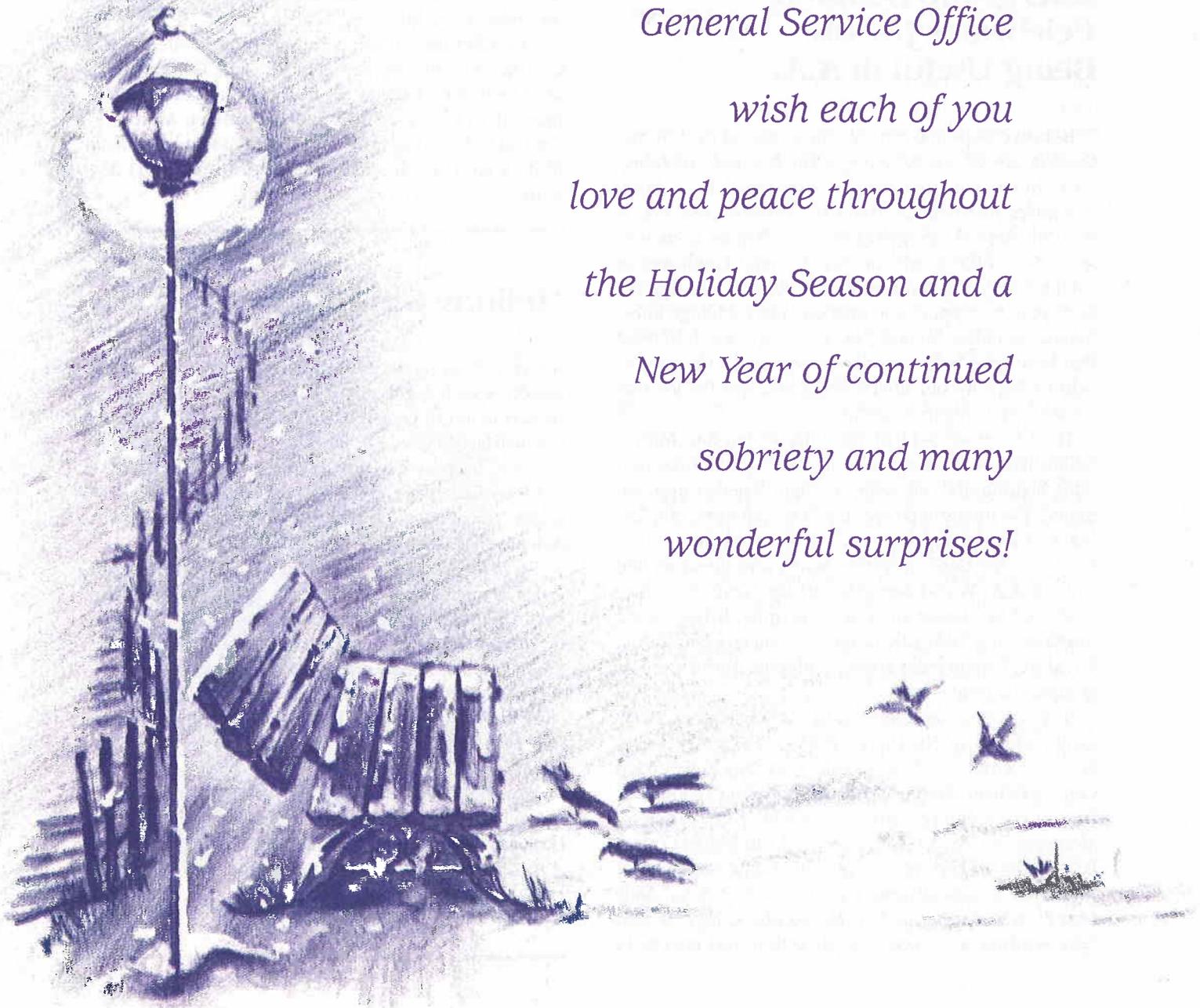


*All of us at your
General Service Office
wish each of you
love and peace throughout
the Holiday Season and a
New Year of continued
sobriety and many
wonderful surprises!*



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Intergroup Seminar Celebrates Joy of Being Useful to A.A.

“The intergroups and central offices around the U.S. and Canada are where suffering alcoholics, A.A. members and the public turn when they want to contact Alcoholics Anonymous,” read the letter of welcome to the 13th Annual Intergroup Seminar. “Those of us who serve these offices, whether we are paid employees or volunteers, find it immensely valuable to come together each year to support one another and exchange information and ideas on how best to do our jobs. Like those that have gone before, this year’s seminar is designed to help us improve our effectiveness and feel the joy that comes from being truly useful.”

Held October 8-11 at the Villa Hotel, San Mateo, California, the weekend of workshops, panel presentations, sharing and fellowship brought together approximately 135 intergroup/central office managers, employees and intergroup representatives. Together with a trustee of the General Service Board and directors and staff of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine, they examined key issues such as anonymity, listing closed meetings on a Web site, usage of Conference-approved literature, how to enlist stronger support from local A.A. groups, and much more.

The seminar was cohosted by six neighboring intergroup offices in Northern California: Contra Costa Service Center, Walnut Creek; East Bay Intergroup Central Office, Oakland; Central California Fellowship, Sacramento; Intercounty Fellowship, San Francisco; Monterey Bay Area Intergroup; and San Mateo County Fellowship of A.A. Noting that the theme of the seminar was “Central Offices: The Frontline of A.A.,” Sally Mae S., who heads the San Mateo office, reports that “the seminar gave renewed direction and energy to

our commitment to reach suffering alcoholics and to respond to the needs of those who are recovering in A.A. Seeing anew that we are not alone in our work, that we can rely on each other for direction and support, bolstered our sense of unity and strength. At the same time, we didn’t take ourselves too seriously—we lunched by the pool, renewed old friendships, made new ones, and enjoyed a tour of San Francisco. At one point the planes of the Blue Angels roared overhead. In formation they performed their daredevil stunts as they do every year, but when the visitors looked amazed we assured them tongue-in-cheek, “We planned it just for you.”

To obtain a copy of the Final Report of the 1998 Intergroup Seminar, write: Maggie W., Monterey Bay Area Intergroup, 1015 Cass, No. 4, Monterey, CA 93940; or call (831) 373-3713. A \$5 contribution is requested to help cover production and mailing costs.

The 1999 Intergroup Seminar, to be hosted by the Central Office of Sara-Mana, in Sarasota, Florida, will be held October 14-17 at the Holiday Inn Riverfront in Bradenton. For more information, contact: Marcus E., Central Office of Sara-Mana, Inc., 1748 Independence Blvd., Suite F-1, Sarasota, FL 34234; or call (941) 351-4818.

Holiday Gift Ideas

A nice way to remember your home group this holiday season is with a gift subscription to *Box 4-5-9*. A bulk subscription (10 copies each of 6 issues, \$6.00) is a gift that will last all year.

Many on your list may not have the biographies of A.A.’s co-founders: *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* (B-8) \$7.50; *“Pass It On,” The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World* (B-9) \$8.00.

For years, now, A.A. members have been solving giving problems by sending friends a Grapevine subscription. To keep track of your days (one at a time) are the Grapevine Wall Calendar, with beautiful color photos, \$5.00, and the GV Pocket Planner, \$3.00.

The anthology *Best of the Grapevine*, Vol. III is new this year, so it is a pretty good bet that some of your sponsees and friends do not have it. Like Vols. I and II this new addition is \$8.00; 5 or more \$7.50.

Most of these items may be ordered from G.S.O. or through your local intergroup or central office. Grapevine books and other items are available by contacting the A.A. Grapevine: Grand Central Station, Box 1980, New York, NY 10163-1980.

A Time of Giving, of Sharing, of Gratitude

This year marks the Fellowship's 63rd holiday season—beginning with Thanksgiving, through the Festival of Lights that is celebrated at Hanukkah, and on to Christmas and New Year's Eve. For a continuously growing society of two million members in 150 countries, it's hard to imagine what it must have been like that very first Christmas in 1935. A December 1952 issue of the Grapevine brought together some reminiscences: "The first Christmas for A.A. was the depression year of 1935. There were three old timers to mark it. . . hardly a dozen newcomers to share it with them. In Akron, Dr. Bob and Bill D. [A.A. number three] were going on their second six months. Four recruits had four months to two months. In New York, Bill W. had thirteen months since his last drink, seven months since his historic trip to Akron and the start of A.A.



"In Akron, the six gathered with their families at Dr. Bob's. There was no ceremony . . . no exchange of presents. The Twelve Steps had not yet been formulated. The Big Book was only a vague stirring that would not even be in manuscript until three more Christmases had been achieved. But there was joy that this most dangerous of times for the alcoholic had arrived. . . and twenty-four hours by twenty-four hours was being mastered."

Bill W., in 1952, remembered only a quiet day in New York that first Christmas—there were so few members. Five years later, there was a place to celebrate Christmas—the first clubhouse. They called it the 24th Street Club. . . . There is a St. Nicholas story—literally—that goes with it. Just one hundred years before, in 1840, the building was erected at 334 ½ West 24th Street, the property of a family named Moore. They were large landowners in Manhattan's Chelsea section. Driving across the snow-covered lawn one day, Dr. Clement Clarke Moore began to compose his immortal gift to children of all ages, with the opening words, "Twas the night before Christmas. . . ."

The Grapevine article, written as A.A. entered its 17th Holiday Season, quotes one of the members at that first Akron Christmas. "There were thanks that we had come this far. However, I am certain that there was still considerable fear and trembling. . . not fear that this new way would not work, but doubt and uncertainty that we would be able to hold on to it. We remembered our many failures and thanked God for what he had already granted us and prayed sincerely for continued strength."

Today, although the holidays may be lonely and uncomfortable times for many A.A.s, there is no longer as much "fear and trembling." For most, as one member said, "Every day I don't drink is a holiday." Each day of the holiday season is still only 24 hours long. One A.A. reminded us a couple of years back, "Eight of those hours can be disposed of easily by taking the doctor's advice about sleeping. So that leaves only 16 hours to worry about at a time, and no one who knows anything about horse trading would trade 16 hours for a lifetime of sobriety. Furthermore, a good share of those 16 hours can be filled with A.A. friends and A.A. talk and A.A. thoughts." That, in fact, is what most of us do, or learn to do, pretty early in sobriety, because that very sharing keeps us sober.

Treatment facilities are not exactly brimming with bubbling good cheer at this time of year. Quite a few A.A.s, especially those who sobered up around holiday time in a treatment facility, remember all too vividly what a scary, baffling—as well as tentatively hopeful—time it was. So many sober A.A.s leave their homes or friends' celebrations for a few hours to share their hope

and gratitude with brand new members in the facilities.

Every December, brightly-colored decorations go up in A.A. meeting rooms, and thousands upon thousands hang out at marathon meetings. Usually these are held from noon on Christmas Eve, continuing through the night and into Christmas Day. Interspersed with a back-to-back schedule of speakers are breaks for holiday eating and reveling. Quite often, these marathon meetings are repeated by the groups on New Year's Eve, again running through the night and into New Year's Day. Whether small and simple or large and lavish, sober alcoholics pour in to celebrate the season together in sobriety.

One group's members, in Quebec, get together every December in a round robin to recall their first Christmas without alcohol. It's a great way to transmit to each other, and to newcomers in the group, how "A.A. gave us a new life," one of the group's members wrote us. "It's always a message of hope."

And this message of gratitude is spelled out every year in a variety of seasonal greetings received at G.S.O. from all corners of the globe. Thousands of heartfelt messages, written on colorful cards, come pouring in, in Spanish, French, Japanese, Norwegian, Russian or Bulgarian (to name a few), all of them expressing the shared good news: "Happy Holidays, and thank you for my sobriety."

From Box 4-5-9, Holiday issue 1993

Deadline for Directory Information—March 2, 1999

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 2, 1999.

Printouts, corrected to show up-to-date group information and returned to G.S.O. by the areas, will be used to produce the 1999-2000 A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian. These confidential directories list groups and contacts; delegates and trustees; central offices/intergroups/answering services; and special international contacts.

Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

'It's Your Office' Emphasizes New G.S.O. General Manager

January 1, 1999, marks the official starting date for the newly appointed G.S.O. general manager, past trustee Greg M. of Honolulu, Hawaii, who will step into the position filled by George D. since 1992.

George looks back at his seven years "with gratitude and joy." And now "looks forward to moving into just 'another A.A. room' in which I can live a life of love and service." He is particularly pleased that Greg will be taking over. "In terms of A.A. service experience and management abilities" George feels, "Greg is probably the best qualified person ever asked to fill this position. He is both spiritual and pragmatic in his approach to fulfilling A.A.'s mission and G.S.O.'s role of service to A.A. members and groups."

Greg will be spending time at the office before January, planning for the transition and becoming familiar with current office operations. "My first priority is to be a sponge," he says, "to soak up the knowledge and experience of seasoned staff and employees."

Greg is no stranger to G.S.O. operations, having served for two years as a trustee-director on the A.A. World Services Board, and when the opportunity came to apply for the job of general manager, he embraced it eagerly. Greg's working life (he currently heads up his own construction business) has been deeply influenced in sobriety by A.A. principles, and he has always relied on input from others and on prayer and meditation when decisions need to be made. In the new arena of G.S.O., he sees a chance to utilize this management style in working with both A.A. staff members and non-A.A. employees. "They all know what they're doing," he says, "and I need to establish bonds of trust that will bring out the best in all of us."

The search for a new general manager is an involved process, and Greg reports that because he has so often worked for himself, he had never before actually been interviewed. With a chuckle, he tells the story of his most critical interview with the trustees. As both delegate and trustee, Greg was renowned for his wild and colorful Hawaiian ties, but his wife had bought him a dignified new tie in honor of the occasion. In the midst of a series of probing questions about goals and qualifications, one of the interviewers looked at him in amazement and barked, "Where did you get that tie?"

Now that the selection process is complete, how does he feel about leaving sand, sun, and surf for a job in a large city? Not only Greg, but also his wife Aleda and children, Reannon, 16, and Sterling, 12, are looking forward to making a change and widening their hori-

zons. His older son, Aaron, will stay in Hawaii and run the family business. "There are no limits — that's what I've learned in sobriety. I've been touched by A.A. principles and blessed to serve A.A. in my home group and area, then as a trustee and now as general manager. It's all part of giving back."

Sober since 1978, Greg attended his first meeting on Maui, where he had landed after drinking his way out of California. Not even Paradise worked a successful geographic cure however, and having managed to lose both family and business, Greg had taken up residence in the back of a truck on the beach. He finally asked for help, and at his first meeting, where group members concentrated entirely on Step One, he experienced a profound surrender and has not needed to take a drink since.

Greg was introduced to all three Legacies very early in sobriety, and just as he drank for the effect of booze, he stayed sober for the effect produced by A.A. — the joy of giving replaced the false happiness of alcohol. He began giving back with various group jobs such as coffee maker, group secretary and treasurer, then moved into general service as G.S.R. and D.C.M. After filling several area committee and other jobs, he was chosen to represent Hawaii as Panel 37 delegate and served as chair of the Conference Report and Charter Committee. In 1990, A.A.s in the Pacific Region elected him to a four-year term as regional trustee. He was chair of the trustees' Conference and Nominating Committees, as well as a director of A.A. World Services, Inc. from May 1991 to April 1993.

Those years on the General Service Board were marked by profound changes in the Fellowship, and as the trustees struggled with difficult issues, like the question of copyrights and trademarks, communication was not always easy. Greg recalls that at times there was an overwhelming temptation to consider primarily the immediate consequences of an action and lose sight of the far-reaching effect of that action on the Fellowship as a whole. "We are all now engaged in the ongoing spiritual task — to let go and refocus — and that takes mental and spiritual discipline."

The most important legacy of his term as trustee, though, is a storehouse of memorable experiences. One that stands out in Greg's mind and heart happened at the 1995 International Convention, when a nonalcoholic trustee from Russia stood and wept with gratitude for the U.S. and Canada A.A.s, thanking them for their sacrifices in making it possible to give the Big Book to his country. The whole room wept with him.

Incidents like that feed directly into Greg's enthusiasm for the job of general manager. The publication, translation, and distribution of literature comprise only one of the many ways G.S.O. and A.A. World Services help A.A.s to carry the message. As he reflects upon his new responsibilities, Greg's priorities are very clear. First and fore-

most, he says, is the task of making sure that every A.A. member knows that the General Service Office is *their* office, that its sole function is to provide the resources to help members of the Fellowship carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. He hopes that all A.A. members will be able to experience the work of the office, to become knowledgeable about the full range of services that G.S.O. provides, and to know it is truly theirs.

Those Things We Do Are Less 'Organized' Than They Look

"To a newcomer it may appear mystifying to see a large A.A. meeting come to life, unfold, then get 'put away'—only to learn that 'A.A. ought never be organized.'"

"Actually," writes editor Marianne F. in the September issue of *Harbor Light*, published monthly by the Harbor Area Service Committee of A.A. in Long Beach, California, "I laugh every time I hear that phrase. And after you've been around A.A. a while, perhaps it becomes even more of a paradox. Members put conventions together, panels, potlucks, dances and much more. Our program chairperson puts together three events each year. 'The Twelve Traditions Illustrated' pamphlet, in a discussion of Tradition Nine, begins with a quote from A.A. co-founder Bill W.: 'We need to distinguish sharply between spiritual simplicity and functional simplicity. . . . When we get into questions of actions by groups, by areas, and by A.A. as a whole, we find that we must to some extent *organize* to carry the message—or else face chaos. And chaos is not simplicity.' He further explains that, 'in action by groups,' we find that we do need some degree of organization. If everybody thinks somebody else is going to make the coffee, what's the result? No coffee!'"

Marianne points out that her home group is a meeting with more than 200 people attending. "I have been privileged," she says, "to observe the meeting being set up with chairs, tables, literature and podium. Each week there is a 'crew' that makes coffee and sets out refreshments. Other members greet guests at the door, speakers come, birthdays are celebrated, funds are contributed in the Seventh Tradition's spirit of self-support and money is allocated as directed by the group conscience. Then, when the meeting is over, the kitchen and bathrooms are cleaned, trash is picked up, floors are washed, chairs, podium and tables are put back in their original place, and the room returns to the way we found it."

However, Marianne advises, "if you come again next year, or maybe in six months, there will be a different secretary, a different treasurer and a very different crew doing the same thing. That is the spirit of rotation working in my home group. It ensures that our leaders are trusted but temporary servants and that we can never be truly 'organized.'"

A.A.s Enjoy Their Own Version of Cinema Verite

From Eastern Canada to California, members are sharing days and evenings at the movies—the A.A. kind—and loving every minute.

In Montreal the Acceptance Group showed the 15-minute, A.A. Conference-approved film "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" at its 10th anniversary last May. Reports member Robert P.: "The video, which we'd borrowed from the Area Service Office, in Montreal, was highly praised. It talks about everything—the Steps, Traditions, sponsorship, the importance of having a home group, service, a Higher Power and living one day at a time. And it does so in the manner we're used to in A.A.—from the viewpoint of experience."

Afterward, Robert adds, "popcorn, pretzels, cake and beverages were served while most of the 50 participants came up to the podium and shared on the topic of hope. There were many expressions of gratitude for the recovery program of A.A. and the Acceptance Group in particular." He adds that "this was the second year we've made a film the centerpiece of our group anniversary. In 1997 we showed 'Bill's Own Story,' an hour-long video we'd obtained from G.S.O. New York. In it A.A. co-founder Bill W. tells of his drinking and recovery. I guess an anniversary night at the movies is getting to be a tradition."

Western Pennsylvania's Area 60, District 26, which encompasses the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh, hosted a Saturday at the movies in September. "Super-Sober Cinema Presents a Day of Sharing," the flyer announced. "The Ticket Price: A Desire to Stop Drinking." The movies to be shown, the flyer noted, included "Bill's Own Story," "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" and "Young People and A.A."

"The format for this day of sharing," says Dan S., general service representative of the North Hill Group, "was to follow up the showing of each A.A. video with a discussion period. The moviegoers had a great time viewing and sharing. They also enjoyed the Area

Archives and literature displays in the lobby of the church-turned-movie-theater."

"The cost of renting the church for the day was \$100," notes district committee member Jerry O., who reports that the funds came out of the district treasury. "This was the third year we sponsored a 'day of sharing' but the first on which we incorporated movies into the day's program," Jerry says. "The A.A.s were enthusiastic—they seemed to enjoy it all, the movies, the sharing, the refreshments—so I won't be surprised if Super-Sober Cinema does more presenting in the future."

Movies are also being used to carry the A.A. message by the Southern California Area Assembly. Its audiovisual committee now has a variety of films and videos, in Spanish as well as English, that are available for showing at meetings. In addition to several of the films mentioned above, the committee offers "A.A.—Rap with Us" and several service videos.

1999 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 offices and intergroups, approximately three months ahead of time. The final Forum in 1998 will be Southeast, December 4-6, Daytona Beach Resort, Daytona Beach, Florida. In 1999 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Northeast*—June 11-13: Ramada Hotel, Altoona, Pennsylvania
- *Special Forum*—August 20-21: San Juan, Puerto Rico
- *West Central*—September 10-12: Holiday Inn, Sheridan, Wyoming
- *East Central*—September 24-26: Clarion Hotel, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- *Special Forum*—October 8-9: Four Corners Areas. Site to be decided by the areas: Arizona (3); Utah (69);

Colorado (10); New Mexico (46)—either Window Rock, Arizona or Gallup, New Mexico

- *Southwest*—December 3-5: Holiday Inn Lubbock Plaza, Lubbock, Texas

Treatment Facilities

Some Old Tools Give Way to New In Helping Teens

The difference between carrying the message to adult and teenage alcoholics is enormous, says Tom D., chairman of the Bridge the Gap (BTG) Committee of the greater Phoenix area. "It is like functioning in two worlds, and the lessons we have learned and continue to learn are awesome."

The question of how to better carry the A.A. message of recovery into both correctional and non-correctional youth centers is of growing concern to many A.A.s in Treatment and Correctional Facilities service work [Bar 4-5-9, Oct.-Nov. 1998]. And, upon the recommendation of last spring's General Service Conference, sharing from U.S./Canada T.F. committees concerned with this challenge is being garnered for a report to be reviewed by the 1999 Conference.

Like all temporary contact programs in A.A., the one in Phoenix, now about eight years old, helps newcomers make the crucial transition from treatment to the Fellowship. "In the past," Tom reports, "adolescent treatment facilities were almost nonexistent, but the past decade has seen a great change. Today every major treatment center in our district has a separate adolescent section. One of the valuable lessons we're learning in reaching out to the young people is that when we travel on strange ground, we can't always use old tools. By keeping an open mind and asking, 'How can we help?'—not just telling them what we will do—we are far more effective."

Over the years, Tom says, it became clear that a wide gap in age between adult alcoholics and the A.A.s trying to help them "is no big deal. But with adolescents the age difference is more defined and pertinent. So we needed to develop a list of volunteers in the 16-25 age bracket, but doing so opened a Pandora's boxful of problems. For

example, we have a contact volunteer list of about 500 people. Upon checking it, we found there was only one person who fit the age requirement. This necessitated a massive drive to develop a suitable list of contacts before we could even approach local adolescent units."

Additionally, he points out, "we customarily use zip codes for paring contacts with T.F. patients. With the great number of meetings in the valley, very few people travel far to attend a meeting (where I live, there are 16 meetings a week within a four-mile radius). However, there are approximately 35 'young people's' meetings scattered throughout the valley, and these kids regularly travel 20-30 miles to get to them. Two of the larger meetings are What's the Point in west Phoenix and Doctor's Nightmare in Tempe, and many of the teens regularly attend both these meetings on a regular basis. Consequently, where age takes on a more significant meaning, zip codes are practically useless."

Many adults who have attended meetings of these teenage people, Tom relates, "have described them variously as unstructured, undisciplined, unfocused and, indeed, as barely resembling a proper A.A. meeting. Perhaps they are, at least by grown-up standards. But more and more, as we build our volunteer list, something is happening that begs a reevaluation. We have 16-, 17- and 18-year-old volunteers with three-to-five years' sobriety. And they have an enthusiasm for service work that makes many of us look like pikers."

On the other side of the U.S., a well-attended workshop on "Carrying the A.A. Message into Non-correctional Youth Facilities" was held in July by the South Florida T.F. Committee. David H., chairman of the District 1 T.F. committee and a member of the presentations panel, suggested that "the main challenge we face is apathy on the part of the clients." They are either court-ordered or parent-ordered to the facility, he explained, "and, for the most part, feel they don't belong there. The A.A. volunteers sometimes become discouraged at the lack of response, but we remind them our job is simply to carry the message. We must keep our commitment to show up no matter what the response, realizing a seed can be planted that could be the reason for a person's coming into A.A. earlier than otherwise, or at all."

Said panelist Mindy W., who chairs the District 2 T.F. committee. "We remind our volunteers to be careful not to come across as just another adult telling the adolescents what to do. We ask them to refrain from saying, 'Oh, I wish I had come in when I was your age.' Also, we find that young people really like to pick up literature. They especially like the pamphlets 'Too Young' and 'Twelve Steps Illustrated,' though some of them laugh at what they feel to be the outdatedness of some of our literature."

The third panelist, John G., chairman of the District 9

T.F. Committee, commented that “we’ve found it doesn’t matter if A.A. volunteers are young or old. What seems to be more important is having speakers with six months to a year of sobriety; the kids relate better to relative newcomers than to people with longer-term sobriety. We don’t have any problems with kids acting up, other than they all want two chairs—one to sit on and one to rest their feet on.”

In conclusion a workshop participant commented, “In the youth facility I don’t talk a lot about how and where I drank. I talk about the way drinking alcohol made me *feel*. The kids relate to that.”

C.P.C.

Helping Doctors To Help Their Alcoholic Patients

“When you go to your doctor, do you inform him/her that you are in recovery? Do you then assume that your doctor knows what A.A. is and what A.A. is not? Is your doctor aware that A.A. is a tool available for persons in their care?”

Addressing their fellow A.A.s in Broward County, Florida, the letter from District 9’s Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community explains: “Our Twelfth Step and Fifth Tradition speak to us of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. How better to make ourselves available than to ensure that those who come into contact with suffering alcoholics are aware of what A.A. is about?” Here the committee stresses that “there is no promotion involved. On the contrary, this committee serves to inform and explain our Traditions to those outside A.A. There are many myths about A.A. that still exist—anything from it’s ‘a religion’ or ‘a cult’ to people who think A.A. can teach people how to ‘drink like a gentleman.’”

In their efforts to make contact with local doctors, the C.P.C. committee has come up with the idea of furnishing members with a ‘Does Your Doctor Know?’ kit to give to their own physicians. Included is a letter from the committee to “Dear Doctor,” which opens: “You have been given this information by one of your patients. A patient who is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and in recovery from alcoholism—a person who is serious about sobriety and would like you to know something of

A.A.” The committee goes on to say, “We would like to offer ourselves to you as an additional tool for your use in treating your patients. We are here and we are available. . . . We of the C.P.C. committee also extend to you and your staff an offer to come to your location to provide a short presentation and answer any questions you may have about A.A.” Included in the kit are several pamphlets, among them “Problems Other Than Alcohol,” “A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional,” “If You are a Professional, A.A. Wants to Work with You” and “A Brief Guide to A.A.”

Michael W., a member of the C.P.C. committee, reports that the program, now nearly a year old, is going strong. “More than 500 kits have been given to doctors in Broward County,” he says. “They have not been sent by mail but, rather, handed out from A.A. patient to physician one-to-one. As much as any professionals, doctors are on the frontline when it comes to caring for alcoholics, and if they don’t know about A.A., they can’t very well recommend us. So each time we let a doctor know, in person, that A.A. works, we may be helping to carry the message to a sick alcoholic down the road.”

P.I.

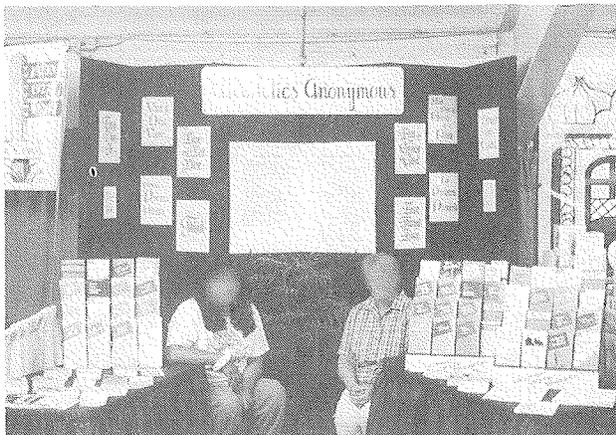
Staffing a Booth Can Get You Into A Lot of Sobriety

When the Public Information booth at the mammoth Evergreen State Fair in Monroe, Washington, is situated strategically right next to what district committee member Mike B. refers to as “a high-profile vendor,” otherwise known as the garlic booth . . . when it is carefully designed, well-supplied with A.A. literature and staffed by 70 enthusiastic A.A.s from all over the Western Washington Area . . . and the weather stays beautiful for all 12 days of the fair, bringing out more than 800,000 visitors . . . right there you have the ingredients for getting into a lot of A.A. sobriety and passing it along to any comer who wants it.

Because of the way the booth was first set up, says Mike, “we were losing visitors.” Originally “two tables were angled in toward the center,” he explains, “creating an open lane in the middle of the booth through which the volunteers and passersby could see each other. We found that people who browsed slowly at

other booths would accelerate past us if they happened to make eye contact with our volunteers. Also, when people stood clustered at other booths to watch product demonstrations, some would turn and watch us from a distance but not come over. Since they might be the ones who need the Fellowship most, we rearranged the tables and literature racks. We figured that if the volunteers were partially obscured, the visitors might feel more comfortable. It must have helped because some of the skittish observers did start coming over for a brief look.”

How they and others reacted to the booth was recorded by many of the volunteer A.A.s who, Mike emphasizes, “were the final element that ensured the project’s success.” Many volunteers faithfully recorded their impressions in a log at the end of each shift; some of their comments follow:



Esther and Lynn: “Wow, what an experience! The fear we had about doing this left almost immediately after we started. The most repeated request of the day was for meeting schedules. We got some strange looks from visitors, and one lady even grabbed her kid and pulled her away from the booth. There are still lots of people who are afraid of us, but we had great fellowship with program people who stopped by. Thanks for another sober experience!!”

Ron G.: “Today is Senior Day. They stop, look and go on, but about a dozen have made comments, all positive. With the new table setup today, I’ve not noted that ‘being watched’ attitude of the public.”

Kathleen M. and Mary H.: “Got here on time for a change—good for us! Now that the booth has been rearranged, people don’t feel ‘on display’ when looking at pamphlets. Good idea. We’re looking forward to a chance to ‘jaw’ since we’re pretty much going to speak only when spoken to by the public so’s not to put them off.”

Tom and Kathy: “We had lots of lookers, only a few takers. God bless! If we planted one seed, it was worth it.”

Danny C.: “A woman requested information for her young children, ages 4 and 7, explaining about Grandma’s four-year sobriety coin. I told her I wasn’t aware of any such material for such young children but gave her some illustrated pamphlets. She left happy. People with an alcoholic in their life appear more open and interested than those who need us directly. I believe, however, that there are those alcoholics whose contact with A.A. will have happened here, and that as a result our Primary Purpose will be furthered.”

Larry G. and Sandy: “It’s Sunday, and serenity ruled.”

Muriel: “It seems a lot of people are afraid to take the literature—they look, touch, then put it back. A couple of people were sneaky—at least they got the pamphlets. One man, sober 19 years, asked if he could get me a Coke or something. People in A.A. never cease to amaze me with their friendliness and courtesy!”

Kathy P.: “This is better than working at the election polls!”

Kelly W.: “Paul, our garlic neighbor, welcomed us and said how nice it was to have us A.A.s as his neighbors. He thinks it’s a great thing we’re doing here and that if we touch one person with the public information we have available, how great it will be. Paul said he’d noticed people walking by as they took our literature and wondered if maybe the seed of hope had been planted—that [alcoholism] is not some dark secret. In the world of A.A. you can always see somebody you know. You can feel safe and less afraid that somebody will find out. You know you’re no longer alone.”

Jim F.: “A lady just leaned over our table. She winked and said we do a great job. That gave me a warm, fuzzy feeling. A young deaf lady also stopped by and wrote down a little of her story for me to understand. She’s been around the program for about three years but relapsed and has now been back for 36 days. I gave her a hug and a ‘welcome back,’ and she walked away with a big smile. . . . Have had a great time with the garlic people next door—I wanted to know about garlic necklaces to ward off evil spirits. Meanwhile, I’m impressed by the number of friends of Bill W. and Dr. Bob who’ve stopped by.”

Jennifer: “It seems like when I say hi or make eye contact, people look away. More of the young people have stayed and looked at pamphlets. They seem to have much less fear than the older folks.”

Michelle and Ali: “Quite a few women pointed out the booth to the men with them and said, ‘Look, A.A.!’”

Mike reports that the booth was an unqualified success and the P.I. committee is already planning for a repeat performance in 1999. “This year Districts 19, 36 and 38 participated along with my own District 3—the host district” he says, “and their support will be needed again. We are hoping that more districts will join us next time around.”

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.

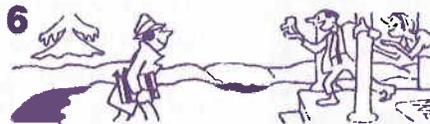


4 *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

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.

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

- 4-6—*Daytona Beach, Florida.* Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 4-6—*Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada.* 15th Family Roundup. Write: Ch. 888 5th Ave. NW, Moose Jaw, SK S6H 3Y3
- 4-6—*Hospital Hill, Gibraltar.* First Gibraltar Conv. Write: Sec., Nazareth House, Hospital Hill, Gibraltar
- 24-26—*Copperas Cove, Texas.* Second Annual Alkathon. Write: Ch. Rt. 2, Box 2596A, Kempner, TX 76539
- 31-January 1—*Franklin, New Hampshire.* Dist. 11 Second Annual New Year's Eve Celebration. Write: Ch., Box 1615, Laconia, NH 03246

January

- 1-3—*Merrimack, New Hampshire.* NECY-PAA IX. Write: Ch., Box 56, Alstead, NH 03602
- 8-10—*Laughlin, Nevada.* Ninth Annual River Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1063, Bullhead City, AZ 86430
- 8-10—*Columbus, Ohio.* Fifth Annual Winter Gathering. Write: Ch., Box 141131, Columbus, OH 43214
- 8-10—*Yakima, Washington.* 10th Annual Yakima Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 10802, Yakima, WA 98903
- 15-17—*Jamestown, North Dakota.* 18th Annual Dist. 6 Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 402, Valley City, ND 58702
- 21-24—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida.* Ninth Annual Emerald Coast Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875
- 22-24—*Biloxi, Mississippi.* 18th Annual Mississippi Gulf Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 75, Ocean Springs, MS 39566
- 29-31—*Blytheville, Arkansas.* 42nd Annual Coon Supper Conv. Write: Ch., Box 675, Blytheville, AR 72316-0675
- 29-31—*Christchurch, New Zealand.* 36th New Zealand Conv. Write: Secy., Box 2062, Christchurch, New Zealand

February

- 5-7—*Brawley, California.* Imperial Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92244-0393
- 5-7—*Burbank, California.* 24th Annual SFVAA Convention. Write: Ch., Box 45, Agoura, California 91376-0045
- 5-7—*Ligonier, Pennsylvania.* Ligonier Midwinter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 55, Laughlinton, PA 15655
- 12-14—*Little Rock, Arkansas.* 17th Annual Winter Holiday. Write: Ch., Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72211
- 12-14—*No. Falmouth, Massachusetts.* Second Annual Cape Cod Pockets of Enthusiasm. Write: Ch., Box 991, No. Falmouth, MA 02556
- 19-21—*Mitchell, Kentucky.* 48th Annual State Conf. Write: Ch., 530 Berry Ave., Bellevue, KY 41073
- 19-21—*Corpus Christi, Texas.* 45th Annual Coastal Bend Jamboree. Write: Ch., 5433 S. Staples, Suite F, Corpus Christi, TX 78411
- 19-21—*Virginia Beach, Virginia.* Ocean Front Conf. Write: Rgsr., Box 2801, Virginia Beach, VA 23450
- 26-27—*Sikeston, Missouri.* 18th Annual Five Corners Conv. Write: Ch., 501 Maple St., Kennett, MO 63857
- 26-28—*Gulf Shores, Alabama.* 15th Annual District 19 Jubilee. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536
- 26-28—*Kansas City, Kansas.* 17th Annual Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 26141, Overland Park, KS 66225-6141

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 53): Sponsor/Sponsee
January (page 29): Self-pity

March

- 5-7—*Rochester, New York.* 18th Annual Conv., "Language of the Heart." Write: Ch., c/o Rochester Central Off., 10 Manhattan Square Dr., Ste. D Rochester, NY 14607-3937
- 12-14—*Fresno, California.* 52nd Annual Spring N.C.C. Conf. Write: Trsr., Box 508, Rocklin, CA 95677
- 26-29—*Ames, Iowa.* Aim for Ames Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2491, Ames, IA 50010

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on February, March, and 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): _____

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



