

For A.A.s Everywhere, 'Tis the Season for Gratitude and Sharing

From North Pole, Alaska to Garland, Texas, A.A.s everywhere experience the holidays with a singular sense of kinship in our freedom from suffering. Following are some examples of how A.A. groups and individuals in towns and cities with holiday-sounding names across the U.S. and Canada, keep the greatest gift we have—our sobriety—by giving it away freely to the alcoholic who still suffers.

South End Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada: "Our Northern Lights Group is no more," reports Richard M., "but we have a few people around who help each other stay sober." Richard's wife, Margaret, and his son are sober as well, and "we go to area roundups together." The best thing about Christmas, Richard comments, is that "I feel okay and don't think about drinking."



North Pole, Alaska: The North Pole Thursday Night Group is part of the Fairbanks area, about 15 miles away, says Pat T. "Our district intergroup holds a holiday dance, raffle and a potluck supper. We dine on moose and caribou—and we always have a white Christmas." Pat came into A.A. 10 years ago in New

Jersey. "As a newcomer, I went to lots of meetings over the holidays," he recalls. "There was no way to be lonely."

Holly Hill, Florida: The Big Book Study Group holds open house at the homes of various group members over the holidays, taking care to make newcomers feel welcome. Says member Emily K., sober 39 years: "I will remember my first sober Christmas—I actually cooked without a drink in my hand!" Emily calls A.A. "an opening wedge in the gateway to a brand new life." All her holidays are "glorious now," she adds. "I am so grateful to the Fellowship for my life. Many a night, I look up at the moon and the stars and say 'Thank you, God.'"

Bethlehem, Connecticut: "The special thing we do at the Woodbury and Bethel Groups is hold our meetings, just as we do the rest of the year," reports Grey Z. "Time was, we drank ourselves sick over the holidays; today, just being at a meeting is enough." Sober 10 years, Grey says he still gets "uncomfortable and wound up on Christmas Eve—last year, I was like a cat on a hot tin roof." Then he remembers "how bad it used to be," goes to midnight church service with his wife, and wakes up Christmas day "sober and feeling just fine."

St. Nicolas, Quebec, Canada: "The only special thing the St. Nicolas Group does is to hold its regular meetings," says Pierre B. "We have about 35 members and we look out for one another." This is Pierre's second Christmas in A.A. and "it feels very good. I am happy and grateful to be sober."

Garland, Texas: The Belmont Group is having its traditional Christmas party with all the trimmings. Says member Jack F.: "We have a ball exchanging gag gifts, eating up a storm and generally celebrating our sobriety. There are the usual hassles beforehand—over everything from decorating ideas to who's in charge of the food detail—but everything works out just fine." Jack, who will celebrate his 16th A.A. anniversary in January, vividly recalls "some miserable holidays" while drinking. "I'm one of those lucky A.A.s who has maintained

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his family," he notes. "I'm grateful for the rapport I have today with my four daughters." For the seventh year in a row, Jack and his wife will host a New Year's party in their home. "There's so much going on," he reports, "such as the New Year's dance sponsored by the Dallas Intergroup. No A.A. needs to feel alone."

Holly, Michigan: "Our Davisburg Group is super," says John M. "We started it four years ago with just two members; now there are more than 30 of us. Over the holidays, we have our meetings and get together for celebrations at home. We wake up next morning knowing where we were and what we did the night before. It's a time for gratitude."

Shepherdstown, West Virginia: "We have a party about a week before Christmas," says Jane T. "Last year, 180 people came." Jane, who entered A.A. in Washington, D.C., 10 years ago, feels that "there is true family spirit in groups outside the big cities. Here in Shepherdstown, people help you in everything you do—the support is tremendous."

Peace River, Alberta, Canada: "In addition to our regular meetings," reports Jim T., "we hold institutional meetings at the local hospital and correctional facility. Reaching out to these people keeps my memory green. I remember how I used to be and am grateful to be able to give away what has been given to me since I joined A.A. in December 1984." At Christmas, Jim says, the Peace River Group holds meetings as usual. "For me personally," he adds, "just being sober is the best present I could get."

Deer Park, Washington: "At holiday time, we have several pot luck dinners around the county," says Lynne A., a member of the Deer Park Fellowship Group. Holidays always make me crazy," she explains, "but over the last five years in A.A., my priorities have changed. I used to have a Norman Rockwell idea of what Christmas should be—now I know that the realities of life can be even better. Progress!"

And at the Candlelight Group in Denver, Colorado, Christmas Eve signals the start of a running meeting that lasts until the wee hours, or until everyone goes home. Says Willard D., who will be sober 15 years come January: "Being with all those recovering alcoholics

revitalizes my spirits. I leave with a glow that comes from inside, not out of a bottle. And so long as I push myself around to meetings, it lasts when Christmas has long gone."

Dear Friends,

At this time of giving and receiving, let us consider the gift of Acceptance. Some of us balk at the word "acceptance." This holiday, we may be facing personal crises, and we ask ourselves, "How can I accept this?" We are then reminded that this is how we felt when we confronted our powerlessness over alcohol. And yet, it was only in the acceptance of our deadly disease that we could find sober living. For those of us in pain, let us accept the gift of another door opening.

For some of us, this holiday will express all the joy that the "Bridge Back to Life" can sustain. And yet, we may feel unworthy, or we may have forgotten that, without A.A. and a Higher Power, we'd have no gifts at all. For those of us with much to celebrate, let us accept the gifts of self-acceptance and humility.

And for all of us, there is the precious gift which makes the other gifts possible—the gift of "love that has no price tag"—the unique miracle of our own sobriety, which we share with each other and the newcomer—the gift that makes every day in A.A. a holiday.

With A.A. love,

*Patricia Susan Cheryl Ann
John Bob Sarah Betty
Vicente Susan
Maureen*

Please post Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous (page 11) on your group bulletin board.

Why Worry About Self-Support?

A new group in Northern California sent G.S.O. a thought-provoking letter expressing concern about Tradition Seven. Since this well-informed group is concerned, we thought other groups might also be questioning the need for increasing contributions so that A.A. will be self-supporting. So, with the group's permission, we decided to share the following correspondence.

Dear G.S.O.,

We've had quite a bit of discussion in our group recently about Tradition Seven and, frankly, we are confused. From some quarters we hear that A.A. is not self-supporting. Our delegate urges us to spread the word that groups need to contribute more (and that more groups need to contribute). Others say, "Why worry?" — particularly two elder statesmen that many of our members heard on two separate occasions. Both say that we're doing fine. In fact, one of them said that we actually don't need to send any contribution to G.S.O. at all — that A.A.W.S. publishing makes enough to carry us all.

We're getting a double message. We'd like to get it straight.

The feeling in our group is that the true spirit of Tradition Seven will be realized when the groups actually support the General Service Office and we don't have to dip into publishing funds at all. Why don't we simply budget G.S.O. for expected group contributions only? We feel that there are inherent dangers in depending on publishing for our support. However, it appears that some A.A.s are comfortable with the idea of book and literature sales paying much of our way. We feel the need for a Fellowship-wide group conscience on this.

The 1986 Conference recommended that we discuss the question: "Can G.S.O. be self-supporting through contributions only?" Perhaps that should read, "Shouldn't G.S.O. be self-supporting through group contributions only?" And, "Should A.A.W.S. have a role in A.A.'s self-support?"

Love,

Members of the Plug in the Jug
Traditions Group, Rohnert Park, CA

Dear Members of the Plug in the Jug Traditions Group,

Thanks for the thoughtful and thought-provoking letter about Tradition Seven. We appreciate and understand your concern and hope this letter will clarify the matter.

The gist of what you heard from your elder statesmen

— that is, "That A.A.W.S. makes enough to carry us all," is partly true at the present time. And, if literature sales continue to increase, and, if prices are occasionally adjusted to meet rising production costs, A.A.W.S. will continue to make up our deficits. But, using A.A.W.S. net publishing income to pay for group services and other expenses of the General Service Board is not the solution to our financial problems — it is, indeed, the problem itself! You, the A.A. group, control the destiny of Alcoholics Anonymous through your delegate. And Concept VII points out that the "ultimate rights and powers" of the delegates, collectively, is through their ability to control the A.A. purse-strings, that is, ". . . the voluntary contributions of the A.A. groups themselves." To the extent that G.S.O. becomes more and more financially self-sufficient through publishing income — the traditional balance of power between the General Service Board and the Conference as a whole becomes distorted; and to that extent, your group's voice in the affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous becomes less and less audible.



"The Twelve Traditions Illustrated"

However, over a period of years, an even more compelling problem has arisen. An increasingly large percentage of A.A.W.S.'s net publishing income is coming from non-A.A. purchasers (approximately 45% in 1985). Therefore, about 45% of the difference between the cost of group services and General Service Board expenses, on the one hand, and voluntary group contributions, on the other hand, is being paid for by non-A.A. funds! The feeling in your group about the true spirit of Tradition Seven being realized only when the groups actually support G.S.O. is right on the "money." As Bill W. said, "Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist temptation to receive money from the outside world."

You also asked why G.S.O. didn't limit its budget to expected group contributions. Well, the answer is that A.A. groups have asked, through the Conference, to be provided with the diverse services available from the G.S.O. and the General Service Board, relying, if necessary, on A.A.W.S. net publishing income to pay the bills. And this practice has a long history. It is our hope that, when all our groups become sensitized to the need for self-support, just as your group has done, true self-support will become a reality. We hope this will happen within five years. At that time, literature (which is a primary means of carrying our message) can be reduced in price; and G.S.O. can budget based on anticipated group contributions only.

Bill W. considered the services which G.S.O. provides to be an integral part of Twelfth Step work, and he said in this regard, "We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and our bills paid. Without A.A.'s services we'd often fumble that new man just coming in the door; without our services we'd certainly spoil the main chance of those millions who don't yet know."

Thank you for this opportunity to share.

In fellowship,

Your friends at G.S.O.

XIV Hispanic Convention

The XIV Annual Hispanic Convention, held at the Roosevelt Hotel, New York City, August 29-31, attracted more than 1,000 members of A.A., Al-Anon and Alateen, with 18 delegations in attendance from 14 states, Puerto Rico, and the province of Quebec, Canada. Victor V., of the Volviendo a Vivir Group in Far Rockaway, N.Y., chaired the organizing committee and was impressed and delighted with the turnout. Sharing on such a grand scale, he said, "would surely have an impact on Hispanic A.A. throughout North America."

Although the official opening session was not scheduled until Saturday morning, activities in fact commenced early Friday, with guided tours of the G.S.O. and Grapevine offices. Friday evening, hundreds of convention-goers, brimming with enthusiasm and buzzing with excitement, filled the Terrace Room to hear welcoming remarks and presentations on Chapter Five, Sanity, and Service. Vicente M., G.S.O. staff member assigned to Spanish Services, gave a capsule-history of the Hispanic Convention, and introduced John B., G.S.O. general manager, who delivered—in Spanish—a brief

welcoming address. John spoke of the universal malady of alcoholism and its likewise universal remedy—Honesty, Responsibility and Love—a remedy that we offer to each other in A.A., and to the still-suffering alcoholic, whatever language he or she may speak.

The meeting opened Saturday morning with the introduction of the participants, and the traditional presentation of the *mallette*, a hardwood plaque inscribed with the dates and sites of previous conventions. This "object of little material value but great spiritual significance" has, since the inception of the Hispanic Convention, passed each year from one organizing committee to the next, as a symbol of the assembly.

The afternoon session began with workshops: Are We Being Friendly With Our Friends?; How A.A.s Cooperate Without Affiliation; New Ways to Carry the A.A. Message; and Are We Becoming Too Rigid? There were special sessions on Districts and General Service, and Intergroups and Institutions. A highlight of the afternoon program was a Women's Meeting, the first of its kind ever held at an Hispanic Convention, which attracted more than 50 A.A. women. The strong showing was, as one delegate observed, a sure indication that women will be playing a larger and ever more important role in future conventions.

Although interests and concerns were as many and as varied as the members themselves, one question resurfaced insistently throughout the proceedings: How can we make our service work more effective? Baltasar C., from New Jersey, long active in the service structure, spoke of a need to share experience, not only personal, practical experience, but historical experience as well, "in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past."

At the closing session, on Sunday, brief workshop report-backs were given. Among the observations and suggestions made, of particular note were: C.P.C. work



in the Hispanic A.A. community is at present rudimentary at best and it would be useful to coordinate efforts and to establish committees, at the local or area level, that reflect and can respond to local needs. More open meetings should be held to foster a better understanding in the world at large of A.A.'s purpose and principles. A firm understanding of A.A. principles and a broad knowledge of A.A. experience might prepare service workers to perform their duties most efficiently and responsibly.

The administrative committee announced that, in conformity with an agreement of the XII Hispanic Convention, and following a variation of the 60-30-10 Plan, ten percent of convention receipts in excess of costs would be contributed to the General Service Office.

The final article of business of Sunday's agenda was the selection of the site for the XV Hispanic Convention, to be held over Labor Day weekend in 1987. Since no one of the five sites proposed received a sufficient number of votes to reach the agreed-upon 75% needed to carry, the decision was submitted to the hat, from which emerged, perhaps as a concession of sorts to those who had found the northern morning a bit severe, a ballot bearing the Spanish word for "full of flowers," Florida, and the name of the city of Miami.

Are A.A. Conventions Becoming Commercialized?

Countless thousands of A.A.s are enthusiastic convention-goers. To realize how much a part of A.A. life these conventions, conferences, round-ups, jamborees and assorted get-togethers are, you need look no further than the "Bulletin Board" section of this newsletter. They provide fellowship and fun, inspiration and joy (and often, information about service) beyond what the A.A. member gets from his or her home group.

However, A.A. conventions have problems of their own, and at G.S.O. we have received a number of phone calls and letters asking for sharing on these problems. Although an excellent guideline on conferences and conventions is offered at no charge by G.S.O., it does not cover these new subjects. Not surprisingly, all of them directly or indirectly involve money.

One major area of friction seems to be who decides who pays the registration fee? Local A.A. members who cannot afford the registration fee to attend a convention in their town may protest, on principle, that you can't keep 'em out — based on the Third Tradition and the "no dues or fees" statement in the Preamble. "You can't charge for an A.A. meeting," they declare.

A more specific complaint was received in a letter from a member who had tried to take the patients from a treatment center to a conference, only to be told they would have to pay registration fees. He was indignant.

The reality is that any conference or convention is the responsibility of a committee. The committee sets the policies — including the amount of the registration fee, what it covers and who must pay it. In actual practice, many conference or convention committees permit local A.A. members to attend certain selected events without paying the full registration fee. For example, they may be allowed in to hear a banquet speaker, after the banquet is finished. Also, the committees sometimes waive the registration fee for certain categories of people, such as inmate members who have been permitted leave from their correctional institutions to attend the A.A. weekend, or patients from hospitals or treatment centers. But the committee is the only body that can make such decisions.

At the 1979 General Service Conference, three presentations were made on "How Do Roundups, Jamborees, etc. Fit Into A.A. Traditions?" It was pointed out, with general agreement from the Conference, that such gatherings entail expenses for hotels, mailings, travel and meals for the invited speakers, entertainment if any, etc. The registration fee pays for these costs (self-support!) and not for the A.A. meetings as such.

When a speaker is invited to a convention, he or she has a right to expect that transportation expenses will be reimbursed and that room and meals will be provided. Speakers should not accept any fee; A.A. speakers at A.A. affairs are engaging in a form of Twelfth Step or service for which they receive no pay.

As conventions have become larger and more numerous, they attract more and more vendors who set up shop to sell everything from bumper stickers and jewelry to T-shirts and coffee mugs. Even though the items they offer are identified with A.A., as far as A.A. is concerned, these vendors are "outside enterprises." About the only control the convention committee can exercise is to prevent the vendors from operating *on the convention premises* — and even this is difficult when the vendors manage to rent rooms in the convention hotel.

Recent problems reported to G.S.O. have not involved direct purchases from vendors at conventions, but rather the failure to deliver when items have been bought and paid for at the convention, with the promise that the purchase will be sent later by mail. So, a word to the wise about mail order purchases!

Ultimately, it is up to the convention committees to handle problems. The most immediate help might be obtained by calling or writing other convention committees and asking for their sharing. Then, as more sharing reaches G.S.O., we will include it in the A.A. Guideline on Conferences and Conventions.

'Don't Throw Me Away — I Belong to A.A.'

Look around home with an A.A. eye. Do you have an oldtime meeting book or directory tucked away . . . out-of-print pamphlets . . . correspondence with early-timers . . . a first edition of the Big Book? If so, you can do a special kind of Twelfth Step work: share A.A. history with newcomers by contributing these artifacts to your local archives.

From the interest shown at archives exhibits at assemblies, state conventions and G.S.O., it is clear that we A.A.s are fascinated with our past. Looking over old pictures, letters and newspaper and magazine articles that trace our growth engenders a sense of wonder and gratitude. Additionally, in the words of one of the original members of the trustees' Archives Committee, "These things will keep the record straight so that myth does not prevail over fact." Thus, besides providing spiritual nourishment, archives can serve to foster careful study and understanding of the truth in the development of A.A. and thereby strengthen our unity of purpose.

The Archives Committee has prepared material to help with this history-gathering activity: a flyer describing the importance of archival information; and stickers and bookmarks that remind, "Don't throw me away, I belong to A.A." These are handy for identifying books and other memorabilia that members wish to hold onto but would like to leave to A.A. as a legacy.

Of further archival interest are oral histories taped by earlytimers whose experience with A.A. dates from the Fellowship's formative years in a given area. These earlytimers are invaluable in providing fresh, detailed recollections because they "were there." So, if you know an earlytimer—or are one yourself—you can do some invaluable Twelfth Stepping by arranging contact with your local archives committee.

For help and additional information, contact the G.S.O. Archives.

Enclosed with this issue

you will find two order forms, which may help you solve some holiday gift-giving problems.

- *Box 4-5-9*—Why not give your group a bulk subscription? Bulk subscriptions: ten copies each of six issues per year, \$3.50; individual subscriptions: six issues per year, \$1.50.

- *Portable soft-cover edition of the Big Book*—This smaller, lighter edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* is perfect for the A.A. friend who travels, and for the newcomer, sponsor, sponsee and yourself. Also available from your central office or intergroup; \$4.15 a copy.

A.A.W.S./Intergroup Seminar

The first A.A. World Services/Intergroup Seminar was held Sept. 5-7 at the Holiday Inn/O'Hare in Chicago. In the spring of 1986, the A.A.W.S. Board surveyed intergroups and central offices throughout the U.S. and Canada to see how many would be interested in a seminar to discuss questions on literature distribution and practices, to communicate G.S.O.'s policies and to find out how G.S.O. might better serve intergroups. Of more than 300 intergroups surveyed, 150 responded favorably. Ninety-eight people representing 82 intergroups or central offices—plus three trustees of the General Service Board and 13 employees of G.S.O. and the Grapevine, attended the seminar.

All participants at this weekend seminar welcomed this forum and were eager and hungry to share and exchange ideas with others who are also on the frontline of Twelfth-Step work. As one central office manager said, "Often there is no place we feel safe to discuss our office problems." Thus, what started as a seminar to exchange information on literature policies, became a forum which opened the gates of communication for greater recognition and involvement into the main stream of A.A. by the people who are the understanding voices on the other end of the phone. Julia C., who coordinates 100 volunteers servicing approximately 60 groups in Albuquerque, New Mexico, said, "I have never spoken with another person who has my job—only my predecessors."

Seminar attendees came from all points of the U.S. and Canada—from Alaska to Hawaii, Maine to Florida. Five Canadians attended, reaching from British Columbia to Nova Scotia. They came from large metropolitan areas (Los Angeles and New York) which serve a few thousand groups, and from small isolated hamlets where the central office is staffed by one volunteer. In Ft. Wayne, Indiana it is an Al-Anon wife, Edna W., who manages the central office, which serves 92 groups of combined A.A., Al-Anon and Alateen. Edna's A.A. husband, Hank, who accompanied her to Chicago, said, "If it weren't for my being an alcoholic she wouldn't have her job." Lynda L. came from Ft. Collins, Colorado, which does not yet have a central office, but Lynda was sent to get information to use when one is formed.

Cathy W., manager of the Chicago Area Service Office, and Chicago area delegate Bill W., did much of the advance work in Chicago; past delegate Tom D. and other Chicago A.A.s did a lot of behind-the-scenes work that made the seminar run smoothly.

After registration on Friday evening, Bill W. chaired a get-acquainted "Red Ball" (actually a white ball with red polka dots) meeting. Bill introduced the manager

of the Kansas City, Missouri, Intergroup, Ken S., who was celebrating his 45th anniversary of sobriety.

Chairperson of the General Service Board Gordon Patrick welcomed all those in attendance and noted that the time had come for a central office seminar, "an endeavor which is enthusiastically supported by all of the trustees. And I thank you for the privilege of sharing this weekend with all of you!"

Saturday morning, John B., general manager of the General Service Office, gave a presentation in which he explained the functions of the General Service Office and, with the aid of an overhead projector, reviewed sales and net publishing income over the past six years, contributions and costs of services, and the projection for the future if the current shortfall of contributions to G.S.O. continues—problems that also affect central offices. Vinnie M., G.S.O.'s publications director, and Ed Gordon, director of finance and business administration, gave presentations on A.A.W.S. publishing.

Other highlights were presentations (by both G.S.O. and intergroup people) on Pricing, Sales and Discounts of A.A. Literature; Carrying the Message Through Literature (selling only A.A. literature or selling non-A.A. literature as well); Ordering/Shipping/Inventory; Intergroup Finances; "A.A., May I Help You?" and the A.A. *Grapevine*. Each presentation was followed by a discussion period. Jack W., East Central U.S. regional trustee, chaired the Sunday morning session, in which Joe P., Southeast U.S. regional trustee, gave a report on the Trustees' Self-Support Committee. There were also Ask-it-Basket and Open Sharing sessions.

Three workshop periods were scheduled over the weekend. Participants were asked to keep the discussion to the topics presented during the preceding floor sessions: Literature Matters, and Routine Intergroup Office Matters. A third workshop was optional. Workshop discussions covered a wide range of topics and information on practical matters: contributions, sales tax (a problem applicable in areas that sell to third parties); insurance (a need was expressed for G.S.O. to share experience from other groups on this topic); literature sales (27 offices sell A.A. Conference-approved literature only; 38 also sell non-A.A. literature); employee benefits, newsletters and meeting lists; volunteers (nine intergroups have *no* paid employees); and office practices (12 have on-line computers and 12 more are considering). A complete report on the seminar, including presentations, is available from the General Service Office.

Saturday morning, when Vinnie M. went to the microphone to welcome the participants, Ben C., manager of the Maui Central Office, Hawaii, came out of the audience and placed a fragrant lei of white and lavender blossoms around her neck. In Hawaii the lei is a symbol of welcome—Aloha, the Hawaiian word that may be interpreted as peace, friendship, love, fellowship. And

these were the feelings that grew and flowered through the entire weekend, as each member of the seminar took back to their area a new dimension of the word fellowship.

1987 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service, and offer a unique opportunity for A.A. group or area representatives and individual A.A.s in a particular region to share their concerns with one another and with G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members, trustees and directors. Through this exchange of ideas and information, the common purpose of all A.A. service work is emphasized.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum will be sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central offices approximately two months ahead of time. In 1987, the weekend Forums will be held as follows:

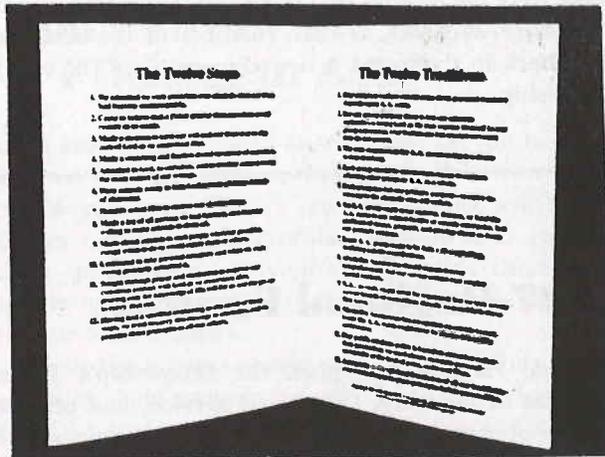
- *Southeast Region* — May 15-17: Condado Beach Hotel, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- *Northeast Region* — June 5-7: Stamford Marriott Hotel, Stamford, Conn.
- *West Central Region* — Sept. 11-13: Doublewood Inn, Fargo, N.D.
- *East Central Region* — October 2-4: Ramada Hotel, Peoria, Ill.
- *Southwest Region* — December 4-6: Riverfront Hilton Inn, Little Rock, Ark.

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

The Sound of Sobriety — Now in Spanish and French

To better serve all A.A. members, the 1986 General Service Conference authorized the production of cassette tapes of *Grapevine* articles originally translated and published in *El Mensaje* and *La Vigne*.

Sonidos de Sobriedad (Spanish) and Les Sons de la Sobriété (French), are now available for \$5.50 each, two or more \$5.00 each. Please make checks or money orders, in U.S. funds, payable to The Grapevine. Mail to: P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-1980.



New *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Table-top Display* (M-33)—convenient for institutions meetings or for your group's literature table. Each panel 19½" × 27". Available from G.S.O., \$14.00.

Ordering Films? Here's How

If you are ordering films from G.S.O., here are some tips that will insure your receiving them in the right place, at the right time, or even ahead of schedule. They were suggested by Luis Carrillo of Inventory Control. A nonalcoholic employee, Luis nevertheless looks for ways to "keep it simple"—and keep you happy:

1. Please give us ample time, at least 30 days' notice, when ordering.
2. Give us a specific date of showing, so we will know if the film you want will be available for the date it is needed.
3. Give us a street address if you possibly can. Post Office boxes make delivery harder.
4. If you will not be present at the time of delivery, give us an alternate name.
5. Bear in mind that your film order must be accompanied by a check or money order. It cannot be charged.

Treatment Facilities

Carrying the Message 'Makes Gratitude Grow'

As the holidays roll around, A.A. gratitude reaches an all-year high among many members who carry the message to hospitals, detox centers and rehabilitation facilities.

"These people feel sick and closed off from the love and joy the season represents," says Barbara S. of Brooklyn, New York. "When they talk to someone like me, an alcoholic who is making it out of the bottle, you can see those sullen faces glimmer with hope. It's the most rewarding thing in the world and really makes my gratitude grow."

Barbara has been taking a meeting to Long Island College Hospital every week for nearly eight of her nine sober years in A.A. "Five-sixths of the people I've watched come through there have made something of their lives," she observes, "even the toughies who thought they knew it all."

Generally, Barbara leads the Thursday night meetings herself. "But if A.A.s I meet at my home group in Brooklyn or other meetings want to speak, I take them along," she says, "so long as they're not out to 'save' everyone." Approximately 20 people attend the meetings, which last about an hour and a half. However,

there is no set limit. "I don't close until everybody has had a chance to speak," Barbara reports.

Her greatest joy is bumping into people she has helped months or years later. "They remember me," she says, "and put their arms around me. Some even ask me to speak at their A.A. anniversaries. It's at times like these that I get back twice what I give."

In Montreal, Canada, A.A. member Jacques L., carries the message into local treatment facilities and a therapy center. In working with alcoholics, he is "awed by the power of the shared experience. More than medicine, psychology and formalized religion, it gets to the core of the alcoholic's illness—helps him change the old destructive patterns and start to heal."

After suffering paralysis of his left side 10 years ago as the result of alcoholism and heroin abuse, Jacques spent six months in a hospital, then joined A.A. "I decided to say 'yes' to sobriety," he recalls, "and to anyone who might need my help. It was selfish; I knew I had to give my sobriety away in order to keep it." Fully recovered from his paralysis, he has carried the message over the years to hundreds of alcoholics, "and every one of them has given me something back—a grateful word, a smile, a happy expression. The recovered ones sometimes meet me and say thank you. When I see their transformation from sickness to health, I am the richest man in the world."

Toni A., chairperson of the Treatment Facilities Committee in Eastern Missouri, was largely responsible for forming the committee when her area divided the Hospitals and Institutions Committee two years ago. "What a mass confusion it was," she remembers, "especially

without the guidelines we now have in the *Treatment Facilities Workbook*."

It has been rewarding, Toni notes, "to meet new people I never would have known otherwise. Most of our 18 districts are now active in area work and we meet at the quarterly assemblies to share ideas and suggestions for ways to 'bridge the gap' from treatment to A.A. Getting inside the service structure of A.A. has enhanced my sobriety, given me the confidence to work with groups of people, and taught me to take rejection lightly.

"Also, now that the state's treatment programs number more than 70, it takes a lot of A.A.s to carry the message. I've learned not to make a commitment without backup—or else risk having egg on my face! But, with God's help and a lot of trial and error, we have created a good foundation for our future members to follow."

Correctional Facilities

Twelfth Stepping Behind Walls Gives A.A.s New Lease on Life

"While institutional work may not be everyone's cup of tea, many A.A.s may be missing out on some of the best meetings and opportunities to carry the message that the Fellowship has to offer." So writes Cliff J., of New Fairfield, Connecticut, who, with fellow member Bill L., takes the Insiders meeting to the correctional facility at Danbury. "Tonight I am full of the usual gratitude I get from our meetings," he says, "so what better time to say thank you, G.S.O., for the literature you sent for our Spanish-speaking inmates."

When Cliff first came to A.A., he "could not imagine" what he would do with his time. Soon he began carrying the message "inside" and, five years later, time is his "scarcest commodity."

One thing he has learned first-hand is that "A.A. is truly a program of attraction." About a year ago, he relates, the compulsory alcoholism program at the correctional facility was eliminated as the result of federal cutbacks. Because attendance was no longer mandated,

the size of the Insiders meeting "dropped drastically."

However, says Cliff, "the quality of the meeting seemed to be inversely proportional to its size. There was just a handful of us—but we were there because we wanted to be. The sharing among us has been incredible and at times very emotional."

Now the Insiders meeting is growing again, he reports, "and some of the men who once came only under duress are drifting back of their own accord. Apparently they saw what we have and now they want it for themselves."

C.P.C.

Court Referrals: an Update

More and more A.A. groups are being asked to deal with large numbers of court-referred newcomers, and many are reporting overload problems. Increasingly, C.P.C. committees have instituted informational meetings to familiarize referrals with the Anonymity Tradition and to ease their way into mainstream A.A. meetings. Some areas are reaching out to judges, probation officers and other court personnel to acquaint them with A.A. and to serve as an ongoing resource through our policy of "cooperation but not affiliation" with the professional community. Still others are continuing efforts to resolve problems that surround the signing of referral slips at meetings. Following are some progress reports:

Lansing, Michigan: Since July, members of the C.P.C. committee have been conducting two informational meetings a month for court referrals in a local community center—one at noon on the first Thursday of the month for people who work nights; the other at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday for those who work days. Both meetings are open and the referrals are encouraged to bring their parents, spouses, children and friends—though no more than six or seven at a time. With court cooperation, a probation officer is present at every meeting; the officers are rotated for maximum exposure.

A flip chart tracks the format of the meeting and is proving an effective visual aid in holding the attention of the referrals. Based on suggested A.A. guidelines, the meeting format covers 14 main areas, including: what A.A. is and is not; the importance of anonymity and A.A.'s tradition of self-support; types of meetings; the conduct of newcomers at meetings; sponsorship; help for the families of alcoholics; A.A. services; and A.A.'s

position on addictions other than to alcohol. The referral is given three pieces of literature to take home—"Information on Alcoholics Anonymous," a meeting book and a wallet card imprinted with the Preamble, Twelve Steps and Serenity Prayer.

Reports Fred A. from Lansing Central Office: "Reaction to the informational meetings from court-referred people has been positive, especially in view of the fact that their attendance is mandated by the court. Most of them have been ordered to attend three A.A. meetings a week for one year, or for the length of their probation." The probation officers, he notes, "are totally enthusiastic."

California Northern Coastal Area: From Napa, Pat S. reports that two DUI (Driving Under the Influence) informational meetings a month are being conducted at Napa Valley College. A Spanish-speaking class, requested by the courts, is expected to start up soon at the county detox facility where a Spanish-speaking A.A. group holds its meetings.

"We feel that these informational meetings will make the introduction of DUI offenders into regular A.A. meetings smoother," says Pat. Once they understand that the Fellowship is not a punitive arm of the court system, he notes, "there should be much less chance of disruption at the meetings."

San Francisco, California: The June 1986 *Secretaries Newsletter* from the San Francisco Central Office reported the following item from the minutes of their Central Service Committee's May meeting:

"Old Business: Referral Slips. A discussion was held regarding the appropriateness of the Central Service Committee making a statement in regard to individual group secretaries being asked to sign their names, addresses, and phone numbers on referral slips. The committee felt each group should act according to its conscience: some sign, some refuse, and some use a stamp. The committee did move to ask the PI/CPC committee to identify the source of these referrals and initiate contacts to explain A.A. tradition and purpose to the referring agencies."

This item was introduced in their April meeting. Much thought and discussion went into arriving at the above decision, which reflects their commitment to the Fourth Tradition. The dilemma as reported in the bulletin was that on the one hand group secretaries seemed to be involved in an "outside" issue when monitoring attendance of court referrals, and on the other hand most of the groups felt a responsibility to offer the hand of A.A. to those reaching them through the courts.

Danbury, Connecticut: C.P.C. member John C. presented information about A.A. to Danbury police officers during their October inservice refresher course. His talk expanded on information contained in the A.A. pamphlet, "If You are a Professional . . ." which had been distributed beforehand to the city's 120 officers in

their pay envelopes. He also discussed the anonymity tradition, how to spot signs of alcoholism, how to contact A.A. quickly, and how to refer people to the Fellowship.

"We are presently getting 600 to 800 referrals a year through the court system," John reports. "It's what we're in business for—to help the referrals as well as any other alcoholics who need us. But, if we are to be effective, we need to work with the police and other people in the courts. Before we can do that, we'd better let them know who we are, what we can do and what we can't."

PI.

Anonymity Makes a Difference, P.I. Memo Reminds the Press

Every December, the Public Information Committee mails out a memo explaining A.A.'s tradition of anonymity at the public level to members of the press, radio and television, and requesting their continuing cooperation in helping us to protect what Bill W. called "our shield and our buckler." In many areas, local P.I. committees reprint the message on their own stationery and send it to their media as well. During the holidays, when editors are rushed and more apt than usual to let anonymity breaks slip by, many of them appreciate the reminder.

Headed "Anonymity," the memo defines "anonymous" as "a word so important that it's 50 percent of our name."

"We ask your help," it continues, "in maintaining our tradition of personal anonymity by not identifying members by name or by recognizable photos as 'members of Alcoholics Anonymous.' We have learned from experience that alcoholics or potential newcomers to A.A. may avoid any help that might reveal their identity."

The memo further points out that "A.A. members are always happy to see articles about our Fellowship, but not in terms of A.A. personalities. Cooperation by the press over the years has been outstanding, and the publicity given to the A.A. program in all phases of the media has played a major role in encouraging many thousands of alcoholics to seek help."

In conclusion, the memo expresses thanks to the media "for your continuing understanding and support."

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober — an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.

parties, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



2 Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



3 Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



4 Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



5 Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember — "one day at a time."



6 If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.



7 Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts — but this year, you can give love.



8 Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes — postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



9 Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



10 Find out about the special holiday



11 Go to church. Any church.



12 "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

Flip up this end of page for December, January and February events.

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

Calendar of Events

December

- 5-6 — *Sikeston, Missouri*. Sixth Annual Five Corners Conv. Write: Ch., 1930 N. 15th St., Belleville, IL 622235-7 — *Del Rio, Texas*. Border Conf. Write: Ch., Box 395, Del Rio, TX 78841-0395
- 5-7 — *Jacksonville Beach, Florida*. Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 5-7 *Montgomery, Alabama*. Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Reg. Forum Coord., Box 459, New York, NY 10163
- 6-13 — *New Orleans, Louisiana*. Cruise Without Booze. Write: Ch., Box 9183, Tulsa, OK 74157
- 19-21 — *Seoul, Korea*. Annual National Roundup. Write: Ch., Morning Calm Intergroup, AC of S, G-1, Attn: EAIDGP-DA, APO, San Francisco, CA 96224
- 24-25 — *London, Ontario, Canada*. Alkathon. Write: Ch., Box 130, London, Ont. N6A 4V6
- 24-25 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. '86-'87 Christmas Alkathon. Write: Secy., Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419
- 27-28 — *Neosho, Missouri*. Winter Holiday #6. Write: Box 195, Cassville, MO 65625
- 31-Jan 1 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. '86-'87 New Year's Alkathon. Write: Secy., Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419

January

- 3-17 — *Miami, Florida*. Cruise Without Booze. Write: Ch., Box 8201, Buckland Sta., Manchester, CT 06040

- 9-11 — *Clarksburg, West Virginia*. Jackson's Mill Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26302
- 9-11 — *Brownsville, Texas*. 13th Annual Lower Rio Grande Valley Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 5453, Brownsville, TX 78520
- 9-11 — *Tyler, Texas*. Texas Rose City Ramble and 40th Anniversary. Write: Ch., 2514 Malabar, Tyler, TX 75701
- 16-18 — *Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*. Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938
- 16-18 — *Midland, Texas*. 17th Annual Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 5751, Midland, TX 79704
- 17-18 — *Olean, New York*. Day of Sharing. Write: Sec., Box 894, Olean, NY 14760
- 23-25 — *Cleveland, Texas*. Yellow Rose Conf. Write: Box 1470, Cleveland, TX 77327
- 23-25 — *Palestine, Texas*. Third Annual Yellow Rose Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1470, Cleveland, TX 77327
- 23-24 — *Blytheville, Arkansas*. 30th Annual Tri State Coon Supper. Write: Ch., Box 873, Blytheville, AK 72315
- 30-Feb. 1 — *Kindersley, Saskatchewan, Canada*. 16th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 287, Alsask, Sask. S0L 0A0

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 27): Getting through the holidays; Step Four; progressive sobriety; A.A. "don'ts"; self-support.

January (page 16): Letting go of old ideas; the forest and the trees; "practice these principles."

Planning a February, March or April Event?

Please be sure to send your information on February, March or April events in time to reach G.S.O. by *December 10*. This is the calendar deadline for the February/March issue of *Box 4-5-9* (to be mailed January 15).

Naturally, G.S.O. cannot check on all the information submitted. We must rely on local A.A.s to describe the events accurately.

February

- 5-8 — *Pine Mountain, Georgia*. 17th Pine Mountain Fellowship Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 617, Pine Mountain, GA 31822
- 6-8 — *Canterbury, New Zealand*. 24th National Conv. Write: Sec. Conv. '87, Box 2062, Christchurch, New Zealand
- 12-15 — *Albuquerque, New Mexico*. 23rd National Women's Conf. Write: Box 11432, Sta. E., Albuquerque, NM 87192
- 12-15 — *St. Petersburg, Florida*. Third Annual Mid-Winter Big Book Seminar. Write: Box 1682, St. Petersburg, FL 33731
- 13-15 — *Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada*. Sixth Heritage Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 322, Elliot Lake, Ont. P5A 2J8
- 13-16 — *Miami Beach, Florida*. Fourth Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 381274, Miami Beach, FL 33238
- 20-22 — *Memphis, Tennessee*. Conf. of Young People. Write: Ch., 1625 Monroe, Apt. 3, Memphis, TN 38104