

BOX 4-5-9

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE OF A.A.

Vol. 19 No. 1

February-March 1974

Theme Set, Agenda Shaping Up for 1974 Conference

"Understanding and Cooperation . . . Inside and Outside A.A." will be the theme for the 24th meeting of A.A.'s General Service Conference, U.S. and Canada, at the Hotel Roosevelt, New York City, April 22-27, 1974.

Your area delegate would love to hear how you feel about the theme. What does it mean to you? How and where can we apply it in A.A. life?

Members of the Conference Agenda/Admissions Committee chose the theme from three recommended by the G.S. Board's new subcommittee (of its Policy Committee) on the Conference after its October 28 session.

A rough draft of the approved agenda includes:

1. Presentation-discussion-workshop on A.A.'s relations with professionals in the alcoholism field
2. Presentation-discussion-workshop on relationship of, and cooperation between, local G.S. committees and local central offices or intergroups
3. Presentation-discussion on special-purpose groups
4. Discussion of electoral procedures for regional trustees
5. Election of new G.S. Board trustees from the East Central,

Pacific, Southeast, Eastern Canada, and Western Canada regions

6. Discussion of recommendations of *World Directory* Study Committee
7. Discussion of A.A.'s 40th-year International Convention, to be held in Denver, Colo., July 4-6, 1975
8. One unstructured workshop
9. Discussion topics: (a) Are we placing personalities before principles in planning, programming, and promoting conventions, round-ups, banquets, etc.? (b) Supple-

(continued on p. 4)

NEW IDEAS SPUR GROWTH OF WASHINGTON GROUP

Twelve members turned up for the "first ever" business meeting of a group in the state of Washington. Everyone received the Grapevine article on "Growth" (August 1972), plus excerpts from "The A.A. Group."

The group has now become a healthy, growing one, R. M. writes us. A steering committee has been named; hospitality-committee members welcome newcomers; and the group now gets Grapevines in bulk.

"New ideas are what we need," R. M. says. "I'm an alcoholic full-time, not just from 8:00 to 9:30 at a meeting. Reading others' thoughts or getting a different slant on old problems — that's what nourishes full-time growth, in my opinion."

BOX 4-5-9 TODAY — PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE, GOALS

How can *Box 4-5-9* better serve the needs of our fast-growing Fellowship? This has been the topic of earnest discussions at your General Service Office. From these have emerged the following ideas. Any suggestions you have for putting these aims into practice will be heartily welcomed.

Box 4-5-9 offers perhaps the best means the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada), the World Service Meeting, the Board of Trustees, and the General Service Office have of establishing and maintaining two-way com-

munications with all A.A. groups and members throughout the world.

Box 4-5-9—published in English, French, and Spanish — provides a means of sharing A.A. experience on a worldwide basis, of providing news about A.A. to A.A.'s, of helping to discuss group and area problems, and of determining the group conscience.

With the improvements now under way in editorial, production, and distribution procedures, *Box 4-5-9* has the potential of becoming to Service what the Grapevine is to Recovery — promoting service as a means of individual growth and bringing increased support to the service structure from A.A. members everywhere.

All at G.S.O. convey heartfelt thanks to everyone for sending such beautiful holiday greetings from far and near.

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GENEROUS RESPONSE TO ARCHIVES REQUEST

From as far away as Ireland, and all across North America, A.A. old-timers are responding generously to the call for archival material on A.A.'s earliest days, according to Nell Wing (nonalcoholic), G.S.O. archivist.

Rare photos, tapes, early editions of the first A.A. pamphlets, letters from Bill, and old records on the first 100 A.A. groups have been arriving steadily since the August-September 1973 issue of *Box 4-5-9* called for such historic material. (If contributors wish, G.S.O. has copies made of items sent in, and originals are carefully returned to owners).

Committee Helps

Chaired by trustee George G., an Archives Committee is establishing policy and guidelines for the library. The purpose, the committee decided at its first session, is to keep the record straight, so that myth does not predominate over fact in the history of our Fellowship, and to give A.A. a sense of its own past and the chance to study it.

Also on the committee are the Rev. Lee A. Belford, Ph.D., of New York University; Milton Maxwell, Ph.D., of Rutgers University, who is a nonalcoholic member of the G.S. Board; and Midge M., administrative assistant to the G.S.O. manager.

Nell reports that Bill W.'s personal files have been integrated with the earliest G.S.O. files, and microfilming of these is under way.

Winchester Cathedral and the Big Book

Since about 1100 A.D., Winchester Cathedral (65 miles west of London) has been made famous for many reasons, such as its history and architecture, and by many people, such as pop singers.

In the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," Bill tells of visiting the cathedral when he went "over there" for World War I in 1918. In the adjoining graveyard, Bill took a photo of an old tombstone epitaph which amused him, and brought it back to his bride Lois after the Armistice.

Twenty years later, when Bill began writing our basic A.A. text, he recalled the dramatic irony of that old epitaph, which had almost foretold his own future. On page 1 of the Big Book, that bit of tombstone doggerel appears as Bill reconstructed it from memory in 1938.

Lois herself visited Winchester recently, and brought us the exact wording of the epitaph and some

background material on the tombstone.

Remarkably, Bill's recollection of the verse was almost perfect, as you can check. The epitaph actually reads like this:

*Here sleeps in peace a
Hampshire Grenadier
Who caught his death by
drinking cold small Beer.
Soldiers be wise from his un-
timely fall
And when yere hot drink
Strong or none at all.
An honest Soldier never is
forgot
Whether he die by Musket or
by Pot.*

The tomb is that of Thomas Thetcher, who died in 1764 at the age of 26. The stone was restored in 1781 by officers of the nearby garrison, and either perfectly restored or replaced in 1802 and again in 1966 by the militia.

'INSIDE' MEMBER TWELFTH-STEPS US ALL

"Not many fellows want to hold office in our group," writes Robert S., secretary of a group in the Southwest. "It involves a great deal. . . which tests a man's endurance, temper, adjustment, and tolerance."

Sound familiar? But read on. This letter came from a state prison in response to a *Box 4-5-9* story that appealed for help for a "shrinking group" outside the walls, in New York State.

"Daily pressures build up from day to day," says Robert. "We are housed in two-man cells, so when both men are standing, one can hardly turn around or pass one another. We are told when to bathe, eat, sleep, work, and play. It tests our tolerance.

"We have many more ways to practice the Twelve Steps and Tra-

ditions than you people in the free world. Alcohol is probably not so easy to acquire here as it is on the street, but if a man wants a drink, he can readily get one. This gives us the chance to practice our lives one day at a time without taking that first drink."

After detailing the many chores which prison officials require the A.A. group servants to perform, Robert goes on: "It is indeed very easy to pass on the work to someone else, or make up an excuse not to attend a meeting when things seem unbearable. It takes a serious-minded person with courage to hold his head up and make the best of things, when there is no offer of help. But it takes only one drink to take you to the lowest level of living," Robert reminds us.

"If you all have a drinking problem and are completely serious about this, I'm quite sure you will find a solution," he writes.

CRY IN THE STREET

On a windy day in Wellsville, N.Y., Maynard A. found this handwritten note — evidently from a serviceman — with no envelope, no address:

“Dear mom

“mom why can't you hurry up and get me out of here. mom I just can't take it much longer some things got to give please hurry. mom if you could only get me out of here I'd do any thing I wouldnt drink Ill work real hard. . . .

“I love you all, R —

“P.S. I read this in a A.A.A. Book some drunk wrote it

“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter glass of self pity.

“Thats why I quit drinking I really did”

Surely every A.A. can identify with that cry from the heart blowing down the street. Let's pray together real hard that R — is soon soberly, happily at home in some A.A. group.

CLOSED MEETING TOPICS FROM THE GRAPEVINE

February: Newcomers who think sobriety offers a dreary prospect might read “There Can Be Love and Laughter” (p. 2). Discuss our own feelings at first, how our ideas of fun have changed, what new values have brought us joy. “The Long Crawl to the First Step” (p. 5) describes the spiritual awakening that released one member for sobriety. Share other individual experiences of surrender. “How, Then, Could We Carry Our Message?” (p. 26) sketches the background of our Twelve Traditions — always a topic sure to open new personal insights.

March: Should newcomers avoid emotional entanglements? Read “No Time for Self-Pity” (p. 2).



* *From North Carolina* comes this new explanation of what the initials “G.S.R.” stand for: Gratitude, Service, and Responsibility.

(Aside to newcomers: Ask an old-timer what a general service representative does, and you'll get the idea. Aside to old-timers: If you don't know, shame on you! It's in “A.A. Comes of Age,” “The A.A. Service Manual,” and the pamphlets “The A.A. Group” and “The G.S.R.”).

* *From Coventry, R.I.*, delegate Dorothy G. writes us that the state general service assembly has been holding “schools for service and information,” with all interested members invited. Response is enthusiastic, particularly among G.S.R.'s.

Topics covered so far have included: “Why a Conference?,” “The Three Legacies,” “Responsibilities of a G.S.R.,” “Assembly Structure,” “Responsibility of a G.S. Committee Member.”

Past delegates Swan J. and Joe F. have helped out. Dorothy says results include an “informed assembly, less confusion and controversy, and a deeper interest in A.A. service.”

* *From Jacksonville, Ala.*, delegate Gerald H. writes: “Hope the enclosed maps help you locate cities and groups within the Ala-

How can an oldtimer broaden his outlook? See “Emotional Growth” (p. 26) — and discuss how we cope with human emotions at all stages of our A.A. lives. Three articles (beginning on p. 6) present varying A.A. views on referrals from courts and other agencies. Where do we draw the line between cooperation and affiliation?

G.S.R. Corner

bama-Northwest Florida Area. If not, we'll try to do better. It is always a pleasure, instead of a chore, to be asked by G.S.O. to do something. A feeling of excitement runs through me when I see mail in my box from G.S.O.”

What a nice letter! Thank you!

* *From El Monte, Calif.*, Jeanne K. writes: “Sorry to report — can no longer be our G.S.R., but happy we had an alternate who has been attending all service meetings and is qualified to take over. We've always felt it important to have an active and informed alternate to every group servant, so we were prepared. . . . 'Bye for now.”

Thanks, Jeanne. Other groups might take the tip.

* *From Madison, Wis.*, M. B. K. writes: “I'm sure you get letters of concern, complaint, and dissatisfaction; so I'm writing to say how pleased we are with the way our Southern Wisconsin delegate (Virginia H.) does her job.

“She has given more than a dozen Conference reports, traveled hundreds of miles, and given up every weekend to fulfill her responsibility!

“She continues to attend meetings of her own group. She is a shining example to me. Just wanted you to know we support her efforts and are proud she represents us!”

How nice of you, M. B.! We agree — good delegates are shining examples to us all!

NEW ‘SERVICE MANUAL’ IS NOW READY

The new, updated edition of “The A.A. Service Manual” is now off the press. Priced at \$1.00, it clearly explains the skeleton of A.A.'s structure, and details the Third Legacy of A.A.'s founders to the rest of us — Service.

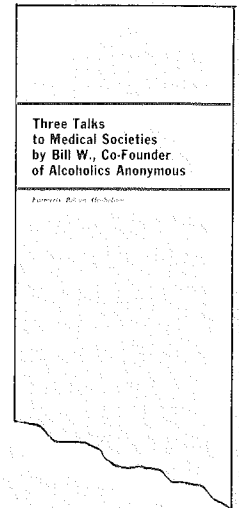
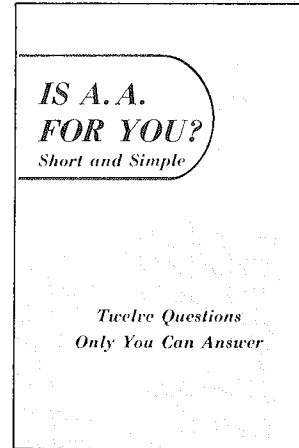
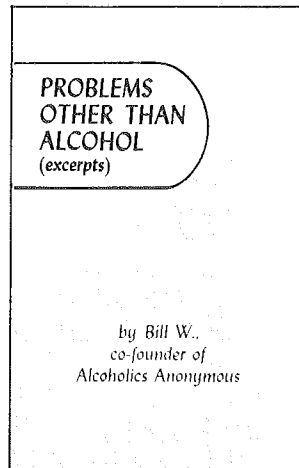
LEAFLET ON DRUG ADDICTS AND A.A.

Now in a new format, the reprint of Bill W.'s Grapevine article "Problems Other Than Alcohol" explains in detail the dilemma of nonalcoholic narcotics addicts in A.A. groups. It offers kind, practical, and short answers to specific questions — and it is free for A.A.'s.

Today, many alcoholics turn up hooked on other drugs in addition to alcohol. Thoughtful and mature A.A. members are anxious to see these sick people get help, but realize that it is the primary bond of *addiction to alcohol* which has traditionally enabled A.A.'s to help each other.

If A.A. members set themselves up as experts on *all* drugs, trouble can result, of course. A.A. members who are not physicians have no more business pushing pills, or opposing properly prescribed medications, than any other unlicensed "doctors."

Reg. C., South Australia, writes: "Nowhere do I see in the Steps and Traditions drugs mentioned. We deal with alcoholism, not [other] drug addiction.



"I've seen ex-servicemen alcoholics in the hospital doing well in the program until somebody at a meeting jumps on them for properly using medication prescribed by the physician for a heart ailment or something else — and all the good work of the program is destroyed," he says.

Reg is right, of course. That is why our pamphlet "Sedatives, Stimulants and the Alcoholic" is limited to describing the actual experience of A.A. members — and why it was prepared by A.A.'s who *are* physicians.

SHORT AND SIMPLE

Know any newcomer still a bit foggy — as most of us once were?

Maybe he or she can appreciate the new leaflet "Is A.A. for You? — Short and Simple." It contains the same 12 questions that "Is A.A. for You?" does, but in a form easier to read. Makes it easier for newcomers to identify. Price: 5¢.

NEW TITLE FOR THREE HISTORIC PAPERS

"Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W., Co-Founder of Alcoholics Anonymous" is the newest title of the pamphlet previously called "Bill on Alcoholism," and before that known as "Alcoholism the Illness."

Included are three historic A.A. papers not available anywhere else. Before the New York State Medical Society (1944), the American Psychiatric Association (1949), and the New York City Medical Society on Alcoholism (1958), Bill gave his basic concepts of how A.A. works, the principles borrowed from medicine and religion, and a summary of A.A. progress in its first 23 years.

In addition, various well-known doctors' comments are included. All this for 20¢.

A.A. RECIPE

This strikes us as good for an "A.A. Loving Cup" any day of the year:

- 1 gal. open-mindedness
- 2 qts. willingness
- 1 pt. understanding
- 6 C responsibility
- 2 qts. gratitude
- 1 C judgment
- 1 C tact
- Dash of intelligence

"Combine ingredients, serve with large dollop of love flavored with faith. This, like yeast, will grow and improve if kept warm and active. But to increase, it must be shared with others." — Coney J., San Marcos, Calif.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

(continued from p. 1)

mentary Guidelines for "The A.A. Service Manual."

All A.A.'s are urged to convey to their Conference delegates their opinions and experience on all the above, and to suggest other questions suitable for Conference committee consideration or Ask-It-Basket.

Ninety-one U.S. and Canada delegates will join G.S. Board trustees and A.A.W.S. and Grapevine directors and staff members for the six-day annual session, which traditionally voices the collective group conscience of the entire Fellowship in the two countries on matters of movement-wide concern.

(my)



THE BULLETIN BOARD

February-March 1974

ITEMS AND IDEAS ON AREA A.A. GATHERINGS - VIA G.S.O.

HIGHLIGHTS - PLEASE ANNOUNCE TO GROUP

DEAR G.S.R. OR SECRETARY:

Please share with other members of your group the experience, strength, and hope in this issue of Box 4-5-9. It takes just a moment to tell the meeting the group's new Box 4-5-9 has arrived, and to sketch its contents:

* **After 34 years**, an "error" on page 1 of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" has just been discovered! See "Winchester Cathedral" story, p. 2.

* **Theme for the 1974 General Service Conference** in New York is set, and agenda are shaping up. We want to hear from every group on these (see p. 1).

* **From now on, your A.A.**

Calendar of conventions and conferences will be on this separate loose sheet - for posting on your group bulletin board where all can see. **There's good news here** for program chairpersons, too.

* **More changes** are coming up in *Box 4-5-9*. See story on page 1, and let us hear from you.

* **"G.S.R. Corner"** lets you in on some good A.A. experiences across the country (p. 3). Does *your* group have something good to share with the rest of the Fellowship?

* **New A.A. publications** - four are discussed on pp. 3, 4 in this issue. Does your group make *all* Conference-approved literature available to all members?

ABOUT THOSE TRUSTEES YOU MEET AT A.A. CONVENTIONS

Many A.A. members first learn about, and meet, our Fellowship's trustees (members of the General Service Board) at state, regional, or local area A.A. conventions and get-togethers. So "What is an A.A. trustee?" is a natural question on such occasions.

One former trustee answered the question this way. A not-quite-dry-yet newcomer once asked him, "What does it mean, that you're an A.A. trusty?" The trustee decided a discourse on structural elements of A.A.'s Third Legacy would hardly penetrate. So he said, "It means I can go out without my sponsor!"

This satisfied the newcomer, and it also conveyed a very significant truth about our G.S. Board members. In a sense, they truly

are "trustees" - A.A. servants we trust, just as we trust group steering-committee members, Conference delegates, and each other.

Our first trustees (three nonalcoholics, two A.A.'s) began their service in 1938, when the Big Book was being readied for publication. To make sure the expenses and profits - if any - were properly handled, the Alcoholic Foundation was established to own the book and operate G.S.O. Later, its name was changed to the General Service Board of A.A. Since 1966, it has been composed of 14 A.A.'s and seven distinguished nonalcoholics.

How are they chosen? What are their qualifications? What do they do? All these questions are answered in detail in "The A.A. Service Manual" (see p. 87).

WE NEED ANSWERS ON RAFFLES

For years, many A.A. groups have raffled off a copy of the Big Book (or other A.A. books) at each meeting, usually selling raffle tickets at the door for 25¢ each, and giving free tickets to newcomers or visitors.

This has never created any problems as far as we know, but has carried the message to lots of alcoholics and also made some small income for many a group's expenses.

But now, we hear, at some A.A. conventions, raffles are being held at which prizes are TV sets, toasters, trips abroad, etc. Tickets are sold to the general public.

What do A.A. members think of this? Is it in keeping with A.A.'s primary purpose? Within the spirit of our other Traditions?

Please let us know what *you* think. Thanks.

FOR BROADCAST - AND FOR PROGRAM COMMITTEES

New color-TV spots on A.A. (30- and 60-second) can be borrowed *free* from G.S.O. for conventions in the U.S. and Canada, if we get requests far enough in advance. You need a 16-mm projector and a screen.

To buy these spots for local TV stations, prices range from \$25 to \$10 each, depending on quantity and length. See Item P-38 on the A.A. Conference-Approved Literature Order Form of Fall 1973.

