General Service Conference Comes of Age
As Successor to A.A. Founders

Ninety delegates representing U.S. and Canadian groups assemble in New York next month to carry on — with the trustees, directors and G.S.O. staff as successors to A.A. co-founders Bill and Dr. Bob.

The occasion will be the 21st annual meeting of the A.A. General Service Conference (North American section), Apr. 19-24, at the Hotel New Yorker, the first not attended by Bill W., father of the A.A. Conference idea, who died Jan. 24 this year.

More than 20 years ago Bill, encouraged by Dr. Bob, proposed that the Conference try acting as “the voice of A.A.,” logical successors to the Fellowship’s co-founders. It has fulfilled this purpose for 20 years — evidence of the wise foresight of the two former drunks who first started helping each other stay sober on May 11, 1935, in Akron, O.

A.A. has since grown to more than 500,000 alcoholics in some 90 countries — every individual member still using, to to keep himself sober, exactly the same key to recovery that the first two A.A.’s used: communication at depth with fellow alcoholics.

In fact, “Communication: Key to A.A. Growth” is the theme of the 1971 Conference.

As everyone who has ever attended any kind of one- or two-day A.A. session knows, an outstanding characteristic of such a gathering is the flow of words in “the language of the heart,” as Bill called A.A. talk.

It pours forth from breakfast until late in the night, with formal Conference sessions running from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. for four of the six days — sometimes lunch and dinner meetings.

Two kinds of activity will predominate in the 1971 Conference agenda:

1) reviewing G.S.O. and Board activity,
2) establishing world-wide Fellowship policy.

Your Answers Needed for Agenda Questions

If you or your group have additional questions you want discussed at the Conference, contact your delegate. Groups have already been asked to discuss and tell delegates their feelings about:

- What can young people contribute to older members?
- Is there a generation gap in A.A.?
- Is sponsorship declining?
- What can be done when blocks become slums and groups move away without being replaced?
- Values and procedures of closed vs. open meetings.
- Should G.S.O. and Central Offices accept contributions from “clubs” formed by A.A.’s for A.A.’s? Should groups contribute to such “clubs?”

NEW STAFF MEMBER

Valerie S. joined the G.S.O. staff on January 11, 1971. Born in New Haven, Conn., she came to New York during the fifties and embarked on a theatrical career. Later she became interested in publicity work and served as assistant to the executive director of the Host Country Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Mayor Lindsay and the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. The committee’s purpose is to improve the host city’s relations with the diplomatic community. Fortunately when G.S.O. was casting about for an additional staff member, Valerie agreed to come to us.

A recent bride, she is married to the portrait painter, Richard S., also an A.A. member. She is very active in A.A. and a member of the Carlyle Group. We are delighted to have her with us.

(cont’d p. 3)
Girdling the globe during the 24-hour span of February 14, 1971, A.A. memorial services honored the late Bill W., our Fellowship's co-founder who died January 24, this year.

Ranging from the silent meditation of a lonely seaman aboard a freighter on the starlit Indian Ocean to mammoth throngs chorusing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" in New York's vaulted Cathedral of St. John the Divine... and many kinds of A.A. meetings and observances in between... all the gatherings demonstrated two common purposes: to honor the work of A.A.'s last surviving co-founder, and to reaffirm A.A. members' zeal to continue carrying the message of recovery to other alcoholics.

The A.A. tone was the same around the world: at the gathering held early in the morning in Port Elizabeth, South Africa; and at the international meeting in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Similar observances were held at the Teachers' Federation Auditorium in Sydney, Australia; in the Veterans' Memorial Hall, Oakland, California; in Westminster Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia; St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Church, Trafalgar Square, London; Notre Dame Cathedral, Montreal; Trinity Church, Boston; Sacred Heart Church, Aruba, Dutch West Indies; Trinity Church, Hartford, Connecticut; Perpetuo Socorro Church, Sao Paolo, Brazil; churches in Karwar and Bombay, India; and many other places.

Mass meetings of A.A. groups were held in civic auditoriums in Seattle, Washington; Johannesburg, South Africa; Cincinnati, Ohio; Glasgow, Scotland; Long Beach, California; Hamilton, Ohio; Antwerp, Belgium; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and many other places.

Robbins Hall, Central Islip State Hospital, New York; Little Rock, Arkansas (four meetings); Helsingborg, Sweden (for all Swedish groups); every Texas town with an A.A. group and many other places were the sites of various kinds of memorial gatherings. In Queensland, Australia, a Catholic priest in A.A. said a special mass; in Greenwich Village, New York, the film "Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions" was given a special screening.

G.S.O. is still receiving daily dozens of sympathy letters plus notices and clippings about memorial services.

In effect, A.A.'s everywhere marked Bill's passing by renewal of the spirit present in Miami Beach, Florida, the weekend of July 2-5, 1970, when Bill made his last public appearance at the Miami convention.

Bill's Last Message

When the late Bill W. was too ill last year to attend his 36th A.A. Anniversary Banquet, sponsored by the New York Intergroup on Oct. 10, (1970), he wrote a message for his wife Lois to read to the assembled guests. Since it turned out to be his last written A.A. message, it is reprinted here, in full:

"My dear Friends,

"Recently an A.A. member sent me an unusual greeting which I would like to extend to you. He told me it was an ancient Arabian salutation. Perhaps we have no Arabian groups, but it still seems a fitting expression of how I feel for each of you. It says, 'I salute and thank you for your life.'"

"My thoughts are much occupied these days with gratitude to our Fellowship and for the myriad blessings bestowed upon us by God's Grace. If I were asked which of these blessings I felt was most responsible for our growth as a Fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, 'the concept of anonymity.'"

"Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival: the spiritual and the practical. On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes.

"A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard. As long as we accept our sobriety in our traditional spirit of anonymity, we will continue to receive God's Grace.

"And so – once more I salute you in that spirit and again I thank you for your lives. May God bless us all now, and forever.

Bill"
CONFERENCE
(from p. 1)

Also scheduled are area reports from all new (Panel 21) delegates; committee meetings and reports on literature, finance, long-range planning, staff, policy, professional relations, public information, agenda-admissions, Conference report (published proceedings sent to all groups), institutions, the Grapevine, and A.A.'s 1975 International Convention.

Presentations and workshops will cover "Cooperation through Communication" (with professional alcoholism agencies and others); A.A. overseas; G.S.O. services; anonymity at the press-radio-TV level; anonymity at the personal level; anonymity within A.A.; a short form of 12 Concepts for World Service; and a delegate's demonstration of how to give a Conference report back home.

Close scrutiny of all New York operations will include briefings by trustees and staff members plus a full afternoon at the G.S. and Grapevine offices.

A.A. TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

Five regional trustees will be selected for the G.S. Board by electoral panels including delegates representing states and provinces in the Pacific, Southeast, East Central and Southwest U.S. regions and Eastern Canada. A total of 40 members have been nominated from the states and provinces involved.

Also to be chosen is an A.A. trustee-at-large for Canada, for which eight nominees have been named.

(A.A. newcomers can learn about their trustees on the G.S. Board, and how they are chosen, from pp. 87-101 in The A.A. Service Manual.)

Formal election to the Board of those chosen by the Conference will take place at the April meeting of the Board, just after the conclusion of the Conference.

At that time the Board is also scheduled to elect one "general service" trustee (New York area member with special business experience) and two non-alcoholic trustees.

Want Some Answers...?

Four frequently asked A.A. questions (according to our mail) — and the essence of our usual answers — are:

1. What qualifications (time of sobriety etc.) should an A.A. group officer have?

Naturally, in A.A. that is up to each group to decide for itself (see Tradition #4, on group autonomy). There are no rules in A.A. However, a lot of group experience is spelled out in detail in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group," for every office in A.A.

2. What is "Conference-approved" literature?

Conference-approved literature always carries this trademark ® and carries the words "Conference-approved." This means it has gone through a long process of checking and revisions by the General Service Board and Conference Literature Committees, and therefore represents a wide consensus of A.A. opinion, not just one point of view, the ideas of one person or one part of the A.A. world.

Other publications, such as the Little Red Book, the 24-hour book and many others, although not Conference-approved, have been helpful to many people.

3. How do you get a halfway house started and support it?

A.A. does not own or run halfway houses or any other facilities (see Tradition #6, on outside enterprises), but of course many A.A. members have been wonderfully helped by good halfway houses. And, too, many A.A. members do try to help such facilities — as private individuals, of course, not as representatives of A.A. Also, group funds are not used for this purpose.

For advice on this write to:
Halfway House Alcoholism Programs,
334 Mounds Blvd., St. Paul, Minn. 55106.

North American Association of Alcoholism Programs, 1130-17th St. N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036.

National Council on Alcoholism, 2
Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

National Institute of Mental Health,
Division of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 5451 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase,
Maryland 20015.

4. Should we use members' pictures, with first name only, in our group newspaper or magazine?

The General Service Conference in 1968 decided that showing faces of A.A. members on TV films, in any publication where they would be seen by the public, is a violation of our 11th Tradition (on anonymity), even if identified. You may have noticed that here, in Box 4-5-9, we show faces of nonalcoholics only.

IN OUR MAILBAG... FROM GERMANY

"Dear friends!

"My English is very bad. But I think we will understand each other because it is the language of heart we try to talk. This are the words of our american friend Quenton who had to leave us. He stays now in Vietnam.

"Now we do not have an american A.A. friend in our group, so I try to write you. We try to continue what our friend Quenton started. We have one trouble now. We do not have any american literature. Please send us some literature that we can help if somebody needs help. We want to pay for it. Please tell us where we can send the money. Kind regards and best wishes from all here.

Sincerely,

Helmut"
NEW IRISH A.A. OFFICE

The Irish political strife depicted in North American newspapers does not give a true picture of A.A. in the Emerald Isle, we are assured in recent letters from Tim M., current secretary of the fairly new Irish A.A. office in Dublin. On St. Patrick’s native turf, as elsewhere, A.A. growth did not wait for establishment of any organizational ties among groups.

Since 1946, when the first European group got going in Dublin, groups have sprung up all over the place.

In 1968, a start was made at convening a permanent pan-Irish Conference, and delegates from all four provinces have met semi-annually and amiably ever since.

In 1969, they took steps to establish necessary financing from Irish A.A.’s and voted to establish an office in Dublin to serve the entire Irish fellowship, from Cork to Belfast.

Dublin

Behind the efforts is “a desire that the voluntary involvement of all members in an entity created and maintained by themselves may loosen the shackles of alcoholism on even one victim of the disease which we all share,” writes the eloquent Tim.

He concludes, “It is confidently believed that manifestations of support, encouragement and material help, together with the flood of goodwill to be found only in A.A. will lead to a flowering in the Irish fellowship of the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service.” Right on! God Bless you and Happy St. Paddy’s Day!

GROUPS RECEIVE FREE GRAPEVINE

Every month 60,000 copies of the Grapevine are read and passed along. A conservative estimate of three readers for every copy projects 180,000 readers of each Grapevine issue. And yet there are many A.A.’s who say they have never heard of the magazine, and many groups which do not take a single copy for their meetings.

A free sample copy of the April issue is being mailed to 15,000 group secretaries in the hope of creating interest where there is none, or very little, now. The April issue carries the traditional Serenity Prayer cover, two excellent articles on the slogans and cliches we live by, a whole section on “nameless fears” and how to cope with them, an interpretation of the Ninth Step, personal stories, humor, and discussion topics.
AN INTERGROUP'S CONCERN

"Money is always a subject of controversy in any group, and especially among A.A. groups. For your interest, I am writing about the way a large intergroup handled a money problem.

"Over the years there was built up in the Central Service Account what was known as a savings account of about $4,400. Each new Executive Committee wrestled with the problem of what to do with this money, wondering if it was right to have a savings account.

"The budget for running the very wonderful up-to-date A.A. services of this intergroup comes to about $10,000 a year. After much debate last year, the Executive Committee, backed by the Board of Representatives, voted to change the name of the savings account to a "Reserve for Contingencies Fund."

SPECIAL SPANISH DISCOUNT PACKAGE NOW AVAILABLE

Groups who need A.A. literature in Spanish for use at A.A. meetings in hospitals, penal, correctional and rehab facilities can now get $4.50 worth of A.A. pamphlets from G.S.O. for only $3.50, a saving of $1.00 per package.

Included in each package are 40 pieces, including "Esto Es A.A.," "44 Preguntas y Respuestas," "Es A.A. Para Ud.?" "Sedantes, Estimulantes, Estimulantes y el Alcohólico," "Como Trabaja el Programa," "Lo que le sucedio a Jose. . .," "Los Doce Pasos" y "Las Doce Tradiciones."

This special service for institutional and committees can also be used by regular groups that might want to make gifts of A.A. literature to Spanish-speaking fellow alcoholics behind walls.

In some groups, all kinds of literature on drinking, alcoholism, and religion are lumped together. In other groups, pains are taken to see that G.S.O.—published literature is not mixed up in displays of other books, leaflets and pamphlets. This emphasizes (especially to newcomers) A.A.'s independence as spelled out in Tradition Six (our not endorsing any sects, denominations, political viewpoints or institutions) and our determination to steer clear of controversial issues (Tradition Ten) which might turn off some newcomers.

Most groups have found that a prominent, attractive display of A.A. literature is a splendid way to help carry the message and to answer many members' questions.

Our banker told us that with the yearly budget we have and with the running of the annual Banquet, it was only good business to have a reserve of some $4,500.

The result of the debates and discussions was that twice a year we take the interest provided by this fund and send it directly to World Services — General Service Office in New York. This, of course, is consistent with the pledge adopted at the Toronto Convention, and this is also in addition to the regular monthly stipend that we send to G.S.O. Everybody was happy when this money, which was kept for a business purpose but earning interest, was so designated that the earned interest went back into the pot to help forward the plans, programs and work of A.A.

"Perhaps this idea can help your intergroup.

Fred F., Washington, D.C.  
Area Intergroup"

JOE IN THE NEWS

An A.A. cartoon strip is running serially in the County Press, a weekly newspaper in Salem, Ind.

Does it look familiar? It is, of course, a serial version of "What Happened to Joe," the cartoon style Conference-approved pamphlet.

The Salem paper got legal permission from A.A. World Services, Inc. to run "Joe" page by page. (Wonder if he'll run "Alice" if "Joe" gets results?)

If any paper you know wants to help carry the message this way, just write us.

NEW TITLE

Don't forget! "The A.A. Way of Life" has a brand new title which we think is more descriptive of its contents. It is "As Bill Sees It" and it has a colorful new jacket as well. (Price, $3.15 to groups and $3.50 to individuals.)

BEA NORRIS

This is the name by which she was known to us at G.S.O., and it indicates the affection which we had for our "Dr. Jack's" wife. It is sad to share with you the news that she is gone from us. She passed away on Saturday night, March 13, in New London, New Hampshire.

If you would care to send a note or card to our dearly loved Dr. Norris, you may address him at Box 251, New London, New Hampshire 03257.

We know that your thoughts and prayers and loving sympathy are with "Dr. Jack" and his family.
A. A. Calendar of Events

MARCH

1-2 — Surrey, B.C., Can., "Fraser Valley Rally." Write: Rally Treasurer, Box 1671, Langley, B.C.
1-3 — Steel Falls, S.D., S.D. Spring Conf. Write: Conf. Chm., Box 716 Sioux Falls.
7-9 — Pembroke, Ont., Can., District Conf. Write: Earl G. Homuth, 152 Laurier Avenue, Pembroke.
7-8 — Evanston, Ill., Wyoming Spring Conf. Write: Conf. Secy., Box 131, Evanston.
28-30 — Craig, Colo., Little Sky Line Conf. Write: Chm., Box 1151, Craig.

JUNE

4-6 — North Platte, Neb., Nebraska A.A. State Reunion. Write: Reunion Chm., Box 491, Laurel, Nebr.
10-13 — Pompano Beach, Fla., 15th Florida State Conf. Write: Chm., Box 6207, Pompano Beach.

Box 4-5-9 is published 6 times a year by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 468 Park Ave., South, N.Y.C., N.Y. 10016.

17-20 — Hollywood, Fla., 15th Florida State Conv. Write: Chm., Box 6207, Pompano Beach.

SPECIAL GIFTS TO G.S.O.

(December 1970)

ALABAMA—N.W. FLORIDA

Convention .................................. $3 66.45
CALIFORNIA

Area 5 Assembly .................................. 20.00
South Calif. Young People's Comm. ............ 80.00
San Diego: Central Mtg. ........................... 125.47

FLORIDA

Broaward Co. Gratitude Dinner ..................... 1,176.45
Gen. Service Representatives, Dist. 8 Gratitude Dinner ........... 2,000.00

INDIANA

Richmond Fellowship: All four groups .......... 25.00

ILLINOIS

Area 7 Get-Together ................................ 58.05
State Conf ....................................... 208.75
No, and So. Area Assemblies ......................... 356.07

KANSAS

State Assembly .................................. 250.90

KENTUCKY

Dist. 10, Greater Louisville Gratitude Month ...... 2,272.69

LOUISIANA

Annui, Tri-State Conv. ............................... 250.00

MICHIGAN

Central Mich. Inter-Area Council ................... 70.00

NEBRASKA

Omaha: Area Dinner Meeting ......................... 16.00

NEVADA

Southern Roundup .................................. 100.00

NEW MEXICO

Dist. 4 .............................................. 10.00

NEW YORK

Lake Placid: 20th Annu. Fall Conf. .............. 331.90

NORTH CAROLINA

Fayetteville: Sandhills Intergroup ................. 8.00

OHIO

Crosby Groups Thanksgiving Collection ........... 55.00

OKLAHOMA

N.W. Dist. Conf. ................................ 47.00

PENNSYLVANIA

Area 10 ........................................... 20.00

RHODE ISLAND

State Assembly ..................................... 150.00

WASHINGTON

State Assembly .................................... 142.27

WEST VIRGINIA

State Conf ....................................... 256.03

CANADA

Alberta: 20th Prov. Conf. ......................... 323.00
B.C.: Yukon Assem. Area ......................... 124.91
Ont.: Dunnville, Go-Forth Conv. .................. 162.82
Ont.: Orillia, Area New Year's Eve ............... 24.50
Ont.: Sault Ste. Marie, All groups Gratitude Meeting ...... 60.00
Ont.: Sudbury, Central Comm. .................. 33.90
Ont.: Toronto, W. Toronto Men's Meeting ....... 100.00