Celebrating Holidays the A.A. Way

When Joe raised his hand at a discussion meeting last week, the leader called on him.

"I'm a new member," Joe said, "as you all know—sober only a few months."

"Although I try to stick to the 24-hour plan, I keep wondering about my birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve. In the past I always drank myself stupid. What do A.A.'s do about the holidays?"

A cheerful murmur of recognition arose in the room, and at least a dozen folks who had faced the very same problem raised their hands.

Joe made a list of all their suggestions and experience. He shared it with us so we can share it with you. Here 'tis:

1. Holiday Alkathons. Round-the-clock sessions co-sponsored by several groups, alternating various kinds of A.A. meetings with refreshments and sometimes entertainment. Everybody welcome to drop in. Some groups keep a buffet loaded with holiday food.

2. Plan extra-meetings. Visit groups you've never seen.

3. Take someone newer than you are to each meeting you attend, and speak first to a stranger at each group.

4. Accept an extra A.A. chore or two—telephone duty, dishwashing, leading or speaking at a meeting, or visiting alcoholics in a hospital or a jail.

5. Try to remember it is more important to give time, love and kind thoughts than it is to give lavish presents.

6. Twelfth Step work.

7. Don't work up holiday worries in advance. Remember: "One Day (or Hour) at a Time."

8. Don't get too tired or too hungry, and try not to be alone. Go where other A.A.'s are.

9. Carry the Grapevine and an A.A. pamphlet with you to read at odd moments.

10. Avoid any drinking occasions you are nervous about. (Use some of those excuses you used to use, remember?)

But if you have to go, eat first; arrive late; keep candy handy; drink a sweet soft drink; and make some excuse to leave early. If possible, take an A.A. member with you.

11. Keep your A.A. telephone list with you at all times. If you think of drinking—or just get uptight—postpone everything else until you've called another A.A. with Holiday Greetings.


13. It may be a good time to catch up on reading and letter writing.

14. Go to a funny movie—or at least do something that is fun. You deserve it!
SERVING A PURPOSE?

New Kinds of Groups

Many good results—and a few problems—have come from some new kinds of A.A. groups and meetings tried out the last few years.

Maybe one of these could produce a new burst of A.A. activity in your community and help us all find ways to make meetings more interesting.

For example, one A.A. experimenter writes: "Surely we can add new things to our present A.A. life without abandoning wonderful tried-and-proved old ways, can't we?"

Bill R. writes us about the "Survivors" group in Fresno, California, where oldtimers "openly discuss their character defects and what to do about them." Bill says it has been a "wonderful spiritual experience for a lot of us, but not too popular with others."

Question: How do you limit sessions to oldtimers, without excluding newcomers, since by tradition, A.A. is open to anyone who wants it?

Flourishing here on the East Coast, we hear, are new Big Book groups, devoted to the study of "Alcoholics Anonymous."

If you know of other new kinds of groups, please write us so we can share it with the rest of A.A.

THE LINK OF FELLOWSHIP

The map of Southwest Asia shows a wee country called Kuwait, on the Persian Gulf. It is squeezed in between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and its capital has the same name as the country.

There you will find one of our Loners, Gerry, with whom we have been in touch since 1968. Gerry has been in Nigeria and Dahomey in Africa and still corresponds with Fraser, now in the Congo, whom he met in Lagos. We were able to put Gerry and Fraser in touch with other A.A.'s who were nearby, in the hopes that a group would result, but new assignments set them traveling again, and they're still going it alone and trying to carry the message to others, even if it's only through letters.

If you've ever read Loners Meeting, you'll see why one member said, "Loners may get to talk A.A. less, but maybe they think it more—and more deeply—than we gabbbers do."

Sample from Kinshasa (Fraser) to Kuwait (Gerry): "We're a long way apart, and most likely will never meet, but somehow I don't feel that I will be alone anymore. It's great to know you are there and making a go of it..."

"The main thing is that I have not had a drink and do not think of that as a solution, and the only way I manage to do it is by the help of people like yourself. So keep rooting for me, my good friend."

Now Gerry is moving to Dubia on the other end of the Gulf, but not before making contact with a new arrival in Kuwait, Tony, and so the chain of fellowship is forged and stretches round our A.A. world.

ADD TO ROTATED STAFF ASSIGNMENTS:

Until further notice, Hazel R., will be serving as acting secretary to the Board's Literature Committee.

DRUGS OR ANONYMITY TROUBLE YOUR GROUP?

"The very best!" said everyone who recently re-read two Grapevine reprints:


They seem even more timely today than ever. So they are being made available from G.S.O. in leaflet form, nominally priced.

WE LOVE VISITORS!

"Thank you sincerely," reads a letter from One Slip Road, G----, N.H., "for your hospitality when I visited Park Avenue South. I returned home with warm praise for the G.S.O. family and a broader understanding of service."

We love such letters, but even more, we loved greeting the 784 visiting A.A.'s who turned up last year from North America and 15 other A.A. lands.

When you are in New York, do come see your new quarters at 468 Park Avenue South.

See the trophy (Lasker Award) and manuscript displays; meet the faces behind the names you have corresponded with.

See where your literature comes from; and let us get to know you!
EL SALVADOR INCREASES LITERATURE OUTPUT

A.A.'s in El Salvador have had their own “Oficina de Servicios Generales” since 1969 to serve their own groups.

Literature available (in Spanish, of course): “This is A.A.,” “Is A.A. for You?,” “A.A. in Your Community,” “The A.A. Group,” “44 Questions and Answers,” and “The Twelve Steps,” plus the Big Book.

Publication is by arrangement with A.A. World Services, Inc., publishing arm of the North American General Service Board, New York, which helped the Salvador office get started.


The “Oficina” distributes a bi-monthly bulletin to El Salvador’s 353 groups.

At present the Salvador office is staffed largely by volunteers. It’s address is: Apartado 132, San Salvador, El Salvador.

Mexico City and Medellin, Colombia, also have General Service Boards and offices and both print and distribute Conference-approved A.A. literature.

Directory Deadline: Please Help!

Remember when you needed help with your drinking problem, but didn’t know where to turn?

What if you telephoned or wrote us, and we told you there was no A.A. in your community?

THAT can easily happen to a sick alcoholic in your own block... . . . If your group does not send in correct, up-to-date Information Cards for the 1971 World Directory (Part I: U.S. and Canada).

The lives of traveling A.A.’s of ten depend on Directory accuracy, too. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT!

It’s the only thing that keeps us all in touch!

NEWS OF BILL

Though not well enough to come to New York, Bill is up and around on most days. He goes out of the house for short walks and has gone out to lunch and dinner as well.

His emphysema continues to be troublesome, and we would think that his activities will have to be strictly limited for a considerable time. At the request of his doctors, Bill is not going to be able to autograph any books or pictures for the time being.

We will continue to keep you posted on his condition, as we are in daily telephone communication with both Bill and Lois.

N.Y. SPANISH GROUPS GET TOGETHER

When A.A. groups work together, great things get done.

Latest example of this in our mail is UNIDAD new Spanish-language bulletin by and for members of 16 Spanish-speaking groups in New York (U.S. has 55, Puerto Rico, 35).

It tells of two new groups and a weekly Spanish radio program about A.A.

A.A. TRUSTEES: 1 AT-LARGE, SIX REGIONAL, 1 GEN. SERV.

The last Box 4-5-9 carried news about the fact that six A.A. trustees are to be elected next spring. Vacancies to be filled next April are those for the Canadian “at large” trusteeship, plus the following five regions:

1. Eastern Canada (Atlantic Provinces, Ont. and Que.);
2. East Central U.S. (Ill., Ind., Mich. and Ohio);
4. Southeast U.S. (Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Miss., N.C., Puerto Rico, S.C., Tenn., Va., and W. Va.); and

Convention Bids for 1975

Cities wanting to play host to A.A.’s 40th Anniversary International Convention (July 4-6, 1975) are to submit formal bids to the G.S. Board no later than Jan. 20, 1971, through the delegates from their area.

North American Conference delegates have been asked to submit bids for the Trustees’ review at their Jan., 1971, meeting and subsequent presentation to the Conference in April.

The Conference’s “Site Committee” will choose three possibilities to be visited by the Convention Chairman before the Board’s final selection.

We’re delighted so many cities have shown interest. Bid questionnaires should be completed in consultation with Convention bureaus and hotels before the Jan. 20, 1971, deadline.
A.A. CALENDAR

NOVEMBER


DECEMBER


JANUARY

22–24  – Ocean Springs, Miss., Gulf Coast Round-up. Write: Chm., Box 845, Ocean Springs.

FEBRUARY


MARCH

5–7  – Santa Maria, Ca., 4th Annu. Pacific Region Service Assem. Write: Chm., 3790 Hadley Way, Santa Maria, or 4th Annu. Pacific Region Service Assembly, Holiday Inn, 1407 E. Ocean St., Santa Maria.

TAPE-LENDING LIBRARY FOR HOSPITAL GROUPS

Five first-person stories taped by alcoholics, some of whom found A.A. in hospitals, will be available by December 15 at G.S.O. for borrowing by A.A. groups in hospitals – free.

This new institutions tape library consists of 10 sets to be loaned on a first-come, first-served basis.

ANOTHER BEQUEST DECLINED

A bequest of $5,000.00 to “National Alcoholics Anonymous” was recently declined.

Since 1945, our G.S. Board has turned down such gifts totaling many thousands of dollars.

At the request of the G.S. Conference, however, the Board accepts a contribution of not more than $200 in any one year from an A.A. member, or a similar single bequest in the will of a member.

No gift from a non-A.A. source is ever accepted, however, in accordance with our 7th Tradition (self-support).

SPECIAL GIFTS TO G.S.O.

CALIFORNIA
Santa Maria: 3rd Annu. 22nd Dist. Conf. .............................................................. $ 200.00

IOWA
17th Waubonsie Park Picnic ................................................................. 10.00

MICHIGAN
Cen. Mich. Inter Areas Council of A.A. ................................................. 77.50
17th State Conf. .............................................................................. 354.49

MISSISSIPPI
State Convention ................................................................. 100.00

MISSOURI
East Mo. Conf. ............................................................................. 73.50

NEBRASKA
Omaha: Intergroup Dinner ............................................................. 18.90

NEVADA
State Conference ........................................................................... 100.00

CANADA
B.C.: Penticton, Okanagan Valley Round-up .................................. 112.12
Manitoba: No. Man. Round-up ...................................................... 121.25
Ontario: Toronto Men’s Meeting ................................................... 32.01
Sask.: Saskatoon Intergroup Round-up ........................................ 80.24
Sask.: Saskatoon New Year Eve Dance ......................................... 64.73

HOLIDAY GRAPEVINES

DEC. ISSUE: Santa Claus takes umbrage at a December, 1969 article suggesting he might have a problem, and he writes the Grapevine a nasty letter.

Other Christmas articles relate personal experiences of A.A.’s in the festive season, and point the way to the true meaning of Christmas.

“Helping People Is a Ticklish Business” by Alan Keith-Lucas was received with tremendous interest and enthusiasm when it was first published in the GV in June, 1962. Because of continuing requests, we are reprinting this thought-provoking article.


HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Individual, $1.00 per yr.; Group, $2.50 for each unit of 10 per yr. (Check should accompany order.) Checks payable to A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Post Office, N.Y.C., N.Y. 10017.