

AA EXCHANGE BULLETIN

NEWS AND NOTES ON ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLDWIDE

April 1963

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GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE MEETS APRIL 24TH

"OUR COMMON WELFARE"

THEME OF THE 13TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On April 24-28, 1963, at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York, 85 Delegates and 30 Trustees, Directors and Staff Members of G.S.O. and "Grapevine" will get together and give serious thought to A.A.'s present and future service responsibilities. It is a time when the Fellowship rededicates its efforts, mindful of "Our Common Welfare," so that we will continue to grow in world-wide usefulness.

In the April 1952 issue of the "Grapevine," the Editorial page commented: "In future years, A.A.'s from beyond the oceans may well sit in this advisory assembly." Since then, Observers from various countries have been present. This year Finland is sending its first Observer to this Conference. Another first: the Internationalists (seamen) will also have an Observer.

This year's agenda includes the following special presentations:

1. Report on "Sharing Sessions," conducted in two General Service Conference Areas, and action affecting the future of such sessions.
2. "Making General Services Self-Supporting." Presentations from Area Delegates, giving plans used in their respective Areas to help G.S.O. be self-supporting.
3. "Table Topics" in which all Delegates will participate in the generation of ideas and suggestions to solve a number of group and area problems.
4. "Our Common Welfare" in which Delegates will discuss ways of keeping "old-timers" and "middle-timers" interested.
5. "The Fellowship Takes Its Own Inventory" wherein A.A. takes a good look at itself.



A running feature of the Conference program will be three-minute reports (Area Highlights) from Delegates on A.A. progress in their Areas, and on Area problems and solutions.

Along with other discussion subjects, there will be three nominating sessions to select Regional Trustee candidates. (See page 4)

Complete reports of the Conference will be published and distributed to Delegates and Committee Members. A special 8-page bulletin, "Conference Highlights," will be mailed to all groups, Loners, Internationalists, Area Delegates and Committee Members in June.

LOVE IS SHARED

A dear A.A. writes "My last drunk was over the holidays eight years ago, my anniversary being January 3, so these days especially, always remind me of that rising from the dead. How tremendously wonderful it is to be able to feel real gratitude and love. I'm enclosing my Birthday Plan Contribution which I think is a fine idea of someone's." (Birthday Plan material available free from G.S.O.)

ANONYMITY -- REACTIONS!

The Anonymity piece in the February issue of this Bulletin brought in many lively comments. Some correspondents felt that there was an implication of our questioning the validity of Tradition Twelve, the one that bears on the principles involved in anonymity. Heaven forbid! Rather, we reminded ourselves as A.A.'s that anonymity has a significance beyond the simple one of concealment of identity, a spiritual significance which ever reminds us to place "principles above personalities." We also reminded ourselves — or at least intended to — that anonymity is still very important to most newcomers.

The whole story was sparked by the many letters we received expressing concern that full names are being used to publicize A.A. meetings. Also, that information about such meetings is mailed on open postcards, including the name Alcoholics Anonymous, and the names and addresses of A.A.'s who have not consented to such use.

A number of people reminded us of the practical aspects of preserving the anonymity of ourselves and others at the public level. Some examples: Loss of jobs and job opportunities; members of the alcoholic's immediate family being molested by very sick drunks (non-A.A.'s) when the alcoholic's A.A. identity was made public knowledge in a small community; court decisions that were perhaps influenced by public statements concerning the plaintiff's affiliation with A.A.

But, there were just as many people who felt that they wanted to shout their A. A. membership from the rooftops, and who had done untold good, apparently, by letting everyone in the community know that they were in A.A. (not at the public level, of course).

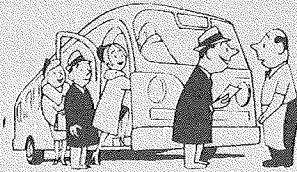
One writer reminded us of a passage from "A.A. Tradition and How it Developed" that bears quoting:

"Of course no A. A. need be anonymous to family, friends, or neighbors. Disclosure there is usually right and good. Nor is there any special danger when we speak at group or semi-public A.A. meetings, provided press reports reveal first names only.

REWARDS IN A.A.

From Wakita, Okla., comes a heartwarming note about the little group there: "Our town is small — 600 population, our group is small, six in number but we have been richly rewarded many times since we started A.A. business a year ago in October. What we lack in quantity is made up in spirit, for which we are grateful. We do a lot of visiting of other groups, and other groups come to share their experiences, hope and strength with us.

BUSSING TO SOBRIETY



We loved the story of the Greyhound Group in the February issue of the "Grapevine," and several correspondents wrote us about it. A.A.'s in Seattle, Wash., charter a bus and attend A.A. Group meetings and Assemblies round the state and have lots of fun and fellowship doing it.

We had the opportunity of attending a Conference in Trail, B.C., (300 miles from Seattle), when the Greyhound Group arrived on the scene. When the travelers alighted from the bus, they were as fresh as daisies and already looking forward to the fun driving back home. Ralph B. of Seattle says, "We had a ball. Singing, coffee, and A.A. meeting, and we even got lost, so that it took us 12 hours going. It is working beautifully and thought it might help in some other area."

Since then they have attended other State assemblies and put on meetings for groups in their Assembly districts. Everyone has enjoyed it and benefited from it. Everett K., the present Delegate from Washington, would be glad to tell you more about it. We have his address here.

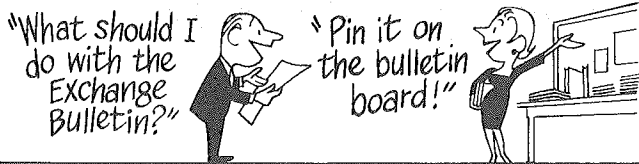
"In most places, but not all, it is customary for A.A.'s to use their own names when speaking before public or semi-public gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters are present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

"As a matter of fact, few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics.

"Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semi-public gatherings under our right names. We wish to impress audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone."

And our friend also reminded us of an editorial in the "Grapevine" of August 1953 which said: "The concept of anonymity today means to all of us the humility which comes from the willingness to serve, without hope of gaining reward or recognition and not as a device to hide an alcoholic past."

Amen to that! Thanks for writing and sharing.



QUESTION BOX

★ We had such good answers to the questions dealing with group problems (February issue) that we thought it would be useful to go on —

APRIL QUESTION

What is your experience with specialized groups — or groups that are made up *only* of members of specific professions? How well do they serve our primary purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic?

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE

The February issue posed some questions about group problems. We have received some thoughtful replies.

The letters that referred to the problem of the drug addict, a non-alcoholic, who had approached the local group for help, were almost unanimous in their feeling that such a person should be made to feel welcome to the group; but that Bill's article on this problem which appeared in the February 1958 issue of the "Grapevine" be kept in mind. The article was called "Problems Other than Alcohol." Bill states:

"There is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into A.A. members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse we can't help anyone."

"Later, he says, 'We cannot give A.A. membership to non-alcoholic narcotic addicts. But like anyone else they should be able to attend certain open A.A. meetings, provided, of course, that the groups themselves are willing.'"

"Several Narcotics Anonymous groups hold regular meetings. One suggestion offered was that the addict try to find another addict to help and form such a group, using our A.A. principles as a guide.

"There were also letters that cited instances of addicts who had been helped through A.A. and who had recovered with the help of an A.A. group. To sum up: the Steps of A.A. can be used, and have been used, to help people with other problems. They are, of course, freely offered to anyone who can use them as an aid to recovery. In general, however, experience has shown that to be effective, A.A. must "stick to its last" — that of helping the alcoholic.

There were also many good answers about the "bossy" person who is seemingly disturbing the group so that newcomers are driven away. Everyone seemed to feel that it should be suggested to the newcomer that "We are in this program to help each other to stay sober, not for likes and dislikes" — that individual sobriety comes first, that it will be to his advantage to overlook the bossy person and to begin the practice of tolerance.

One letter said, "It is up to more sober, quiet, and mature members of the group to approach the bossy one and have a private talk with him. When our group gets one of these 'super men,' the chairman or speakers make a point of discussing 'humility' and kindred subjects at our meetings. One thing we did was to assign such a character to the 'dishes' (washing). He could not refuse (his pride) and understood." To sum up: most answers emphasized a quiet talk with the offender and prayer for ourselves and for him as the best ways to go about handling our own distressed feelings, and to remind ourselves of "Live and Let Live."

MORE ON "KEEP IT SIMPLE"

We have been taken to task for the item in the February Bulletin which referred to Dr. Bob's oft-quoted words, "Keep It Simple." Our informant tells us that these words did not refer to his last talk in Cleveland but came from another source entirely. He quotes from the September, 1948 issue of the "Grapevine." Dr. Bob wrote:

"Alcoholics Anonymous was nurtured in its early days around a kitchen table. Many of our pioneer groups, some of our most restful meetings and best programs have had their origin around that modest piece of furniture with the coffee pot handy on the stove.

"True, we have progressed materially to better furniture and more comfortable surroundings, yet the kitchen table must ever be appropriate for us. It is the perfect symbol of simplicity. In A.A. we have no V.I.P.'s nor have we need of any. Our organization needs no titleholders, nor grandiose buildings. That is by design. Experience has taught us that simplicity is basic in preservation of our personal sobriety and helping those in need.

"Far better it is for us to fully understand the meaning and practice of 'Thou good and faithful servant' than to listen to 'With 60,000 members you should have a 60 stories high administration headquarters in New York with an assortment of trained "ists" to direct your affairs.' We need nothing of the sort. God grant that A.A. may ever stay simple."

We share with our correspondent the fervent hope that A.A. may always retain the simplicity that Dr. Bob emphasized: simplicity of organization, simplicity of program, simplicity in the lives of A.A.'s.

- April 5-7. Twelfth Kentucky State Conference
Phoenix Hotel, Lexington, Kentucky
- April 12-14. A.A. Conference—Convention 1963 at Port Elizabeth
Write: General Service Office, P.O. Box 2134
Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa
- April 13-14. Third Australian Convention
Write: A.A., Box 26, Nedlands, Western Australia
- April 19-21. 10th Indiana State Convention
Hotel Severin, Indianapolis, Indiana
Write: 414 Peoples Bank Building, Indianapolis, Ind.
- April 20. Southeastern New York Convention
Ethical Cultural Society
Write: General Service Conference Committee, P.O. Box 1850
General Post Office, New York 1, N.Y.
- April 20-21. A.A. Convention, England and Wales,
Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate
- April 21. 18th Annual Baltimore, Maryland Banquet
Blue Crest North, 401 Reisterstown Road, Pikesville, Md.
Write: Banquet Committee, 900 Fairmount Ave., Baltimore 4, Md.
- April 27-28. Third Chicago Intergroup Conference
Write: Conference Committee, 3304 N. Osceola Avenue
Chicago 34, Illinois
- April 27-28. Sixth All-Ireland Convention
Great Southern Hotel, Killarney, County Kerry
Write: Cork Group, Basement Flat, 11 Patrick's Hill,
County Kerry, Cork, Ireland
- May 3-5. Eastern Townships Bilingual Conference
New Sherbrooke Hotel, Sherbrooke, Quebec
Write: P.O. Box 434, Sherbrooke, Quebec
- May 10-12. Sixth New Mexico State A.A. Conference
Carrigo Lodge, Ruidoso, New Mexico
Write: P.O. Box 1431, Roswell, New Mexico
- May 17-19. Central New York Area Conference
Arlington Hotel, Binghamton, New York
Write: P.O. Box 5, East Side Station, Binghamton, New York
- May 17-19. Twenty-four Cook Forest Conference
Cooksburg, Pennsylvania
Write: Cook Forest Conference, P.O. Box 265, Verona
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania
- May 18-19. Northern Arizona Regional Conference
Write: Box 445, Sedona, Arizona
- May 18-19. Cochrane-Temiskaming Fourth Annual Conference
Write: Italian Club, 37 Prospect Ave., Kirkland, Ontario
- May 24-26. 12th Annual Tennessee State Convention
Memphis, Tennessee
Write: Chairman, State Convention
324 Dermon Building, Memphis, Tennessee
- May 26-27. Downstate Spring Conference
Orlando Hotel, Decatur, Illinois
- May 31-1. Sixth International Conference—Young People in A.A.
Write: Drawer X, Tryon, North Carolina



THREE NEW A.A. TRUSTEES

The following names have been received as candidates for Regional Trusteeships — that is, Directors of the General Service Board:

<i>Pacific Region</i>	<i>Southwest Region</i>	<i>East Central</i>
Tom C., Oregon	Ed D., Colorado	Al. T., Michigan
Charles R., Idaho	Roy S., Oklahoma	Ed C., Indiana
Jim M., Calif.	Jim P., Arkansas	Howard B., Ohio
Bert W., Arizona	Bill C., New Mexico	Ward M., Illinois
O.C.P., Alaska	Rex H., Utah	
Ben S., Hawaii	Paul M., Kansas	
Jerry M., Washington	Olin L., Texas	

During the General Service Conference in April, the Nominating Committee of the General Service Board and the Conference Committee on Trustees will meet with the Area Delegates of the states involved to select three nominees from these three Regions, using Third Legacy procedures.

The nominating meetings will be held one after the other with all Conference members looking on. Two will be new Trustees and one will be a replacement for Pat C. of Minnesota whose terms as Trustees is expiring.

"OUR CRITICS CAN BE OUR BENEFACTORS"

This is the title of an article appearing in the April "Grapevine." The "Grapevine" comments: "A recent magazine article criticizing certain aspects of A.A. reminds us of the need to review our relationship to medicine, religion and to the world at large."

When the "Grapevine" Editors consulted Bill W. on the matter, he suggested a rereading of relevant portions of "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age" (published in 1957) and "Twelve Concepts for World Service" (published in 1962). The article is composed on excerpts from this material.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO G.S.O.

ALABAMA: Convention Fund Committee	\$500.00
ARIZONA: Bisbee Group	\$ 11.40
Arizona State Convention	\$479.75
NEW YORK: Central New York Area Committee . . .	\$ 15.00
TEXAS: Southeast Texas Conference	\$238.96
ALBERTA: Edmonton 10-Year Breakfast	\$112.00

"Where's your GSR?
...or your secretary?
I wanna be pinned
on the bulletin
board!"

