

Sponsorship: Is It Disappearing?

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."

This opening sentence, of the chapter "Working With Others" in the Big Book, is further emphasized in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (p. 106): "The joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and action is its key word. Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in distress. Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards . . . the kind of love that has no price tag on it."

How well is our Fellowship doing with this vital practice, since the time, over 55 years ago, when co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob first put this most basic principle of A.A. into action? Is your home group geared toward our primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers? Are today's A.A. sponsors passing on to newcomers what A.A. is really all about? Are we living up to our responsibility to share our experience, strength and hope of recovery in the A.A. program? Or are we diluting the simple and powerful A.A. message with other non-A.A. philosophies and ideas, suggestions and advice that are, though perhaps well-intentioned, actually misguided and even harmful?

Recognizing the need for renewed emphasis on this basic tenet, the 1990 General Service Conference set the theme for the 1991 Conference as "Sponsorship: Gratitude in Action." The Conference delegates seemed to recognize that their ability to serve A.A. in the U.S. and Canada was defined by their experiences in being sponsored into recovery, and their continued willingness to share with another alcoholic specifically what they had received through A.A. membership and the practice of our Twelve Steps.

During a District 6 Sponsorship workshop in Kansas, past trustee-at-large/U.S., David A., asked what do we have to offer when a new person, wet or dry, calls A.A., or comes to an A.A. meeting: "Only one thing; how an alcoholic can recover in Alcoholics Anonymous. We share our experiences before A.A. and how we achieved and maintain sobriety through working the Twelve Steps of recovery with a sponsor, and how we continue to apply those principles to daily living."

David suggested that all A.A. experience is contained in our literature, and emphasized the value of our pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" as a basic guide. He also pointed out the story of our third member, "A.A. Number Three" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 182) as an excellent outline on Twelfth Step work. Carrying our message in such a way may be the *beginning* of an opportunity to serve as a sponsor.

A.A. members who agree understand that they are not responsible for anyone else's sobriety; only for being willing to share their experience with A.A.'s program and Steps of recovery regardless of circumstances or situations. Each one of us involved in sharing in this way recognizes that our fitness to honestly convey the heart of our A.A. recovery is based on our individual, daily spiritual progress.

"Sponsorship—being one and having one—is a necessary part of my program," says David W., of Bella Vista, Arkansas, who, with several others some years ago, was responsible for setting up the first Bridge-the-Gap (temporary A.A. contact) program in Oklahoma, a program that has now spread to other parts of the country. "I feel very strongly there isn't enough follow-up when new A.A.s are released from treatment facilities," says David. "The facilities tend to appoint temporary sponsors, which I've never approved of. Why? Because it's much better for the newcomer to pick his own sponsor, it's part of growing up."

"I don't believe newcomers these days are given a chance to hear enough of what A.A. is," David continues. "The sponsor's role is not that of a marriage counselor or a banker or therapist. If sponsors take on these extra roles, they do more harm than good, by making newcomers too dependent on them and not enough on a Higher Power."

"All I share is my actual experience," says Raymond D., of Santa Cruz, California. "I don't believe in tutorial sponsorship, a teacher-student type of relationship. We're equals." The heart of what Raymond shares is "the importance of working the Steps, and how I gradually moved from atheism to believing in a Higher Power." Raymond agrees that each of us is better off choosing our own sponsors; "they pick me intuitively

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when they've heard me share—and that choice has a spiritual significance.”

A.A. groups composed of members who are actively engaged in sponsorship tend to have a warm, open atmosphere for newcomers and traveling A.A.s who want, or need, a meeting. That kind of group is a good source of practical experience for those beginning the habit of sponsorship to draw on. David A. talked about sponsors growing up in these groups when he said, “They have more to offer newcomers than the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts of World Service and the Third Legacy. They are the very life of our Fellowship and the basis of our future.”

These same groups often are willing to help new groups get underway by carrying A.A. in until the newest get strong enough to continue on their own. When asked, local A.A.s will often respond to difficulties being experienced by an established group by sharing their experience and how they practice our Traditions to insure group unity and the survival of A.A.

Some A.A. members share their participation in general service with those they sponsor. We often hear a D.C.M. or area delegate say their sponsor took them to their first service assembly. Many A.A. members learned the importance of our central offices when their sponsors suggested they volunteer to answer phones at the local A.A. office or intergroup. And, at the biennial World Service Meetings, new countries invariably demonstrate the sharing brought to them by members from other countries through sponsorship, country to country.

Bill W. wrote on several occasions of the profound effect that his friend Ebby (whom he always called his sponsor) had on him when Bill was barely sober, lying in a hospital bed. Ebby told Bill he had to “admit you're licked; . . . get honest with yourself; . . . talk it out with somebody else; . . . make restitution to the people you have harmed; . . . give of yourself without stint; . . . and pray to whatever God you think there is.” In a nutshell, Ebby handed Bill the germ of what we now call A.A.'s Twelve Step program. It is what we, as sponsors, have the responsibility to share with newcomers. When those early members went out to carry the message, Bill tells us over and over, all they were sharing was their own experience, and they were doing it to

insure their own sobriety. Their *only* expertise was their past drunken lives and their experiences in sobriety.

Bill's words on sponsorship offer a promise for each of us and for our Fellowship: “Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 124)

Before You Rotate, Take the Time to 'Pass it On'

“With time and experience,” says Southeast New York's past delegate Boyce B., “one comes to understand that rotation in service positions—from the Board of Trustees to the General Service Office and within the A.A. group—is an essential reminder to place principles before personalities.” However, he stresses, “stepping down from office doesn't mean running out. The group, indeed the whole Fellowship, is enriched when the persons who are rotating out make the effort to pass on their experience, strength and hope to the incoming trusted servants.”

Writing in *The Link*, the newsletter of the general service committee of Southeastern New York, Boyce suggests that “we drunks sometimes undermine even the best of our Traditions. Have you known of a group chairperson who served responsibly—then disappeared as soon as his replacement was elected? Or, on the other hand, have you seen an ex-officer patiently explain to his successor what responsibilities are entailed, what special attentions have worked most effectively for the group's common welfare?”

Rotation can be orderly, Boyce points out, “when patience, good judgment and sensitivity are a part of the process. You don't have to be a ‘bleeding deacon’—someone who thinks he's essential and won't let go—to step down from office but not out of service.”

Within the framework of Tradition Two, rotation is the main method we A.A.s have to prevent power, prestige and personal recognition from distorting our best intentions. Moreover, rotation is practiced not to put somebody out of a job but to ensure that others have a chance to serve.

But what of the experienced trusted servants who no longer hold office? As Tradition Two clearly states, they can “become the voice of the group conscience; in fact, these are the true voice of Alcoholics Anonymous. They do not drive by mandate, they lead by example.”

New Literature Prices Effective April 1

The enclosed Literature Catalog reflects the new prices—effective April 1, 1991—that were approved by the General Service Board at its February meeting. There will be increases on the prices of all books and booklets, except for the large-print Big Book and *Daily Reflections*. Pamphlets, miscellaneous items, Spanish and foreign-language literature will remain at the 1990 level.

Quantity discounts for bulk shipments will remain at 6, 12, 18 percent, depending on quantities ordered.

The reasons for these increases is, of course, based on economic conditions: U.S. Postal System and United Parcel have just been substantially increased, and manufacturing prices are ever increasing.

Preserving A.A.'s Past Is a Labor of Love For Area Archivists

Local archives committees are collecting every scrap of A.A. memorabilia they can find in an effort to preserve the Fellowship's past. They will tirelessly track down a dog-eared first edition of the Big Book that is yellowing in an attic, a tattered note from co-founder Dr. Bob, or a hard-to-locate earlytimer who remembers way back when. They delight in making A.A. history come alive, and their excitement is contagious. Following is shared experience from areas in the U.S. and Canada:

Arkansas: "A spirit of conservation is sweeping the state," observes archivist Bob W. "A.A.s increasingly realize that our founders are gone and that those who are still around won't be here forever to share their memories and mementoes."

Bob, who serves as nonrotating state archivist, attri-



Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock

butes much of the archives' growth to the structure of the committee itself. "Half of the members are rotating general service representatives," he explains. "The other half are past delegates, who act as advisers and stabilizers." Adds his wife, Fay, secretary of the state archives committee: "We find that communication—through workshops, area newsletters and person-to-person contact—is the number one key to success."

Alabama-Northwest Florida: "In 1986, when our committee was formed," says archivist Bo S., "we were pretty green, so we phoned the Archives at G.S.O. They sent a handbook explaining everything you'd want to know about how to retrieve, preserve, set up and secure a collection. That gave us the confidence to approach the area general assembly for startup funds. We stressed the need to preserve A.A.'s past for members to come, and they went along with us."

Southeast New York: Noting that his area is second only to Southern California in its number of groups (more than 1,500 of them), chairperson Tom M. says he would like to see more members active in archival work. "Some people talk and get excited," he relates, "but do nothing. Then there's the occasional person who walks up at a meeting and presents a package, saying, 'This is for the archives.' We need that kind of concern and sharing."

Nova Scotia, Canada: "Over the past 10 years," reports archivist Robie C., "our portable archives display has been set up at more than 75 A.A. events and seen by thousands of members." Although it requires 40 feet of wall space plus another 20 feet of table space, the display can be compacted into the trunk of a car. It features a wide range of artifacts, from old phonograph records made by Bill W. to copies of the *Bluenose Bulletin*, an A.A. newsletter first published in Halifax in 1948.

"Initially," Robie explains, "our area had one archive. But because it is made up of two provinces, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland/Labrador, which are separated by approximately 60 miles of water, it was decided in 1984 to have separate archives. Each province's district committee members serve as a rotating archives committee. The archivists, however, do not rotate."

Oklahoma: According to longtime archivist Earl H., the archival collection presently includes at least one copy of every printing of the Big Book, and every issue of the Grapevine printed since its debut in June 1944. Other area archives frequently request copies of Grapevine issues, especially those containing Bill's writings, and the committee is quick to pass them along. To date, Earl reports, "we have sent well over a thousand copies of Grapevine articles to correctional facilities alone."

Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Remarking that the archives committee has amassed a sizable collection, chairperson Tommy H. relates that A.A. started in Toronto in January 1943, when two nonalcoholic ministers got together with six alcoholics at a local restaurant.

"We have had great success," Tommy says, "with our series of open breakfast meetings at which earlytimers are invited to speak. The breakfasts, held in a local restaurant, attract several hundred people. We have the privilege of hearing (and taping) these earlytimers in person—their stories make the past as vivid as today."

Washington State: "For some years," says Burke D., immediate past-chairperson of the archives committee, "we were a one-person operation, with boxes of artifacts helter-skelter and no system for filing and preserving documents. But that's all changed—we're in good shape now. Some professional archivists who saw our set-up recently told us, 'You're more than an archives, you're an historical society.' In a sense, I guess that's true. But what really matters is helping newcomers to get in touch with their A.A. roots. That's what we're about."

Wanted: Stories and Souvenirs of Our Oldtimers

The A.A. Archives is urging area archives committees, and individual A.A.s, too, to engage in an invaluable form of Twelfth-Stepping: Reach out to oldtimers and invite them to share their memories of A.A.'s early days—on tape, on paper, in any way that makes them comfortable within the framework of our Anonymity Tradition.

One earlytimer, Travers C. of Bristol, England, is no longer with us. But fortunately for A.A., he committed the following experience to paper before he died last year:

"I remember well my first visit to my sponsor's home in the early 1960s. The place was piled high with old A.A. books, Grapevines and other items, many encrusted with dust. When I expressed astonishment and interest, he casually began showing me the time-worn mementoes collected during his years of active service: 'Here's a signed photograph of Dr. Bob . . . and there's a photograph of Bill W. with his violin. You knew, didn't you, that we both played?'"

Like Travers' sponsor, many earlytimers don't realize how scarce or precious some of those musty old menus, convention programs or photos are. As Travers explained, "My sponsor's 'junk,' and his memories, were no longer just his. They were also my roots. For the first time, I felt in touch emotionally with our early members. It was the beginning of my involvement with others."

To help local archives committees record and preserve such irreplaceable stories of the past, the A.A. archives has prepared a number of help-aids including a sample contact letter, and stickers and bookmarks that say: "Don't throw me away, I belong to A.A."

Areas that have no archives but would like to form one may also want a copy of the Archives Handbook, which details how to establish and maintain a local repository. For information and materials, write to: Archives, General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

'By Your Student You'll Be Taught'

An axiom in A.A. is that we "give away" our sobriety in order to keep it. This Twelfth-Step sharing takes many forms—sponsorship and service among them. Now comes the story of Curt O., of Hoboken, New Jersey, who "gave" and "got back" in a most unexpected way.

"It all started during a meeting of my home group, the Nu Garden Group in New York City," Curt relates. "Seated next to a quiet young man named Rocco, whom I knew only by sight, I said a few words to him and mentioned in passing that I am a teacher. That triggered

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something in him. He asked if I would do him a favor. 'Sure,' I replied. 'What?' He flushed. 'Can you teach me how to read?' "

Some days later, Curt and Rocco embarked on what Curt calls an "amazing adventure." "He couldn't read at all—not a tabloid newspaper, a child's book, or even the label on a can of soup. Apparently his early years had been too chaotic for him to learn to read, and later on alcohol helped him to forget himself and his loneliness. All his life he'd acted the clown, thinking he was the town dummy."

Each week, Rocco arrived at Curt's home for his lesson. After 18 months, Curt reports, "he was well on his way to literacy. He became able to read some of the simplified A.A. pamphlets—such as the cartoon-style one for young people entitled 'Too Young?' and 'The Twelve Traditions Illustrated'—then the Big Book and other literature."

Curt is quick to point out that "Rocco's no Eliza Doolittle and I'm certainly not Professor Higgins. Yet our lives have changed as a result of his willingness to reach out for help."

Helping Rocco gave Curt, who was sober a year when their friendship began, "the confidence I needed to become active in A.A. service."

Together, Curt concludes, "Rocco and I have traveled a long distance. As is so often the case in Twelfth-Step efforts, the giver is the main beneficiary. Rocco's journey has become a part of my own. Our backgrounds are wildly different, and our lives have their separate orbits. But we are both alcoholics, we both are recovering daily in A.A., and we have enriched each other's sobriety. That is more than enough."

Setting the Record Straight

Some months ago, Angel S. of Los Angeles, California opened a magazine for substance abuse counselors and was unhappy with what she saw. She sat down and wrote a letter, signed "Anonymous," which the editors printed in its entirety. Excerpts follow:

"As a recovering alcoholic with 11 years of sobriety, I must express a deep disappointment in three of the articles you ran on cocaine addiction. Each article suggested sending addicts to A.A. meetings rather than encouraging them to embrace recovery in Narcotics Anonymous and/or Cocaine Anonymous, where they would have other addicts to identify with and a common recovery solution.

"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. As the A.A. pamphlet, 'Problems Other Than Alcohol,' states: 'Sobriety—freedom from alcohol—through the teaching and practice of the

Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an A.A. group.'

"When I was three years sober, I tried to carry the A.A. message to a free-base addict. He was not an alcoholic, but I thought A.A. had the answers for him. I never gave him the phone number for N.A. or C.A. When he died of an overdose, my signature was on the death certificate. I carried the wrong message to another human being and I carry the guilt today.

"Now when I share my experience, strength and hope with someone, I try to make certain that person is an alcoholic who wants to recover from alcoholism. I encourage people with problems other than alcohol to seek out twelve-step programs that specifically address their afflictions."

Sobriety's 'Ripple Effect'

Recently, an A.A. anniversary contribution arrived at G.S.O. from Harry G., of Jacksonville, Florida. In his letter, Harry, who has not taken a drink since 6:40 p.m., January 16, 1948, recounts some of the results of working the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

"By attending 13,000 meetings I have been able to put my son through the university and he helped to put man on the moon. I was able to live with my second wife, without a single argument, for 28 and a half years, before she passed on seven years ago with 31 years of sobriety. My daughter picked up a 15-year medallion in September. That is why I am forever grateful that I became teachable after I was reachable. I think the program works *sometimes!*"

Arizona's 'AA-of-the-Air' Marks 20 Years

"Radio listeners around the Old Pueblo—that's Tucson, Arizona—have the opportunity to 'attend' an open A.A. discussion meeting every Sunday morning." What's more, continues oldtimer Chuck R., "the program celebrated 20 years of broadcasting this past fall."

Sponsored by the Tucson Central Office, "AA-of-the-Air" is broadcast over station KQYT-FM (92.1, 103.9 and 105.5 on the radio dial). The idea originated, Chuck relates, "while a bilingual group called El Grupo Internacional was having a sharing session about new ways to carry the A.A. message. That underlying purpose has never changed. In addition to providing a meeting for A.A.s—especially those who are housebound, handicapped and/or institutionalized—'AA-of-the-Air' informs the general public about the Fellowship and its program of recovery from alcoholism."

The 30-minute broadcast was launched in 1970 after Doc E., a member of the original group, who was also on the staff of KUAT (which launched the program), won the cooperation of the station manager. The plan was to hold a regular, topical meeting, broadcast live and followed by calls from listeners. Today's program format is much the same, except for the elimination of listener calls, which consumed more time than was available.

It is unofficially estimated, Chuck reports, that several thousand people tune in each week. "We know," he says, "that interested inmates of correctional facilities gather in their day rooms on Sunday morning to listen. We've also found that many nonalcoholics—among them the families and friends of alcoholics as well as professionals—tune in regularly."

These days, the program is taped beforehand in a back room of the Tucson Central Office, with an average of six or seven members on hand. However, Chuck recalls times when the intergroup representative received permission to tape a regular meeting for airing. Any last names or personal references were edited out.

One day, he says, "when the meeting was still live and listeners phoned in, not a single member showed up. Doc explained, on the air, that it takes only two members to have a meeting, so someone had better pitch in. Right away an A.A. called in a suggested topic, a second caller chimed in, and the meeting was on. Another time, the members were all late, so Doc explained the dynamics of a speaker meeting and proceeded to fill the half-hour with his own story of recovery."

A recipient of the "Best of West" award for excellence, presented by the Western Educational Society for Tele-

communications, "AA-of-the-Air" at 20 is older than some of the A.A.s who consider it a Sunday morning tradition. "As it has in the past," Chuck observes, "the program will go on carrying the A.A. message to anyone who's interested here in southeast Arizona—God willing and the creeks don't rise."

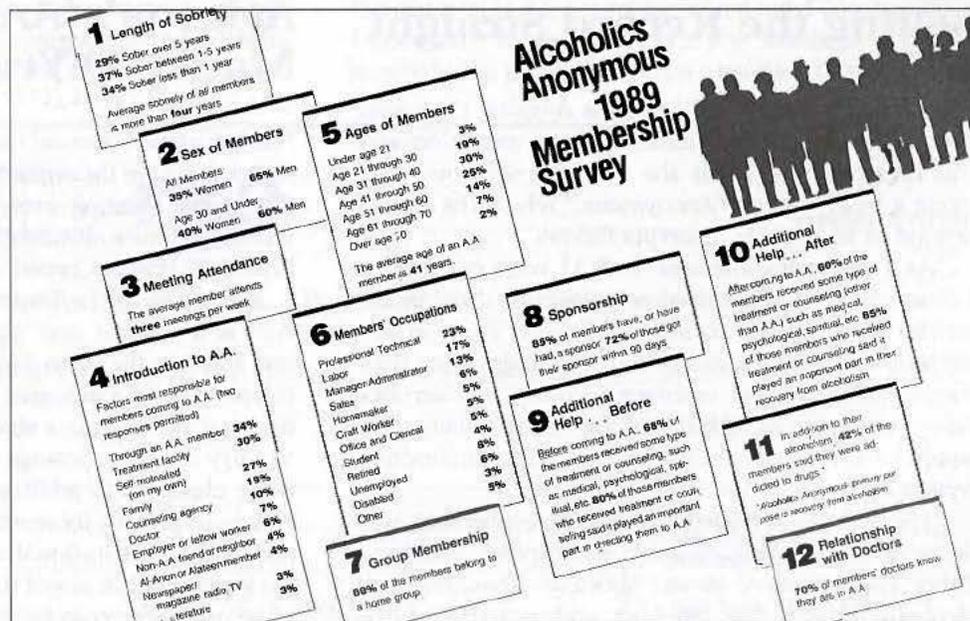
News from A.A.s in the Persian Gulf

Since the military action began in the Persian Gulf, G.S.O. staff member John G., on the Loners-Internationalists desk, has heard from many A.A.s serving in Saudi Arabia. The following letter, from Sgt. John L., is representative of many:

"Thank you ever so much for your letter. I was praying to hear from G.S.O. and ZAP!, your letter arrived. Which is more amazing than it sounds; since the war started we of the 101st have been on the move, over 700 miles from our original base, so it's remarkable that your letter found me so quickly.

"I've been deluged with mail—about 200 pieces from A.A.s—books, literature, wallet cards, personal letters, pictures, tapes, Grapevines (and even a Jan. issue of 'Playboy'). All this mail prompted one of my friends to comment, 'You must have a huge family.' I responded, 'You know, you're right. But I've never seen or met most of them face to face.' He, of course, was lost by that remark. So I took the time to explain about my 'family,' and he was stunned to find that 'total strangers' could

This double-easel display, 29" high and 40" wide, reflects information in the "A.A. Membership Survey" pamphlet. Statistics are based on the 1989 random survey of A.A. members in the U.S. and Canada. The display is suitable for P.I. and C.P.C. local exhibits and health fairs. (M-13) \$14.00



care that much for their fellow human beings.

"John, I've got another favor to ask: Could you put out a note of thanks for me to all the folks who've written. To respond to them all would take most of my working and sleeping hours.

"A lot of good has come out of my being in this desert. I've finally been forced to really take a good look at where I'm at in my program and in my life. As the Big Book says, I'm 'building an arch to walk through a free man.' "

Once G.S.O. was aware of the A.A.s serving in the Gulf, each was sent a copy of the new *Daily Reflections*, a free subscription from the Grapevine and any other literature they requested. We know from their letters that they have been well taken care of—with letters and literature from their home groups, districts and areas.

Now the conflict is over, and once more the strength, caring and love of Alcoholics Anonymous is evident. Speaking of A.A.s during World War II, Bill W. wrote in the Third Step: "Would they be able to take discipline, stand up under fire, and endure the monotony and misery of war? Would the kind of dependence [on an A.A. group or upon a Higher Power] they had learned in A.A. carry them through? Well, it did."

1991 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service, by providing an opportunity for A.A. group and area representatives, as well as any interested individual A.A.s in a particular region, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board, and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum will be sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central office/intergroups, approximately three months ahead of time. In 1991 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Northeast*—June 1-3: Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, Maryland
- *West Central*—August 2-4: Holiday Inn Central, Omaha, Nebraska
- *East Central*—October 11-13: Hilton East, Columbus, Ohio
- *Southwest*—December 6-8: Sheraton Kensington Hotel, Tulsa, Oklahoma

For additional information, please write: Regional Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

From Egypt: News of Growth and Gratitude

"I am beginning my third year here with my company in Egypt and have not had a drink since July 1986. I can speak for our membership in saying we are grateful to A.A. for all your support in carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholics here and around the world."

Writing from Cairo, American Peter C. says that A.A. there is growing. The English-speaking Cairo Home Group, established in 1978, now has five meetings a week. Additionally, there is the fledgling Heliopolis Group, which just celebrated its second anniversary. It holds one meeting a week and presently has three members: two Americans and one Egyptian.

"As part of our efforts to carry the message," Peter reports, "A.A. meeting times and contact telephone numbers are published in 'Cairo Today,' our leading monthly expatriate magazine, as well as in a number of local community newsletters.

"Our members also maintain contact with the medical department of the U.S. Embassy and with the Community Services Association (C.S.A.), a service agency, through telephone lists that are updated on a regular basis. Many of our new members come from C.S.A. and, occasionally, from a physician who heads the mental-health hospital in nearby Helwan."

In his letter, Peter expresses appreciation for the A.A. pamphlets that have been translated into Arabic: "This Is A.A.," "44 Questions," and "A Newcomer Asks." "There is great interest here," he adds, "in the anticipated Arabic version of the Big Book."

Countries Helping Countries

When 36 delegates from 22 countries met last October in Munich, Germany, for the Eleventh World Service Meeting, the theme was "Twelve Concepts for World Service." Presentations were given on each of the Twelve Concepts, which are not as well known or used in some of the overseas service structures, and have not been translated into all the languages of countries that have general service boards and literature distribution centers. In an effort to gain better understanding of the Concepts and their value to the Fellowship, it was recommended that much of the focus of the Twelfth W.S.M., to be held in New York City in 1992, continue to be on the Concepts.

The purpose of the World Service Meeting, since the first one in 1969, has been to maintain the unity and

continuity of A.A. worldwide. A major topic of discussion in Munich was the spread of A.A. in Eastern Europe and the special needs of A.A. in other parts of the world. In a long and fruitful sharing session, various countries related how they have been helping A.A.s in other countries, from working with professionals, helping groups form, providing information, and generally, like all good A.A.s, just being there.

Perhaps, most important, was the concern expressed by each delegate about the importance of providing A.A. literature in the languages and dialects of countries that do not have a service structure or financial means. Many of the participating service structures are now helping these countries, and all countries desire to share the financial responsibility for furthering this Twelfth Step work to the extent that they are able. Thus, the 36 delegates unanimously agreed that:

"[The coordinator] of this [World Service] meeting write to all participating countries' General Service Boards for the specific purpose of seeking cooperation in the task of raising funds for the current problem of providing start-up literature for those countries unable to finance their own translations and acquisitions."

A *Final Report* of the World Service Meeting will be available from G.S.O. this spring.

New from G.S.O.

- Big Book in Arabic, available from G.S.O. (SM-1) \$4.00; 20% discount applies.
- "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" is now available in Spanish. ½" videocassette (VS-2) \$15.00 per unit; 20% discount applies.

C.P.C.

Missouri Workshop Accents A.A.s' Understanding of Court-Mandated Programs

Since the early 1980s, when courts began sending alcoholic offenders to A.A. meetings—and unwittingly opened a Pandora's Box of problems both inside the Fellowship and out—groups of concerned A.A.s have held informational meetings for the referrals to ease their way. Now, as the direct result of a recommendation by the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With

the Professional Community, some areas are conducting workshops on court programs to further understanding among the A.A.s themselves.

Last October, at its election assembly, the Eastern Missouri Area introduced just such a workshop. Says delegate Ginny J., "The presentations gave attendees a new view. It made them realize that cooperation is not a one-way street labeled 'A.A.' The courts, too, are making a sincere effort to cooperate with us in resolving the problems caused mainly by ignorance of what we can do and what we cannot."

In a detailed presentation, Leon McG. told of the Alcohol Abuse Court Class that is operating successfully in Stoddard county—there, under the aegis of the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole—and in other counties as well. The model for the program, he said, "was one that has flourished in the southeastern part of the state. It has helped to protect the integrity of the A.A. group while offering court referrals a solution if they want it."

Here Leon noted that "the practice of the courts in ordering D.W.I. offenders to A.A. ignores our cardinal requirement for membership: 'a desire to stop drinking.' This, and all the other problems referrals impose on A.A.—including disruptive behavior, requests for validation of attendance at meetings and anonymity breaks—is the primary reason the court class came into being."

At the onset of the class, which covers five sessions on a once-weekly basis, the participating A.A.s explain that "we are volunteers only and members of Alcoholics Anonymous." Importantly, Leon notes, "we say we will tell them about our program of recovery from alcoholism but emphasize that A.A. has no official spokesperson."

"Following Guidelines sent by the General Service Office, we read the Preamble and tell them we are there because it helps us to stay sober. We do not tell them they're alcoholics nor do we advise them to stop drinking. That is for them to decide. We explain we will do our best to share our experience so that they may take an honest look at themselves and decide whether or not they are alcoholics."

Since its inception in 1985, Leon reports, "some 76 court-referred persons have successfully completed the program. Of these, only six have been repeat offenders—a sizeable reduction compared with pre-court-class experience. County officials state that the class 'has met the most exacting of tests. It works!'"

During the workshop, past delegate Byron B., a pioneer in developing A.A. informational programs, shared his experience with a plan borrowed from Phoenix, Arizona, which ran for approximately six years in the 1980s. This plan called for D.W.I. first-offenders in the Fulton area to attend an open A.A. meeting every Friday night for six months as an alternative, among

other things, to paying a stiff fine and having their driver's license revoked.

"Generally speaking," Byron relates, "during the first two months the referrals were angry and hostile. We A.A. members took no notice of this; we simply shared our experience, strength and hope, never argued, and tried to answer any questions the referrals asked. During the second two months, their attitudes were considerably softer, and by the last two-month period, they would actually greet us with a smile and share their feelings."

During the time this program ran, the recidivism rate was reduced from well over 50 percent to less than one percent. "To most of us who were involved," Byron observed, "it seemed that the prescribed time period of six months was the main ingredient of success." To a great degree, he adds, "such informational programs address a vital need. Sending D.W.I.s to jail won't cure their active drinking problem. There's a great possibility that exposure to A.A. will."

Correctional Facilities

From Guam: A Lesson In 'Letting Go'

"Looking back, I feel that our 'inside' group somehow started in reverse, and not according to wise A.A. experience. Little did we know that the setup is basically the same as in groups on the 'outside.'"

Writing from Guam, a small island in the Pacific about one-sixth the size of Rhode Island, Ernie H. still finds it amazing that the group worked at all. "It began," he relates, "with several outside A.A.s holding weekly, unstructured meetings with the inmates. The members were neither self-governing nor autonomous, something alcoholics don't tolerate too well.

"In time, failure to know and heed the Second and Fourth Traditions caught up with us. The group was starting to outgrow its fumbling sponsors but had little self-direction. Belatedly we turned to the General Service Office; it promptly gave us a shot in the arm with the Correctional Facilities Workbook, tapes, and accumulated A.A. experience."

Gradually, Ernie reports, "we have been tackling some thorny problems: Should female inmates attend male inmate groups? How can we get outside A.A. members processed to attend meetings in less than the

usual month's time? How can we better explain to the institutional staff our need to be self-supporting in every way—from funding our own A.A. literature to buying coffee? Last but not least, we've been learning to let go!"

With time and experience, Ernie points out, "we've learned some of the qualities that A.A.s volunteering in correctional facilities need in order to carry the message effectively:

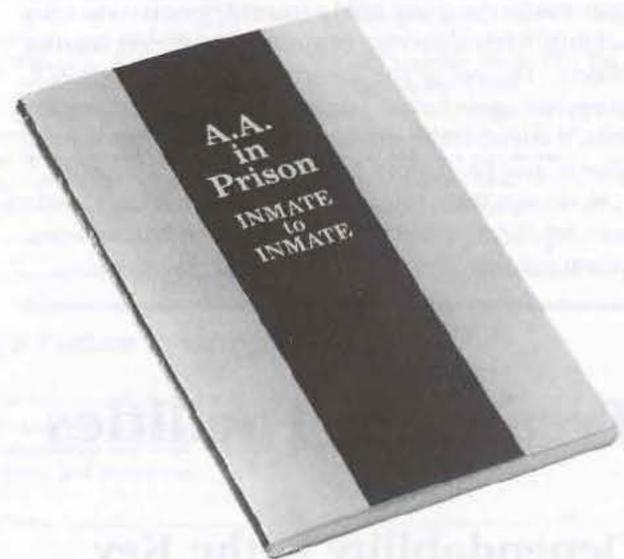
"Quality sobriety"—It helps get the group off to a healthier start. Inmates know a con.

"Patience"—It takes time and commitment from the volunteers. They, in turn, should realize that the inmates need time to understand the A.A. program, and that the facility administrators need time to comprehend our Traditions even as we need time to learn all their rules.

"Previous group experience"—This is a near 'must,' as are familiarity with the Steps and Traditions.

"Inmate Participation"—It is vital for 'inside' group members to serve as responsible officers—to learn the process and ask those questions we would not, such as: 'Can our group meet regardless of whether or not outside A.A.s show up?'

In conclusion, Ernie acknowledges somewhat ruefully: "If we had reached out for help at the beginning, we would have suffered less. Now we're closer to our goal: having our group function according to the Traditions—a Fellowship with no 'authority' in charge."



In accordance with a 1990 General Service Conference Advisory Action, we now have a new way to carry the message into correctional facilities. This message of hope is available from G.S.O., (B-13) \$2.95. The book consists of 32 correctional facilities stories from previous Grapevines.

When Things Go Bump, Don't Grump— Communicate!

"As A.A. volunteers taking meetings into a correctional facility near Springfield, Ohio," says Walt C., "we know that we're the guests, not the proprietors. But when Mr. Substance Abuse Coordinator (S.A.C.) took away our coffee, our smoking privileges—and appointed a group secretary—we were a pretty grumpy crew."

What to do? First, Walt relates, "my A.A. friends Carol R. and Rocky R. joined with me in a group conscience meeting (three A.A.s and God). Our proposed solutions ran the gamut from canceling our commitment altogether to seeking help from A.A.s with more tolerance and experience.

"Sanity prevailed. We contacted our C.F. committee and the C.F. staff member at the General Service Office, and they both said the same thing: Sit down and talk with Mr. S.A.C., seek a mutually acceptable solution, and pray before you go."

Meeting with Mr. S.A.C. as suggested, Walt explained that the A.A.s' intention "was not to tell him how to run his program but, rather, to have the group function as much like an 'outside' group as possible. I also gave him a copy of 'The A.A. Group' pamphlet and expressed appreciation for the facility's hospitality to Alcoholics Anonymous.

"Mr. S.A.C. listened, learned and cooperated. He agreed to let the group hold a monthly group conscience meeting, form a steering committee, and elect rotating officers. Thanks to the generosity of an outside A.A. group, we again have a pot to make coffee and cups to drink it out of. We're still not smoking, but what a small price to pay for the privilege of attending a meeting."

Now, says Walt, "comes the real kicker: Some months later, Mr. S.A.C. asked us to start a second A.A. meeting. As you can see, we're communicating just fine."

Treatment Facilities

Dependability is the Key To Effective Service

"When I first got into service," said Philadelphian Frank D., "what impressed me most about our A.A.s carrying the message into treatment facilities was their absolute

dependability. They might have to travel many miles through rainstorms, blizzards and fog, but they had committed to come and they did. I can't think of anything that better assesses the credibility of A.A. No matter how sober we look or how meaningful our message, these won't cut ice if we don't show up."

The importance of dependability punctuated a workshop on "Carrying the Message into Treatment Facilities" at A.A.'s 1990 International Convention in Seattle last summer, as did emphasis on service and our singleness of purpose. "I came into A.A. not wanting to be an alcoholic, and at first I talked about everything except alcohol," Frank acknowledged, "but as a result of getting involved in T.F. service, I started sharing my experience—and the only experience I had was that I didn't drink today."

Underscoring Frank's words, his fellow panelist Lee M., of Pompano Beach, Florida, stressed that carrying the message of A.A.'s primary purpose "is a grave responsibility. The treatment centers treat the disease and we treat the recovery," he said. "That recovery is squarely based on our suggested Twelve Steps."

Sharing his experience from the floor, workshop participant Roy D., past-chairperson of the Central New York Institutions Committee, observed that, "Frequently the Steps are taught by substance abuse counselors as part of their instructional programs. Consequently, many newcomers come in knowing little about sobriety and nothing about service. They have the notion that the A.A. meeting is just another form of group therapy. In our area, we have set up a program whereby we take the clients of rehabs through the Steps and Traditions. We tell them the difference between open and closed meetings; and we explain that A.A.s share their experience in recovery from alcoholism—not the vague touchy, feely things they may have heard about from somebody else."

Both Frank and Lee mentioned the rapidly increasing scope of their respective T.F. efforts. "In the five-county Philadelphia area," Frank reported, "we take roughly 250 meetings a month into 65 treatment centers. High participation at the group level is what makes this extensive commitment possible. To insure that our commitments are met, we also have hosts. Their function is to be on hand as backups in case the assigned speakers don't show up."

In Broward County, Florida, Lee related, "the institutions committee started up rather informally in 1980. As the result of a lot of bumps and bruises and the learning process, we today have 160 A.A. members on our committee and take 90 meetings a week into both treatment and correctional facilities. That adds up to more than 2,000 people we reach each week with the message of recovery in A.A."

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided.

April

- 4-7 — *Casa Grande, Arizona*. Campout. Write: Ch., Box 828, Casa Grande, AZ 85222
- 5-7 — *San Jose, California*. Sixth Conf. (presented by gay & lesbian members) Write: Ch., Box 6978, San Jose, CA 95150-6978
- 5-7 — *Niagara Falls, New York*. Western New York Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 86, Amherst, NY 14226
- 5-7 — *Grand Forks, North Dakota*. Northern Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1262, Grand Forks, ND 58206-1262
- 5-7 — *Tulsa, Oklahoma*. First Annual Oklahoma-Indiana Conf. Write: Ch., Box 675, Tulsa, OK 74101
- 5-7 — *Longview, Texas*. 22nd Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2082, Longview, TX 75606
- 5-7 — *Trinity, Texas*. Spirit of the Pines. Write: Ch., 320 Market, #5, Galveston, TX 77550
- 5-7 — *Clarksburg, West Virginia*. Jackson's Mill Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26302-0825
- 5-7 — *Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada*. Southern Alberta Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 212, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Y5
- 5-7 — *Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada*. 21st Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., #205-8804 86th St., Fort St. John, BC V1J 5L7
- 5-7 — *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. 12th Conv. (presented by gay & lesbian members) Write: Ch., Box 1031, Station "A," 757 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 2P1
- 5-7 — *Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada*. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 453, Dauphin, MB R7N 2V3
- 5-7 — *Kaiserslautern, West Germany*. Roundup. Write: Ch., 230 MP Co., Box 7623, APO, NY 09227
- 11-14 — *Palm Springs, California*. Fourth Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3003, Palm Desert, CA 92261
- 12-13 — *Allegany, New York*. Fifth Anniversary Recovery Weekend. Write: Ch., 824 N. Union St., Olean, NY 14760
- 12-14 — *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia Area Intergroup Roundup. Write: Ch., Room 309, 311 S. Juniper St., Philadelphia, PA 19107
- 12-14 — *Wichita, Kansas*. Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1814, Wichita, KS 67201
- 12-14 — *New Orleans, Louisiana*. Big Deep South Conv. Write: Ch., 4041 Tulane Ave.,

- Suite 301, New Orleans, LA 70119
- 12-14 — *Eau Claire, Wisconsin*. Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 615, Menomonie, WI 54751
- 12-14 — *Superior, Wisconsin*. 46th Annual Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 996, Superior, WI 54880
- 12-14 — *Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada*. 10th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 848, Flin Flon, MB R8A 1N7
- 12-14 — *Toronto, Ontario, Canada*. 41st Regional Conf. Write: Ch., 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5
- 19-21 — *Eureka Springs, Arkansas*. 15th Annual Conv. Write: Tr., 1944 Brent Lane, Fayetteville, AR 72703
- 19-21 — *Ridgecrest, California*. Fourth Indian Wells Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6154, Ridgecrest, CA 93555
- 19-21 — *Detroit, Michigan*. National Men's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 43611, Detroit, MI 48243
- 19-21 — *Barriere, British Columbia, Canada*. Chu-Chua 10th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 175, Barriere, BC V0E 1E0
- 20-21 — *Grand Rapids, Michigan*. 43rd Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., 1539 Plainfield Ave., Grand Rapids, MI 49504
- 26-28 — *Modesto, California*. 19th Annual H&I Conf. Write: Ch., Box 687, Modesto, CA 95353
- 26-28 — *Harvey, Illinois*. Spring Conf. Write: Box 4, Joliet, IL 60434
- 26-28 — *Kalispell, Montana*. Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1935, Whitefish, MT 59937
- 26-28 — *Canandaigua, New York*. Sixth Conf. of the Lakes. Write: Ch., Box 890, Geneva, NY 14456
- 26-28 — *Lincoln, Nebraska*. The Spring Fling. Write: Ch., Box 30852, Lincoln, NE 68503
- 26-28 — *Fairlee, Vermont*. 24th Conv. Write: Ch., Box 276, Townshend, VT 05353
- 26-28 — *Banff, Alberta, Canada*. Banff

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

April (page 13): Gratitude; spiritual experience; autonomy.

May (page 34): Sponsorship.

- Round Up. Write: Ch., Box 6744, Station D, Calgary, AB T2P 2E6
- 26-28 — *St. Paul, Alberta, Canada*. Roundup. Write: Ch., District 3, Box 3018, St. Paul, AB T0A 3A0
- 26-28 — *North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Battlefords Roundup '91. Write: Ch., Box 520, North Battleford, SK S9A 2Y8
- 26-28 — *Nassau, Bahamas*. First Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box SS6089, Nassau, Bahamas
- 26-28 — *Dublin, Ireland*. 34th All-Ireland Conv. Write: Ch., GSO, 109 South Circular Road, Leonards Corner, Dublin 8, Ireland

May

- 3-4 — *Jerusalem, Israel*. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7538, Jerusalem, Israel 92428
- 3-5 — *Grand Rapids, Minnesota*. Iron Range Get Together. Write: Ch., Box 469, Grand Rapids, MN 55744
- 3-5 — *Reno, Nevada*. Northern Nevada H&I Conf. Write: Ch., 2100 Idlewild Dr., Reno, NV 89509
- 3-5 — *Grants Pass, Oregon*. 16th Annual Rogue Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1741,

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on June, July or August events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by April 10, the calendar deadline for the June/July issue of Box 4-5-9.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19_____

Name of event: _____
Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: _____
(exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Flip up this end of page — more events listed on reverse side

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board

May (cont.)

- Grants Pass, OR 97526
- 3-5 — *Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 35th Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., 1169 Colgate Dr., Monroeville, PA 15146
- 3-5 — *Golden, British Columbia, Canada*. Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 1405, Golden, BC V0A 1H0
- 10-12 — *Sarasota, Florida*. Big Book Weeknd. Write: Ch., 3951 Sawyer Rd., Box 112, Sarasota, FL 34233
- 10-12 — *Roanoke, Virginia*. Roanoke Women's Retreat. Write: Ch., Box 5795, Roanoke, VA 24012
- 10-12 — *La Crosse, Wisconsin*. 40th Annual Spring Conf. Write: Tr., Box 1893, La-Crosse, WI 54602-1893
- 10-12 — *Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada*. 27th Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 851, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6V6
- 10-12 — *Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada*. 25th Anniversary Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 73, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4V5
- 17-18 — *Little Rock, Arkansas*. First Annual Correctional Conf. Write: Ch., 825 Belle Ave., Fort Smith, AR 72901
- 17-19 — *La Mirada, California*. 10th Annual H&I Conf. Write: Ch., Box 41736, Los Angeles, CA 90041
- 17-19 — *Rehoboth Beach, Delaware*. 31st Annual State Conv. Write: Sec., 39 Duchess Circle, Dover, DE 19901
- 17-19 — *Holyoke, Massachusetts*. 22nd Annual Western Mass. Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 5193, Springfield, MA 01101
- 17-19 — *Rock Springs, Wyoming*. Spring Conv. Write: Sec., Box 1301, Green River, WY 82935
- 17-19 — *Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada*. 49th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., 1254 Todd Rd., Kamloops, BC V2C 5B3
- 17-19 — *Campbellton, New Brunswick, Canada*. New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island Area Assembly 81 Roundup. Write: Ch., 25 Hatley Cr., St. Eleanors, PE C1N 5E9

- 23-26 — *Springfield, Missouri*. Heart of the Ozarks Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 1607, Springfield, MO 65801
- 24-26 — *Bowling Green, Kentucky*. Ninth Annual Sponsorship Rally. Write: Ch., Box 20033, Bowling Green, KY 42102
- 24-26 — *Boyer Mountain (Boyer Falls), Michigan*. Ninth Annual Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 260, East Jordan, MI 49727
- 24-26 — *Bloomington, Minnesota*. Gopher State Roundup XVIII. Write: Ch., Box 65265, St. Paul, MI 55165-0295
- 24-26 — *Portland, Oregon*. First Annual OR-CYPAA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 55902, Portland, OR 97238
- 24-26 — *Memphis, Tennessee*. Third Mid-South Spring Fling. Write: Ch., 3592 N. Trezevant, Memphis, TN 38127
- 24-26 — *San Angelo, Texas*. Concho Valley Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1341, San Angelo, TX 76902-1341
- 24-26 — *Castlegar, British Columbia, Canada*. 18th Annual Round-Up. Write: Ch., Site 19, Comp. 14, R.R. 2, Castlegar, BC V1N 3L4
- 24-26 — *Songton City, Osan, Korea*. Annual Korea Conf. Write: Ch., PSC, Box 4207, APO SF 96366-0006
- 24-27 — *Boca Raton, Florida*. Sponsorship Weekend. Write: Ch., 3909 Redman Pkwy., Lantana, FL 33462
- 24-27 — *Boston, Massachusetts*. 15th Boston Round-Up (hosted by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 1009-GMF, Boston, MA 02205
- 31-June 2 — *Flagstaff, Arizona*. Flagstaff Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 22148, Flagstaff, AZ 86002
- 31-June 2 — *Eustis, Florida*. Spring Meet at Lake Yale. Write: Ch., 609 Glenview Ct., Winter Garden, FL 34787
- 31-June 2 — *Clearwater, Florida*. Second Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 40238, St. Petersburg, FL 33743
- 31-June 2 — *Kearney, Nebraska*. 32nd State Reunion. Write: Ch., Box 1126, North Platte, NE 69103

June

- 7-8 — *Nashville, Tennessee*. 21st Founder's Day Reunion. Write: Ch., 2407 Nolensville Rd., Nashville, TN 37211
- 7-9 — *Key West, Florida*. Sunset Roundup '91. Write: Ch., Box 4165, Key West, FL 33040
- 7-9 — *Davenport, Iowa*. Iowa Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 952, Davenport, IA 52805-0952
- 7-9 — *Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada*. 13th Annual MSA Rally. Write: Ch., 1315-3044 Clearbrook Rd., Clearbrook, BC V2T 4T6
- 7-9 — *Calgary, Alberta, Canada*. 10th Annual Calgary Gratitude Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 954, Station M, Calgary, AB T2P 2K4
- 8-9 — *Great Bend, Kansas*. Kansas Area Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 1773, Salina, KS 67402-1773
- 9-15 — *Vilnius, Lithuania*. Lithuanian Conv. Write: Ch., L.A.A.A. c/o M & R Insurance, 2808 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90404
- 13-16 — *Hagerstown, Maryland*. 21st State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 37131, Towson, MD 21286-7131
- 14-16 — *Akron, Ohio*. Ninth Loners International Conf. Write: Ch., Box 360446, Columbus, OH 43236
- 14-16 — *Bristol, Rhode Island*. 15th Annual Ocean State Young People's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 23199, Providence, RI 02903
- 14-16 — *Morgantown, West Virginia*. 39th West Virginia Conv. Write: Ch., Box 4, Fairmont, WV 26554
- 14-16 — *Chatham, Ontario, Canada*. 13th Annual Midseason Campout. Write: Ch., Box 5, Chatham, ON N7M 5K1
- 28-30 — *Wichita Falls, Texas*. Texoma Freedom Rally. Write: Ch., Box 3243, Wichita Falls, TX 76309-3243