

Committees Set the Stage for the General Service Conference

From April 23-29, when the 39th General Service Conference convenes at the Omni Park Central Hotel, New York City, delegates, trustees, and directors, along with members of the G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs, will go about the business of working toward consensus on matters vital to Alcoholics Anonymous – a task that would be impossible to accomplish in a week without the mounds of advance work done by the 11 Conference committees.

As *The A.A. Service Manual* points out that the 91 delegates, who constitute two-thirds of the Conference, carry the “heavy influence.” They make up the Conference committees, which cover the broad range of A.A. activities. They have free access to the Conference floor for discussion of all actions affecting the Fellowship.

As the Conference has grown in size and influence, the committees’ importance has grown even more. Since 1951, when the first four of them were formed, others have been added. Each committee has been strengthened, and all have ample time during the year to consider the issues before them.

However, no annual Conference is “committee run.” The committees’ recommendations are passed along to

the entire Conference for consideration and/or Advisory Action. The Conference in turn, can refuse a committee’s recommendation; if it does, the matter is discussed and resolved in general session. In typical A.A. fashion, a Conference committee does not represent “authority.” (There are 133 voting members of the Conference. They have the final say.)

On the other hand, as Bill W. stresses in the Second Concept, “the group conscience of A.A. could not be heard unless a properly chosen Conference were fully trusted to speak for it.” Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to “trusted servants” must be implicit. In the Third Concept, he is even clearer: “Our entire A.A. program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust A.A., and we trust each other. Therefore, we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service. The ‘Right of Decision’ that we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.”

The theme of the 1989 General Service Conference is “Anonymity – Living Our Traditions.” This is largely what the committee members do. Because there is always room for argument and dissent, they can trust each other. And, unlike members of committees elsewhere, they share a strong singleness of purpose: to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. Following is a capsule listing of the Conference committees and what they do:



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Agenda Committee has the year-round job of communicating with G.S.O. on subjects for the Conference agenda and theme.

Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community seeks to create mutual understanding and cooperation between the Fellowship and professional groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic.

Committee on Correctional Facilities encourages A.A. members to carry the message to alcoholics confined to long- or short-term institutions and reviews services to "inside" groups and institutions committees.

The Finance Committee looks into G.S.O.'s annual budget and concerns itself with income needed to carry out service work.

The Grapevine Committee is a valuable instrument for communication between The Grapevine and the Fellowship. It also brings grass-roots opinions to the Grapevine staff so that they can better serve A.A.

Literature Committee has played a vital role in the development of A.A. pamphlets, books and audiovisual materials.

Policy and Admissions Committee handles all changes in the Conference plan, all steps in the expansion of the Conference, and all procedures affecting its cost. It also reviews requests for additional delegate areas.

Public Information Committee tries to carry the A.A. message and information about the Fellowship to the public. It is also concerned with anonymity breaks and misinformation about A.A. at the public level.

Report and Charter Committee reads drafts of *The A.A. Service Manual* and *Final Conference Report*, checking them for accuracy of content. This committee also receives suggestions for changes in the Conference Charter and A.A. directories and makes recommendations on them.

Treatment Facilities Committee encourages A.A. members to assume responsibility for carrying the message into hospitals and treatment facilities.

Committee on Trustees is concerned with elections, slates of candidates, rotation of directors, and other aspects of A.A. "government."

Trustee emeritus Dr. Jack Norris, who died last Jan-

uary (see page 6), often noted that "committees are made up of people, and so the system will never be perfect. Modification and adjustment are ever necessary to meet changing times within and without A.A." Like so many others, Dr. Jack also believed that an informed group conscience rarely makes a mistake — and that problems will remain minimal so long as we apply the principle of trust that is so basic to the A.A. way of life.

Think 1990! — More on the International Convention

If you're planning to be part of the 1990 International Convention, July 5-8 in Seattle, Washington, here is some more information to help you make your travel plans.

Because approximately 35,000 A.A.s from around the world are expected to attend this Ninth International Convention, marking A.A.'s 55th birthday, the logistics are complex. Some 14,000 hotel rooms in the greater Seattle area are under contract at reduced rates; however, all requests for housing must be processed by G.S.O. together with the registration forms. These, in turn, will be forwarded to the Seattle Convention and Tourism Housing Bureau. As is customary, all the hotels require advance deposits.

Each conventioneer must register and pay the \$55.00 fee *before* the housing request can be processed. Registration forms, listing available hotel accommodations and requesting first, second and third choices, will be sent to A.A. groups worldwide in September 1989. Registrants will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so it would be wise to mail your forms early.

"We realize," says G.S.O. Convention Coordinator Curtis M., "that many of those attending may wish to have their travel agents do all the planning, and we want to cooperate with the agents as fully as possible." However, he notes, "Should you use the services of a travel agent, please be aware that *you* must register and request housing for the Convention directly from G.S.O., even though your agent is handling your transportation, stops en route, etc. If a travel agent's check, rather than a personal check, is received, the entire package and check will be returned unprocessed. We have learned from experience that this procedure best serves and protects the interests of A.A. members."

Similarly, receipts for registration fees, as well as housing information, will be sent directly to you, not to your travel agent. (In the event that you need to cancel arrangements you've made, you can furnish your agent with the receipts and let him or her handle the rest.) Some additional information:

- If members of a group wish to stay at the same hotel,

every effort will be made to accommodate them. However, registration/housing forms for the entire party must be submitted in a single package, not piecemeal.

- If a person wishes to share a room, the names of both occupants should be indicated, with the name of the second occupant in brackets.
- Children under age 12 will be admitted to the Convention at no charge and therefore need not be registered. Nevertheless, their names should be listed on the housing portion of the registration form.

Despite the need for registration procedures amounting to "rules" in smoothing the way for this enormous Convention, the International Convention Committee is ready and eager to cooperate with every registrant, every travel agent, in every way it can.

For further information, or to obtain your form directly (instead of through your home group), please write to: International Convention Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Former Trustee Wayne P. Named G.S.O. Manager

The spirit of rotation is again in the air at the General Service Office as former trustee Wayne P., of Rogers, Arkansas, assumes reins as general manager, effective April 1st, and prepares to join the A.A. World Services Board later this year. In both positions, he will succeed John B., who has served since May 1984.

Noting that Wayne is a seasoned G.S.O. service hand, John points out that "he and I have worked together over the years on both the A.A.W.S. and General Service Boards. He was part of a group that planned some of the major changes introduced at G.S.O. over the past several years, so he is already familiar with the vital aspects of our operations. Turning over responsibilities to him is easy; I know how well he will manage them. We expect the process to be completed by the July 1989 meeting of the board, although Wayne and I have not yet worked out all the details."

On March 21st, Wayne celebrated 20 years of sobriety in A.A. "I wasn't the smartest drunk," he observes. "It took me four years of popping in and out before I finally got the message. The people at the meetings never lost patience. They kept saying, 'Keep coming back' . . . 'You'll make it,' and thanks to their help, I finally did." A member of the Rogers Group in Arkansas throughout his sobriety, Wayne claims he got into service for all the wrong reasons. "I ran for the office of general service representative in order to keep an attorney in the group out," he chuckles. "It was a real case of personality

above principles." Then service work "got into my blood when I found all the good things it did for my sobriety." He served successively as Arkansas area treasurer, chairperson and Conference delegate (Panel 29). In 1983, he was elected southwestern regional trustee. During his four-year term, he was a member of the Finance, Conference, and International Convention/A.A. Regional Forums Committees, and served as chairperson of the Nominating Committee and the A.A.W.S. Board.

Born an only child in Havana, Arkansas - "a town of 93 people" - Wayne holds a B.S. in business administration, with a major in marketing and transportation. Before completing his studies, he saw action in Korea with the U.S. Marine Corps. Upon discharge in 1952, he married "a home state girl," his wife, Marcia. "Over the years, she has been totally supportive," Wayne recalls. "I'm an enthusiastic fellow, always running off to a meeting or an area assembly or a General Service Conference. Hardly ever has she said, 'What, you're going again!' She went to Al-Anon meetings, which I think helped her to understand the anatomy of the sober drunk who happens to be her husband."

The Parks have a daughter, Karen Lee, age 33. "I have been sober since she was 13," Wayne notes, "and I'm grateful for the rapport we have today." He also is close to his mother, who he says is "82 years young."

Wayne has worked variously for Phillips Petroleum Company, Inc., Transcom Freight Lines, Inc. and J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. He also was general manager of the Moser Manufacturing and Sales Company, specializing in school equipment and, most recently, was owner and operator of a contract and institutional sales firm. He feels that his administrative background, coupled with his extensive contacts with school boards and institutions, will help him in his work at G.S.O.

"I am very interested," Wayne says, "in working with young people and seeing them get into the mainstream of the Fellowship." He is equally concerned about Native North Americans. "Until recently," he points out, "so little was happening on the reservations. Now A.A. is taking hold. Two years ago, I participated in a roundup on a Navajo reservation near the Arizona-New Mexico border, and it was apparent that we had a tremendous amount of work to do in carrying the message. Since then, the groups in that area have grown steadily. It's very exciting."

Wayne says that "A.A. is my life and my hobby. No hunting or fishing for me - I've found that what to do with my spare time has not been a problem." Pondering his new appointments, he comments, "All this just happened. I'm the first regional trustee and the first person outside the New York area to have these posts, but I don't think that makes a difference. Throughout my A.A. life, it has been drilled into me, 'Do what you're asked, the best you can.' I'm just doing what so many other A.A.s have done before me. It's a privilege to serve."

Why Not Turn to an Oldtimer? – A.A. Grapevine Turns 45!

Feeling resentful, confused, or just plain bored? Finally at the end of your rope? Do you need a meeting? Then why not turn to the A.A. Grapevine, an oldtimer in print?

First published in June of 1944, the A.A. Grapevine certainly qualifies as an oldtimer. Yet there are still plenty of newcomers who haven't heard of the Grapevine. For that reason, and at the suggestion of the 1988 General Service Conference, June 1989 will be the first ever "Grapevine Awareness Month." Coinciding with the Grapevine's 45th anniversary of "continuous sobriety," the June issue will be expanded from the usual 48 pages to 64 pages in order to include a retrospective look at the Grapevine's place in A.A. history.

In March, circulation reached over 131,000 – and the magazine is getting to far more people than that as A.A. members pass old copies on from hand to hand and take them into treatment centers, hospitals, and correctional facilities. Yes, along with the Big Book – which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in April – the Grapevine is actually one of A.A.'s "elder statesmen."

As Bill W. wrote in the historic first issue of the Grapevine – intended originally as a local newsletter for groups in the Metropolitan New York area: "Now comes another lighted lamp – this little newspaper called 'The Grapevine.' May its rays of hope and experience ever fall upon the current of our A.A. life and one day

illumine every dark corner of this alcoholic world."

A.A. in 1944 in many ways was quite different from the A.A. world of the 1980s. The Big Book and one or two pamphlets were the only pieces of published literature and there was virtually no way for groups to communicate with one another across vast geographic distances. Word of mouth was the principal tool in carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous, and traveling A.A.s were the prime conduits for moving the message beyond the two early centers of Akron and New York.

The Grapevine, like most oldtimers, has gone through plenty of changes over the year. It has lost pages, gained pages, gone up and down in size, circulation and legibility, yet one thing remains: the Grapevine is A.A.'s international monthly journal. And if you're ever feeling lonely, depressed, confused – or even if you're bursting with that special sort of A.A. enthusiasm and happiness – rest assured that an oldtimer is just a page away, ready to share the experience, strength, and hope of A.A. members worldwide.

Fellowship Unfolds in U.S.S.R.

When G.S.O. general manager John B. returned from the U.S.S.R. in October 1987, after participating in the first phase of a ground-breaking American-Soviet Dialogue on Common Problems, he noted that A.A. in an organized form did not yet exist in the U.S.S.R., although there had been scattered meetings in the past. Two years and several exchanges later, a newly returned A.A. contingent reports the existence of at least four fledgling groups – one in Moscow, two in Leningrad, and yet another in Tallinn.

The A.A. group included three members of the trustees' International Committee – Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee John Hartley-Smith, M.D. and Class B trustees Webb J. and Don P. Accompanied by Sarah P., the G.S.O. staff member on the Overseas assignment, they flew first to Helsinki, Finland, for a "heartwarming" visit with A.A. service workers, then on to the Soviet Union.

"Everyone we visited in the Soviet professional community was familiar with A.A.," the visitors state, "and with our Steps and Traditions as well. Additionally, there has been a fair amount of publicity in the media."

In Moscow, the visitors attended a meeting of the one A.A. group, the Moscow Beginners Group: "It was conducted in the traditional A.A. way, with the Preamble, Steps and Traditions read at the beginning of the meeting. After much sharing, we closed with the Serenity Prayer. Tea and fellowship followed. The approximately 30 group members, whose length of sobriety



Facsimile copy of the first issue. Available from the Grapevine, \$1.50.

seemed to range from two weeks to five months, asked questions on subjects ranging from sponsorship and anonymity to A.A. literature and self-support. They appeared to have no problems with any portion of the program. Before we left, they presented us with a beautiful porcelain teapot which is now in our Archives."

In Leningrad, the American A.A.s were told that "both groups are conducted in the traditional A.A. way, but with differences. A young psychologist sits in on the meetings of the Leningrad Group, but only because of his great interest in our program; he does not participate in any way. The second group, however, is under the wing of a doctor from a hospital that treats alcoholics. In Tallinn, the one group operates under the auspices of a doctor who reportedly is a former member of the Anti-Bacchus Society for nondrinkers." Tom, a newly sober member, gave the visitors a beautiful picture book inscribed, "To our American friends from Estonian A.A., Nov. 15, 1988, Tallinn, Estonia"; this, too, is now in our Archives.

The U.S. contingent met a number of professional people who felt that use of the word "God" in A.A.'s Steps and Traditions represents a great stumbling block to the Soviets because of the antireligious sentiment that has prevailed for so many years. A psychiatrist said that some people have a similar problem with the appellation "Higher Power," which could be confused with "Stalin." Interestingly, adds Sarah P., "a scientific researcher questioned the whole of our Fifth Step - 'Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.' He said that although many changes are currently taking place, his countrymen simply have not communicated openly in this fashion for many years. Because of this he felt it was premature to include this Step. Thus, the Soviets are coming to grips with the emotional and spiritual aspects of alcoholism."

Meanwhile, the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, has been translated into Russian, and A.A.W.S. hopes to have it ready for distribution in the near future.

The A.A. Concepts: An Aid to World Service Workers

The Twelve Concepts for World Service are to A.A.'s service structure what the Twelve Steps are to the individual recovering alcoholic, what the Twelve Traditions are to the group.

Written by co-founder Bill W. in 1962, the Concepts are an interpretation of A.A.'s world service structure. From a historical perspective, they "aim to record the whys of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons

we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost."

From a philosophical point of view, the Concepts embody principles such as "the Right of Decision," which allows leaders discretion and latitude in their considerations and decisions; and "the Right of Participation," which ensures that each trusted servant has a voting status commensurate with his responsibilities. The "Right of Appeal" protects and encourages minority opinion, and the "Right of Petition" makes certain that grievances can be heard and appropriately acted upon.

Then there are the practical, down-to-earth aspects of the Concepts. These concern "those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service - A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc."

In a discussion of the Concepts some years ago, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Joan K. Jackson, of Bethany, Connecticut, spoke of the "spirit of the Concepts." To read any one of them, she said, "is to grasp a way of thinking about the problems we face, one that embodies a unified and integrated philosophy of our organization. It provides for sensitivity to the needs of our members, for faith in the abilities of those who serve to act responsibly for the good of the Fellowship. I feel that Thomas Jefferson would have had a very warm feeling about the Concepts, that he would have appreciated the extraordinary scope of Bill's vision."

Royalties on Bill W.'s Writing

The office has received questions about the disposition of Lois Wilson's royalties.

As authorized by the royalty agreement of 1962 between Bill and the A.A.W.S. Board, and its subsequent amendments, royalties paid to Lois, Bill's widow, during her lifetime could be willed either to individuals who have to be, now, more than 65 years old; or to her Stepping Stones Foundation. In fact, slightly more than half the royalties now go to Stepping Stones for a period of ten years, and will then revert to the Fellowship. Slightly less than half were willed to individuals, and upon their deaths will revert to the Fellowship.

The individuals are, we are told, with one exception, members of Bill's or Lois's family. The foundation, which is not affiliated with A.A. in any way, maintains as a museum the home where Bill and Lois lived from 1940 on, and also engages in support of programs related to alcoholism.

