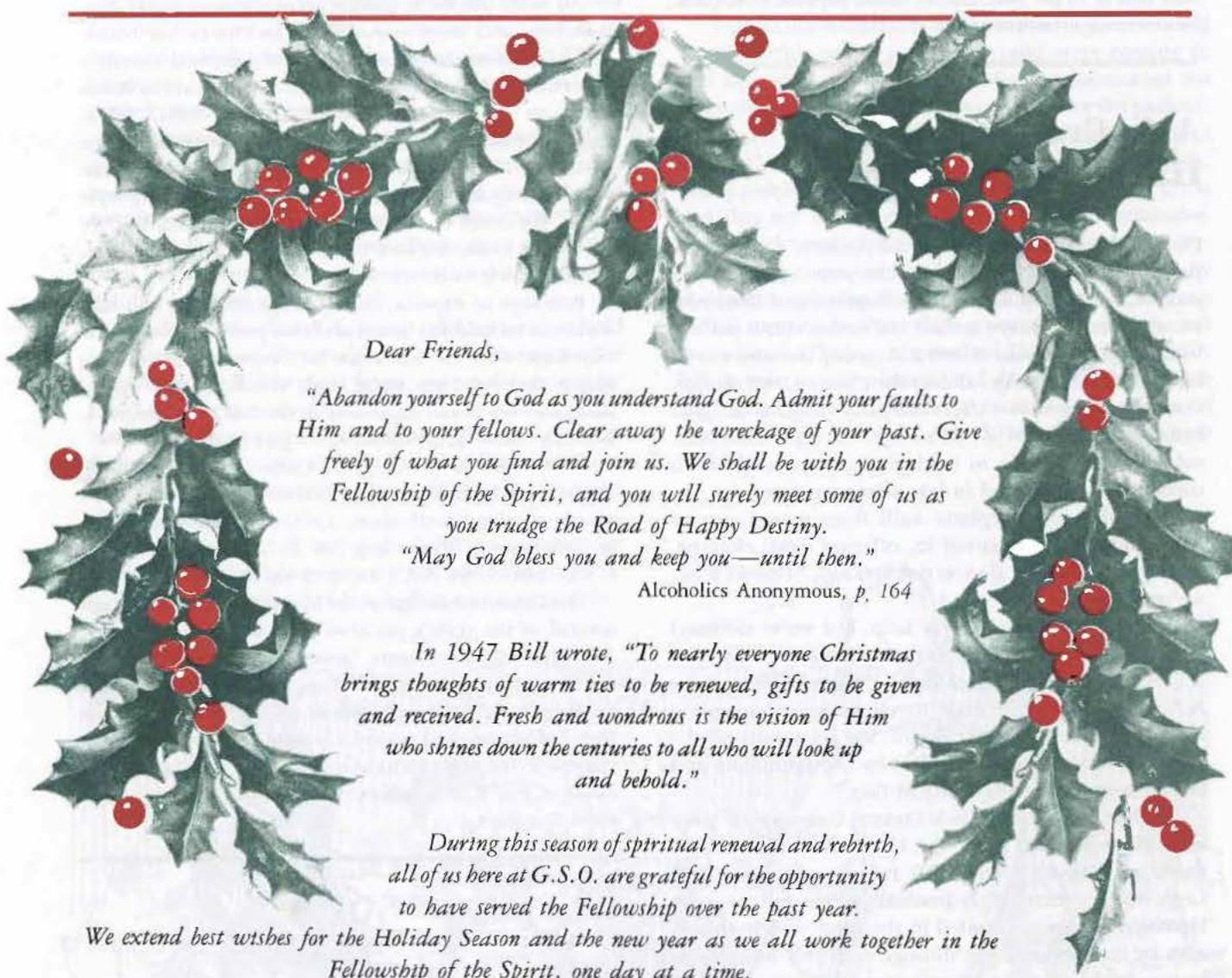


# BOX 4|5|9

News and Notes From the General Service Office of A.A.®

VOL. 38, NO. 6 / HOLIDAY ISSUE 1992



Dear Friends,

*"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.*

*"May God bless you and keep you—until then."*

*Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164*

*In 1947 Bill wrote, "To nearly everyone Christmas brings thoughts of warm ties to be renewed, gifts to be given and received. Fresh and wondrous is the vision of Him who shines down the centuries to all who will look up and behold."*

*During this season of spiritual renewal and rebirth, all of us here at G.S.O. are grateful for the opportunity to have served the Fellowship over the past year.*

*We extend best wishes for the Holiday Season and the new year as we all work together in the Fellowship of the Spirit, one day at a time.*

*With A.A. love,*

*Tom Sarah Helen George*  
*Danny Fred M. Lois Janie Susan Richard*  
*Queen Valerie John*

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## A.A. Groups Survive Hurricane Andrew

Picture this. A hurricane named Andrew comes ram-paging through your area, wrecks your home, knocks your A.A. meeting hall to high heaven, and then your state governor, his eye on law and order, sets a curfew. What do you and your fellow A.A. group members, who have also, incidentally, all lost their homes, do? Simple. You wait a few days—that's all, just enough to get your bearings—and then you come up with a practical A.A. solution. You decide to hold your regular night-time meetings outdoors and in late afternoon instead.

And when the telephone calls from many parts of the country come pouring in, offering food, clothing, money, books, what do you do? You say, "Thanks a lot, we're doing just fine."

"We got a lot of offers of help, but we've declined everything. We're self-supporting," explains Pete M., D.C.M. of Dade County, Florida. "We're all fine now, A.A. is strong, alive and there's nothing happening down here that we need help for. We appreciate all the concern, but we're going to live by the Traditions and be self-supporting. We'll be just fine."

Of the 123 groups in Dade County, three groups were in Andrew's direct path: the Homestead Group (150 members); South Dade (200 members); and Three Legacies (20 members). Ironically, Pete tells us, the Homestead Group, situated in the most widely-shown area by the media, came through relatively unscathed; looters broke into the group's storefront window and stole a microphone. Eerily, all the buildings surrounding it were razed.

"The Homestead Group met outdoors for a while because they had no power, no air conditioning or electricity. But they're back in operation and are in good shape," Pete added. In fact, they're all sitting on boxes and boxes of A.A. literature, sent from Cleveland, the hometown of one of the group's members who spends six months in Florida.

The South Dade Group "got hurt the worst. Their building was literally torn to the ground," Pete says.

Donations, by members, of a couple of generators and the finding of a new site has put the South Dade Group back in business and "we have our usual 23 meetings a week again."

The Three Legacies Group, which used to meet in a church, now meets in a member's home. Although the roof of the church, ripped off by Andrew, was replaced, the church is still operating as a food distribution center.

All told, the three groups comprise about 400 A.A. members and every one of them lost his or her home. "All of us have lost everything," Pete says, with uncanny cheerfulness. "You have to see the devastation of South Dade to understand. There's nothing left." While everyone has found temporary lodging elsewhere, some members have decided to move away from the area permanently and "that's the saddest part of it all," Pete says. "We don't know how many have moved, but we do know those we lost were good, strong members. They're going to be missed."

Pete says he expects, like so many others, it will take a year to rebuild his home and two years to rebuild the city. Right after the hurricane hit, "everyone was talking about Andrew. Now we're back to talking A.A. again. Self-pity? We're not supposed to do that. You see, A.A. is really working down here, it's just beautiful."

Pete says that the annual Dade County Gratitude Dinner will be held as scheduled on October 24th. "It's always a sellout, with about 1,000 A.A.s attending and, as usual, we'll be sending our \$3,500 contribution to G.S.O. Listen, we A.A.s just pick up and go on."

The Louisiana delegate, Sid M., tells us that, although several of the state's parishes were severely damaged, A.A. meeting places were "generally not disrupted. But many A.A.s along the Louisiana coast, in Terrebonne, St. Mary's and Lafourche parishes, lost their homes or their belongings and many have no insurance." A similar curfew to the one in Florida was ordered in Louisiana, he says, but it only affected scheduled A.A. meetings for a few days.

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## Deadline for Directory Information —March 1, 1993

A reminder for area delegates: If you haven't already returned your group information printouts, please remember that the *final* deadline for inclusion in the directories is March 1, 1993.

Printouts corrected to show up-to-date group information and returned to G.S.O. by the areas, will be used to produce the 1993/94 A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian. These confidential directories list groups and contacts; delegates and trustees; central offices/intergroups; and international contacts.

## Holidays Revisited

Come late fall, many of us in the Fellowship wonder if the wag who said that alcoholism is a threefold disease—Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's—wasn't, just maybe, on the right track. Memories of past, booze-drenched holidays loom embarrassingly large. We begin to project. Suddenly we forget we're in this Fellowship a day at a time, no matter *what* day it is. Some of us look into the weeks ahead feeling as if fear, loneliness, a sense of emptiness, even depression, had settled permanently inside us.

Yet, in spite of our gloomy forecasting, our holidays quite often turn out not only well, but far better than many previous holidays. The presents we received were certainly appreciated and we actually enjoyed the family reunions. But the most lasting impressions were often from the love and support we experienced in our group holiday celebrations.

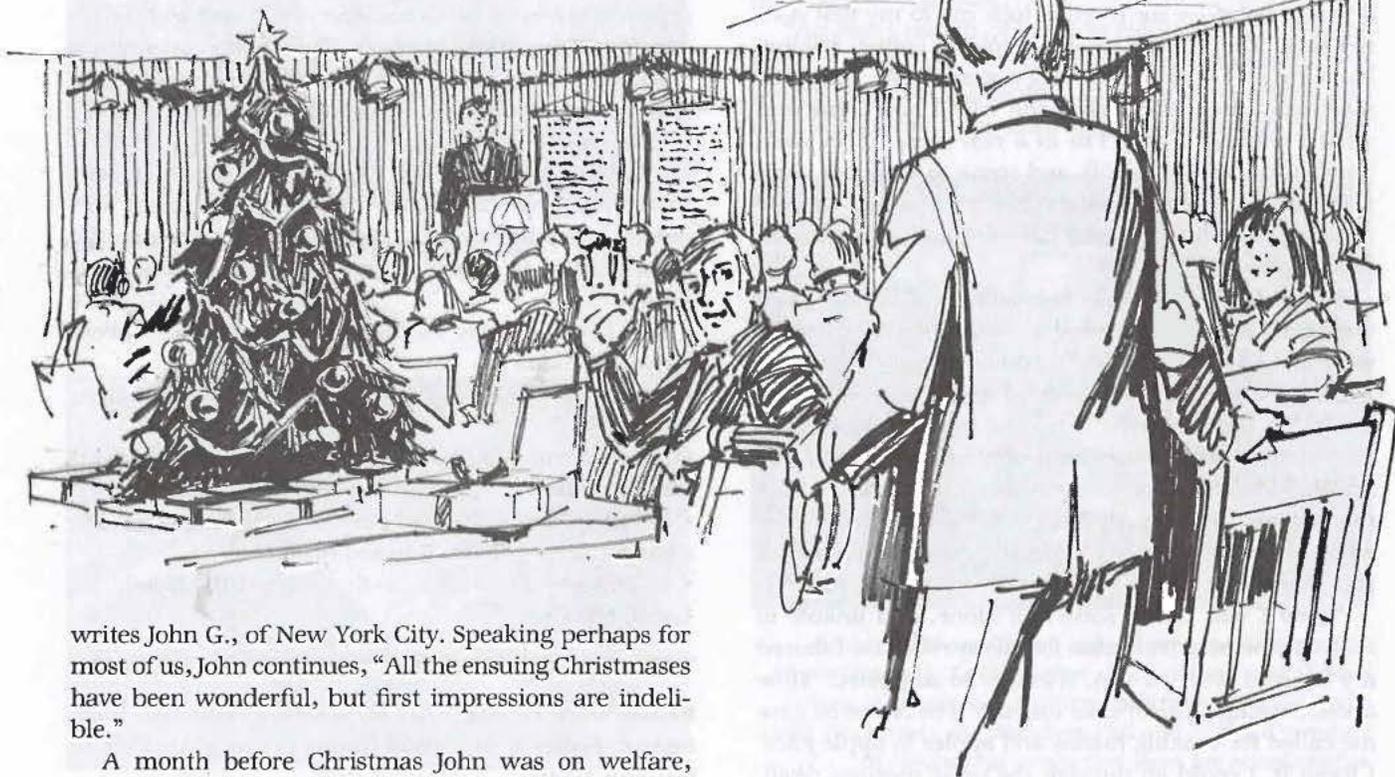
It's safe to say that A.A. group celebrations are held in most parts of the world, wherever Christmas (or Hanukkah) is celebrated. Large or small, in remote rural areas or densely-populated cities, the sharing and hospitality always center around a regular A.A. meeting. Beyond that core, the style of group gatherings are as varied as the members choose and regional customs dictate.

No doubt every A.A. member with at least one holiday behind him or her has a story to share. Here are a few:

"My first Christmas in A.A. is the most memorable,"

living in a furnished room near the rehab from which he had just been discharged. "As Christmas approached, I found out that a marathon meeting was being held from 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve to 12:00 noon Christmas day at that same rehab. Christmas Eve came and yours truly was nervous as all get out.

"I got to the rehab early and spent the night attending meeting after meeting. Sober drunks were coming in and out all night and a warm feeling permeated the place. Many brought cigarettes and gifts for the patients and there was much laughter and fellowship. This, I thought, is what I have been looking for all my life. These people understand me, they are not judging me and they are laughing about their drunken escapades. As the night wore on, new faces kept appearing, everyone sharing how they had taken care of their family obligations, playing Santa Claus, etc., but had to come to this meeting to share their gratitude for all A.A. had given them. What an impression! These people actually left a warm, cozy house and family to share their experience, strength and hope with me and others on Christmas Eve. I may be stupid, but not crazy. I have never left."



writes John G., of New York City. Speaking perhaps for most of us, John continues, "All the ensuing Christmases have been wonderful, but first impressions are indelible."

A month before Christmas John was on welfare,

Richard B. writes of an early Christmas in A.A.: "A group of Southwest Missourians were at a meeting when the topic was 'holiday blues,' so they decided to do something about it. The result was the A.A. Winter Holidays Convention.

"Because it was in a rural area at a small hotel and because it was known that many members would spend the holidays with their families, there was reluctance in the beginning. But it was decided that, even if it were always very small, it would be there for those who needed it. The convention is usually held on the weekend between Christmas and New Year's and frequently, because of bad weather or electrical outages, has difficulty getting speakers. One speaker, who came back after eight years to speak a second time, shared that he had received a poinsettia the first time, addressed to his family; the card read, 'Thank you for sharing your alcoholic with us this Christmas.' There are people who have to miss this convention because of family obligations, but others have never missed, saying, 'A.A. is the only family I have.'"

Celebrating Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, in Jerusalem, "was always a real trial," writes Fred. "Candles need to be lit. Lighting one candle with the shakes was quite an experience; trying to light eight in a row was a major mission.

"One time I left a beautifully laid table after the soup course to go to the bathroom, stopped off to take a little nap and didn't wake up until four o'clock in the morning." There were many incidents like this, Fred relates, but one day "a neighbor who had been watching my drunken behavior for months took me to my first A.A. meeting. There were people drinking coffee, talking, laughing and obviously having a grand time. After the meeting started, they asked me why I had come and what I wanted. I said 'I'm in a real mess.' They said, 'Don't take that first drink and come to meetings. And get an alcoholic pal.' Though I had arrived quite drunk, I heard what they said and have not had a drink from that day to this."

Esther H., remembers the loneliness of her first A.A. Christmas after getting sober in September 1974. "Alone with my 2-year-old child," Esther tells us, "I was cut off from my family in Canada, and from the whole world. I'd been married to a West Indian and, around the holidays, I had always made a West Indian fruitcake, saturated in rum. For weeks before Christmas I'd start marinating the fruits, tipping away at my mixture the whole time. I'd use a real expensive rum, telling myself this was about flavor!

"Now I was newly sober, all alone, and unable to make my beloved fruitcakes for all my relatives. I shared my concern with an A.A. friend who suggested: 'How about making a carrot cake instead?' The recipe he gave me called for soaking raisins and apples in apple juice. I loved it. I could go through the same motions. Well,

every year since 1974 I've made holiday carrot cakes and I take them to my A.A. group," Esther says.

Esther continues that, "Having come from a Jewish home, during my first days in A.A. I first went to a synagogue, but couldn't feel a connection. Then I went to churches but couldn't connect there, either. So I began to sing the Hanukkah songs I remembered from childhood to my daughter. There were no people in my life that first Christmas, but I bought us a little tree and adorned it with storybook characters. To this day my 20-year-old daughter and I have a tree, Hanukkah candles—and carrot cake! For me, sobriety was a miracle. Hanukkah was a celebration of the miracle of the lights. The birth of Christ symbolized the birth of a new me."

From Quebec, Rosaire V. relates that every Christmas, for the last eighteen years, his group holds a round robin meeting in December. Everyone is asked to recall his or her first Christmas without alcohol. Rosaire writes, "The message we transmit, especially to the newcomers, is that A.A. gave us a new life. It is a message of hope."

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## 1993 Regional Forums

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

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum will be sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central office/intergroups, approximately three months ahead of time. In 1993 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *East Central*—May 14–16: Fort Wayne Marriott, Fort Wayne, Indiana
- *Northeast*—June 4–6: Radisson Hotel, Burlington, Vermont
- *West Central*—August 6–8: St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud Minnesota
- *Eastern Canada (Special Forum)*—September 24–25: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
- *Southwest*—December 3–5: Henry VIII Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri

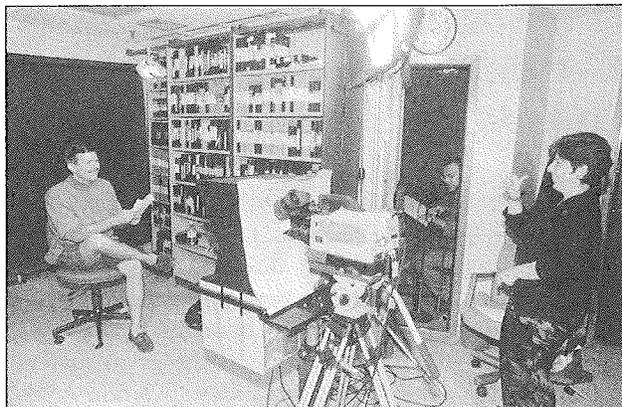
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**Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 11) on your group bulletin board.**

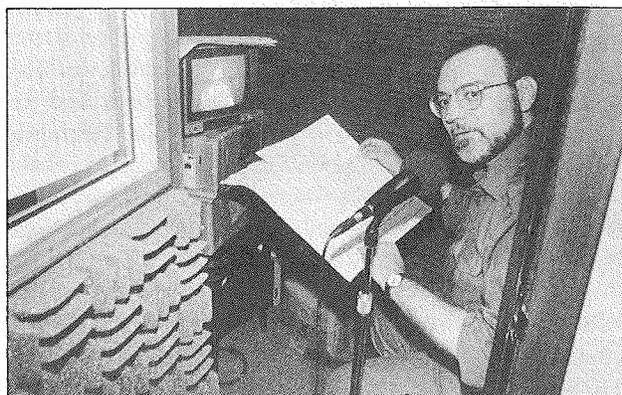
## Big Book Available In Sign Language for The Hearing Impaired

After many months of planning and filming, it is ready—a set of five video cassettes of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, designed for the deaf and hearing impaired.

The cassettes contain the unabridged first 11 chapters that constitute the basic text of the Big Book, as well as “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,” in which co-founder Dr. Bob shares the story of his personal recovery in A.A.; the Forewords, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” and the Appendices are also included. Thanks to careful planning, it satisfies the varied needs of the hearing impaired. Experienced nonalcoholic American Sign Language (ASL) translator Alan R. Barvielek (who is known as “Al B.”), who is totally deaf, fills the “big picture” throughout in his lavender turtlenecked shirt. As he signs in ASL, the text in English simultaneously flashes below, and the voice of another nonalcoholic, Philip E. Giambaresi, is heard reading the exact narrative.



ABOVE: Al B. and interpreter/teleprompter Marie Taccogna reviewing a segment prior to filming. Phil Giambaresi is in the sound booth in background.  
BELOW: Phil in the “doghouse.”



A certified sign language interpretator, Phil is a social worker who specializes in therapy with the deaf at a mental health clinic for disabled persons in New York City. He feels that the new version of the Big Book “will help open the way to sobriety in A.A. and a real sense of belonging for thousands of deaf alcoholics who have known isolation of the deepest kind.”

Work on the project began at the General Service Office about 10 years ago in response to requests from hearing-impaired A.A. members for literature and video tapes. A video cassette of Chapter Five of the Big Book was put together under the supervision of the Group Services coordinator. Soon more than 10 cassettes were being ordered every month, in addition to service material developed for the hearing impaired, such as the service piece, “A Deaf Newcomer Asks. . .” and a listing of contacts available to the deaf in the U.S./Canada. It quickly became apparent that one chapter was not enough. So, with the approval of the A.A. World Services Board, the work of recording began in 1991.

Unlike Al B., Phil has his hearing. However, each is the child of deaf parents; their common bond and enthusiasm for the project translated into a working rapport that encircled all those involved, from the video supervisor and line producer of National Audio Video Transcripts, Inc., the production company, to the G.S.O. project coordinator and an outside consultant.

“It was a tremendous challenge,” recalls Phil, “and at the same time we had fun.” While Al B. was signing, he explains, “I was watching him and synchronizing the narration inside a soundproof booth we quickly dubbed the ‘doghouse.’”

“An exact match of voice to signing is not possible some of the time,” he points out. “For deaf persons who use ASL, English is a second language. Also, idioms and abstract concepts are hard to sign; and some phrases



A.S.L. project production team: Interpreter/teleprompter Marie Taccogna; Keith Gardner, line producer and Michael Wilson, video supervisor/editor, both from National Audio Video Transcripts, Inc. Standing, Phil and Al B. All members of filming and production team are nonalcoholics.

used in the Big Book, such as 'Rarely have we seen a person fail' (Ch. 5) and 'As we became subjects of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm' (Ch. 11) do not have strictly comparable signs. Many of these expressions, plus some of the old-fashioned words and sometimes mildly sexist language, unavoidable in a book published over 50 years ago, kept things lively. We spent approximately 100 hours videotaping, and there was no lack of hilarious flubs, or outtakes, either! In the end, I feel, we maintained the factual and spiritual integrity of the text while making the signing as authentic and clear as possible."

For the alcoholic who is deaf or hard-of-hearing, the new ASL video of the Big Book opens a wide window to A.A.'s message of recovery and hope. Available, from the General Service Office, on ½-inch VHS cassettes (VS-1), \$38.00; 20% discount applies.

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## **VIEWPOINT**

### **Do You Have to Be a 'Pure Alcoholic' to Belong to A.A.?**

"At the Kansas City Area Conference for Young People in A.A. last August, I heard a rumor to the effect that the story in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, titled 'Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict' is in danger of being deleted because it addresses addiction to both alcohol and drugs. I myself am exclusively alcoholic, but I would consider myself an antiquated fossil in blinders if I refused to accept those dually-addicted young people who have been attracted to the A.A. program."

Writing from Springfield, Missouri, Jim S. added, "My home group meets at the university here, and the newcomer who has been addicted exclusively to alcohol is a rare bird indeed. I see no validity to my acquiring any sort of snobbery from my single-addiction status; I have enough character defects as is without adding such pompous hypocrisy to boot."

In response, a G.S.O. staff member noted that Bill W. had addressed dual addiction, as it relates to A.A.'s singleness of purpose, "quite clearly" in the February 1958 issue of the Grapevine (subsequently reprinted in *The Language of the Heart* and excerpted in the pamphlet "Problems Other than Alcohol").

Addressing the question, Can a pill or drug taker, who also has a genuine alcoholic history, become a member of A.A.?, Bill answers with a resounding "Yes." Then he hypothesizes: "Suppose that we are approached by a drug addict who nevertheless has had a genuine alcoholic history. There was a time when such a person

would have been rejected. Many early A.A.s had the almost comical notion that they were 'pure alcoholics'—guzzlers only, no other serious problems at all. When alcoholic ex-cons and drug users first turned up, there was much pious indignation. 'What will people think?' chanted the pure alcoholics. Happily, this foolishness has long since evaporated."

As for the "rumor" that the story "Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict" is being removed from the Big Book, the G.S.O. staffer continued in his letter to Jim, "It is just that—rumor. In fact, there is no intention at present to make any changes at all in the Big Book. Some day a fourth edition undoubtedly will be contemplated and, as happened in the past, some stories may be deleted in favor of more contemporary material. But that's a long way off."

Since its publication in 1939, the story section of the Big Book has been revised twice. The second edition was issued in 1955, the third in 1976, in accordance with Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference. In both instances, literally years of continuing dialogue preceded Conference action.

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## **The Loners-Internationalists Meeting—Staying Sober Through Letters**

Every two months Leonard A. walks to his local post office in the village of Effiduase, Ghana, to pick up an eagerly-awaited envelope from G.S.O. in New York City. All the envelope contains is a six-page newsletter, but to Leonard—and hundreds like him around the world who cannot attend A.A. meetings—the newsletter is both anchor and lifeline that links him with fellow A.A.s in similar isolated situations.

It's called the *Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM)*, and it's mailed to newcomers and oldtimers alike who are tucked away in remote towns in the Republic of China, Thailand, Iceland, Turkey, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia or even Vienna, Virginia, and Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

"Dear A.A. Friends," the confidential newsletter always begins, under a logo of a country mailbox next to a porthole through which is seen a ship on the high seas. Following the Preamble, the meeting-in-print begins with letters from A.A.s in Alaska, say, or the Philippines, or Lancaster, California, each one sharing the writer's experience, strength and hope. It's amazing how, reading these pages, one experiences the same feelings of safety and well-being that attending a regular A.A. meeting offers. And that, of course, is its purpose.

The LIM was largely the brainchild of a recovering

drunken sailor, Captain Jack S., who understood very well, back in the late 1940s, that to maintain his sobriety he needed to reach out to his fellow drunks through letters. A.A.'s phenomenal worldwide growth is now largely attributed to Captain Jack and hundreds of Internationalists like him who, sailing the seven seas, carried the message wherever they dropped anchor.

The *LIM* is assembled by a G.S.O. staff member who breaks the letters that arrive at G.S.O. into various headings. At the end of each *LIM* is a confidential list of the names and addresses of those who "participated" in the meeting, new members and changes of addresses. Many *LIM* members correspond with each other, frequently establishing lifelong friendships.

Members of the *LIM* Group fall into various categories. *Loners* are A.A.s who live in areas where they are unable to attend A.A. meetings. Seagoing A.A.s are known as *Internationalists* who, when possible, form groups aboard ship; there are now fifty-six *Internationalist Groups* meeting aboard ship or in ports. *Port Contacts* make themselves available when seamen or other A.A. visitors arrive, and are listed in the *LIM Directory*. Housebound members, who cannot go to meetings due to illness or other physical problems, are known as *Homers*. *Loner Sponsors* are A.A. members who write to LIMs, sharing group-life experience with them and often sending tapes or working the Steps through the mail.

Little did Captain Jack (as he came to be known to thousands of A.A.s) know that his letter of March 28, 1946 to the General Service Office would bear the fruit that it did. "My problem is this," he wrote. "Could I obtain addresses of A.A. branches in Portland, Maine; Providence, R.I.; New York City; Albany, Philadelphia, Beaumont, Galveston, and Corpus Christi, Texas?" He continued that he was "still at sea on oil tankers, on which I have served for ten years and I have few contacts ashore with A.A., and have to rely on the Book and the guy upstairs. Are there any magazines or literature to which I can subscribe and to whom I should pay dues?"

Charlotte L. of G.S.O. not only provided Captain Jack with the names of A.A. contacts in those cities he requested, but she encouraged him to write to other seagoing members, which he did. Eventually, he would write to another staff member that "letters have become a hobby with me." They take "the place of meetings and I hope in the course of events may have helped somebody."

It was not until the publication of a three-part article by Captain Jack, "A 'Loner' at Sea," printed in the October, November, and December 1948 issues of *The Grapevine* that plans began to take shape to start an Internationalists meeting by mail. Letter response to the article by a seaman prompted yet another G.S.O. staff member, Bobby B., to suggest to Captain Jack that he consider starting a "Round Robin Meeting" through

letters; it would be similar, she wrote him, to one that A.A.s in isolated situations in South America had begun around that time. Captain Jack responded positively and suggested calling it "The Far East Internationalist Group." He said "that would leave it open to lone members stationed ashore in the Far East and also to men who sail . . . these waters under flags of different nations." The South American Round Robin meeting, according to G.S.O. archives, did not continue for very long. An A.A. Loners meeting, begun in 1960, did continue, eventually merging in 1976 with the Captain's original Internationalists meeting.

*LIM* first came out in 1949, as *The Internationalists Round Robin*. It consisted of a few pages of letters received at G.S.O., typed up by a staff member, and mailed out to a small band of Internationalists determined to stay sober no matter how isolated they were. By 1963 it had become "fancier"—5 or 6, one-sided pages, mimeographed on blue paper. Two years later there were 30 Internationalists listed in the 1965 *Internationalists Directory*. Membership grew steadily. The latest *Internationalists/Loners/Homers Directory* lists 248 Internationalists, 386 Loners, 36 Port Contacts, 150 Homers, 56 Internationalists Groups (one group might meet on a particular tanker, for example), and 990 Loner Sponsors. Every year, there's a Loners-Internationalist Conference, held in Akron, Ohio, and there are usually several Internationalist speakers at the International A.A. Convention.

Captain Jack attended the 1985 International Convention in Montreal, three years before his death, in December 1988, at age 91. A few months earlier he had celebrated his 42nd A.A. anniversary. He had remained active in the Fellowship, particularly seeking out newcomers in Portland, Maine, where he had retired, and he never stopped answering the many letters he received.

And so it continues. ". . . I need help," writes D.J., from the Philippines in the May/June 1992 issue. He started a group but only "four or five alcoholics attend," although ". . . alcoholism is rampant in the Philippines." Internationalist Debby C. writes, "My husband and I are about to embark on a voyage throughout the South Pacific on our 40-foot sailboat. We have an *International Directory* and plan to contact other friends of Bill W. over VHF radio when we are in port."

Recently, G.S.O. received a letter from A.A. member Wiley H., who related how someone in his home group had asked, "Has anyone ever written to the New York Office for information?" A young man raised his hand and said, "When in the Gulf War, feeling much alone on that ship, I wrote asking for a letter. I got 350 replies, was the envy of every sailor on ship and got the courage to ask for other friends of Bill W. We started a meeting at 4 a.m., the only time available for all of us." He is sober and busy with his A.A. work in Houston.

## **SERVICES AT G.S.O.**

### **Spanish Desk at G.S.O. Serves Hispanic Members In Their Own Language**

"There are many Spanish-speaking A.A. members who don't speak English. They meet in more than 800 Hispanic groups in the U.S., Puerto Rico and Canada, and all too many of them are unaware that we're here to serve them in their own language. Consequently, they miss out on a lot of supportive services that are theirs for the asking."

For instance, continues Danny M., nonrotating coordinator of Spanish Services at the General Service Office, "How many Spanish-speaking members know that almost all A.A. literature is available in their native tongue, from the Big Book to *The A.A. Service Manual* and the annual *Final Report* of the General Service Conference? How many know that our Spanish pamphlets and Guidelines are constantly updated along with their English counterparts, or that the Spanish Literature catalog is available from G.S.O. free of charge?"

The wide range of audiovisual materials in Spanish may be one of A.A.'s best kept secrets. Their availability comes as welcome news to many a Hispanic member trying to stay sober in a confusing English-language culture where rules of grammar and syntax seem made to be broken. Even more reassuring is the fact that Danny is ever available to answer questions and lend support—speaking in Spanish, English or, if you prefer, Portuguese or Italian.

With the help of nonalcoholic linguist John de Stefano, Danny coordinates and revises Spanish translations of material handled by the other G.S.O. staff assignments, especially the International desk. "Our goal is to provide services to the Hispanic A.A. community which are as equal as possible to those provided to English-speaking A.A. groups," he explains. "Also helpful to them is the Spanish edition of *Box 4-5-9*, which is distributed to all Hispanic groups."

Danny always has several irons in the fire—for example, assisting the staff with correspondence in Spanish, preparing to represent G.S.O. at a convention, and helping an individual Spanish group to register with G.S.O. As the G.S.O. staff representative to CIATAL (the Ibero-American Commission on Translations and Adaptations of A.A. Literature), he also works with other Spanish-speaking countries wishing to produce their own translations of A.A. literature. "We seek uniformity, consistent with the spirit and meaning of the original English version," he says, "but of course there are changes reflecting the colloquialisms of a given country."

As more Spanish-speaking people come into A.A., Danny points out, "we are seeing improved communication between the Spanish- and English-speaking groups. Most of our Spanish-speaking members want to become an informed and loving part of mainstream A.A. We stand ready to help in every way we can."

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### **New From G.S.O.**

- *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, 1992–1993 edition. History of A.A. services, explaining the Conference structure. (BM-31) \$1.55.
  - *Directories*: International A.A. Directory (MD-1) 75¢; Canadian (MD-2); Western U.S. (MD-3); Eastern U.S. (MD-4). (MD-2–4) \$1.35 each. Confidential to A.A. members only.
  - "The A.A. Group" (Hungarian translation) (SJ-16) \$2.80.
  - "Letter to a Woman Alcoholic" (Bulgarian translation) (SB-34) \$1.75.
  - *Posters of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (in Spanish). Each poster is approximately 25" x 35" and is suitable for mounting or just hanging on meeting room wall. Steps (SS-83); Traditions (SS-84) \$6.55 each.
- 20% discount applies to all above, except the *A.A. Service Manual*.

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## **P.I.**

### **Portland A.A.s Meet On TV to Reach the Suffering Alcoholic**

Ours is a program of attraction, not promotion. But how can we carry our message to the suffering alcoholic who doesn't know A.A. exists? And the one who knows we do, but has misconceptions and fears . . . or else wants our help but doesn't realize it's as close as the phone? Such questions have led to an exciting outcome in Portland, Oregon, where a series of A.A. meetings created especially for television are keeping the intergroup hotline humming.

Explains Jeffery P., chairperson of the Public Information Committee of the Portland Intergroup: "Unlike the early days of A.A. when the 'media' consisted primarily of newspapers, magazines and radio, current

statistics show that in the 1990s, more than two-thirds of Americans get their daily news from television. While rigorously observing the Twelve Traditions in the production of this series, we feel that TV as a whole affords us the greatest opportunity to share the attraction of A.A. with the greatest number of people. I believe that Bill W. said it best when he stated, 'It's hard to be attractive if you're invisible.' "

Created by an ad hoc group of the P.I. Committee, the 13 one-hour meetings have been airing three times a week on various cable access channels, which together reach approximately 1.2 million viewers. The basic format remains the same throughout and resembles an A.A. meeting as closely as possible, with complete protection of anonymity. Approximately eight A.A. members participate in each meeting, their talks interspersed usually with brief public service announcements prepared by the General Service Office. As they share their experience, strength and hope, for about five minutes each, their hands and torsos are evident, but their faces are disguised by a computerized mosaic pattern.

As the leader says at the beginning of the meeting, "The A.A. members participating here represent a cross-section of the community. The spectrum ranges from intellectuals to illiterates . . . from the lawful to those who were once outlaws. From bankers to housewives, from rich to poor, the disease of alcoholism knows no social boundaries."

The leader clearly addresses anonymity: "During this broadcast, you will not be able to see the faces of the participating A.A. members, nor will they use their full names. We are not a secret society, nor are we ashamed of being A.A. members—quite the contrary. We celebrate our program of recovery, not those who practice it."

Because of the anonymity factor, the TV meetings do not reveal the warmth and camaraderie that bonds A.A. members as they mix together at the start and end of "real" meetings. However, the sharing of the speakers is varied, candid and direct; the great potential for identification thus compensates for the visible absence of interaction.

There's Rusty, sober 11 years, who "learned how not to drink, then learned how to live" . . . and Bruce, who says he was "terminally unique" before coming to A.A. in 1983 for the second time . . . and young Peter, who explains that when he drank he became Fred Astaire, but only for a while. In 1988 he discovered that "the only way not to get drunk is, don't drink." Finally, there's Kay, in A.A. for six years. "I found," she shares, "that the people in the program continue to love you even when you can't love yourself."

Jeffery reports that the TV series "has been produced at a local cable access studio that is available to all Portland area citizens who want to produce and air their own programs over the city's cable access channels."

He emphasizes that the Portland Intergroup, which owns the copyrights to all 13 meetings in the present series, "is happy to make copies available to other P.I. committees that would like to use them in their areas." The only charge would be for duplicating and mailing the ½-inch videotapes.

For further information, you may contact: Portland Area Intergroup, 1650 N.W. Front Ave., Suite 130, Portland, OR 97305.

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## C.P.C.

### Talking Plus Teaching Add Up to Attraction In Northwest Texas

"Our Northwest Area extends from the top of Texas to the bottom and all along the border, so when I set out to do workshops, I tend to cover a lot of territory. But they're generally well-received and I am always grateful for the opportunity to do them."

The writer is Steve H., who lives in Borger, Texas, "about 50 miles north of Amarillo," and chairs his area's Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community. "At the workshops," he says, "I tell how others in the Fellowship have stayed sober and carried the message to suffering alcoholics, and how I have, too."

"Ours is a program of attraction, but you can't attract people to something they don't know anything about, so I just keep talking about what we can do and what we can't. I don't know if it has actually helped anyone else but it has definitely helped me to stay sober, and has certainly enhanced the quality of my sobriety."

Steve notes that four of the districts in his area "have active C.P.C. committees, and they have been busy sending out letters to professionals, with favorable response. One district, that includes the good-sized cities of Midland and Odessa, has targeted judges, probation officers and the like, as they've had problems with 'paper-signing' for the court referrals they send to our meetings, along with some disruption difficulties. We're confident that a little education about A.A. and a lot of communication will turn things around."

Overall, interest in C.P.C. "is slower than we'd like," Steve acknowledges. "But it's picking up and, meanwhile, we're doing what we can here to make sure as many people as possible know that Alcoholics Anonymous is available to anyone, anywhere, who wants our help."

# Correctional Facilities

## 'Jail Box' Funding Can Chase Away the Out-of-Books Blues

The "jail box" has become a common sight this past year at meetings throughout Northern New Jersey. Simply a cardboard container of indeterminate size, it is where members contribute everything from old Grapes and Big Books to pennies, dimes and dollars for the purchase and distribution of A.A. literature to alcoholic inmates in the area's approximately 28 jails and prisons. (All new literature is purchased directly from the Area Literature Committee.)

The brainchild of the area Correctional Facilities Committee, the jail boxes are klinking cousins of the pink and green C.F. collection cans that have been popping up across the country (*Box 4-5.9*, Oct.-Nov. 1991). Chairperson Tom S. emphasizes that, "It is not the intention of our committee to take money away from a group's regular collection; rather, this program is designed to help satisfy the ever-increasing demand for A.A. literature.

"The inmate population is growing at an alarming rate, and many of those committing crimes do so under the influence of alcohol. Spare change given by grateful recovering alcoholics can go a long way in providing hope and a 'meeting in print' to those who are still striving for sobriety."

The C.F. committee has turned over more than one new leaf in its approach to literature distribution. "In the past," Tom points out, "we would mail out literature from our intergroup office without keeping track of how much we were sending or to whom. Now, at our bi-monthly C.F. committee meetings, A.A.s who sponsor meetings 'inside' can pick up literature, provided that they sign their names, the amount taken and the facility involved on an inventory sheet.

"Furthermore, meeting sponsors are less apt to give out literature willy-nilly. We've come to realize, for example, that we simply can't supply each inmate with a personal copy of the Big Book; instead, we are donating copies to a number of the facilities' 'mini-A.A.' libraries, where they can be borrowed, read and passed along. It is our hope that as more and more A.A.s participate in the jail-box program at the local level, there will be a lessening of the financial strain on G.S.O., which at present is enormous."

Robert A., who chairs the Greater Newark District

C.F. Committee, reports that "some members aren't content just to toss coins or old Grapes into the jail boxes. I've seen people buy a new copy of the Big Book or Twelve and Twelve or *Living Sober* from the literature display and place it carefully in the jail box—often with a hastily scrawled message of gratitude and hope, such as 'If I can recover my life, so can you' and 'Please remember, in A.A. you'll never have to be alone again.'"

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## Treatment Facilities

### For Some Alcoholics, Medication Is a Must

"Well-intentioned A.A.s who advise new members to stop taking prescribed medications may be playing with fire," says Melody T., immediate past chairperson of the Intergroup Treatment Facilities Committee in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The problem has surfaced mainly, she explains, "with alcoholics in Dual Diagnosis units in our treatment centers. Some of our A.A. people are all too aware that drug misuse can destroy sobriety; at the same time, they may not realize that for serious medical conditions ranging widely from allergies, epilepsy, and heart trouble to clinical depression, physician-prescribed medication is often a must."

What to do? "For one thing," Melody reports, "all our chairpersons have access to the pamphlet 'The A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs,' which discusses the matter in detail. It also makes it clear that sobriety in A.A. alone does not qualify members to play doctor. We offer this pamphlet as well to treatment facility administrators and staff."

Fortunately, for the sake of clearer communication and understanding, Melody adds, "many of the A.A. chairpersons in our Dual Diagnosis units are dually diagnosed themselves, as alcoholics who also suffer from some form of mental illness. In fact, one, who previously had been diagnosed as 'criminally insane,' celebrated eight years of sobriety in September. These people are keenly aware that psychiatry is best practiced by those qualified to do so. Therefore, discussion at our meetings is limited to A.A.-related topics and to what we have to share with each other: our experience, strength and hope in recovery."

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## 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.



**2** 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.



**3** 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.



**4** Find out about the special holiday

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



**5** 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.



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



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



**8** Go to church. Any church.



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



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



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



**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 events on reverse side.

# BOX 459 BULLETIN BOARD

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s — Via G.S.O.

HOLIDAY ISSUE 1992

## Calendar of Events

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

### December

- 4-5 — *Sikeston, Missouri*. 12th Annual Five "5" Corners Conv. Write: Ch., 205 N. Jackson, Kennett, MO 63857
- 4-6 — *Virginia Beach, Virginia*. Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Regional Forums Secretary, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 4-6 — *Jacksonville Beach, Florida*. 17th N. FL/S. GA Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 4-6 — *Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*. Sandlapper Round I. Write: Ch., Box 14634, Surfside Beach, SC 29587
- 15-January 3 — *Chicago, Illinois*. Second Annual Blazing Trails Mega Alkathon. Write: Ch., 2018 W. Giddings St., Chicago, IL 60625
- 23-26 — *Dale City, Virginia*. Candlelight's Celebration of Sobriety. Write: Ch., Box 4139, Woodbridge, VA 22194
- 24-25 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. Holiday Event. Write: Ch., Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419
- 31-January 1 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. New Year's Event. Write: Ch., Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419
- 31-January 3 — *Waterbury, Connecticut*. NECYPAA III. Write: Ch., Box 301, Storrs, CT 06268

### January

- 8-10 — *Dodge City, Kansas*. 23rd Southwest Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 1413 Pershing, Salina, KS 67401
- 8-10 — *Houston, Texas*. 31st S.E. Texas Area Conf. Write: Ch., 12202 Chessington, Houston, TX 77031
- 8-10 — *Clarksburg, West Virginia*. Jackson's Mill Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26302
- 15-17 — *Laughlin, Nevada*. Third Annual River Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 8039, Ft. Mojave, AZ 86427
- 15-17 — *Eau Claire, Wisconsin*. Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 1592, Eau Claire, WI 54702-1592
- 21-24 — *Raleigh, North Carolina*. 26th Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619
- 22-24 — *Jamestown, North Dakota*. Dist. 6 12th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 774, Jamestown, ND 58402

- 28-31 — *Fort Walton Beach, Florida*. Fourth Annual Emerald Coast Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875
- 29-31 — *Blytheville, Arkansas*. 36th Tri-State Coon Supper. Write: Ch., Box 675, Blytheville, AR 72316
- 29-31 — *Christchurch, New Zealand*. 30th National Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2062, Christchurch, New Zealand
- 29-31 — *Albert Bay, British Columbia, Canada*. Fifth Annual Rally. Write: Ch., Box 290, Albert Bay, BC V0N 1A0

### February

- 5-7 — *Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada*. Sixth Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., 31 Pine Grove Tree Ct., Comp 32, Site #1, RR #8, Fredericton, NB E3B 5W5
- 5-7 — *Universal City, California*. 18th SFVAA Conv. Write: Ch., 7970 Woodman Ave. #201, Van Nuys, CA 91042
- 7-9 — *Arevalo Iloilo City, Philippines*. National Conv. Write: Ch., Plaza Rizal Jaro, Iloilo City, Philippines
- 12-14 — *West Palm Beach, Florida*. Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 325, Boca Raton, FL 33429
- 26-28 — *Warwick, Bermuda*. Big Book Study. Write: Ch., Box WK178, Warwick, W.K.B.X., Bermuda
- 26-28 — *Burlington, Iowa*. Southeastern Iowa Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 431, Ft. Madison, Iowa 52627
- 26-28 — *Kansas City, Kansas*. Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 26-28 — *Corpus Christi, Texas*. CBIA Jamboree. Write: Ch., 3833 So. Staples, Suite 44, Corpus Christi, TX 78411
- 26-28 — *Wilmington, Delaware*. NERAASA

## Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 44): Anonymity, our spiritual foundation; Gratitude; Keeping the memory green.

January (page 31): Newcomers.

'93. Write: Ch., Box 3721, Wilmington, DE 19807

### March

- 5-7 — *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. North Shore Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 91086, West Vancouver, BC V7V 3N3
- 5-7 — *Jekyll Island, Georgia*. Sixth Unity Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 1464, Tifton, GA 31793
- 12-14 — *Cherry Hill, New Jersey*. 29th Southern NJ G.S.C. Write: Ch., Box 25, Clementon, NJ 08021
- 26-28 — *Goodyear, Arizona*. West Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1491, Surprise, AZ 85374
- 26-28 — *Ames, Iowa*. Aim for Ames Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2491, Ames, IO 50010
- 26-28 — *Topeka, Kansas*. K.S.C.Y.P.A.A. Write: Ch., Box 3342, Lawrence, KS 66046

## Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on February, March or April events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by December 10, the calendar deadline for the February/March 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 — for events on reverse side

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