



AA EXCHANGE BULLETIN

NEWS AND NOTES ON ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLDWIDE

VOLUME I Published by General Service Headquarters of A.A., P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17 NUMBER 3

Groups Respond To Birthday Plan In Many Areas

The May "Grapevine" article on the A.A. Birthday Plan as a device for developing increased support for worldwide Twelfth Step work struck a responsive chord with many members and in many groups.

Here are a few excerpts from mail received at Headquarters since the article appeared:

"We hope to adopt the Plan for the coming year. Membership numbers only 30 but quite a few have several years' sobriety. It is a wonderful plan." (San Angelo, Texas)

"We've started our plan. Enclosed find check for \$20 from four of us." (Group #10, Milwaukee, Wis.)

"The enclosed two dollars is a birthday contribution from Bob W. It isn't a lot but sometimes a little bit makes the difference." (Thursday Night Group, Oklahoma City)

"The Birthday Plan article certainly rang a bell with me. Enclosed find my token check in remembrance. With God's help on the 24-hour basis, may they continue annually!" (Andy A., Evanston, Illinois)

"Here is the result of the Birthday Plan tried out at the Fifth Anniversary meeting of our Group. Of the 78 present, at least half had less than one year in A.A. and many were very, very new. Two had more than ten years' sobriety. I enclose check for \$59 which was
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A.A. WORKSHOP

The first "Workshop" on institutional A.A. to be sponsored by A.A. committees and interested agencies in New York and New Jersey was held in Newark, N. J. June 15-16-17.

Headquarters Briefs

BEST WISHES TO MARIAN

Marian Fiske, known to many hundreds of A.A.'s throughout the country as one of the senior members at General Service Headquarters, has resigned to devote full time to her home. We know all her friends join A.A.s at Headquarters in wishing Marian all best wishes. We will really miss her.

OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER

Anita Ryan, a member of the Jackson Heights (N.Y.C.) Group joined the Staff in mid-June. Anita is a registered nurse and has been medical secretary to a local doctor. We know you will look forward to meeting her.

OUR NEW ASSIGNMENTS

We follow the basic A.A principle of rotation at Headquarters, too. Here is the way staff members' service responsibilities stack up following the rotation of assignments that takes effect July 1:

- Ann MacFarlane Conference Secretary; Groups, Loners in Asia, Africa, Europe, Central and South America; Internationalists.
- Eve Marsh Group Relations.
- Hazel Rice Hospital and Prison Groups; Groups and Loners in United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.
- Anita Ryan General Inquiries and Assistance with Group Relations.
- Lib Symington Public Information Service, Senior Staff Member.

CORRESPONDENCE ANONYMOUS

When using mailing addresses from the Group Directory for A.A. purposes, *please* do not use the words "Alcoholics Anonymous" or the initials "A. A." on any envelope, wrapper or postal card to identify either the addressee or the addressor.

Many A.A. members receive group mail at home or businesses addresses. Several members have written to us recently to say that they have been embarrassed by receiving readily-identifiable A.A. mail at their home addresses.

CHECK YOUR CHECKS

Just a reminder on book prices: Groups can order the new revised edition of the Big Book for \$4.00 a copy and "The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" for \$2.50 each.

Have a wonderful vacation.

Please Pass Mail To Your Groups, GSH Staff Urges

The problem of maintaining effective lines of communication between General Service Headquarters and local groups is gradually working out, according to Headquarters staff members, but a number of serious "kinks" still have to be unraveled.

In a number of groups a serious breakdown in communications occurs when the group's General Service Representative fails to pass along the material he receives from Headquarters.

It was emphasized that the G. S.R., duly selected by the group, is the only person listed to receive Headquarters bulletins and other service material. If the G. S.R. fails to pass pertinent material along to the group secretary, the group remains completely out of touch with A.A. worldwide. The secretary does *not* receive duplicate copies of Headquarters material.

This breakdown in communication is particularly serious when a G.S.R. fails to turn such items as the annual "A.A. Handbook & Directory" or the "A. A. Exchange Bulletin" over to the secretary. All material of this type should be transmitted promptly, Headquarters staff members point out.

A number of complaints have been received at Headquarters from groups who felt that they had been overlooked in the distribution of A.A. mail.

68 NEW GROUPS

A total of 68 new groups, exclusive of institutional units, and eleven new Loners were registered with G. S. H. during the period from May 16 to June 14, 1956.

INSTITUTIONAL

Folsom Sets Up Seven-Man Unit On Improvement

New Groups

Essex County
House of Correction
Salem, Mass.
Franklin County Jail
Chambersburg, Penna.
Ultima Copa Group
District Jail
Ponce, Puerto Rico
Seguaro Group
Federal Prison Camp
Florence, Arizona
Women's Prison
Raleigh, North Carolina
Cotton Wood Grove
State Farm
Bismarck, N. Dakota

The Folsom Fellowship in California State Prison, Represa, Calif., has elected a seven-man "Improvement Committee" to work out ways of strengthening all phases of the A.A. program in that institution. The annual Conference at Folsom in May was "a decided success, to say the least," according to Charles M., secretary.

"You have a terrific program," Rev. A. Garland Rotenberry, chaplain at Minnesota State Prison, told inmate A.A.s in a special June article in "The Prison Mirror," institutional publication. The article, entitled "Step Five is a Part of The Twelve Steps," suggested that "until a man takes this Step (the fifth), he cannot receive the full benefits that A.A. has to offer the alcoholic."

Inmate groups are now active in both the Provincial Gaol and the Federal Penitentiary in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada, Bill S. reports. Bill works with the Gaol group. George S. helps the Nor-Kel group at the Federal prison.

About 45 inmates are attending meetings of the Hill Top Group at the Vandalia (Illinois) State Farm, William F. reports. The total "farm" population is approximately 1,500 to 1,800 men. William has made the 154-mile round-trip from Decatur to Vandalia for Wednesday night meetings for three years without a break.

'End-of-Line' Group Is Starting Point Of New Life for Ex-Inmate A. A.s

"Some of our members have spent as much as 25 and 29 years behind bars. They are now living happy, sober, useful, honest, free lives and are helping so very many others."

That's Clint W.'s capsule description of the unique "End-of-the-Line" Group in Los Angeles, a group composed almost exclusively of ex-convicts who have found sobriety and a new way of life in A.A. Clint him-

self is a three-time loser and a 15-year "inside" man.

Between 70 and 80 persons attend the group's meeting every Sunday night.

"We are well named the 'End-of-the-Line' Group," Clint says. "Most of us went all the way to the end of the line indeed. There is no better, no more sincere, no more active A.A. group in existence. We've gotta live A.A. all the way and, brother, we know it."

'Unbelievable,' Attorney Says

Alcoholics Anonymous does an "unbelievable job," in helping alcoholic prisoners, Mr. Reed Cozart, pardons attorney of the U. S. Department of Justice, told the 169th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Prison Society recently.

Before studying the A.A. program in penal institutions, he had been skeptical of its success, Mr. Cozart said. "But what these men brought to the alcoholic prisoner was just beyond belief," he emphasized.

The Finley-Greene Group at Glades State Prison Farm, Belle Glade, Florida, invited members of surrounding groups to attend the Group's second anniversary June 30th.

The Ontario (Canada) Committee is providing 336 speakers a year for prison group meetings, Jack H. writes. Speakers are selected from a large area, with increasing emphasis on men from smaller communities since it has been noted that many of the inmates themselves are from relatively small centers.

The Nor-Kel Prison Group, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada, now has a membership of 25, Ray H., secretary reports.

ANNIVERSARIES

15 Years
Alano Club
Alano Club Family Group
San Jose, Calif. (6/16)
10 Years
Bronxville, N. Y. (5/23)
Golden Gate Group

Love Is The Key In A. A. Drama

Correspondence received at G. S.H. tells, or suggests, many dramatic "true life" stories. One of the most stirring was contained in the brief paragraph of a letter from an inmate group secretary:

"Our guest speaker was Mrs. Mary S. from Charlotte N.C. She told the most wonderful story I have ever heard. For the man that killed her father is also a prisoner. Yet she still has love enough for alcoholic prisoners to visit us and tell us of the wonders of A.A. and its wonderful fellowship."

Nearly 200 men and women from Alabama groups attended an inspiring three-and-a-half hour meeting at Kilby Prison, near Montgomery, on a recent Sunday. It marked the first time such an event had been staged at Kilby and was "a soul-stirring sight," according to Jo D. of Mobile who attended as a guest.

The group now has more than 100 members, according to Oscar U., secretary.

The first showing of the new A.A. display requested by the General Service Conference was at the Western meeting of the American Public Health Association at Salt Lake City the latter part of May. The display is designed solely for use at meetings of professional groups in the field of medicine, penology and public welfare.

Directory Errors On Contributions Are Corrected

Our thanks to correspondents who have noted the following corrections for the 1956 "Handbook & Directory:"

AMESBURY, MASS.—\$20 credited to the Merrimac Valley Group should be credited to the Merrimac Valley Intergroup of Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN—\$25 credited to Group No. 17 (Study Group) should be credited to Group No. 19.

WHITEHORSE, YUKON—\$10 credited to the group in Whitehorse should be credited to Loner in Whitehorse.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY—\$40 credited to South Louisville Group should be credited to Central Office.

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA—\$90 contribution credited to the Alano Club should be credited to the Area Group in South Bend, making their contribution for 1955 \$180 last year.

INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA—\$28 credited to the Inglewood Group should be credited to the Inglewood Beginners' Group.

SEATTLE, WASH.—\$149 contribution inadvertently omitted.

BIRTHDAY PLAN

(Continued from Page 1)

the amount of the collection. We think this very good, since the Plan is entirely new in our area."

The Birthday Plan originated in Oklahoma, at the suggestion of a former Delegate to the General Service Conference, and has since spread to many A.A. areas.

Those who adopt the Plan contribute one dollar for every year of sobriety, up to a maximum of \$10., on the anniversary of their becoming a member.

An interesting example of a local group budget designed to assure continuing support of both Intergroup and General Service Headquarters activities has been submitted to G.S.H. by a member of the K. H. Group, Toledo, Ohio. With an average attendance of about 25 and an average collection of not much more than \$1., the group automatically sets aside \$1 per week for G.S.H., for a total annual contribution of \$52.

"There can't be many groups who can't afford a buck a week for A.A.'s world services," our Toledo correspondent writes.

HOSPITALS

Hudson River State Hospital Starts Group

New Groups

V. A. Hospital
Albany, N. Y.
State Hospital
Austin, Texas
Saskatchewan Hospital
North Battleford
Saskatchewan, Canada
Hudson River State
Hospital
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.
Repatriation General
Hospital
Springbank, S. Australia

The first meeting of an A.A. group at Hudson River State Hospital, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., was held the evening of June 2nd, Dr. O. A. Kilpatrick, Director, has announced.

Interestingly, Dr. Kilpatrick was one of the speakers on A.A. in institutions at the St. Louis convention last July.

The Vaca Valley T. B. Group, Vacaville, California, now has about 15 inmate members, Walter H. reports. Three to five members of the "general" prison population attend meetings regularly. Total membership at the Vacaville Medical Facility is about 235, Paul R. writes G.S.H.

"It seems marvelous to me to see speakers from Ottawa, which is 100 miles away, come all that distance to carry the message to a few people," Ross A., secretary of the Ontario Park Group, Kingston, Ontario, reports.

His group continues to have four to eight members "but I don't expect it to be larger since most of the members are in for only 60 days."

Chaplain Ralph G. Saxe, sponsor of the V. A. Hospital Group at Canandaigua, New York, recently released the second number of a mimeographed newsletter on A.A. activities. During the past six months 26 members have left the hospital and only one has been returned to date.

GRATITUDE

The Sixth General Service Conference has asked Service Headquarters to designate next Thanksgiving Week as "A.A. Gratitude Week" when the Fall reminder on 1956 contributions is mailed out. More about this in future issues.

Nurses Invited To Participate

Members of the nursing staff of Essondale Hospital, Vancouver, British Columbia, are being invited to attend A.A. meetings at the Hospital and are taking an increasingly active interest in the A.A. program, Jim L. writes.

The Patient Group at the V. A. Hospital, San Fernando, California, recently celebrated its third anniversary, Kermit W., secretary, notes.

Between 25 and 30 people attend the regular Saturday night meetings at Ypsilanti (Michigan) State Hospital, according to Edgar C., group secretary.

Group #20 at Norfolk (Mass.) Prison now contains about 4 regulars, with another 50 inmates "who attend when they feel like it," Joe G., secretary, informs G.S.H.

"We are going into our ninth year as a group and all our meetings are held exactly the same as those on the outside, for it has been passed on to us by those who led the way that this is the best course."

There are now 75 members in two groups at Manitoba Penitentiary, Stony Mountain, Manitoba, Canada, according to Chaplain G. W. McNeill, A.A. sponsor.

"I am more than pleased with the progress we have made over the past six years. Numerous ex-inmate members are now holding responsible positions and living happy and normal lives, thanks to A.A.," Rev. McNeill writes.

Problem of Defining 'Self Support' Is Raised By Query from Local Area

Here are a few of the typical problems and questions referred to General Service Headquarters recently. The answers or suggested solutions are based on group experience recorded in G. S. H. files.

Q. Our Central Office, in a recent report, listed contributions from two Family Groups and also lists "Twelfth Step calls" handled by Family Group members. I fully appreciate the good work done by the Family Group movement but feel that mixing A.A. and the Family Groups in this way breaches several of our Traditions. Are the practices outlined above really deviations from Tradition?

A. "Self-support" is certainly one of our basic Traditions. At G.S.H., when contributions are received from Family Groups, we express our appreciation in a special letter but always return the contribution. However there may be danger in being too "rigid" about "outside" contributions at the group level. Non-A.A.s obviously contribute to meeting collections, part of which generally goes to G.S.H. or to support local Central Offices.

Perhaps the problems might be resolved by discussing the full significance of the Tradition of "self-support" with the people in charge of the Central Office involved. It is our experience that many misunderstandings arise (and continue to exist) in some areas through a failure on the part of those who hold varying viewpoints to seek mutually acceptable interpretations of A.A. Tradition as it applies to a specific situation.

(Editor's Note: Within the space of a month we recently received two letters dealing with the problem of the A.A. member who continues to be identified with the illegal sale of alcohol. In each case, a majority of a group was seriously disturbed by the situation and wondered what could be done. For purposes of brevity, the answers to these two unusual inquiries have been summarized in a single reply.)

A. In the section, "Who is A Member of Alcoholics Anonymous?" of the pamphlet on A. A. Tradition there appears the following paragraph:

"So it is that few of us are any longer afraid of what any newcomers can do to our A. A. reputation or effectiveness. Those who slip, those who panhandle, those who scandalize, those with mental twists, those who rebel at the program, those who trade on the A.A. reputation—all such persons seldom harm an A.A. group for long. Some of these have become our most respected and best loved. Some have remained to try our patience, sober nevertheless. Others have drifted away. We have begun to regard these not as menaces, but rather as our teachers. They oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance and humility."

Actually, anyone who claims membership is within his rights when he says that his personal affairs are not the concern of the group. If, however, his activities and his clear identification with A.A. (as in the case of the bootlegger who had his customers get in touch with him at a meeting) tend to harm the group or A.A. as a whole, the group may well wish to consider the problem at a business meeting. If it is the sense of the meeting that such a person is harming A.A. by violating the anonymity of others, he might be asked to avoid meetings until the situation can be cleared up.

Whether such a suggestion will be followed is another problem, for as A.A. has Traditionally emphasized, any one is a member who says he is and shares our common objectives.

SERENITY

If you can't sell 'em, join 'em?

Service Headquarters has just received an order for 100 copies of the A. A. Serenity Prayer from the Brewers Association of one of the larger Canadian provinces.

Loner To Move, Hopes A. A. Stays In Resolute Bay

Slim S., a Loner in Resolute Bay, North West Territory, Canada, hopes to leave the seeds of A.A. behind him when he moves out of the Territory this month. He's working on two "pigeons," and thinks that at least one of them really wants the program.

From Joseph B., Liverpool, England, comes a beautiful letter describing what A.A. has meant for the past six years to an invalid who has made A.A. his "creed," even though he is unable to go to meetings. Members of the Liverpool group have been most helpful, Joseph writes.

"I am getting more sure of my sobriety," Pedro M., a Loner of Curacao, reports. "The only thing that is getting on my nerves sometimes is that, no matter how hard I try to help others here, no one will 'click' with me, even though I know and see that the other fellow is killing himself drinking. Some day I hope you will hear that I have helped some one; that will be my happiest day."

Hugh S., Truro, Nova Scotia, is a travelling salesman with a special problem. He is an A.A. member in a town with a local group but is rarely able to get to meetings there. So he has solved his problem by registering as a loner—and attending more than the average number of meetings in the course of his travels.

Good news from 'way up North. Woody W. writes to say that the Arctic Lights Group in "sunny Southern Greenland" is being reactivated with "two-and-a-half members!" Hope the "half-member" has made that crucial decision by now!

Overseas News from A to V Covers Argentina to Venezuela & Elsewhere

During the past month the Overseas mail bag has brought us news of A. A. group activity in Nicaragua, South Africa, the Netherlands, Venezuela, Argentina and Puerto Rico.

The group in Leon, Nicaragua, now numbers six and "if we click," expects soon to have eight, according to Jack M. The group meets in the Dominican Fathers' Library.

In Buenos Aires, Hector G. writes, the local group is progressing slowly. "I had expected a substantial increase in members after the political situation got straightened out, as we are now completely free to have meetings without interference from the police authorities which, as you know, was a serious handicap during the former government.

"The number of members is about the same. We have several newcomers but some of the older members are no longer with us. Those who do come to meetings regularly are really united and very much at home with each other so I feel that we now have the material ready to 'spread out' a bit."

The San Juan, Puerto Rico, group reports that it is meeting the need for additional pamphlet literature in Spanish by translating and mimeographing material for distribution to various groups in the island.

"How great is Life as I know

it now," writes J. E. Van Der W. of Ijmuiden, Holland. "My friends and relations are wondering how I am so sober the last few months. They cannot believe their eyes when they see me walking with my wife and kids, happy and with a broad big smile on our faces. We did not smile in the last 15 years. I am reborn and the rest of the family is, too!"

The first open meeting in Ijmuiden was held on April 27th in a meeting room made available through the interest of the mayor of the town.

Margaret G. writes from Caracas, Venezuela, to say that the local group includes "eight very sincere members," including the first woman member. "Needless to say, she is most welcome. Continual Twelfth-Stepping of only men can get to be quite a chore after a while!" The group is using G.S.H. background editorial material in the Caracas English language newspaper.

A seven-page letter from Dan D., secretary of the group in Welkom, Orange Free State, South Africa, indicates that local A.A.'s are making constructive approaches to many problems besetting isolated new groups.

In Brakpan, South Africa, Malcolm M., group secretary, is particularly active in making A.A. Tradition better understood in a situation involving an attempt on the part of a non-A.A. unit to suggest that it is linked with the Fellowship.

Saga of a Sailor in a Strange Town

Capt. Sam K. writes from Houston:

"Here is an experience that I just had that may interest some of the fellows. We were in Albany, N. Y., and all that I cared to go ashore for was to see what A.A. had to offer. We dock about six miles from town but I felt like taking a little walk so walked into town. When I called the A.A. number, I was told no group was open during the day. So I took a

turn around the State Capitol Building and hiked right back to the ship.

"There is no need adding what I did as soon as I got back. I can assure you I did it 'just like a baby.' It's the answer to the old question, 'What else could I ever do in a strange town but get drunk?'"

"It all depends on just how much a fellow wants to stay sober. For I spent *my* 30 cents on a 'phone call and two cups of coffee. Ha!"

First 21 Days Are Real Test for Newcomer

"Landlocked" newcomers—and oldtimers,, too—who can turn to many nearby members for help and guidance sometimes forget that fellows aboard ship have an even rougher time when they first come into A.A.

Here's a friendly reminder from Jack E. S., one of our newest Internationalist correspondents:

"Today is my 21st day of sobriety and I feel good physically and somewhat cheered mentally. The 'Panther Sweat' (credit The Grapevine's cartoonist) is still about in abundance but I haven't succumbed to it despite the continued urgings of my focsle mates. I'm not giving myself a stout pat on the back for this accomplishment. I'm only praying that I can continue to ignore the presence of the booze for, quite frankly, I do sometimes feel like bending my elbow with them. Charles and George have quite convinced me that I can never again have a drink and I know only too well how I'd react to that one. I'd probably dash greedily ahead of my drinking partners and empty the jug. It did occur to me the other night that it would be all right to have one or two but I speedily said an 'Our Father' and a 'Hail Mary' after I'd mulled the idea over for a minute and the desire left me.

"You asked me if the other fellows weren't up against the same disappointment of an earlier return than necessary to the ship. Of course they were. Why couldn't I have thought of that? That ugly thing—self-pity—reared its head. I'm still not rid of it and I suppose I'll continue to occasionally feel sorry for myself for some time to come."

First Things First

Easy Does It