

# BOX 4-5-9

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

Vol. 20 No. 5

October-November 1975

## Our Grapevine Has Made A.A. History

The world's most popular publication in the field of alcoholism — circulation, 82,125 as of Sept. 1, '75 — our own Grapevine has a special place in A.A. history, as well as in its readers' hearts.

One of the most popular Conference sessions this year was the presentation by editors Jack M. and Paula C. and circulation manager Kitty K. As a service to 4-5-9 readers, here are the highlights of the Grapevine story told by Paula. (You can get the full texts in the *Final Conference Report*, described on p. 5.)

\* \* \*

Do you know why the Grapevine came into being? Because some A.A.'s whom Bill called "six ink-stained wretches" really cared about the members in the armed forces in World War II, and wanted to help them keep in touch. So the first Grapevine came off the presses on D Day, in the form of a newspaper, and went free to every known A.A. member overseas. Soon, groups at home caught on and asked that it be our A.A. magazine.

Concerns of today had their trial run in the GV many years ago. For instance: outside agencies. The front-page headline in the first Grapevine was "Two Yale Savants Stress Alcoholism as a True Disease." The first announcement of the forming of the National Council on Alcoholism appeared in the Grapevine.

Bill W. used the Grapevine as a means of communication with the

*(continued on p. 5)*

## 19,300 Hail A.A.'s 40 Years At the International Convention

Suppose you worked four years planning a party for 12,000 folks, and over 19,000 turned up. Or you had to stage a dramatic production with a cast of over 320 speaking actors — without even one rehearsal!

That's the Denver experience, July 4-6, 1975, from the G.S.O. viewpoint. Its success exceeded our wildest expectations. Even with about 500 no-shows, the crowd was the largest massing of recovered alcoholics in world history. Everyone there will tell you words cannot convey the tremendous spiritual lift we all felt.

Less than a week after the awe-inspiring sound of that last "Our Father" led by Lois W. in Currigan Hall closed the spiritual meeting

at noon Sunday, the G.S.O. and Grapevine staff and board members got to work on the next such A.A. super-bash, to be held in 1980. Above all, it was agreed G.S.O. should retain for 1980 a firm of topnotch acoustical engineers to avoid the kinds of sound problem that arose in Denver.

Although the next Convention should have better sound, it can't have better spirits. From the very moment travelers alighted from planes, cars, buses, and trains, a remarkable sense of love and joy spilled throughout Denver. On downtown streets, there seemed to be no one visible but exuberant A.A.'s, speaking the language of the heart in many tongues.

*(continued on p. 3)*

### HOW 'I AM RESPONSIBLE' BECAME A PART OF A.A.

When Al S., Lake Worth, Fla., a former trustee, was introduced as leader of the big spiritual meeting in Denver, many learned he was author of the "I Am Responsible" Declaration.

Al recently told the story behind the saying. It was written for the 1965 International Convention in Toronto, the theme of which was to be "Responsibility."

"A statement was wanted that would be emotionally gripping to A.A.'s without imposing any musts," Al recalled. "I tried my hand at a flock of them, using 'we,'

*(continued on p. 3)*

### DR. BEALER FIRST 'CIVILIAN' DIRECTOR

John D. Bealer, M.D., Bethlehem, Pa., has been named a corporate director of A.A. World Services, Inc., the legal entity responsible for G.S.O. business operations and A.A. publishing.

He is the first nonalcoholic to serve in that capacity. The nine A.A.W.S. board members meet in New York at least once a month.

"Dr. John," assistant medical director of Bethlehem Steel, has been a trustee of our General Service Board since 1971. He serves on its Committees on Cooperation with the Professional Community, Policy, and Finance.

Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 468 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.

© Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1975

Mail address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Subscriptions: Individual, \$1.50 per year; group, \$3.50 for each unit of 10 per yr. Check—payable to A.A.W.S., Inc.—must accompany order.

## A.A. FILM NOW AVAILABLE TO REHABS

Many rest farms and other alcoholic rehab facilities try to orient patients to A.A., and have asked to show our color film "Bill's Own Story," in which our co-founder tells about his own recovery and the start of A.A.

The 16 mm. film, which rents for \$35 for one week and runs 50 minutes, is now available for such use — provided it is shown under the control of an A.A. member.

This was a decision of the 1975 General Service Conference. May the film encourage many more sick alcoholics to give us a try!

## IN A.A., THE MINORITY VOICE IS OFTEN RIGHT

The bigger A.A. gets, the more we need to look out for the very dangers the Concepts are designed to protect us against. Concept Five says:

*Throughout our world service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.*

Why should we listen to minority opinion? Here's one reason why. You know how often Bill W. said we alcoholics are likely to be power-drivers. He said he had tendencies that way himself. The Concepts tell us power-drivers how to put the brakes on. Listen to minor-

ity opinion, the Fifth Concept says. Time after time in A.A. history, the minority voice has proved to be the wisest.

Suppose a group is having a business meeting, and everyone is pretty much in agreement — until a guy in the back speaks up. Why does he insist on arguing? Why does he always have to be different? We'd better listen to him anyhow. Maybe he's right, just this once.

The Big Book was originally a minority idea. So were the Steps, the Traditions, and the General Service Conference. Aren't we glad those minority ideas were respectfully heard?

## RIGHTS OF APPEAL AND PETITION NEED STUDY

Calling all G.S.R.'s, D.C.M.'s, and delegates!

Bill W. often expressed the opinion that the Rights of Appeal and Petition (named in the Concept just discussed) should be made a part of the Charter of the General Service Conference.

It has been 13 years since the Conference approved the Concepts proposed by Bill, but they are still largely unknown in vast reaches of A.A. (It is true that their *spirit* often pervades group and assembly affairs, but only a few members are familiar with their *wording*.)

The 1975 Conference found the Concepts an absorbing topic for a presentation and workshops, with practical usefulness (see pp. 15-17, *Final Conference Report*). The Conference formally asked that "study and consideration be given to adding the Rights of Appeal and Petition to the Conference Charter" — so action can be taken on this at a future Conference.

It is suggested, therefore, that all Third Legacy workers haul out "The A.A. Service Manual," "Twelve Concepts for World Ser-

vice," and the '75 Conference report, and bone up. There should be discussion of these rights at local assemblies in preparation for Conference action.

## SARAH P. JOINS G.S.O.

Newest staff member among us is Sarah P. of the Gotham and Metropolitan Groups, New York City. Since her last drink, in January 1969, Sarah has had all group offices, from coffee maker to co-chairman, and also served as a volunteer at the N.Y. Intergroup office and at Columbus Hospital.

After seven years in her native Michigan, Sarah grew up in Fairview Park, Ohio, and attended both Ohio and Fordham Universities to study business and liberal arts.

Her work career has included a stint in the offices of our good friend and neighbor, the National Council on Alcoholism (N.C.A.). Before that, she worked for one of the large news magazines. Sarah has also had experience in research, leasing, documentation, and secretarial supervision, and worked in London and in San Francisco for one of the large advertising agencies. Her first job was in the steel industry in Pittsburgh, where her family lives.

Sarah is now a confirmed New Yorker and is "just delighted" to be on the G.S.O. staff.

## REPORT FROM G.S.O.'S GENERAL MANAGER

The article on the Denver Convention which begins on p. 1 of this issue captures beautifully the spirit of love and the excitement that prevailed during that unforgettable Fourth of July weekend. The October issue of the Grapevine also carries a marvelous Convention story. I choked up when I read the advance proofs. Don't miss it.

I won't attempt to describe my own emotions at this great spectacle of sobriety, except to say that, as it was my first International since joining the G.S.O. staff, it was a special thrill for me, too.

The more than 800 members of the Colorado Host Committee served far beyond the call of duty. And there is not one of the 80 employees of G.S.O. who did not contribute in some way to the success of the big event. We have literally begun already to plan for the 45th Anniversary International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1980. See you there.

— Bob P.

### 'I AM RESPONSIBLE'

(continued from p. 1)

but none came off." Not even Bill or Dr. Bob, he pointed out, had ever tried to impose any pledge on all A.A.'s!

Then it came to Al: Share your *personal* experience; say "I"; then it becomes "a matter of personal choice," he explained. "It talks about responsibility without institutionalizing it."

No one there in Toronto has ever forgotten the feeling of holding hands with over 10,000 other A.A.'s while we all said, "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

### 19,300 AT CONVENTION

(continued from p. 1)

Hotel lobbies and registration desks at Currigan Hall were mobbed with A.A.'s, Al-Anons, and Alateens greeting old and new friends. Working 12-hour shifts with only one break, good-natured Host Committee members registered arrivals at the rate of 400 per hour.

The Grapevine booth, person-

ally decorated by editor Jack M., attracted 1,200 new subscribers, and the booth displaying advance copies of "Bill W.," the biography of A.A.'s co-founder, by Robert Thomsen, had sold out by noon Friday. (As a service to A.A. members, copies of this \$10.95 book, authorized by Lois, Bill's widow, and published by Harper & Row, are available from G.S.O. at \$8.50.)

Two big dances Thursday evening attracted more people than could dance, and the free shuttle-bus service from hotels and motels to the Convention Center had to be beefed up (final cost: \$36,000).

At the Denver Hilton, some 5,000 Al-Anon and Alateen members held their own high-spirited sessions each day. In many downtown hotels, hospitality suites set up by state and provincial A.A. members kept coffeepots busy practically around the clock.

At the formal opening session Friday evening, the auditorium was a thrilling sight. The dais was draped in blue and white, and centered over it was the biggest Big Book ever (28 feet high). Revolving panels showed giant photos of Bill and Dr. Bob and the Steps, Traditions, Serenity Prayer, and Responsibility Declaration.

Spotlighted flags of 29 nations streamed down the center aisles from the rear of the hall, and each flag-bearer repeated, "Let It Begin With Me," the Convention theme, in his or her native tongue. Thousands of goosebumpy A.A.'s and their families and friends clapped, wept, and cheered themselves hoarse. And that was *before* the main program began!

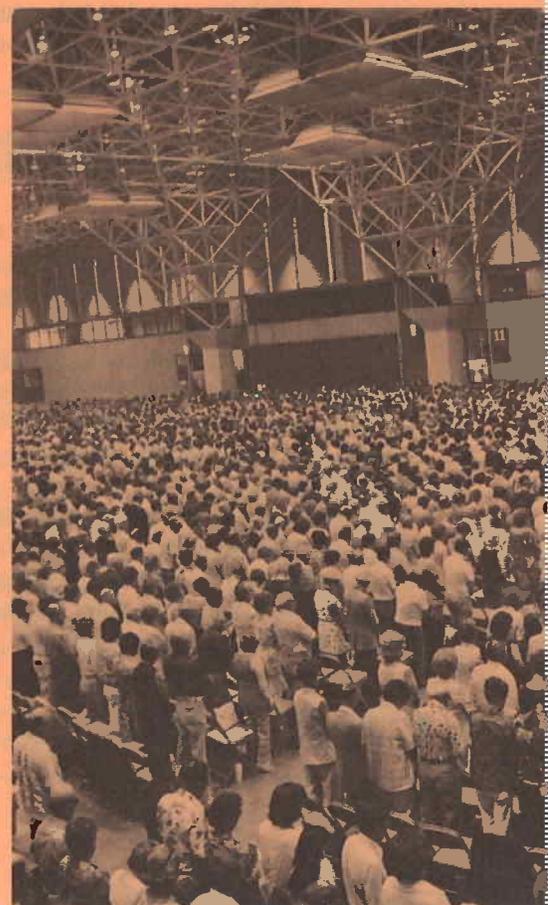
But it was after a full day of panels and workshops, plus alkathons (which began at 8:00 a.m. Friday and resumed at midnight in downtown hotels). Non-A.A. guest speakers were welcomed as warmly as A.A. speakers, and responded with as much enthusiasm. Many have written G.S.O. that the Convention was a high spot of

their lives. Each got an ovation from A.A.'s packed so tightly into meeting rooms that several sessions were halted by fire-department and police officials until aisles were cleared and standees thinned out. Hundreds of Spanish-speaking A.A.'s were enthralled by workshops in that language.

The big show Saturday night was a blast, too, with emcee Jack B. as big a favorite as headliners Enzo Stuarti, the Spurrilows, Skiles and Henderson, Talura Lee, and the Ray Bloch orchestra.

Choosing program participants for such a shindig is no easy job, of course. To present a fair, balanced sampling of speakers, geography, sex, and age are considered — plus special interests, such as institutions, Grapevine, and public information.

Since each member pays his or her own way, the A.A. speakers have to be selected from among those who register in advance. Opinions of delegates and trustees are solicited, but the G.S.O. staff makes most final decisions, because it has the largest over-all acquaintance with A.A. speakers.



It has now been agreed that, because of the A.A. custom of rotation, no Denver speakers should be reinvited for 1980, to offer us a chance to hear different A.A.'s.

TV and newspaper coverage of the Convention flooded North America with the message that thousands of anonymous alcoholics were happily sober in Denver, drinking gallons of coffee from the world's biggest coffeepot. The National Council on Alcoholism (N.C.A.) saluted us with a big ad in Denver papers, praising A.A.'s accomplishments in its 40 years.

At least four still-suffering alcoholics made their very first approach to A.A. at the Convention — and what a first meeting

they can tell about in years to come!

A Convention highlight occurred during the Indian alkathon. Over a thousand A.A.'s from many countries and races repeatedly joined hands in great circles on the Arena main floor and balcony when drums summoned all present to dance in celebration of the Great Spirit.

Almost as soon as we pinned on our badges, many of us had decorations stuck on them by people campaigning to lure the next Convention to their hometowns. That was harmless fun, but the site of the 1980 Convention cannot be picked by popular ballot. It is far too big, expensive, and complex an enterprise.

A.A.'s of any city interested in hosting the 1980 celebration should contact — before the end of this year — their delegate to the 1976 General Service Conference (which meets in New York next April). Delegates will have or can get the necessary Convention-bid questionnaire.

The 1980 International Convention Committee will be named at

the 1976 Conference. Two-thirds of the committee members will be delegates whose names are drawn from the hat; one-third, trustees and staff. Delegates representing interested cities will then make presentations to the Convention Committee at the Conference, detailing meeting and hotel facilities. The committee will select first, second, and third choices and offer them to the entire Conference for disapproval, if any.

A site-selection task force from G.S.O. will visit the first-choice location for an on-the-spot inspection of the proposed Convention site. If the Conference's first choice seems inadequate, then the second and maybe the third will also be visited before a final recommendation is made to the General Service Board, which has to negotiate the formal contractual agreement with officials of the host city.

We look forward to 1980, one day at a time, but don't envy any city that has to match the unforgettable beauties, warm hospitality, and marvelous A.A. found in Colorado.

*Here's the "official" photo of A.A.'s 40th Anniversary International Convention, made July 4, 1975, in Currigan Hall, Denver, Colo. For your own 24" x 10" copy of this picture, send your name and address and a check or money order for \$8.00 to Faingold Studios, P.O. Box 8435, Denver, Colo., 80201. Please do not order from G.S.O.!*



## CARRYING THE MESSAGE — THE LONG WAY ROUND

"I've just read a magazine article on alcoholism. It sounded as if you were talking about me. I am black and would like to talk to a member," read a letter G.S.O. got in January from a woman in a small North Carolina town. We had no record of an A.A. group there.

She got an answer from a staff member right away, of course, and her name and her addresses at home and at work were sent to members in three nearby communities. It took weeks to find her. But finally, a member from another place who worked in her hometown reached our inquirer at her home.

Dot C., in a town 20 miles away, wrote us with the next chapter in that newcomer's search: "She called Bennie. Evidently, she not only needs us but wants us. She came to our meeting last night. Since she has lost her driver's license, this was at some effort. She had located someone to drive her the 20 miles each way. Thank you for helping us to be of service. She has taken a step in the right direction, and we will all be standing by her."

*Then we learned there was a meeting in the newcomer's hometown after all, but the group was not registered with G.S.O.!*

Really, now, shouldn't it be possible for G.S.O. to locate *any* group *quickly* when a lonely alcoholic seeks help? Or even better — shouldn't any sick alcoholic be able to find *local* A.A. instantly? Any suggestions?

## HISTORIC CONFERENCE REPORT — ILLUSTRATED

With a strikingly designed, metallic-silver cover, the *Final Report* of the historic 25th meeting of our General Service Conference is now available to all A.A.'s.

Observing the silver anniversaries of both our Traditions and the Conference itself, the report has been mailed to all Conference members, and any A.A. member may have one for \$2.50.

The cover displays the theme, "Unity: Through Love and Service." Inside is the most complete and lavish record of Conference proceedings ever published — 58 pages, with drawings illustrating Conference activities. If you want to broaden your understanding of A.A., here's fascinating reading.

## NEW 'LIVING SOBER' BOOKLET NOW READY

"Living Sober," our new 88-page booklet, is now available from G.S.O. The softbound publication is subtitled "Some Methods A.A. Members Have Used for Not Drinking." It makes a good basis for beginners meetings, and is an ideal group gift to newcomers. Long-sober members say they find the manuscript a refreshing reminder of simple ways to enjoy not drinking.

"Living Sober" gives, for the first time in print, a collection of tips on how to avoid the first drink — the suggestions heretofore shared among A.A.'s only by word of mouth. Written in breezy, conversational style, it does *not* offer a program of recovery from alcoholism. It just points the way toward the A.A. program, by recommending the reading of our basic literature and attendance at meetings.

The new booklet (in a 5½" x 8" format like that of "Came to Believe . . .") is the result of a seven-year project, started when John L. ("Dr. Jack") Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of the G.S. Board, noted that many of the gimmicks A.A.'s use for not drinking had never been put in writing in one place. Here they all are, from "Never get too tired, too hungry, or too lonely" to discus-

sions about cocktail parties, sex, and booze in the house.

"Living Sober" is priced at \$1.75 per copy retail — for individual orders — and \$1.50 per copy for group orders.

## GV AND A.A. HISTORY

*(continued from p. 1)*

groups. Beginning in August 1945, he wrote a series on A.A. group experiences, "the Twelve Points to Assure Our Future." In their present form as hammered out in the Grapevine, the Twelve Traditions were accepted at the Cleveland 1950 Convention as our Second Legacy, that of Unity.

About this time, an increasing number of nonalcoholics were reading the Grapevine and knew little about A.A. To clarify what we are and what we are not, in June 1947 the Grapevine carried a definition of A.A.: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share . . ." Yes, our well-loved Preamble, written by the first Grapevine editor.

In 1961, Bill W. wrote Dr. Carl Jung, telling the good doctor of the part he had played in his message to alcoholics and eventually to A.A. Dr. Jung replied to Bill's letter, and this now-famous correspondence was first published in the Grapevine in 1963.

For some time, Bill and Dr. John L. Norris, chairman of the G.S. Board, discussed a plan to increase the number of A.A. trustees in relation to nonalcoholic trustees. This was published in the Grapevine in 1966, and voted in-to being by the 16th Conference that year.

Perhaps you begin to realize the deep gratitude that has been mine for the opportunity to participate with the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous through the Grapevine pages. I'm happy to see and feel unity all around me, growing just as fast as A.A. itself.

—Paula C.

