Which Serves Alcoholics Better—Special ‘Group,’ or ‘Meetings’?

Women alcoholics, young ones, homosexuals, alcoholic priests, doctors, and policemen have sometimes been helped in their early A.A. days by finding some A.A. member whose life situation is similar to their own.

Some A.A. groups established especially for such classes of alcoholics have flourished, and done much good. Wherever they have been successful, however, they have strongly urged their newcomers not to restrict themselves solely to the special group. Beginners are encouraged to attend meetings of regular, non-restrictive A.A. groups also. They are urged to use the special meetings as only a helpful addition to their A.A. experience, never as their entire source of A.A. help.

Here at G.S.O. we get more and more letters about special groups. The purpose behind them is a good one, which all of us can applaud. The intent is to carry the message to more and more alcoholics—especially to those who feel they are “different” from the other alcoholics they usually see at most A.A. meetings.

However, A.A. experience shows that when new members associate only with alcoholics of their own occupation, background, or other special interests, and try to set up A.A. groups composed exclusively of one class of alcoholics, the experiment is practically always a failure.

Maybe in such exclusive special-interest groups alcoholics tend to focus attention away from alcohol (which is “cunning, baffling, and powerful,” remember?) and on to other common interests. Thus alcoholism becomes only a secondary interest of the group, not a primary one.

Certainly many of us sober today remember that when we first came to A.A. we latched onto anything which made our case “different.” We used that as an excuse to drink instead of joining in the recovery program... until more suffering forced us to try it, like everybody else.  (continued on page 2)
About That Directory
You Just Received...

The 1972 A.A. World Directory Part I (U.S.A. and Canada) for your group has just arrived at the address G.S.O. now has for your group.

It is furnished for use by the entire group, and is not meant to be the private property of just one group servant. So please be sure that all members of the group are notified that the new Directory is now available to them.

If any information on your group is incorrect, please send us correct information at once.

SPECIAL GROUPS
(from p. 1)

In the non-exclusive neighborhood A.A. group, which welcomes any alcoholic, maybe it is easier to keep attention centered on alcoholism—partly because this may be about the only thing most of the members have in common.

Surely thousands of us in A.A. have been helped enormously by alcoholics with whom we shared almost nothing except alcoholism.

From this experience grew A.A.‘s Third Tradition, which suggests that the A.A. membership policy is guided better by the principle of inclusiveness than that of exclusiveness.

Any A.A. group that begins to exclude some alcoholics because they are different in some way is of course depriving itself of the experience, strength, and hope of those it excludes.

The only requirement for A.A. membership (that is, membership in an A.A. group) is a desire to stop drinking. Other circumstances—occupation, other health problems, ethnic background, or sexual orientation—are certainly no bars to A.A. membership.

COMING SOON...

Group Information Cards for Part II and for the Hospital and Correctional Institutions directories will be mailed out soon. They must be completed and returned to G.S.O. no later than August 4 if groups are to be correctly listed in those Directories.

Please cooperate by getting your group’s cards in on time. Thank you.

Nonetheless, many members have found that setting up a special meeting (not calling it an A.A. group) for alcoholics of one particular interest may be a beneficial addition to regular A.A. meetings.

In many places, extra meetings for people who have had slips, or for oldtimers, seem to have been worthwhile.

No P.I. COMMITTEE?

In areas where there is no local A.A. Public Information (P.I.) Committee, “it is the [G.S. Conference] delegate’s responsibility to form one in his area with the help of qualified and dedicated A.A. individuals,” the 1972 Conference recommended.

Maybe your delegate is looking for you?

EXHIBIT (from p. 1)

“A.A. In Your Community” pamphlet and collect requests for additional information on A.A.

In March and April alone, 1,575 requests for A.A. literature were received as a result of showing the Exhibit at just five national and scientific meetings.

A small, one-way (non-returnable) table-top version of the new Exhibit is available at $9.50 for regional and state A.A. conventions.

In the last year, our big display was seen at national meetings of the American Medical Association, National Medical Association, American Nurses Association, Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America, American Public Health Association, American Personnel and Guidance Association, National Conference on Social Welfare and the Industrial Health Show.

A new pamphlet describing the Exhibit and how to get it is being prepared. Write G.S.O. for a copy.

CO-FOUNDEES HONORED
BY NEW LEAFLET

Photos and short biographies of A.A.’s two late co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., are included in a small, memorial leaflet, now ready for distribution.

Copies are available from G.S.O. at .05¢ each.
THIRTY DELEGATES WILL REPRESENT WORLD A.A.

Twenty-nine topics are tentatively scheduled for discussion at A.A.'s second World Service Meeting on Oct. 5-7, in New York.

Countries and regions to be represented are Australia, Belgium, Central America, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, North America (U.S. and Canada), Norway, South Africa, South America and Sweden.

Conference sessions will include presentations and workshops, with specific questions being referred to four committees: Agenda-Admissions; Finance; Literature-Publishing, and Policy.

The close of the sessions will be marked by the delegates' attendance at the annual banquet of the New York Intergroup Association.

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN R.

John R., until April our trustee from Western Canada, died at his home in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, May 9.

Stricken in his office the day he and his wife Mercy were to leave for the 1972 General Service Conference (it would have been his last as a regional trustee), John was hospitalized shortly but was at home convalescing when the final attack came.

Elected to the General Service Board in 1969, John had had his last drink in 1955. He served on the Trustees' Literature, Policy and Professional Relations Committees.

NEW GUIDELINES READY

Three new A.A. Guidelines are now available from G.S.O. for any A.A. member who asks for them. They are:

1. For Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field (those who "wear two hats").

2. On Cooperation with Alcoholism Agencies and Facilities, for A.A.'s who want to do volunteer work in non-A.A. alcoholism programs.


SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSED MEETING DISCUSSION IN THE AUGUST GRAPEVINE

Will "A.A. Growth" cost us the intimate, one-to-one relationships that have been so helpful in the past? Not if we begin planning now. Share experience of help received by talking out our personal problems in small gatherings. Discuss ways by which we might preserve these precious relationships.

Most of us accept the spiritual part of our A.A. way of life as something pragmatic, something that works. Read "Comfortable With God" and discuss our understanding of the spiritual as differentiated from "religiosity."

"To Creep Before I Walk" is the story of one who let other life problems get ahead of her number one problem—the first drink. Dis-

(Cont'd. on p. 4)
A. A. Calendar of Events

JULY


AUGUST


18-20 - Creve Couer, Ill. All State Conf. Write: Conf. Chm., Box 20, Creve Couer 61060.


18-20 - Dallas, Tex. First Lone Star Roundup. Write: Lone Star Roundup, 6131 Luther Lane, Room 240, Dallas 75225.


SEPTEMBER


1-3 - North Bend, Ore. Area State Conf. Write: Conv. Chm., Box 783, North Bend 97459.


2-3 - Fairbanks, Alaska. 7th Annu. State Conv. Write: Chm., Box 1764, Anchorage 99510.

2-3 - Penticton, B.C., Can. 7th Annu. Okanagan Valley Roundup. Write: Chm., Box 524, Penticton.

5-10 - Ocean City, Md. 15th Annu. Session By-The-Sea. Write: Session Comm., Box 23, Denton, Md. 21629.


15-17 - Ogden, Utah. A.A. State Service Conf. Write: Chm., Box 1288, Ogden 84401.


29-Oct. 1 - Clinton, Mo. 1972 Western Mo. Conf. Write: Chm., Box 61, Clinton 64735.


OCTOBER

6-8 - Montreal, Que., Can. 14th Bilingual Que. Conf. Write: Conv. Chm., 7210 St. Denis Street, Montreal 327.

6-8 - Sudbury, Ont., Can. 16th Annu. N.E. Area Conf. Write: Comm. Chm., Box 1132 Attlee St., Sudbury.

7 - New York, N.Y. Intergroup Dinner & Dance. Write: Dinner Chm., N.Y. Intergroup Association, 24 E. 22nd St., N.Y.C.


* SPECIAL GIFTS TO G.S.O.

CALIFORNIA

Palm Springs: Desert Roundup...$1,000.00
San Diego: Delegates Report Meeting.......................... 75.00

FLORIDA

Largo: 1st Annu. Suncoast Conv................................ 300.00

INDIANA

Evansville: 1971 Tri-State Conv............................... 233.22

MISSOURI

Springfield: Western Assembly................................. 50.00

NORTH CAROLINA

Bath: Tri-State Roundup........................................... 50.00

OHIO

Niles: Youngstown Area Groups................................ 468.00

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City: National Women’s Conf........................ 100.00

PENNSYLVANIA

Area 11 Banquet.................................................... 50.00

TEXAS

Arlington: 1971 NETA Fall Conv................................. 209.44
Houston: Amusement Comm...................................... 10.00
Houston: S.E. Area Conf.......................................... 250.00
Sonora: Gratitude Supper Party................................ 34.00

WASHINGTON

Districts 7,8,9,10.................................................... 48.48

WISCONSIN

No. Wisc.-Upper Mich. Area Spring Conf........................ 86.27

CANADA

Alberta: Edmonton: Spring Roundup.............................. 250.00

Alberta: Grand Centre: N.E. Roundup.......................... 36.00

B.C.: Caswell: Keremeos Group................................ 50.00

B.C.: Surrey: Fraser Valley Rally (2nd Annu.)................ 150.00

B.C.: Salmon Arm Roundup........................................ 40.00

Sask: District 16..................................................... 190.00

OVERSEAS: Japan

Yokosuka Dry Dock No. 8 Group............................... 50.00

GRAPEVINE (from p. 3)

The First Step and the need to surrender in depth to the concept that we cannot drink. Most of us find that true surrender brings release; with reservations, there remains nagging discomfort.

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Individual, $1.00 per yr.: Group $2.50 for each unit of 10 per yr. (Check should accompany order.) Single copies: 10 each.

Checks payable to A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459 Grand Central Post Office, N.Y.C., N.Y. 10017.