

## How do A.A. Films Happen? A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Production Process

Two new films have been added to the sizable list of audiovisual material available for internal and external use. Who decides to make these films? How are they conceived, produced and approved?

An important catalyst for the production of one of the films, the 28-minute "Young People and A.A.," was the 1983 survey of members revealing that 20 percent of newcomers were under 30 years old (see *Box 4-5-9*, Oct./Nov. issue). Many A.A.s voiced the need for a concerted outreach effort directed to the young.

During 1985, the trustees' Public Information Committee had produced two radio public service announcements directed to young people with heartwarming results. It also had sent out a press release informing the media of A.A.'s eagerness to carry the message to young people and the availability of two pamphlets, "Young People and A.A.," and "Too Young?," the latter presented in comic-strip format. These efforts were successful in attracting young alcoholics to A.A., but more needed to be done.

In 1985, the General Service Conference requested that the trustees' Public Information Committee of the General Service Board bring back to the 1986 General Service Conference ideas on how best to reach out to the young alcoholic through audiovisual means.

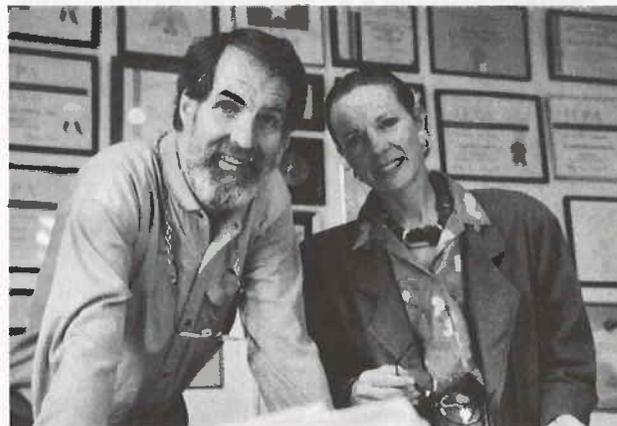
After many meetings, the trustees' Public Information Committee prepared a brief audiovisual "Report of Ideas" for a 28-minute film. Bids for making the audiovisual "Report" were considered in the usual way, and finally the committee selected the husband and wife filmmaking team of Crommie and Crommie for the job.

Says filmmaker Karen Crommie, "At the Public Information Committee's direction, we developed footage on preliminary stories of two young A.A.s that was subsequently presented to the 1986 Conference."

The Conference approved the audiovisual "Report of Ideas," as well as the total concept for the film. Over the next year, the Public Information Committee guided the filmmakers in making the feature film, "Young People

and A.A.," which was presented to and approved by the 1987 General Service Conference.

A similar committee-to-Conference process marked production by the trustees' Correctional Facilities Committee of the 16-minute film, "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell," adapted from the A.A. pamphlet of the same title. However, the two films are designed for different uses. "A.A. and Young People" is designed for the public as well as for use within the Fellowship. Directed to suffering young alcoholics, it will be shown on television as a public service feature, in schools, and excerpted for inclusion in community outreach programs.



*David and Karen Crommie in their California studio.*

"It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell," on the other hand, is designed for use by A.A. and is targeted to three main audiences: young alcoholics in correctional facilities; prison officials and custodial staff members; and the A.A.s who carry the message of sobriety into hospitals and institutions.

Karen and David Crommie, who produced both films, are no strangers to A.A. They created the film, "Alcoholics Anonymous—An Inside View" in the 1970s and later

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produced eight 30- and 60-second TV public service announcements. These, along with radio PSAs available in English, French and Spanish, continue to air across the country.

Karen Crommie is the writer/director member of the team, while David acts as cameraman/film editor. When asked what comes first, the words or the pictures, Karen says, "Often we start with the visual. However, in the case of A.A., we are careful to have the verbal content approved first. We never sacrifice words for image, nor do we embellish. The stories of the recovering young alcoholics who appear in the two films, in some cases with members of their families, are dramatic enough." In keeping with A.A.'s anonymity tradition, she adds, full faces of members are not shown.

"Young People and A.A." focuses on the drinking histories and recovery of the four A.A.s who appear in the film. Footage shot in four states simulates their lives as they used to be and as they are now in the actual locations—including a Denver high school, the Loops of the Oklahoma Panhandle, the streets of San Francisco, and the Boston Commons at dawn.

There are many touching scenes. One depicts a young woman, Tracy P., who recalls that she got drunk as usual after her high school graduation, finally passed out at a party "up in the mountains" and wound up driving home with strangers. "A couple of hours later," she continues, "my mom came upstairs and she opened my door and she was crying and I was crying and she said, 'Honey, there's nothing I can do for you any more.' She said, 'You have a choice, and you can go to A.A. And if you go to Alcoholics Anonymous and you don't drink, you can continue to live at home.' And I'll tell you, at that time in my life, that was not a real easy choice to make."

The film ends at an A.A. meeting, where a sobriety countdown is in progress. As each time period is called out, several people stand up and acknowledge the applause. Each time, the scene dissolves to a specific location, and a "celebrant's" voice is heard, reminiscing about how it used to be when he or she was drinking and how it is now living sober in A.A. The countdown con-

tinues: two years . . . one year . . . ninety days . . . and on down to one day—24 hours of sobriety.

The film "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell" briefly depicts the stories of four young A.A.s who landed in prison as the result of their drinking, and today are sober in A.A. The narration, the Crommies state, "is verbatim transcription and, as such, is often fragmented and ungrammatical."

Film was shot inside correctional facilities in the United States and Canada. In one scene, Sylvia, a young woman from Puerto Rico, tells how she stabbed a girl during an argument and "was put away." The camera cuts to an A.A. meeting inside a New York prison, later to a Spanish-language meeting on the "outside." Sylvia's voice is heard: ". . . I just kept going to meetings . . . I love my sobriety and I feel good about myself. It works one day at a time—*un día a la vez*."

Later in the film, the camera pans along a Canadian lake at dusk, and the voice of Wilf is heard: "I dropped out of school. . . . When I got to be about 19 or 20 I left Hay River, Northwest Territories, and went to Edmonton." There, at bars frequented by Native Americans, he continues, "I used to hear the term 'drunken Indian' and 'firewater' . . . but I don't think I believed it applied to me. . . . And then I started to drink and one thing led to another and it wasn't very long before I . . . got picked up for robbery with violence and I got three years here in Prince Albert Penitentiary."

The camera cuts to a prisoner in a cell watching TV. Wilf relates that "one of the fellows came and gave me a pamphlet to read and I read that. Then he said, 'Why don't you come to a meeting' and I did." The camera pans to a car driving away from the penitentiary and Wilf is saying, ". . . at first it was kind of tough, you know, I had to change my whole way of life . . . but today I'm comfortable with the way I'm living." The scene shifts to a forklift moving lumber at a construction site and Wilf explains, "There's nothing free. You have to pay for everything you get. . . . I guess the biggest thing I found out is . . . if I don't drink I won't have to go to jail."

The final segment of the film focuses on how A.A. works. To illustrate the importance of the acronym HALT, for example, the camera shows oncoming traffic as the word "hungry" comes into focus. The voice-over explains, "Don't get too hungry, that's the 'H.'" Traffic keeps streaming toward the viewer as the word "angry" appears. Again the voice-over: "Don't get too angry, that's the 'A'"—and on through "L" for "Don't get too lonely" and "T" for "Don't get too tired."

In the final scene, an inmate mops a prison floor as a voice observes, "All it takes is going to meetings. It's that simple. If you're in jail, start now. What do you have to lose? It sure beats sitting in a cell."

Both films are available in 16 mm prints, as well as 1/2-inch and 3/4-inch VHS cassettes with closed captions for the hearing impaired.

# Sponsorship: A Vital Stepping-Stone to Service & Sobriety

The 91 delegates to the General Service Conference listened as the question was asked: "How many of you came to service in A.A. with the help of a sponsor?" Essentially, all 91 delegates raised their hands in assent.

Past trustee Al H., of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada vividly remembers that moment in 1978. "We sponsor as we have been sponsored," he says. "I was taken to my first service meeting barely three months after I became sober and I've been active ever since."

Like so many members, Al early absorbed the miracle of Twelfth-Step work—that sharing the A.A. message with other alcoholics helps to keep us sober. Thanks to alert sponsorship, he then learned how such one-on-one help in the Fellowship can be stretched to include an ever widening range of Twelfth Stepping—from becoming active within one's group to serving at the local intergroup or central office, on institutions committees, and finally in "general service." This term embraces the myriad activities within the Conference structure that are carried out by G.S.R.s, area committees, delegates, trustees and the G.S.O. staff. They affect A.A. as a whole and are crucial to our unity and survival.

Al points out that "a lot of A.A.s—not just newcomers, either—don't know enough about A.A. and how it works." He believes that "God smiled on us when He led us into the Fellowship. The hand of A.A. was there for us and if we want it to be there for your kids and mine, I think we need to be active ourselves in service and help the newcomer to do the same. Frankly, I don't even know how to sponsor anyone who doesn't get involved in service. I'm a great admirer of Dr. Bob, who said that if we fail to acquire a spirit of service, we will have missed the greatest gift A.A. has to offer—the ability to give our sobriety away and so keep it."

Al, who travels hundreds of miles to attend service meetings, recalls visiting a new group several years ago with a sponsee. An 18-year-old newcomer had been given the task of slicing pickles; spotting Al, she tried to pass the job on to him. Without consulting Al, the sponsee quickly took the young woman aside and informed her that she was talking to a trustee. Undaunted, she retorted, "The pickles need slicing." Al sliced.

Missouri delegate Rita J. says she sponsors new people

into service early. "I introduce them to the Traditions," she declares, "and take them to G.S.R. and state assembly meetings. A number of them get into service." It's not always easy, Rita admits, "but I just hang in. Of course, when I called for a group conscience meeting not long ago, hardly anyone I sponsored showed up. I couldn't exist without a sense of humor!"

Past trustee David A., of Dallas, Texas, says that "everyone I've sponsored has gone into service. It's not mandatory, I tell the newcomers, but it's more than a suggestion. I also tell them that the Twelve Steps are just one-third of our legacy; there are the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of World Service. It's a 36-point program." He further suggests that they read the Big Book ("you'll find yourself") and *A.A. Comes of Age* ("you'll love A.A. so much you won't leave—you'll want to stay and grow").

"I was brought to service by a former delegate who wanted to go to the Bill W. Dinner in 1967," David relates. Bill himself autographed my copy of *As Bill Sees It*; I met people in service and went back and back and back. I was G.S.R., D.C.M., delegate, area chairperson, area GvR, you name it. I served as alternate in each of these offices, too, before becoming a trustee-at-large, U.S.A. And I'm even more active now than when I started. I attend the state conferences, do meetings on the Traditions and Concepts and, of course, try to get newcomers interested in service whenever I can."

Past trustee Ruth H., Hollister, New York: "When I took the G.S.R. role, my sponsor said, 'You don't want that, it's political.' Nevertheless, I became active on the Southeast New York Conference Committee. The other officers took me under their wing and gave me an appreciation of service. Today, I do the same with those I sponsor—I try to make them aware of A.A. as a whole. Whenever I see members working the Steps and Traditions, I make every effort to interest them in service beyond the group. Service is integral to my recovery; without it, I doubt that I would have stayed sober these past 28 years."

Past trustee George D., Tiburon, California: "When I first came to A.A. I slipped a lot. After I finally stopped drinking, my sponsor and other oldtimers told me I was



From "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."

the kind of drunk who had to be active to stay sober. I took them at their word and have continued to do so for 26 years. Service is a part of me.”

For the first 11 years, George remembers, “I was active in every aspect of service except general service, perceiving it to be full of basic Kiwanis Club types. My closest A.A. friend was active in general service and I just figured it was an eccentricity—otherwise he was a nice, cosmopolitan guy. Finally, he dragged me along with him and I eventually became a delegate in 1975. In a discussion with the late Bob H., who was retiring at the time as G.S.O. manager, I questioned my motives in doing service work—was it love of A.A. or a need for recognition and approval? Bob then quoted what Bernard Smith, a nonalcoholic trustee and former chairperson of the General Service Board, once said about Bill W.: ‘Never in history have so many great things been accomplished by a man with such doubtful motives.’ With Bob’s help I realized that if I waited to be ‘pure’ before getting anything done, I’d wait a lifetime.”

George believes that general service may not be for everyone. “Instead of pushing people into it,” he suggests, “I think we should lead them by example. We need to treat each other in service with the same sensitivity we bring to recovery.”

Past trustee Dick D., Springfield, Massachusetts: “My late sponsor got me to intergroup and area institutions when I was still fairly new to A.A. He did the same with another Springfielder, Margaret C., who also is a past trustee. Then I sponsored a couple of A.A.s who later became delegates, and they’ve sponsored just as actively in turn. We have a living chain of service activity in this area.”

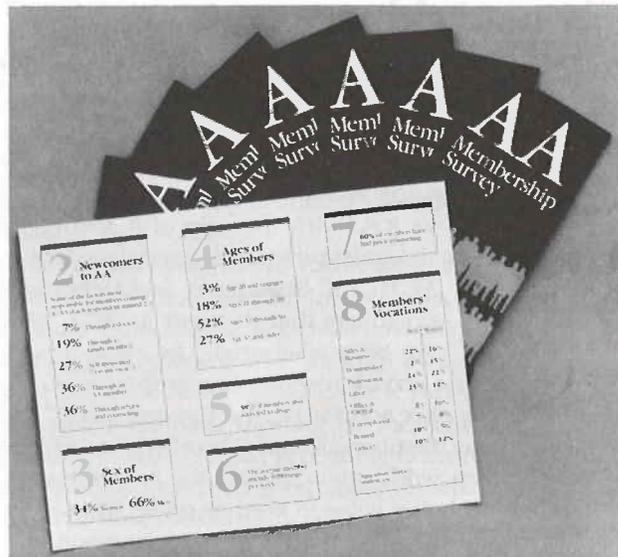
Dick encourages people he sponsors to participate in service work, but notes that “much depends on the individuals, their family problems and other factors.” Importantly, he notes, “I don’t just send them to service meetings at the beginning, I take them myself.”

He feels that the young people coming into A.A. today are motivated to get into service work. “Many have come to our program before hitting the bottom of the barrel. They’re dedicated and grateful enough to pass it on.”

**Note:** The trustees’ Literature Committee has recommended that G.S.O. prepare a service piece on “Service Sponsorship,” and welcomes your suggestions and experience.

## Thanks

to all who sent G.S.O. their resumés for the staff position opening announced in the Oct./Nov. *Box 4-5-9*. A new staff member has been hired and will be profiled in the next issue. Resumés are always welcome and will be kept on file and reviewed the next time a position is open.



The 1986 survey of A.A. membership in the United States and Canada is summarized in the new flyer “A.A. Membership Survey” (P-48) (formerly titled “The A.A. Member”). Copies are 10¢ each. This information is also available on a 29" high, 40" wide display board (M-13) suitable for conventions, meetings, health fairs. \$14.00.

## New Spanish Pamphlets

The following Conference-approved pamphlets are now available in Spanish:

- “A.A. Para la Mujer” (SS-37) — “A.A. for the Woman,” 20¢.
- “¿Se Cree Usted Diferente?” (SS-13) — “Do You Think You’re Different?,” 20¢.

## Participation: One Area’s Experience

The experience of some areas suggests that there is a positive correlation between the level of group participation in the area service structure, on the one hand, and the level of contributions to the service structure generally, on the other. And it makes sense; those who are involved are able to see, firsthand, what the need for contributions is, and how their money is spent; and, just as important, those who are involved are able intuitively to sense, in a positive way, the relationship between the

strength of the group's voice and the fact of the group's contribution ("He who pays the piper calls the tune").

The experience of growth in participation, as reported by one area, indicates that, like the experience of growth in sobriety, it required continuity of effort and patience—a process which, once embarked upon, provides unanticipated rewards. The first step occurred when the area sent a delegate (Panel 2) to the General Service Conference, about 36 years ago; in addition, about 22 years ago, an area assembly was set up, over the strong objections by many members in the area. Another surge began about ten years ago—at that time about 20 percent of the G.S.R.s were attending the area assemblies. The then incumbent delegate traveled to all 20 of the area's districts, carrying with him the message of total Alcoholics Anonymous: Recovery, Unity and Service. He and other area officers initiated efforts to seek out groups which were not participating in the district or area assemblies, and to share with them the relationship between service and Twelfth Step work (and, indeed the relationship between service and individual sobriety). Within a couple of years, workshops and "interest meetings" were set up throughout the area in order to provide even better communications about the Traditions and the service structure. In addition, conscious efforts were made to improve the relationships between the central offices/intergroups in the larger cities and the area committee. For the 10 or 15 years prior to that time, the general service entities and the central office/intergroup service entities were not very friendly. Now, what began as an occasional invitation to the central office/intergroup chairpersons to attend area assemblies, and an occasional reciprocal invitation in turn, has evolved into regular sharing sessions between the two service entities.

Continuity of communications is facilitated by the unique rotational scheme employed in this area (of course, each area is autonomous in these matters): absent some unusual circumstance, the delegate automatically succeeds to the area chair for two years, and then to a position called chairperson of the office committee—a committee comprised of all area officers. Additionally, the delegate meets several times a year with area DCM's to keep in touch, to share about local and area-wide matters, and to encourage the DCMs to reach out to nonparticipating groups.

As a result of these ongoing communications efforts, today 50 percent of all the area groups are represented at the area's assemblies, held three times a year, and the number is growing. And, with the improvement in participation, the percentage of groups that contributed to G.S.O. averaged over 69.3 percent during the past ten years, as compared with less than 55.5 percent for the Fellowship as a whole. For 1986, the area's per capita contribution was \$3.81, as compared to \$2.90 for the Fellowship as a whole.

Thus, while the positive correlation between the level

of group participation in general service, on the one hand, and the level of group contributions, on the other, may not be a mathematical certainty, it seems to help.

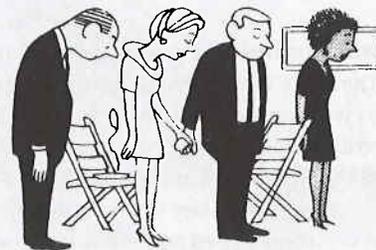
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## How Closing Meetings With the Lord's Prayer Became an A.A. Custom

For many centuries, the Lord's Prayer has been offered by various religious denominations both in public prayers and in private worship. It is also said by non-religious groups, including athletic teams, before or after meetings and games. But when did it become a widespread A.A. custom to close meetings with the prayer? And why, if A.A. "is not allied with any sect (or) denomination," do we use this Christian prayer at all?

A.A. archivist Frank M. says: "Oldtimers' memories differ as to exactly when the Lord's Prayer was first used in A.A. According to members who came to the Fellowship in 1938 and 1939, it was said at meetings then. Co-founder Bill W. thought it might have been a carry-over from the custom of our forerunner, the Oxford Group, but he was never really sure."

During its fledgling years, Frank notes, the Fellowship was more religiously oriented than it would be later. The main emphasis was not on one's drinking history, but on surrender, acknowledging one's character defects, and learning through the shared experience to live better lives—socially, ethically and religiously.



From "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."

In those days, there was no A.A. literature; in fact, A.A. didn't even have a name. And so the early groups leaned heavily on Bible reading for inspiration and guidance. Meetings probably closed with the Lord's Prayer because, as Bill explained, "it did not put speakers to the task, embarrassing to many, of composing prayers of their own."

The religious slant changed as it became evident that A.A.'s program of recovery could cross all barriers of

creed, race and religion—and as the Fellowship developed *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and other literature of its own. Yet use of the Lord's Prayer persisted in A.A., as it has everywhere else.

Frank points to a letter on the subject written by Bill in 1959. Responding to an A.A. member who had questioned the practice of closing meetings with the Lord's Prayer, Bill said, "This prayer is of such widespread use and recognition that the argument of its Christian origin seems to be a little far-fetched."

Stressing that the leader of the meeting usually asks attendees to join him in the Lord's Prayer only "if they wish to," Bill observed, "The worst that happens to the objectors is that they have to listen to it . . . doubtless a salutary exercise in tolerance at this state of their progress!" He further added that most A.A.s believe in God as we understand Him, and have faith that "communication and strength are obtainable through His grace. Since this is the general consensus, it seems only right that the Serenity Prayer and the Lord's Prayer be used in connection with our meetings."

Of course, Frank is quick to note, "the final decision about saying the Lord's Prayer—or about any other group activity—rests with the majority, or group conscience. As Bill said time and again, group conscience in the long run 'will be wiser than the opinion of any single leader.'"

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## A.A. Voice is Heard in Moscow At U.S.-Russia Exchange on Approaches to Alcoholism

The topic was familiar—"Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention and Treatment"—but the locale and circumstances were not. Sixteen Americans, including G.S.O. general manager John B., were in Russia where, as guests of the U.S.S.R.'s All-Union Voluntary Temperance Promotion Society (TPS), they would meet and exchange information with concerned Soviet leaders and officials.

Sponsored by the National Council of World Affairs Organizations and by the Soviet Temperance Promotion Society, this ground-breaking "American-Soviet Dialogue on Common Problems," held September 4-16, was the first of a series of private exchange initiatives endorsed by President Reagan and Chairman Gorbachev at the Geneva Summit. It followed on the heels of a planning session held in Washington, D.C. last May (*Box 4-5-9, Aug./Sept. 1987*).

John B., who attended both colloquies as a representative of A.A. World Services, reports that "discussions in Russia were often quite candid. In general, the focus was

more on the Soviet situation than in hearing about methods and results in the United States. That is probably consistent with the concept of these exchanges; the opportunity to present American programs more clearly will arise when the Soviets visit the U.S. in spring 1988. However, specifically with regard to A.A., our hope was to enhance the receptivity of Soviet authorities to A.A. and give them a better idea of how our Fellowship works. I believe that progress was made in that direction."

A.A.'s participation in the exchange resulted from an invitation extended by Nickolay Chernykh, presently the active head of TPS, a two-year-old organization that claims 14.5 million voluntary members. Using the slogan, "Temperance (abstinence) is the norm of the socialist way of life," TPS aims to educate the populace, particularly the youth, about the dangers of liquor and the advantages of a "sober way of life."

According to officials, there are presently 4,500,000 "alcoholic addicts" (their phrase) in the Soviet Union. However, John explains, "a distinction is made at every turn between 'alcoholics'—what we in A.A. might call low-bottom alcoholics—and 'alcohol abusers.' The Soviets would classify many of our members as 'past alcohol abusers.'"

A.A., in an organized form, does not yet exist in Russia, although there have been scattered meetings and a few Loners in the past. To Soviets who expressed interest in the Fellowship, John gave the address of the Finland central office, which has indicated its readiness to help as it already has in bringing A.A. to Poland. Meanwhile, John observes, "it is certainly possible that the Soviet government may wind up creating the first A.A. groups in the country. The analogue has often occurred in the U.S. and Canada, when a member of the clergy or medical profession has initiated a group that later became independent and full-fledged." It is also possible, he adds, that many individuals traveling to Russia these days may influence the establishment of the first groups.

The meticulously scheduled 12-day visit included meetings with national and regional TPS directors; extensive tours of Soviet industrial plants, collective farms, schools, hospitals, universities and museums, all focused on alcohol abuse; and culminated in meetings and round-table discussions in Moscow. On the last day, Mr. Chernykh summarized the "four major results" of the U.S.-Russia exchange at a press conference attended by representatives of the Communist Bloc press but not of the Western World.

Mr. Chernykh said the dialogue had underscored: (1) the promise of further cooperation in the area of biomedical research; (2) the hope offered by Alcoholics Anonymous and the probability that some future activity of that kind would occur in the Soviet Union; (3) the recognition of family problems created by alcoholism and the promise of Al-Anon in this connection; and (4)

the need to emphasize a sober way of life that includes recreation, athletics and other healthful substitutes for activities involving alcohol.

"This favorable view of A.A. and Al-Anon," John believes, "is presumably the cumulative result of the various contacts Soviet representatives have had in both the U.S. and Russia. It also may result from their own study of the literature." While traveling through Russia, he says, he was able to distribute numerous copies of Russian translations of the pamphlets "This is A.A.," "Is A.A. for You?" and "44 Questions." In some areas, he also distributed material prepared by A.A.'s central office in Finland.

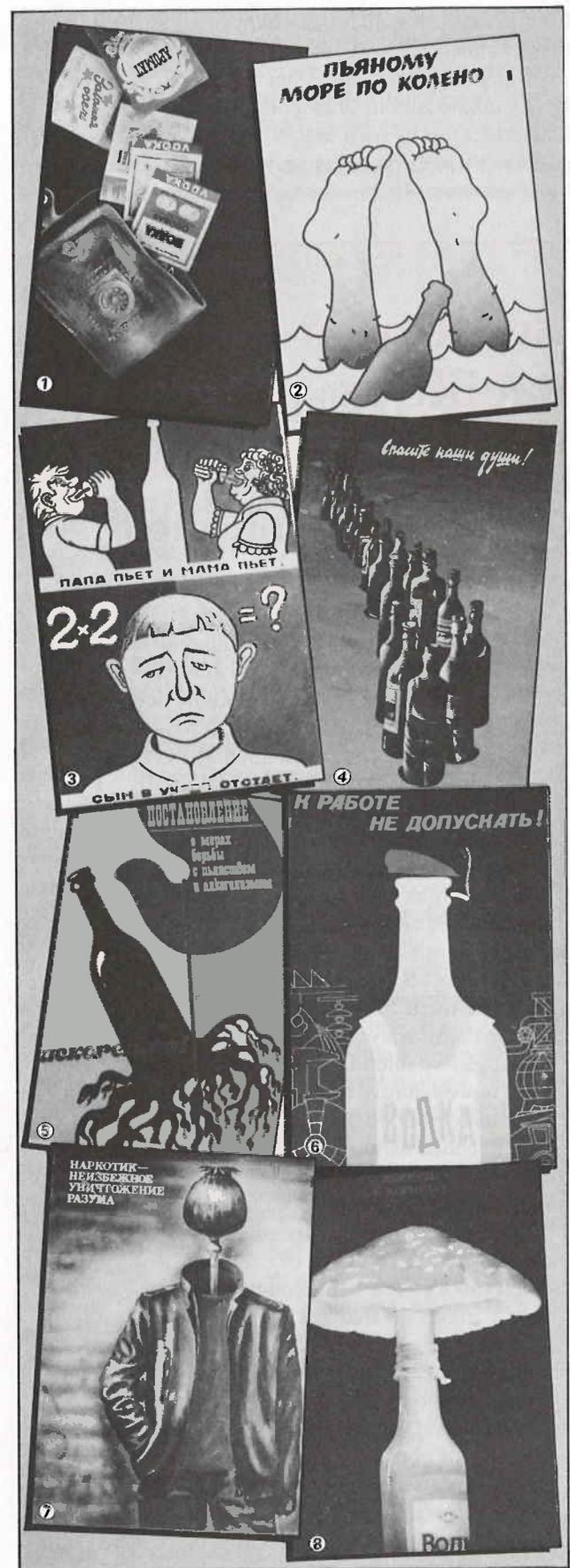
"Although the concept of self-help is difficult for the Soviets to grasp," John says, "many characteristics of the society would appear to make Russia a suitable climate for A.A. Our tradition of anonymity, for example, places the common welfare before the individual—a fundamental tenet of the Soviets. Also, our rejection of outside influence or affiliation, particularly of politics and religion, and our singleness of purpose should make A.A. more acceptable. Importantly, the fact that A.A. in every country is autonomous should relieve Soviet apprehension that A.A. will in some sense be 'under the U.S.' As in Poland, the relationship of A.A. to the State would be different than in many other countries, but the truth is that A.A. can never be above the law in any country. And once groups of alcoholics are sharing together, with the aid of our literature, the process should take over, wherever they are.

"Protecting my anonymity was a concern to me throughout. My cards read John B.; I always emphasized that any written reports should read that way, and I stood to the side when the initial meeting and final press conference were held. While I can't control the possibility of a break by the Soviets, I did the best I could. And in bringing up our tradition I was able to explain its spiritual content, which helped in communicating what A.A. is all about."

Since the Soviets have little or no experience with recovering alcoholics, John B. reports, "they take a dim view of the alcoholic. For example, an alcoholic doctor would have to leave the profession in disgrace; and an alcoholic industrial manager at best would be permanently demoted to worker for not being a proper example of socialist ideals. Very few officials appear to realize

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*Antialcohol posters from the Soviet Union: 1. Don't steal from yourself and your family; 2. For the drunkard, the ocean goes up to his knees; 3. Father drinks and mother drinks. Their son is left behind in school (rhymes in Russian); 4. Save our souls; 5. Resolution concerning the measures to be taken in the fight against drunkenness and alcoholism: We will tear it out from the root!; 6. Do not allow it at work!; 7. With narcotics the destruction of reason is unavoidable; 8. Tear it out from the root!*



that there is a way to return many of Russia's alcoholics to full economic usefulness.

"Apparently, therefore, no identified alcoholics in Russia hold positions of responsibility. As the only alcoholic identified as such in both the U.S. and Soviet delegations, I was strongly reminded of my good fortune to be American and to be sober in Alcoholics Anonymous."

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## Treatment Facilities

### Information Meeting Opens Communication

When it comes to carrying the A.A. message, there are many instances of overlapping responsibilities among A.A. committees. Local circumstances determine who does what. The following is a good example of cooperation with the professional community which relates specifically to treatment facilities. In May, the General Service Office received the following from the C.P.C. chairperson for Southeast Michigan:

"Dear Friends, I'm writing to you in hope that you can inform and direct us in the task we are about to undertake. What we are planning is a one-day workshop with A.A. as host and the treatment centers' administrators and counselors as our guests. We have many misunderstandings in our area with regard to who gets sent to A.A. (i.e. drug addicts without a drinking problem). We want to see them get help but know that A.A. is not the place for them. Narcotics Anonymous is very strong in our area and we intend to make this known and perhaps invite a representative from N.A. to speak.

"We also want to improve our Twelfth Step work where it concerns getting the individual who is just finishing his or her stay at these facilities, so as to assure that a potential member doesn't slip through the cracks.

"We would appreciate any guidelines, recommendations, experiences or words of caution. Also, any literature you can forward to us would be helpful."

G.S.O. suggested that the committee emphasize that A.A. and N.A. are separate fellowships and are not affiliated in any way, and also suggested distributing "Problems Other Than Alcohol," "The A.A. Member, Medication and Other Drugs," "A.A. in Treatment Facilities," "If You are a Professional," and the service piece "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous."

A letter in September informed G.S.O. that the committee had sent a letter (along with a prepaid postcard) to 334 state-registered treatment facilities in Southeast

Missouri. The letter was an invitation to attend a one-day "get-acquainted" session to discuss cooperation with one another in order to reach the common goal of helping people who suffer from the disease of alcoholism. It included the agenda for the day:

1. A.A. speakers—topics: Primary Purpose, Recovery, Traditions and Cooperation
2. Invited guest from Al-Anon—topic: Primary Purpose
3. Invited guest from N.A.—topic: Primary Purpose
4. Invited guest from the professional community—topic: Cooperation

Supplementary information explaining what A.A. is, what A.A. does, what A.A. does not do was also mailed.

The chairperson continued: "The response was approximately 30 percent with more still coming in. A good portion of the respondents took time to write a little memo of encouragement on the card such as 'can't wait,' 'great,' 'looking forward to it,' etc. This tells us that something of this nature is long overdue. They are anxious to open a line of communication.

"We have gone to great pains to make sure that our Traditions, especially our primary purpose and tradition of nonaffiliation, have been stressed repeatedly to try to avoid any confusion or problems that may arise from either inside or outside A.A.

"As you know, the purpose for this meeting is two-fold. First, and most important, it is to inform the professional community that to belong to A.A. one of our addictions should be to alcohol. As a hoped for result of stressing this point, people who are addicted to other substances, of which none are alcohol, will be directed to places where they can get the help they need. Secondly, it is an attempt to open a line of communication and make A.A. more available to those who need us.

"We have found that the professionals involved in treatment are informed and anxious to know and understand. Truly they can be our friends.

"Undertaking a task this size was at first a bit overwhelming. It is only possible because of the active participation of the members of this current committee. I was pleasantly surprised by the number of concerned members who pitched in to take up responsibilities and see them through. We have learned much, and by trying to adhere to the Traditions have learned much more about the importance of them, as well as how they must apply to us as individuals.

"We are circulating a letter in our area to encourage attendance at this meeting by A.A. members as well as requesting financial support from the area groups in keeping with our Seventh Tradition."

The Southeast Michigan C.P.C. committee followed up by sending a letter back to the interested professionals who responded to their September mailing, setting the date, time, and location of the meeting. Copies of the

correspondence the committee sent to the treatment facilities are available upon request. Write to G.S.O.

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## Correctional Facilities

### How Is A.A. Reaching Out To the Inmate Who Can't Read?

Inside the large Huntsville, Texas correctional facility, better known as "The Walls," a young inmate recalls that he entered the prison unable to read. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a dog-eared copy of the flyer "Is A.A. for You?" and says proudly, "I am now reading at the fourth-grade level and I know every word in this pamphlet." He explains that he learned to "read" the words by studying them as he listened to a taped version of the flyer over and over again.

This vignette was related by G.S.O. staff member Lyla B., formerly assigned to the Correctional Facilities desk. In an effort to help formulate specific methods for use in reaching out to inmates who can't read, she recently toured the extensive Texas prisons and met with concerned personnel.

"Early last year," Lyla reports, "the trustees' Committee on Correctional Facilities was contacted by a clinical social worker with the Texas Department of Corrections' Alcoholism/Drug Program." She noted that "approximately 24 percent of the state's prison population are said to be 'illiterate' (including those who read at the third-grade level) and asked for help in reaching them selectively with specially designed A.A. literature and audiovisual aids."

Long aware of the pervasive problems related to illiteracy, the trustees' Correctional Facilities Committee has stepped up efforts to provide help. Prison officials have offered many innovative suggestions for carrying the A.A. message to those with reduced reading levels. The 1987 General Service Conference reviewed the C.F. Committee's recommendation for a new illustrated pamphlet on the Twelve Steps as viewed through the eyes of an inmate. The Conference requested further data, to be presented at the 1988 session, and emphasized that all ongoing efforts to reach illiterate inmates should be based on A.A.'s approach everywhere: "one drunk talking to another."

The committee welcomes ideas and information from all areas with experience in carrying the A.A. message to inmates with literacy problems. Please write: Correctional Facilities Desk, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

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## P.I.

### A.A. Films and PSAs Boost P.I. Efforts In Central New York

Viewing the VHS cassette containing five TV public service announcements has made a difference to the P.I./C.P.C. Committee in Central New York.

Writes immediate past-chairperson Rick B.: "Recently our P.I. committee was reactivated after many years of inactivity. The few members, all brand new to P.I. work, hesitated to approach our local TV stations with material they had not seen themselves. Thanks to G.S.O., I was able to provide them with VHS cassettes of the PSAs and the film 'A.A.—An Inside View.' Afterward they approached their local stations armed with ¾-inch cassettes and boundless enthusiasm. The result: All three commercial TV stations are featuring the PSAs regularly."

Rick adds that the PSAs were shown several times at a recent New York State Information Workshop, "and the excitement was contagious." Because the P.I. people viewed them firsthand, he says, "they are now better able to present them to their area TV stations." Furthermore, he notes, "seeing is believing" and relieves the concern of some about overstepping the line between promotion and attraction.

The multi-reel/combined PSA announcements are available from G.S.O. in a cassette containing one 10-second, two 20-second and two 30-second announcements. Also available on two-inch videotapes: "First Meeting" (30 seconds) and "Calling A.A." (60 seconds) combined; "Calling A.A." (a 30-second version); "B.G.'s Advice" (30 seconds), with subtitles added for the hearing impaired; and "Picking Up the Telephone" (30 seconds), available with both French and Spanish voiceovers. The price of each tape is \$12.50.

The film "A.A.—An Inside View" is available in ¾-inch and ½-inch videotape cassettes at the reduced price of \$15.00 per unit. Also available in the same-size units, with closed captions for the hearing impaired, are two

new films: "Young People and A.A." (28 minutes) and "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell" (17 minutes). Both films cost \$15.00 per unit. To place an order, or to obtain further information, please contact the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

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## Does A.A. Participation At Public Fairs Violate the Traditions?

As A.A. has become increasingly visible at country fairs, health fairs and other community events, some A.A. members have expressed concern that our participation may violate the spirit of the Traditions.

Writing in the *P.I. Newsletter* of the Northern Minnesota Assembly, P.I. committee chairperson Ike S. reports that three main questions concerning this issue were raised at a recent area meeting in Crosby. "After several conversations with G.S.O., reference reading and just plain jawing within the Fellowship," says Ike, "I will attempt to give a consensus of responding opinions and clarifications" as follows:

1. *Is there any difference between health fairs and country fairs?* "There was a strong feeling that no difference exists. Both such events provide a service; and A.A. involvement at either of them is generally considered to be well within the spirit and intent of Traditions Four and Eleven."

2. *Does A.A. violate the spirit of Tradition Six when we pay fees or rent for the use of space at such events?* "Individual groups pay rent for meeting rooms; and G.S.O. pays booth fees at various conferences and fairs. This practice is generally viewed not as promotion, but as consonant with A.A.'s Seventh Tradition of self-support."

3. *When A.A. members and/or standing committees participate in health fairs and such, are we seeking out rather than being sought out?* "We need to go where the public is. We are an anonymous, not secret, society. However, 'attraction' must be seen and given in a spirit devoid of personal self-interest or gain, as spelled out in Tradition Eleven. Promotion would be an obvious issue if high-pressure tactics were employed. Essentially, the difference between promotion and attraction would seem to be simply a matter of 'ego.' We all need to have our individual and group motives questioned from time to time."

In conclusion, Ike says that his "research" has reminded him of several more important principles: "that

the group conscience is autonomous; that service is gratitude in action; and that at the core of service work is the ongoing need to renew our enthusiasm, our encouragement and support of each other. In other words, 'Pass it on.'"

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## C.P.C.

### North Florida Committee Keeps Reaching Out

Never one to rest on its laurels, the North Florida C.P.C. Committee is responding to yet another call for help—this time from Seminole County's 43 elementary, middle and high schools. Alcohol abuse is a serious problem, and volunteers are needed to work once a week, for a minimum of two hours, with the school drug resource teams. Additionally, says area C.P.C. chairperson Bobbe L., we are rounding up volunteer speakers for the Life Management courses that are required by the high schools here.

In the area newsletter *CPC Connection*, of which she is editor, Bobbe also reports that Brevard County A.A.s have held in-depth A.A. presentations for professionals, many of them representing key organizations including the State of Florida Probation and Parole Departments of Central and North Brevard Counties, the staff of Twin Rivers Treatment Center, and a county-wide Employee Assistance Program.

Explaining that Brevard County's C.P.C. Committee is a joint effort between Districts 12 and 23 and the Brevard Intergroup, the P.I. chairperson Joe S. says that funding for literature handed out at the presentations comes from a monthly budget provided by intergroup (which budgets for the local public information and institutions committees as well). This cooperation within A.A., he notes, has resulted in nine presentations to approximately 120 professionals during the first half of 1987 alone.

In *CPC Connection*, Bobbe energetically solicits news of C.P.C. activities around the North Florida area. "Come on," she urges, "it's okay to brag about your efforts. When others read about what you have done, they'll think, 'Gosh, if they can do it, so can we!' and then those people will influence still others to do the same. The result: a real North Florida C.P.C. snowball."

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## Calendar of Events

### February

- 5-7 — *Overland Park, Kansas.* Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 5-7 — *Salem, Oregon.* Fifth Annual Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 5167, Salem, OR 97304
- 5-7 — *Manila, Philippines.* Sharing and Caring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 8288, Dasmariñas Village Mail Centre 3117, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines
- 5-7 — *Universal City, California.* 13th Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2268, Toluca Lake, CA 91602
- 5-7 — *Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.* First Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 742, Sta. A, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 5B4
- 6-7 — *Thief River Falls, Minnesota.* 12th Service Workshop. Write: Ch., 209 S. First St. W., Aurora, MN 55705
- 11-14 — *St. Petersburg, Florida.* Fourth Annual Mid-Winter Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 1682, St. Petersburg, FL 33731
- 12-14 — *Greeley, Colorado.* 38th Annual Stampede. Write: Ch., Box 595, Greeley, CO 80631
- 12-14 — *Springdale, Ohio.* Conf. of Young People. Write: Ch., Box 19338, Cincinnati, OH 45219
- 12-14 — *El Paso, Texas.* 26th Jamboree. Write: Sec., Box 1405, El Paso, TX 79948
- 12-14 — *Palmerston North, New Zealand.* 25th National Conv. Write: Ch., Box 683, Gisborne, New Zealand
- 12-14 — *North Little Rock, Arkansas.* Sixth Annual Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Ch., Box 55269, Little Rock, AR 72205
- 18-21 — *Dallas, Texas.* 24th National Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 516123, Dallas, TX 75251
- 19-21 — *Owensboro, Kentucky.* 37th State Conf. Write: Ch., 302 E. Third St., Owensboro, KY 42301
- 19-21 — *Sacramento, California.* 11th Annual Spring Fling. Write: Ch., Box 19548, Sacramento, CA 95819-0548
- 19-21 — *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.* Write: Ch., Box 91086, W. Vancouver, B.C. V7V 3N3
- 19-21 — *Chattanooga, Tennessee.* 6th TCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 22844, Chattanooga, TN 37422
- 19-21 — *Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.* 21st Intergroup Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 8878, Saskatoon, SK S7K 6S7
- 19-21 — *Montgomery, Alabama.* Seventh Heart of Dixie Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6043, Montgomery, AL 36106
- 19-21 — *Sierra Vista, Arizona.* Area Assembly and Sharing Session. Write: Ch., 20 Gold Finch Circle, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
- 19-21 — *Eufaula, Oklahoma.* 11th Four State

- Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2146, Joplin, MO 64803
- 19-21 — *Camrose, Alberta, Canada.* Eighth Roundup. Write: Ch., 4610 61st St., Camrose, AB T4V 2H7
- 26-28 — *Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* 38th Ontario Regional Conf. Write: Ch., 207 Queen's Quay W., Box 132, Toronto, Ontario M5J 1A7
- 26-28 — *Dayton, Ohio.* Fourth S.W. Mini Conf. Write: Ch., 19A Bell Brook Court, Fairfield, OH 45014
- 26-28 — *Anaheim, California.* Fourth Orange County Conv. Write: Ch., Box 9136, Newport Beach, CA 92658
- 26-28 — *Edmonton, Alberta.* Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., 272 Southridge, Edmonton, AB T6H 4M9

### March

- 2-6 — *Simons Island, Georgia.* Island Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 892, Statesboro, GA 30458
- 4-6 — *Corpus Christi, Texas.* 34th Coastal Bend Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 3204, Corpus Christi, TX 78404
- 4-6 — *Sioux Falls, South Dakota.* W. Central Regional Conf. Write: Sec., Box 386, Beresford, SD 57004
- 4-6 — *Swan River, Manitoba, Canada.* 29th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1484, Swan River, MB R0L 1Z0
- 4-6 — *St. Albert, Alberta, Canada.* 11th Roundup. Write: Ch., 34 Fenwick Cres., St. Albert, AB T8N 1W4
- 4-6 — *Fairview, Alberta, Canada.* Third Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 672, Fairview, AB T0H 1L0
- 4-6 — *Salt Lake City, Utah.* Pacific Region

## Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

*February* (page 13): "If Only . . ."; getting active; "A.A., May We Help You?" (part one).

*March* (page 13): Anonymity; "A.A., May We Help You?" (part two); Traditions meetings.

- Service Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 20467, West Valley City, UT 84120
- 4-6 — *Mount Vernon, Illinois.* Seventh Annual Conf. Write: Ch., Balard Mobile Home, Lot #1, Trailer #13, RFD 3, Fairfield, IL 62837
- 4-6 — *Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.* 20th Rally. Write: Ch., 1395 Stewart Av., Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 4E2
- 11-13 — *Las Vegas, Nevada.* 9th Annual Young People's Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 60657, Las Vegas, NV 89160
- 11-13 — *Brandon, Manitoba, Canada.* Roundup. Write: Tr., Box 382, Brandon, MB R7A 5L2
- 11-13 — *Amarillo, Texas.* Third Annual Old-timer's Reunion. Write: Ch., Box 3983, Amarillo, TX 79116
- 11-13 — *Southfield, Michigan.* Area Conf. Write: Ch., Box 43202, Detroit, MI 48243
- 11-13 — *Naperville, Illinois.* I.S.C.Y.P.A.A. Write: Ch., 351 W. Ogden Ave., Naperville, IL 60540
- 11-14 — *Miami Beach, Florida.* Fifth Annual

## Planning an April, May or June Event?

Please send your information on April, May or June events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by *February 10*, the calendar deadline for the April/May 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

## March (cont.)

- Roundup (hosted by gays and lesbians). Write: Ch., Box 381274, Miami, FL 33238
- 18-20 — *French Lick, Indiana*. 34th State Conv. Write: Ch., 117 South St. Louis Blvd., South Bend, IN 46617
- 18-20 — *Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Canada*. 20th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2365, Salmon Arm, B.C. V0E 2T0
- 18-20 — *Calgary, Alberta, Canada*. Third Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., 110 25th Av. S.W., #103, Calgary, AB T2S 0K9
- 18-20 — *Gulf Shores, Alabama*. Fourth Annual Jubilee Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536
- 18-20 — *Quebec City, Quebec, Canada*. 13th Bilingual Congress. Write: Ch., 2030 Père Leleuvre, Bureau 301, Quebec, P.Q. G1X 2X1
- 18-20 — *Juneau, Alaska*. Spring Quarterly Conf. Write: Ch., Box 293, Douglas AK 99824
- 25-27 — *Ames, Iowa*. Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2491, Ames, IA 50010

- 25-27 — *Phoenix, Arizona*. Spring Break '88. Sponsored by Gays and Lesbians. Write: Ch., Box 36366, Phoenix, AZ 85067
- 25-27 — *Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada*. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 212, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Y5
- 25-27 — *Painsville, Ohio*. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 43225, Richmond Hts., OH 44143
- 25-27 — *Providence, Rhode Island*. 12th Conv., Write: Sec., Box 9342, Providence, RI 02940
- 25-27 — *Palm Desert, California*. First Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3003, Palm Desert, CA 92261

## April

- 1-3 — *Benoni, Republic of South Africa*. Write: Ch., Box 538, Benoni 1500, Rep. of South Africa
- 7-10 — *Columbia, South Carolina*. 41st Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 11230, Capitol Station, Columbia, S.C. 29211-1230

- 8-10 — *Wichita, Kansas*. Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1814, Wichita, KS 67208
- 14-17 — *Lincoln, Nebraska*. Spring Fling. Write: Ch., 8010 Hickory Lane, Lincoln, NE 68510
- 15-17 — *Rockford, Illinois*. Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1911, Rockford, IL 61110
- 15-17 — *Ocean City, New Jersey*. 24th Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 179, Sicklerville, NJ 08081
- 22-24 — *Chicago, Illinois*. 2nd Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 06324, Chicago, IL 60606-0324
- 22-24 — *Banff, Alberta, Canada*. 15th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6744, Station "D", Calgary, AB T2P 2E6
- 23-25 — *Ridgecrest, California*. Indian Wells Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 875, Ridgecrest, CA 93555
- 29-May 1 — *Fairlee, Vermont*. Conv. Write: Ch., 29 High St., #15, Brattleboro, VT 05301
- 29-May 1 — *Lakewood, New York*. Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 41, Lakewood, NY 14750