

BOX 4-5-9

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

Vol. 20 No. 4

August-September 1975

New Archival Library At G.S.O. Shows the Roots of the Fellowship

A.A.'s earliest records and other priceless memorabilia are in safe-keeping forever now, housed in the attractive new A.A. archival library on the eighth floor at 468 Park Avenue South in New York. Just opened, it was a highlight of area delegates' tour of G.S.O. and Grapevine offices during the 25th meeting of the General Service Conference this year.

The archives are worth a special trip just because of the invaluable photographs on the walls, not to mention the bound volumes of precious papers documenting A.A.'s roots and our early history.

There, you can also see a copy of the original manuscript of the Big Book, the Lasker Award, the

(continued on p. 6)

"BILL W." BIOGRAPHY

"Bill W.," a biography of A.A.'s co-founder, by Robert Thomsen, has been published by Harper & Row. (Official publication date: September 30.) As a service to A.A. members, your G.S.O. will make the book available at a reduced price: \$8.50, postpaid. (The retail price in bookstores: \$10.95.) No charge orders accepted; no discounts for quantity purchases. To order, send name and address, and check or money order for \$8.50, to: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Welcome to Denver!

In case you've never seen me before . . .

My name is at the top of this page, and I'm the Alcoholics Anonymous newsletter put out bimonthly (in three languages) by your A.A. General Service Office (G.S.O.) in New York. Hi!

As you can tell from the date at the top of the page, I'm a little bit ahead of the 24-hour plan with this edition — but I have a very good reason.

Your G.S.O. wanted me to say, "Welcome to Denver" to every A.A. member and friend attending this joyous 40th Anniversary International Convention.

There's probably too much excitement around right now for you to read me. But please save me, take me home, and look me over.

You'll find almost nothing in this issue about the Convention (it's all in your printed program). But the "What Readers Say" story on page 2 gives you an idea of my usual contents. Except for Denver, I'm a fairly typical issue. On page 2, you'll learn how to join my circle of regular A.A. readers, if you don't already have your own private subscription.

Now, go get high on A.A. love in this beautiful, mile-high city. Look me up later, when you get home.

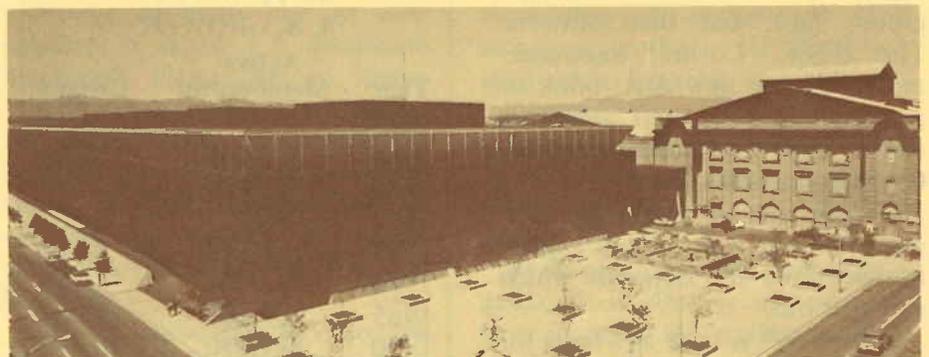
ABOUT CONVENTION TAPES AND ABOUT PHOTOS

As a courtesy to your fellow A.A.'s on the program, Convention-goers are asked to refrain from private taping of any Convention sessions.

However: Every single meeting is being taped by a topnotch pro-

fessional service, and tapes of any session can be bought in the Currigan Convention Center within hours after each meeting.

Naturally, we are all asked to be considerate of the anonymity of *other* A.A. members, and members of Al-Anon and Alateen, when taking any photographs. Thanks very much.



Site of A.A.'s 40th Anniversary International Convention

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WHAT READERS SAY ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

Over 2,000 of you returned the anonymous questionnaire about this newsletter sent with the February-March issue. Thanks so much! You give us at G.S.O. guidance on ways to improve *Box 4-5-9* and make it even more useful.

Apparently, the 2,144 respondents represent a good geographic sample of the A.A. population, since states and provinces with the biggest A.A. membership sent us the most answers. In addition to the U.S. and Canada, returns came from 22 other countries, plus a number of Loners and Internationalists.

We tried to find out what our readers like and dislike most, and what you want more of.

Overwhelmingly, you encourage us to drop "Special Gifts to G.S.O." and (maybe) "A.A. Calendar" in favor of more valuable material, especially items on group problems.

Besides the lead story on the front page, the most-read articles seem to be those about challenges groups face, and their answers. The G.S.R. Corner, announcements of any new A.A. book or pamphlet, G.S.O. staff activities, and news of A.A. overseas and the Grapevine are also liked.

Evidently, you appreciate information about A.A.'s Third Legacy (Service) and the structure which carries it out.

Box 4-5-9 is used as a basis for group (and assembly) discussions, almost 20% of you say. Almost

half the replying readers are G.S.R.'s or group secretaries, and about one-third post *Box 4-5-9* on a group bulletin board so all members can see it. (We wonder how they read the inside and back pages.)

Almost one-fourth of the readers keep a personal file of these bulletins for future reference, and 22% pass it along to an A.A. friend.

Notable categories of reader are other group "trusted servants," intergroup (central office) representatives and personnel, G.S. area committee members and delegates, and public information and institutions workers. But almost a tenth of you identify yourselves as "just a member."

We were surprised to learn about 1% of the respondents work professionally in the alcoholism field. Maybe some P.I. committees have discovered *Box 4-5-9* to be of use in public information or cooperation with professionals.

We're still compiling your handwritten, personal comments, which we value highly, and some of them can be put into action soon.

As previously indicated, *Box 4-5-9*, like our Fellowship itself, is evolving, so you can look forward to various changes (for the better, we hope).

"Promoting" of *Box 4-5-9* would stick in the craw of A.A.'s, of course, but we'd certainly like to "attract" more readers. A form for group or individual subscriptions is enclosed with this issue.

| 40 YEARS OF A.A. GROWTH | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Year | Active Membership | Groups |
| 1935 | 2 | 1? |
| 1940 | 1,400 | 50 |
| 1945 | 12,986 | 556 |
| 1950 | 96,475 | 3,527 |
| 1955 | 131,619 | 5,927 |
| 1960 | 151,604 | 8,211 |
| 1965 | 217,967 | 11,752 |
| 1970 | 311,450 | 16,459 |
| 1975 | 502,733 | 25,030 |

SHIPPING PROGRESS, IF NOT PERFECTION

Your G.S.O. shipping department cannot claim *all* the credit, of course. U.S. and Canadian postal services may have improved a bit. Anyhow, we're encouraged that the results of our latest shipping survey show several improvements over the one taken a year before.

We are *very* grateful to the 744 of you who returned questionnaires sent with orders of books and other A.A. literature. When you do not tell us, we have no way of knowing how soon and how well your orders are delivered.

Last year, G.S.O.'s shipping men handled over 90,000 outgoing pieces of mail (*not* including bulletins like this) and *over 60,880 packages of literature* (plus 158,000 incoming communications and over 2,500,000 pieces of mimeographing).

Earlier this year, 97% of you said your order was received in good condition (about the same as the year before, maybe meaning the packing holds up well).

How fast do orders arrive? About one-third of you reported, "In less than two weeks." That's 9% more than a year ago. About 89% reported less than four weeks; 96%, less than six. That shows improvements of 5% and 1%.

Replying to "Are you satisfied with the shipping service?," 92% of you said yes — a 4% better record than a year ago.

There was an increase of more than 3% in the number saying contents were received *exactly* as ordered. Among those whose order did not arrive that way, there was a 7% growth in back-order efficiency.

So we guess it's safe to claim some shipping progress, if not shipping perfection. Thanks loads for your detailed comments. All are used. And, one package at a time, we'll continue trying to improve our shipping contact with you.

Delegate Corner

ARE D.C.M.'S DOING THEIR JOB?

Since most area delegates to the General Service Conference have been district committee members, discussion of the D.C.M.'s function was a particularly valuable part of the 1975 sessions in New York.

Even a superdelegate couldn't visit all area groups with any frequency, so the D.C.M. is an indispensable link in the A.A. communication system — between the area committee and G.S.R.'s — as Clyde J. (Kans.) pointed out. Both number of groups and geographical area should be considered in the districting plan, he suggested. Some good D.C.M.'s hold sharing sessions, meetings on Conference-approved literature, public information discussions, and study meetings on Traditions, "The A.A. Service Manual," and Concepts, with all members welcome, Clyde said.

In Manitoba, according to Reeta H., D.C.M.'s hold regular educational sessions for G.S.R.'s. There are also courses on the Manual, study sessions on all A.A. Guidelines, liaison with central office personnel, and meetings for showing the G.S.O. filmstrip. *Box 4-5-9* is widely distributed, too.

For copies of Clyde's and Reeta's talks, write G.S.O.

MEET THE NEW FRESHMAN CLASS

Five new trustees on our General Service Board were scheduled to attend the Denver Convention: **Gordon M. Patrick**, Toronto, Ont., nonalcoholic, is an official of the Ontario Ministry of Health. **John W.**, Washington, D.C., Northeast U.S. regional trustee, has 18 years' sobriety, was a Panel 23 delegate, and set up an area mini-conference and a "sponsorship" plan for teaching medical students about A.A.

Mike R., Cordell, Okla., Southwest U.S. regional trustee, has 28 years' sobriety, was a Panel 15 delegate, and chaired the state P.I. committee.

N. M. ("Mac") C., Winnipeg, Man., general service trustee, Canada, had his last drink in 1956, was a Panel 12 delegate, and introduced Big Book study sessions in his province.

Charles ("Chuck") H., Fairfield, Conn., an "in-town" general service trustee, is also corporate chairman of the Grapevine and a member of the trustees' P.I. Committee. He took his last drink in 1966.

Trustee Corner

G.S.R. Corner

'I BENEFITED THE MOST'

"Becoming a G.S.R.," writes Bob M. (Lakewood Group, Tacoma, Wash.), "becoming for the first time interested in A.A. service, made me realize how far I was from being a grown-up, caring A.A. member. I had never before taken part in any A.A. service work. Now that I am, and am interested in trying to help in my district, I find I am the one who has benefited the most — as if I were a newcomer again!

"Looking back over my 'apprenticeship' as a G.S.R., one thing stands out: Reaching out in all directions is the key — not reaching blindly, but following up on leads, writing you people, listening with an open ear and an open mind," Bob added. To lead a study meeting on Tradition Seven, he boned up with "As Bill Sees It," the "Twelve and Twelve," and "The A.A. Group" — and wanted more information!

Bill W. (Everett, Wash.) writes of a P.I. project in his district to furnish libraries and secondary-school teachers with a folder of selected A.A. pamphlets.

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD CENTRAL OFFICES

We now conclude our tale (started in the Feb.-Mar. and Apr.-May issues) of how good intergroups evolved in and around Anonymoustville, U.S.A. Experience taught our correspondents basic principles:

(1) It takes 40 to 50 strong, active groups to open a central office; fewer can't supply enough continued support; (2) each C.O. in the Anonymoustville area bonds all its employees, and an outside auditing firm makes regular reports to all the groups; (3) paid employees are a good idea — usually, A.A.'s with excellent professional office skills; (4) regular meetings of a central or steering committee are essential; it should also meet regularly with general service area people and with institutions and public information committees; (5) regional C.O. secretaries meet periodically.

One problem Anonymoustville hasn't licked yet is the rapid turnover of group servants. Inexperienced new officers are always having to get informed about A.A. in the community. Continuity of communication among groups and central offices is endangered.

How is the old mother office in Anonymoustville these days, with all those offspring? It answered 50,000 calls last year, and has about four paid employees and nearly 20 volunteers.

Central Office Corner

ANN M. RETIRES FROM G.S.O. SEPTEMBER 1

After 27 years' service, Ann M., currently staff coordinator, will retire Sept. 1. Some of us are at last reluctantly beginning to believe it. But we don't want to.

She described to a recent visitor how she made a decision to go to work for the Alcoholic Foundation office, as G.S.O. was called back then. In 1947, Annie was shaking out her last drunk in the N.Y. Intergroup office. The member who was found to take her to a meeting near her home, in Greenwich Village, was Sarah J., already a G.S.O. "secretary" (as everyone there except Bill W. was called).

Ann went to the office weekly for lunch with her sponsor and came to know (besides Sarah) Bobbie B., Charlotte R., and Bill, of course — the whole staff then.

In 1948, when a new staff member had to be added, Ann was the unanimous choice. Her first assignment was typing answers to letters. She had never been a secretary, nor even typed, before. But in those days, everybody at the old Lexington Avenue address pitched in to help with all the chores.

Ann told the visitor, "I guess the most important change I have seen in A.A. is that we're now more aware of, appreciate more, and are willing to cooperate more with non-A.A. efforts to help alcoholics. We are less fearful and defensive now."

Tributes to A.A. individuals are not really the *Box 4-5-9* style, of course, in deference to "principles before personalities." But Annie is one personality from whom a large A.A. generation is still learning a great deal about our principles, through her courageous example. All of us here remember her willingness to be the lone voice of minority opinion — often, as it turned out, wiser than the majority. Yet no one recalls any personal malice in Ann, or any I-told-you-so's.

Ann would refuse the credit, but she is largely responsible for the Internationalists service at G.S.O., which has twelfth-stepped thousands of A.A.'s at sea or otherwise alone. Reading the beautiful letters she wrote our first Internationalists, you feel the compassion born of personal feelings of shyness and isolation. She says, of course, writing them was good for *her*.

The area delegates' chairman, Mick M. (Ky.), reported to the 1975 Conference a resolution of gratitude to Annie for her years of service. G.S.O. staff members were clapping so hard they must have stung their palms badly. Wouldn't you guess that's why their eyes watered?

SHARE YOUR DETOX CENTER EXPERIENCE — IT'S NEEDED

Is your group doing enough about prospective new A.A. members sent to you by a detox center — in comparison to what your group does about helping an alcoholic who walks in off the street on his or her own?

Whoever you are, dear A.A. reader, please tell us your experience with this. (We need actual firsthand experience, of course, not just generalized guesses or impressions.)

As shown in the *Final Report* of the 1975 Silver Anniversary General Service Conference, the sponsorship needed for professionally referred problem drinkers is of increasing concern in A.A., as professional interest in helping alcoholics steps up.

We know of some groups that go all out to sponsor the man or woman sent by a court or A.S.A.P. program, rehab facility or alcoholism information center. Other groups may seem less friendly to such newcomers, we hear. What about *your* group?

Please tell us, so we can share your experience with others. Thanks.

A.A.W.S. DIRECTORS ADDED

Dave C., Raleigh, N.C., and Bruce W., Waukegan, Ill., were recently added to the corporate directorship of A.A. World Services. Both are regional trustees on the General Service Board — Dave, Southeast U.S., and Bruce, East Central.

A.A.W.S., Inc., is, in effect, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the board, and is legally its publishing arm, and is also responsible for the business operations of G.S.O. Its directors, all experienced businessmen and -women, meet with the G.S.O. staff at least once a month, and frequently are called upon for special services to G.S.O. They are, of course, not paid for this A.A. activity.

Increasing the directorship from seven to nine was authorized by the General Service Board because of the increased A.A.W.S. work load, necessitated by the growth of our Fellowship.

100 FREE COPIES OF NEW LEAFLET

The first A.A. pamphlet ever published (believe it or not!) about G.S.O. — "Your A.A. General Service Office" — is now ready!

In two soft colors, lavishly illustrated with cartoons, the new folder explains in simple language exactly what G.S.O. does, and what it is.

Any group that asks may have 100 copies free (additional ones at 3¢ each).

It tells, in short, punchy style, how G.S.O. began with only two people (it is older than all A.A. groups except two!), what it looks like today, what free services it provides A.A. members, where A.A. literature comes from, how the Grapevine is produced, etc., and it answers many questions that some A.A.'s have wondered about for years.

FREE HELP FOR NEW GROUPS

Know of a new A.A. group getting started? It is entitled to free A.A. literature and a Group Handbook from G.S.O., plus other services.

But first, somebody *must* send G.S.O. the group name, mailing address, G.S.R.'s name, etc. Then our Records Department can add the information to our files. From then on, the new group will be in touch with other A.A.'s all over the world. We can refer inquiries to the new group, and will help out with any problem.

ROUND-THE-WORLD A.A. GROWTH AND PROBLEMS

Alcoholism, especially among young people, is growing in nine areas of the world – but so is Alcoholics Anonymous.

Arriving from England at Boston airport, John L. ("Dr. Jack") Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of our General Service Board, reported those findings at a press conference upon completing a seven-week global tour of A.A. offices in Africa, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. Highlights follow:

Hawaii – Dr. Jack spoke at an A.A. meeting attended by more than 300 members, physicians, social workers, and Navy personnel.

New Zealand – Many radio, press, and TV interviews with Dr. Jack carried the A.A. message. He also met with numbers of governmental health officials, the N.Z. General Service Board, and an A.A. meeting of about 500 members – a record size there.

Australia – Dr. Jack spoke at hospitals, to medical and governmental groups, and to an A.A. meeting with 800 present. He spent days with Australian A.A. service workers.

Thailand – Dr. Jack delivered a paper on how to work with A.A. before a plenary session of the 31st International Congress on Alcohol

and Drug Dependence, in Bangkok. **India** – Sixty A.A.'s peppered Dr. Jack with medical questions for three hours before 1,500 (including many doctors and dignitaries) arrived for a big meeting.

South Africa – Why did one reporter try (in vain) to get Dr. Jack to pose in a bar, glass in hand? (No A.A. needs more than one guess!) Our board chairman met with 50 professionals, spoke at A.A. meetings in Johannesburg and Durban, with 600 present at each.

At one A.A. home, a choir saluted Dr. and Mrs. Norris with all verses of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and 200 A.A. members of all ethnic groups crowded into the house and yard to hear his talk.

France – About 160 heard Dr. Jack discuss at an open meeting A.A.'s early days in the U.S. Paris now has 25 groups. Interviews again.

Belgium – En route by train, Dr. Jack heard from a young American student (an A.A. member) about two superanonymous groups in Poland, and 350 government-sponsored "groups" in Yugoslavia. At a Brussels A.A. meeting with 75 members, his talk was translated into both French and Flemish. One hundred attended a meeting in Antwerp.

Germany – Radio, press, TV, army officers, A.A.'s, and Al-Anons were talked to. Interpreter at one large mental hospital had only shaky English; but at an A.A. meeting, questions about intergroups and anonymity were clear – and familiar! The German G.S. Board is effective and mature.

England – Dr. Jack met with British general service workers, governmental officials, and many hospital and prison professionals.

NEW WALL DISPLAY – THE TWELVE STEPS

Three feet wide, six feet high. On white, enamel-finish, durable Masonite, 1/8-inch thick, that practically can't wear out. Block

lettering in black, with title and numerals in bright red.

That's the new Twelve Steps wall hanger for A.A. meeting rooms now available from G.S.O.

It can hang (from one hook) on a heavy brass chain through brass-grommeted holes. Hinged in the middle with brass rings, it folds to 3' x 3' for easy carrying and storage in a heavy-duty carton with handhold. The cost is \$25, post-paid.

FINAL REPORT ON THIRD WORLD SERVICE MEETING

The 32-page *Report of the Third World Service Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous* (London, England, Oct. 15-18, 1974) has now been published by Great Britain's G.S.O., and we've seen a copy. It is a wonderful eye-opener. Our British colleagues have done a superb job.

Thirty-three delegates from four continents (19 nations) attended, and Ronald L., chairman of the host General Service Board of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, presided.

The theme was "Sharing," and a four-committee system made it possible for delegates to help each other with genuine experience in matters of agenda, finance, literature/publishing, and policy/admissions.

Inga-Britt S. (Sweden) said in the keynote talk, "In A.A., sharing is indeed a unique responsibility. We cannot enforce the responsibility with rules or regulations. We cannot discharge it through money alone. And no one else can relieve us of the responsibility. Only we, guided by our individual and collective conscience, can voluntarily accept the responsibility and transform it into a life-sustaining gift to ourselves and other alcoholics."

At the closing session, Gordon W. (U.K.) said that, in behalf of

(continued on p. 6)

WORLD SERVICE MEETING

(continued from p. 5)

the retiring delegates, he was "handing on the trust" to newer delegates. Maria-Marta L. (Argentina) responded, "Many of us have traveled thousands of kilometers to be here. We came with different languages and different ways of living. But we came with one primary purpose. . . ."

"We live in a world full of hate, violence, fear, and egoism. Nevertheless, we succeeded in forgetting all this. I believe it was because we have *trusted* one another."

'RIGHT OF PARTICIPATION'

Each classification of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in proportion to the responsibility each must discharge.

That's the kernel of our Fourth Concept for world service — perfectly straightforward and sensible. In writing the Concepts, our co-founder Bill W. wanted to make sure the A.A. service system would work, no matter how big A.A. grew.

The latest estimate of A.A. membership is more than 800,000 — but that's a pathetically small figure compared to the number of alcoholics in the world. We want A.A. to grow, not because we want to brag about our size, but because we want to reach our brothers and sisters out there.

The Fourth Concept is easy to apply in group matters. Everyone who carries his or her load of responsibility to the group is entitled to a voice (or vote) in group affairs.

In our Third Legacy (Service) system, the same holds true. For example, at this year's General Service Conference, we had 133 voting members. Of those, 68.4% were the 91 delegates sent by U.S. and Canadian groups. G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members repre-

sented 11.3%, and the remaining 20.3% were G.S. Board trustees and A.A.W.S. and Grapevine corporate directors.

That is about the proportion in which those servants have responsibility for carrying out the functions of our world services.

NEW ARCHIVAL LIBRARY

(continued from p. 1)

original *Saturday Evening Post* and *Liberty* articles, and correspondence with alcoholics all over the world.

Such letters from the earliest A.A. members telling of group dilemmas and how they got resolved have always formed the pool of shared experience which is the heart of A.A.'s world services. It is amazing to see how often problems of today were faced and solved by A.A.'s more than 30 years ago.

Nonalcoholic archivist Nell Wing, Bill W.'s personal secretary for many years, welcomes visitors to the newly decorated, big, sunny corner room, where she is assisted part-time by Harriet G. The office has pale blue walls, taupe carpeting, drapery, cabinets, and shelves, with modern wood-finish desks and comfortable chairs. Many luxuriant green plants flourish among the treasured mementoes.

Irreplaceable originals, such as the first draft of the Big Book, naturally are stored in a bank vault for safekeeping, but microfilm copies of that draft and all of Bill W.'s voluminous office correspondence can be viewed in one of the two quiet storage-and-study rooms next door. There is also equipment for listening to recordings of historic A.A. talks and reminiscences of early members.

Nell and Harriet are well along in cataloguing and indexing this material. Such records will be indispensable to responsible scholars and writers of the future, as they

recently were to Robert Thomsen, whose biography of Bill W. is being made available to A.A.'s at a special prepublication price in Denver (see page 1).

But more than that, these records are valuable to A.A. members. *They will help to insure that fact replaces myth about A.A. and its early days.*

George G., chairman of the trustees' Archives Committee, has pointed to the old saying "He who does not know his own history is doomed to repeat it." George has written oldtimers, "What we do in the future will depend upon what we remember about the past. Many important A.A. lessons learned in the early days are still continually (and unnecessarily) being rediscovered. Let's not keep on inventing the wheel!" His committee has appealed for written or taped reminiscences about A.A.'s earliest years.

Midge M., who serves as the Archives Committee's secretary, and George are happy to learn that more and more state, area, and regional committees are wishing they had a record of useful "shared experiences" of the local A.A. past. Some state committees have begun to put together such A.A. histories. In Arizona, for instance, each group was asked to complete a one-page, 13-item questionnaire on its own history.

If your area plans any such project, please let Nell know whether she can help. And, of course, she hopes to see a copy of the fruits of such loving labor and service.

Nell has recently spoken in several parts of the country about the archives, regaling A.A.'s with tales most have never heard about A.A.'s early tears and laughs.

Oh yes — she and Harriet ask us to tell all A.A. committees and offices: Please put a date and address on each flyer, bulletin, poster, and miscellaneous item you send us, so it can be properly filed and indexed for the future.