

ABOUT A.A.

... a newsletter for professional men and women

December 1975

A.A.'s in More Localities Now Interested in Cooperating with Professionals, Evidence Suggests

Cooperation—locally—between A.A. members and the professional community is increasing throughout the U.S. and Canada, according to new information just received here at A.A.'s General Service Office (G.S.O.).

We have learned that there are now at least 25 local A.A. committees for cooperation with the professional community. These committees are a new development in A.A., apparently reflecting (1) more awareness by A.A. members of non-A.A. efforts to help alcoholics and (2) the substantially increased numbers of professional people interested in alcoholism.

Establishment of these committees came after our General Service Board (for the U.S. and Canada) set up a standing committee for the same purpose in 1970, and after A.A.'s annual representative assembly, the General Service Conference (delegates represent all A.A. groups in the U.S. and Canada), also created such a working body in response to widespread evident need for this activity within A.A.

The local committees are often part of A.A. area general service activities, or are sometimes connected with local A.A. central offices. To contact them, see "Alcoholics Anonymous" in your local telephone directory. If you want G.S.O. in New York to arrange local contact for you, we will gladly do so. Write: G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Were You There?

For A.A.'s 40th anniversary, we planned an international convention July 4-6, 1975, in Denver, Colo. As we told you in the December 1974 issue of *About A.A.*, we expected about 10,000

members to turn up. Registration totaled 19,300! No "business" occurs at these gatherings, held every five years. They are just mammoth A.A. meetings for fellowship, fun, and inspiration.

Based on our 1970 experience with our 35th anniversary convention in Miami Beach, Fla., the Denver program was weighted heavily with A.A. speakers. But among the most popular sessions in Denver were panels presenting non-A.A. professionals. Standing ovations for them became commonplace. And more than once, firemen and police stopped a session until standees could be thinned out of the aisles.

We are still astonished at the good nature with which everyone took such occurrences (as well as some acoustical problems). We are particularly grateful to our guest speakers, who included Leonard Boche, Washington, D.C.; Nelson J. Bradley, M.D., Park Ridge, Ill.; Virginia Carter, Hollywood, Calif.; Morris E. Chafetz, M.D., Washington, D.C.; George Dimas, New York, N.Y.; W. J. Estelle, Huntsville, Tex.; Victor Gold, Washington, D.C.; Jack Guest, Los Angeles, Calif.; Samuel C. Kaim, M.D., Washington, D.C.; Maj. William S. King, U.S.A.F., Washington, D.C.; Judge Nathan S. Kirsch, Hackensack, N.J.; Jayne Mazzarella, Cleveland, Ohio; Rev. Bruce Miles, Winnipeg, Man.; Nicholas A. Pace, M.D., New York, N.Y.; Capt. J. A. Pursch, U.S.N., Long Beach, Calif.; William Rader, M.D., Los Angeles, Calif.; James E. Royce, S.J., Ph.D., Seattle, Wash.; Max A. Schneider, M.D., Santa Ana, Calif.; Clarence Shepard, Toronto, Ont.; R. K. Simpson, D.O., Des Moines, Iowa; Charles Z. Smith, Seattle, Wash.; Huey Perry, Tallahassee, Fla.; and Kenneth H. Williams, M.D., Pittsburgh, Pa.

In addition, over 300 A.A. speakers all turned up on time at exactly the right place—quite a switch from our pre-A.A. behavior!

A highlight occurred Friday evening when A.A.'s

from 29 countries carried their spotlighted national flags down the center aisle of packed Currigan Hall, and each spoke in his or her native tongue the convention theme, "Let It Begin With Me." Even the overflow thousands watching on closed-circuit TV in the adjacent sports arena stood and cheered.

Perhaps the four people who got the most attention all weekend were four alcoholics who turned up asking for help with a drinking problem. What a first A.A. meeting they can tell about in years to come!

If you were among us, you know that no words here can adequately convey the essence of that Denver experience. If you missed it, ask someone who went, and plan now to get to the 1980 convention, wherever it is. You'll be glad you did, and so will we.

Questions About A.A. Raised at a Professional Meeting on Alcoholism

Do you know of any professional agency helping alcoholics that has run into problems with local A.A. members? Do you know how such situations have been resolved?

Since professional methods are so totally unlike the amateur approach of A.A., it is not surprising that some A.A. members have trouble understanding professional purposes and techniques. It is also quite understandable that professionals may find themselves puzzled by some zealous A.A.'s.

Naturally enough, such tensions seem to occur most frequently among newer A.A. members and professional men and women only recently active in the alcoholism field.

In relationship problems between A.A. members and professional agencies, certain similarities have existed over the years and around the world. You may recognize some that underlie the following questions asked by a psychologist at one section of the A.D.P.A. meeting in Chicago in September.

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1. For a professional agency dealing with alcoholics, is a working relationship with local A.A. members really necessary, or just advisable?

Isn't this a professional, program decision, which A.A. is not qualified to make for any professional program or institution?

Shouldn't we in A.A. continue to limit ourselves to (a) furnishing information (speakers, literature, consultations) about A.A., when asked, and (b) providing A.A. sponsors, when asked?

Certainly, many different kinds of A.A.-agency cooperation have proved effective, depending on the goal of the specific agency and other local factors. Behind all the forms such cooperation can take, however, there seems to be one basic set of principles guiding A.A. behavior. They are A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, which sum up a great wealth of hard-earned A.A. experience. Do you think A.A. would lose its effectiveness if we began to act differently?

2. Should clients or patients under professional care be required to attend A.A. meetings?

Many A.A.'s look with disfavor on any such compulsory attendance, with good reason. We recall vividly that "going to A.A." simply to placate a physician, an employer, a judge, a corrections officer, or a family member rarely sobered us up. We usually began to recover only when we went to A.A. of our own volition, for our own sakes, not to please someone else.

Angry people, forced to attend a gathering they dislike—whether it is a group therapy session, a staff meeting, a class, or an A.A. meeting—can be unpleasant. They can make the gathering unproductive for everyone else present.

And yet all of us were "sentenced" in some sense to attend A.A.—if not by external pressure, then by our own interior discomfort. Why alcoholics first get to A.A. may be less important than why we decide to stay.

Thousands of us now recovered in A.A. are alive only because someone pressured us into contacting A.A. We may have first approached A.A. quite reluctantly—even resentfully. But something eventually must have changed our attitude, so we could begin to live our A.A. life under our own momentum, not under coercion.

We doubt that A.A. has any business using coercion on alcoholics. But, clearly, being pressured into A.A. by others has worked for thousands of us.

3. What about holding A.A. meetings on professional premises? Should the professional agency try to "subsidize" an A.A. group in any way (with refresh-

ments, literature, furniture, rent-free meeting space)?
How much responsibility does the agency take for what happens at such meetings?

If these questions have arisen for you, please accept a free copy of any of these A.A. pamphlets:

How A.A. Members Cooperate—drawing on years of experience on this very subject, this pamphlet goes into much detail on these questions.

A.A. in Hospitals and A.A. in Prisons—these, too, offer valuable experience in these matters.

The Twelve Traditions Illustrated—this one explains simply why certain practices have proved troublesome for us; others, successful.

Just ask any local A.A. group or office for one of these, or write G.S.O. Do not hesitate to telephone or write us in detail if you think we can be of help.

4. Should A.A. members be paid to run A.A. meetings?

Traditionally, no A.A. member ever accepts any fee or compensation whatsoever for A.A. activities such as leading or speaking at A.A. meetings, twelfth-stepping other alcoholics, etc.

This is not always easy to understand, even for long-term A.A. members. So a compilation of experience on these matters is also available. It is titled **A.A. Guidelines for Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field**. You are welcome to a free copy.

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All the above questions continue to be of vital concern to many A.A. members, as attested by the lively discussion of such issues in A.A. circles. On these questions, we welcome any input from you that could help us do our job better.

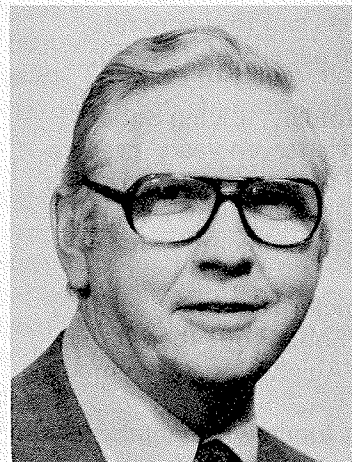
Some New Faces at G.S.O.

Every three years, approximately, staff assignments are rotated at G.S.O. It is one way of observing our Twelfth Tradition axiom about placing principles before personalities. (Likewise, personnel of trustee committees are named for only one-year terms; A.A. trustees serve on the G.S. Board only four years; Conference delegates serve only two, etc.)

The staff member for cooperation with the professional community took on her new assignment September 1. Like her two predecessors in this job,

she is a graduate (class of '75) of the Summer School of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University. You'll be seeing her at meetings of the N.I.A.A.A. advisory council, A.D.P.A., N.C.A., and the like.

Nonalcoholic members of the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community this year are: Andrew Abrahams, M.D., Brooklyn, N.Y.; John D. Bealer, M.D., Bethlehem, Pa.; Milton A. Maxwell, Ph.D., Piscataway, N.J.; Gordon M. Patrick, Toronto, Ont. Six A.A. members also serve.



**Canadian
Nonalcoholic
New Trustee on
A.A.'s General
Service Board**

Gordon M. Patrick, Toronto, was elected this year a nonalcoholic member of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. He is director of counseling services in the Ontario provincial Ministry of Health.

Patrick succeeds Travis E. Dancey, M.D., psychiatrist, of Montreal, Que.

The new trustee became interested in A.A. in 1958, when he directed summer courses on alcoholism for Ontario professionals. He was formerly connected with the Donwood Institute and with the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario.

The board is composed of fourteen A.A. members and seven nonalcoholics. All are unpaid.

Other nonalcoholic trustees are: John D. Bealer, M.D., Bethlehem Steel Corp., Bethlehem, Pa.; Vincent P. Dole, M.D., Rockefeller University Hospital, New York; Austin H. MacCormick, Osborne Association, New York; Milton A. Maxwell, Ph.D., formerly director of Rutgers Summer School of Alcohol Studies, New Brunswick, N.J.; Arthur J. Miles, Dime Savings Bank of New York; and John L. Norris, M.D., formerly associate medical director of Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y.

'Living Sober'—New Booklet Can Help Even Alcoholics Who Resist A.A.

We know that some alcoholics referred for treatment are averse to A.A. With them in mind, A.A. World Services, Inc., has just published a new booklet, "Living Sober," which (1) deals with not drinking rather than with the Twelve Steps of A.A. recovery, and (2) avoids so-called spiritual matters. It contains much A.A. lore never before published.

We hope all problem drinkers can find concrete, specific help in this 88-page paperback (\$1.75).

Described in the enclosed folder, "Living Sober" became available this fall after seven years' preparation. *Not* told in the folder is the story of how this booklet originated and finally came into being as an A.A. Conference-approved publication.

The process was neither quick nor easy. It actually took longer to get "Living Sober" out than it did to publish our basic text, "Alcoholics Anonymous."

One wintry day in 1969, at lunch with members of our General Service Board's Literature Committee, Dr. John L. Norris, nonalcoholic board chairman, wondered aloud whether A.A. should publish a little pamphlet on "traps" a recovering alcoholic should look out for.

There followed years of discussions—which involved two separate Conference Literature Committees (ten members each, names selected by lot), plus the trustees' committee.

Well, you get the picture. Writing for A.A. is not easy, as you can imagine. For every writer, there are at least 800,000 editors, each of whom is as authoritative as any other voice in A.A. The road of consensus is tough to find, but the committee system works with torturous slowness to produce written material agreeable to the largest possible mass of A.A. members.

Skipping to the bottom line: Finally, in 1974, an A.A. writer's work was fully approved, and "Living Sober" is now off the press.

Just such a process resulted in the 1955 revision of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," and another such revision (with more modern stories) is now in the works. Some day in 1976 . . .

Meanwhile, we hope you have a look at "Living Sober."

Pamphlets Give New Data on A.A. Effectiveness and Structure

Latest figures on sobriety, age, sex, and occupation of A.A. members are now offered in a new pamphlet, "Alcoholics Anonymous—a Community Resource for Coping with a National Health Problem."

Also published this year is A.A.'s very first pamphlet explaining the structure and functions of our G.S.O.: "Your A.A. General Service Office." Copies of both are enclosed.

A.A. Visible at National Professional Gatherings

An A.A. exhibit was on display in 1975 at national meetings of the Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America (Chicago), American Association of School Administrators (Dallas), American Correctional Association (Louisville), American Medical Association (Atlantic City), American Orthopsychiatric Association (Washington), American Personnel and Guidance Association (New York), American Public Health Association (Chicago), National Catholic Educational Association (Atlantic City), National Conference on Social Welfare (San Francisco), National Council on Alcoholism (Milwaukee), National Education Association (Los Angeles), National League for Nursing (New Orleans), and National Rehabilitation Association (Cincinnati).

Local A.A. members in each host city were available to answer queries. The next time you see the exhibit, please say hello to the A.A.'s on hand.

News Notes: At the Virginia State A.A. Convention in August, 260 attended a workshop on "How A.A. Members Cooperate with Other Community Efforts." In addition to two A.A. members, participants included Judge D. B. Marshall, State Senator James T. Edmunds, and Mr. Mike Kelly, state alcoholism services coordinator. . . . John McDonough, Ph.D., Hunt, Tex., who formerly headed U.S. Army alcoholism programs in Europe and now directs a rehabilitation center for alcoholics, was guest speaker at the November meeting of the Policy Committee of A.A.'s General Service Board. He spoke frankly about problems encountered by professionals in working with local A.A. members, and questioned the value of some of A.A.'s Traditions. . . . The first catalogue of A.A.-published materials has just been issued. It lists and describes all books, booklets, pamphlets, and other service materials published by A.A. World Services, Inc. If you'd like to see a copy, just ask us for one.