

■ The A.A. Message of Recovery Continues to Spread Around the World

When newcomers enter A.A. they are often told to do simple things that will help them stay sober one day at a time—such as get a sponsor, use the phone, go to meetings, pray, and read A.A. literature. For those of us in countries where A.A. is well established, getting hold of literature—the Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve, *Daily Reflections*, a myriad of pamphlets and many more wonderful books—is pretty easy. But, still, in much of the world there are pioneers who are bringing the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism to people for the first time. One of G.S.O.’s most important services is to provide translations of our books, pamphlets, videos, and audio tapes as A.A.s spread the word to new cultures.

A.A. literature plays a unique role in most members’ recovery. An individual can sit down with literature, with no pressure, no time constraint, no judgment, and think about the message, let it sink in and perhaps find a deeper understanding. In A.A. literature the message comes across gently, yet with suggestions for a program of recovery from alcoholism. It is the shared experience of the Fellowship over many years and across many cultures.

The A.A. message is spreading worldwide. A.A. literature is now published in 69 languages, and the Big Book in 40 languages. By comparison, the largest global magazine is published in just 29 countries and in only 19 languages.

At G.S.O. we strive to help get the literature into the hands of alcoholics around the world. Here is just a partial list of the projects that are in house right now: Spanish “Twelve Concepts Illustrated”; the Big Book in Turkish, Indonesian, Czech, Urdu (an official language of India and Pakistan), and Cambodian; *Living Sober* in Greek and Latvian; various Conference-approved pamphlets in Inuit, Nuer, Russian, Setswana and Thai; the video “Bill’s Own Story” in German and the Steps and Traditions Wallet Card in Chinese.

This does not take into account all the projects that have gone on worldwide over the years, or the service work that other General Service Offices are involved in.

G.S.O.’s role, on an international scale, is first as a resource for

collective shared experience of the U.S. and Canada, and second as a publisher. Meaning, the first choice is to always have the host country’s Fellowship produce a piece of literature. This, of course, encourages our Traditions of autonomy and self-support. When a country has the resources to produce the desired literature, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services’ role is to provide a license to reproduce A.A.’s copyrighted material in their language. The first step is to have the country’s service office send samples of the text to G.S.O. U.S./Canada for review by a translation service here in New York. There is often some back and forth, but G.S.O. typically allows the licensee to proceed on their own once we are sure they are producing an accurate translation.

However, many countries new to A.A. do not have a strong enough membership to be able to produce literature on their own. In that case, G.S.O.’s Publications Department produces the translation through a translation service, and has it checked by A.A.s who know the language. This is the case for the Cambodian Big Book now in the works. We have to be flexible, of course, because there are cultural differences, language differences, and literacy differences that influence a decision on the best way to translate A.A. literature so it will help the most people.

As the copyright holder, A.A.W.S., which is the publishing arm of the General Service Board, has to be diligent about protecting the copyrights and the integrity of the message, because if either becomes diluted and there is a risk of losing the copyright, others might use the material for outside purposes, or worse.

At the same time, members who want to spread the message are helped and hopefully will not get tangled in red tape, so G.S.O. tries hard to make the process as painless as possible. It is a tough balancing act.

The service work is so complicated, but it is also so important. The G.S.O. staff member on the International assignment recently went on a trip to Africa, where he visited small



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A.A. groups. He told how A.A. members treated their literature with such care that it seemed to be their most valued belonging. Probably many A.A. members can identify with that.

Together we strive to make a big difference in the lives of our fellow alcoholics around the world, and everyone here in North America can be proud of their contributions that assist in this work. Going forward we need to keep spreading the message with literature to new people in new countries. But we can do more too. In the age of the Internet we can make our message accessible on line. Perhaps technology can help us spread the message with talking books, for countries where the literacy rate is low.

There are also frontiers right here at home, and we continue to try to help those with special needs. We are looking for ways to spread the message to A.A. members who are blind, deaf, confined to home or a hospital bed. Our goal in all this work is to make the message of recovery as easy to get as possible for everyone who needs Alcoholics Anonymous.

■ Opening for GV Executive Editor

The A.A. Grapevine Board of Directors is seeking candidates for the position of Executive Editor of The A.A. Grapevine. Candidates for this position should have the following qualifications:

- an A.A. member with at least six (6) years of continuous sobriety;
- minimum of five (5) years of management, publishing, editorial, and/or related experience;
- strong background in all phases of the editorial process; demonstrated creativity; and extensive writing experience;
- experience supervising a creative staff and interacting with committees and boards;

- college degree or equivalent.

Interested members may forward their resume by November 30, 2003, and any questions regarding the position to: Dick G., chairperson, Grapevine Board of Directors, P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163

■ 2004 Regional and Special 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.

Special Forums are designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas for better carrying the message through service work.

Mailings regarding each Forum are sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central offices and intergroups, approximately three months ahead of time. On-line registration is also available — www.aa.org, under Services for Members. The remaining Forum in 2003 is: *Southwest* — October 3-5, Adam's Mark Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri.

In 2004 Regional and Special Forums are planned as follows:

- *Special* — January 16-19: Hawaii
- *Western Canada* — February 27-29: Grand Prairie Inn, Grand Prairie
- *Special* — June 5-6: Labrador Inn, Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada.
- *Pacific* — July 16-18: Double Tree Columbia River Complex, Portland, Oregon
- *Eastern Canada* — September 24-26: Montreal, Quebec
- *Southeast* — December 3-5: Executive West Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky

■ Phone Number Change for French Speakers

French-speaking offices and members who wish to place orders for literature — or have questions on orders — with Services Mondiaux des Alcooliques Anonymes (SMAA) should now call G.S.O.'s New York office directly at 212-870-3047. The old telephone number for SMAA (514-381-6266) expires on Oct. 1.

■ 2005 International Convention Most Frequently Asked Questions — Registration, Hotels and Transportation

In a little less than two years, the International Convention will celebrate A.A.'s 70th Anniversary, June 30-July 3, 2005, in Toronto, Canada. With a theme of "I Am Responsible," A.A.s from around the world will converge on Toronto to celebrate sobriety, and share experience, strength and hope in meetings, panels and workshops at the Metro Toronto Convention Center, the SkyDome Stadium, and at other locations throughout that beautiful city. Members of the Fellowship, as always, are now gearing up for this wonderful event and the General Service Office is beginning to receive inquiries. So here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding the Convention.

Registration

Q When will registration forms be available?

A Registration forms and housing information will be mailed in August of 2004 to all G.S.R.s, Central Offices and Intergroups and international G.S.O.s.

Q What about on-site registration?

A On-site registration will be set up in the South Building of the Metro Toronto Convention Center. Registration will open on Wednesday morning, June 29, 2005.

Q Will I be able to register over the Internet?

A Yes. There will be links to forms for registration and to sign up for housing on the A.A. G.S.O. Web site.

Q How much will registration cost?

A Registration fees will be established in 2004.

Q Must everyone register? I thought I didn't have to pay to go to an A.A. event.

A Yes. Everyone must register. Attendance at this special celebration is voluntary and, as responsible A.A. members, "we pay our own way."

Q Can travel agents register groups or individuals?

A Payments from travel agencies to register groups will not be accepted. Individuals must register themselves.

Housing

Q When can I register for my hotel room?

A Once we have received your registration form and fee, a housing form will be sent to you.

Q Can members contact hotels themselves?

A No. To make the process as fair as possible, all housing requests will be processed through the official Housing Bureau. As was done in Minneapolis, hotel rooms will be assigned through a lottery, taking into consideration, as best as can be done, individual preferences. We need your help in cooperating with this housing process.

Q What are the main hotels?

A The headquarter hotels will be within walking distance of the convention center and the SkyDome and, aside from the Royal York, are as yet to be determined.

Q Can travel agents make room reservations?

A Room reservations can only be made in individual people's names. Rooms available through the Housing



Bureau, at specially negotiated Convention rates, are not commissionable to travel agents. Once hotels have been assigned by the Housing Bureau, confirmation will be sent to you by the hotels.

Q Can we request a room in the same hotel with friends?

A Yes, if you submit your housing forms together, in the same envelope with the same hotel choices and deposits, every effort will be made to house you together.

Q If 50 of us are coming together from the same area, can we be in the same hotel?

A We do make an effort to accommodate group housing requests. There is a separate procedure for this to ensure fairness while trying to meet your needs. Contact the G.S.O. International Convention Coordinator for information on procedures for groups of 25 or more at 212-870-2222 or 2005IC@aa.org.

Transportation

Q Will local transportation be available?

A A.A. will provide transportation to and from most A.A.-assigned hotels and motels. This will be at no additional cost to the attendee. Toronto has an excellent and easy-to-use public transportation system and their routes can also be used (there may be a nominal charge for this service). Of the 13,000 rooms A.A. has blocked, nearly 8,000 rooms are in downtown Toronto, so many members will be in walking distance or a short ride on public transportation from their accommodations. All housing blocked for this event is less than a 45-minute ride from the convention center and stadium.

Q What about special airline rates?

A As at other International Conventions, there will be special fares available. That information will be available with the August 2004 registration information mailing.

Q Where can I find information about crossing the border into Canada for this event?

A On the A.A. G.S.O. Web site, www.aa.org, there is another service piece called *Frequently Asked Questions About Travel to Canada for the A.A. 2005 International Convention* which provides information on many border crossing matters.

Q Where do I obtain more information about the 2005 International Convention?

A More information will be available throughout 2004 and 2005 in *Box 4-5-9* and on G.S.O.'s Web site, www.aa.org. All necessary information will be included in the registration packet which will be available August 2004. This packet will also list special telephone numbers to call for answers to specific questions about housing, the program, tours, etc. A.A.'s Web site will be updated as more information becomes available.

We hope to see you in Toronto to celebrate the 70th birthday of Alcoholics Anonymous!

■ Being Grateful In November

Gratitude is always in order, but many groups have designated November as a particular time to give thanks to the A.A. program. It has been that way since the 1940s, when the General Service Board held small "gratitude dinners," which were replaced in the 1960s by bigger and more elaborate "gratitude luncheons." These get-togethers, which Bill W. would address, were occasions for A.A. members to express their appreciation for the program. More important, it was A.A.'s opportunity to meet with members of the media to thank them for their sympathetic coverage. According to a G.S.O. memo at the time, the aim of the functions was, "to advance A.A.'s public relations by bringing editors, publishers, writers and broadcasters in personal contact with sources of reliable information on the movement." The luncheons, which later were deemed too expensive, ended in 1968.

Why November became Gratitude Month in the U.S. (in Canada, it is in October) is uncertain. It may have something to do with Bill W.'s mistaken notion for a time that his sobriety began in November, instead of its actual start date of Dec. 11. There are clear connections to Thanksgiving, though. In 1956 and 1957, there were floor actions at the annual General Service Conferences recommending that Thanksgiving week in those years be designated "A.A. Gratitude Week." The floor action suggested that this "be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help worldwide services."

However it was that November became Gratitude Month, A.A.s early on saw that staying grateful was important in staying sober. Acceptance may be the answer to all our problems, but gratitude has to be a close second.

As many in A.A. have discovered, gratitude is a sure cure for self-pity. And can you be resentful at the same time that you're grateful? Some in recovery will coax their thinking onto spiritual lines with gratitude lists. If not forced to look — in black and white — at what they have been given, too many A.A.s find they can drift off into a reverie about what they imagine they've been denied.

Being quick to take credit for what has been a gift also takes its toll. Bill W. once detected in himself a strain of self-congratulation for his contribution to A.A. Seeing that this attitude was cutting him off from his fellow A.A.s, he reflected, "How much better it would have been had I felt gratitude rather than self-satisfaction — gratitude that I had once suffered the pains of alcoholism, gratitude that a miracle of recovery had been worked upon me from above..." (Grapevine 1946)

Some groups will hold Traditions meetings in November to remind themselves of the rich heritage of A.A. Others do topic meetings on the various aspects of gratitude, such as "gratitude is not passive" or "giving it away." During the course of the year, many members of

the Fellowship send a gratitude gift of one or two dollars for each year of sobriety on their anniversaries to their local intergroup or to the General Service Office.

As Bill W. wrote in a letter in 1959, “if you carry the message to others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you.”

■ Anonymity — a Gift We Give Ourselves

Most A.A.s come to treasure and uphold the spirit of Tradition Twelve, which clearly states, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

But what happens when members die and their anonymity is broken? As one concerned A.A. wrote to the General Service Office, “I am enclosing a recent obituary in which the deceased’s membership in the Fellowship is noted. This seems to be happening more and more. Is there anything we can do about it?”

The answer, G.S.O. said, really is no. As the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity” (p. 10) explains, “A.A. members generally think it unwise to break the anonymity of a member even after his or her death, but in each situation the final decision must rest with the family.” This was the sense of the General Service Conference in 1971, and was reaffirmed in 1988.

As members, however, we can let our loved ones know our wishes so that they are not faced, at a time of sorrow, with making this sometimes awkward decision on their own.

Understanding the Anonymity Tradition’s reason for being can help to clarify the decision-making process. In a nutshell it serves two main purposes: (1) At the personal level, it provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers. (2) At the level of press, radio, TV and films, it stresses the equality of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power or personal gain.

Another problem that occurs when an A.A. member dies: Sometimes well-meaning family and friends want to send G.S.O. or the local intergroup a gift in memoriam. However G.S.O., to remain faithful to the Seventh Tradition of self-support, must, and does, decline any contribution from a non-A.A., whether it’s \$1 or \$100,000. On the other hand, bequests in the wills of A.A. members are acceptable, but on a one-time-only basis, not in perpetuity, and for no more than \$2,000. (Even for living A.A.s the limit on donations to G.S.O. is \$2,000 a year.)

Okay, some members say, but can personal anonymity ever become too much of a good thing? Experience has shown that an A.A. member can indeed be “too anonymous” — where it can mean failure to extend a helping hand to another alcoholic when the need arises; or failure

to correct misconceptions and provide needed information about A.A. both inside and outside the program. But as Tradition Twelve points out, A.A. is a program of attraction, not promotion. This power of attraction makes it unnecessary to flash our faces or full names as A.A. members at the public level. Despite our anonymity and, more, because of it, many thousands of us have found our way to the Fellowship. Many more will come.

■ French Big Book Gets New Translation

A word-for-word translation of the English-version of the Big Book into French is available for the first time. Though there have been three previous French editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, they were either abridged or included stories not found in the English version. This Fourth French Edition — *Les Alcoolistes Anonymes* — mirrors the content of the English version, with no stories added or dropped, and with a revised translation.

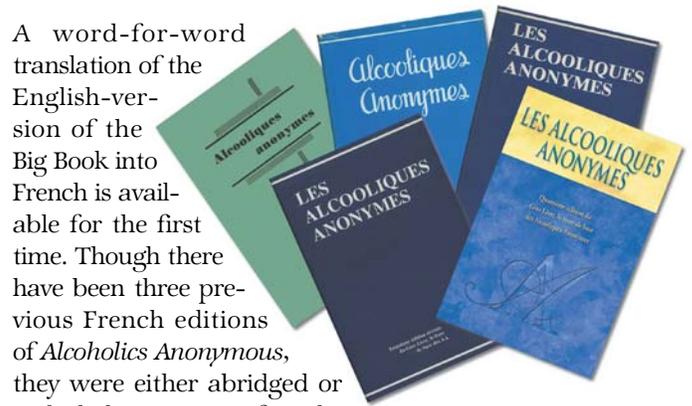
Counting all formats, including abridged and paperback, more than 405,000 copies of the French versions of the Big Book have been sold.

The history of the Big Book in French begins in 1947 in Montreal, where alcoholics seeking recovery founded the first French-speaking A.A. group. The absence of French-language literature, however, prevented a good understanding of the Fellowship and its way of life, which delayed the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous.

One night in 1948, though, at the beginning of a French-speaking meeting, one determined A.A. member prevailed upon a bilingual member of the group to translate the Steps into French. He sat on a bench and translated the Twelve Steps, which were read in French that very night. That translation remained unchanged until being revised for the Fourth Edition.

The French-speaking A.A. members in the Quebec territory were hungry for written literature. They knew it was a key to sobriety, and put pressure on the bilingual members of the time to have the Big Book translated.

Through the efforts of Dave B., the founder of A.A. in Quebec, Canada, work on the translation commenced. Ironically, Dave B.’s French was largely limited to the word “enchanté.” A working schedule was established and on March 2, 1963, the “Gros Livre” was launched in



front of 350 people at the Montreal Botanical Gardens Auditorium. This first French edition contained the stories of eight members from Canada and Europe. Eve M., from the General Service Office in New York, accepted one copy of the book on behalf of A.A. co-founder, Bill W.

In the 1960s, A.A. began in France. The French Big Book found its way there, as well as into Belgium and Switzerland, where it contributed to the growth of A.A.

A French Literature Committee was formed in Quebec 1961, but due to various conflicts was dissolved in 1969. In 1971, a new French Literature Committee was established, under the supervision of A.A. World Services, Inc., through the delegates. The purpose of the committee was to translate and distribute literature in French. The committee had many A.A. pamphlets translated to help carry the message to alcoholics in prisons, hospitals, schools, and to the public at large. In February 1978 in Quebec, the first steps were taken to publish a second edition of the Big Book to better reflect the membership at that time. There was a search for stories by the delegates of the four Quebec Areas and through the French-speaking General Services in Europe. It took seven years to finalize this second edition, which was published in 1985 to coincide with the International Convention of the 50th anniversary of A.A., held in Montreal.

In 1989, a third edition of the French Big Book was published, with a revised translation. A.A.'s General Service Office (U.S./Canada) took the opportunity to add a story of a Native-American to this edition.

A.A. continued developing service structures in French-speaking countries or territories. French literature has been distributed in Belgium, France, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Switzerland, Tahiti, and, more recently, in Africa. A.A. members from non-French-speaking countries — including Israel, Italy, and Greece — also have asked for the “Gros Livre.” Thus, it became more and more essential to have literature in international French, as opposed to French Canadian.

At this time, A.A. World Services was in full preparation for the Fourth Edition of the Big Book. French-speaking members of the program considered three courses: produce an exact translation of the English version of the Fourth Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*; find new stories from French-speaking members in Canada and French European countries and publish a French Fourth Edition of the Big Book; or continue to publish the Third Edition of the French Big Book and have the stories of the Fourth Edition of the English Big Book published in a booklet format.

The delegates of the four Quebec Areas submitted these choices to their areas.

After long discussion, and in view of having uniformity in the translation of A.A. Conference-approved literature, it was decided to publish an exact translation in French of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The first printing of the English Fourth Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* came off the press in October

2001, and some eighteen months later the French translation appeared.

The publications department at G.S.O. took this opportunity to revise the whole book to reflect international French. Revisions in the translation include the wording of the Twelve Steps, which have been revised to correct some inconsistencies between the English and French versions that existed since the very first translation in 1948.

G.S.O. has sent complimentary copies of *Les Alcooliques Anonymes* to 1,395 French-speaking A.A. groups.

■ Delegates Bring The Conference to Life In Their Home Areas

Each year, the 93 area delegates who attend A.A.'s General Service Conference return to their areas charged with the formidable responsibility of reporting not only on what happened during Conference week, but also on the impact and significance of a unique spiritual experience. The six days of the General Service Conference are jam-packed with committee meetings, topical presentations, workshops and sharing sessions, trustee elections, and of course discussion and voting on Committee recommendations that may become Advisory Actions. How can one delegate convey not only essential information but also what that information means for the groups and for the future of A.A. as a whole? As Teresa F. from North Carolina put it: “I was told repeatedly by past delegates that to attend the Conference was to have a life-altering experience, and they were right. Other delegates and I discussed how we could report back on the beauty of watching our principles in action, because words failed utterly to capture the experience.”

Duncan M. from Vermont, serving his second year as a delegate, learned from the previous year: “There is so much happening that it is difficult to keep it straight. I learned to take better notes, and perhaps more importantly, I bought a micro cassette recorder. I kept it in my room, and every time I went back there I immediately stated my newest impressions, concerns, thoughts, and feelings for later use. This helped two weeks later to make some sense of my written gibberish.”

Increasingly, delegates are using their creativity, imagination, and computer skills to bring the Conference alive with pictures, maps, and printed handouts to get the message across. First-year delegate Eddie H. from Western Washington was “just a little uneasy and not sure what to expect.” Like many others, he consulted past delegates and acted on their advice. “While at the Conference, I took lots of pictures, not only of the Conference room (where general sessions are held — traditionally, no pictures are taken during Conference sessions) and some of its members, but

also of G.S.O. and the city of New York, and put together a photo album. On a table, I displayed copies of the two publications that were released and given to me during Conference week, *Experience, Strength and Hope* and the Spanish publication of stories from the Big Book.” Eddie wanted to use a map of North America, but had trouble finding one until “I remembered that the Conference approved a new area map for *The A.A. Service Manual* and it was on the G.S.O. Web site, so I downloaded it and had it blown up for display.” Overall, Eddie says, “I tried to give them the experience of what the Conference was like through my eyes, knowing that most of them will never have the opportunity to attend the Conference. I wanted them to get the most out of my experience.”

Miles B. from Maine also took pictures, helped by his wife, who accompanied him to New York, as many spouses do. He placed them in a binder and displayed them along with the new literature that was passed out to delegates. He prepared a complete written report, and his oral report “was one of good old-fashioned A.A. questions and answers following the presentation.”

Traditionally, each year delegates bring with them pins or stickers from their home areas to trade off with other Conference members. These enlivened many delegate presentations. Amy O. from Alaska “followed the suggestion of others and got a large map of North America, upon which to put the trading pins from the various areas. This was the centerpiece of a display which included a New York City meeting schedule, a map of Manhattan, a photo album, the welcome brochure (from the trip to G.S.O.), my Conference name badge, and other items given to Conference members, such as new A.A.W.S. literature and the Grapevine CD.”

The key to any Conference report is good communication, and most delegates find that an informal approach works the best. Brenda L. from Southern Minnesota handed out her 21-page written report, but used it only as a guideline for the verbal presentation. “I do not like presenting from a podium — it makes things too formal and distant — so I present from a table where we all sit together, and I encourage everyone to ask questions during my report and not wait till the end. This means it is less of a report and more of a discussion. I think anything I can do to help the Conference come to life for my area is just as important as the information I am disseminating.” For those who wanted full, detailed information, Brenda (with the help of a highly computer-savvy past delegate) also posted her entire report on the Area Web site, under a variety of headings that included Personal Thoughts, Conference Overview, Board Reports, Workshops, Presentations, Committee Agenda and Advisory Actions, and a section called “Conference Adjourns” which incorporated basic information on how the Conference works.

Amy O. from Alaska said, “I find that a mixed approach works well all around, because it stands a better chance of appealing to every member of the audience. I created a little report-back flyer, which covered the

agenda items we had discussed in the pre-Conference assembly. Extra space gave me an opportunity to share other information, and the print material served as a take-home for those in attendance to share with others. I also made available copies of the Early Bird edition of *Box 4-5-9*.”

Duncan M. created a PowerPoint presentation, containing all the Advisory Actions, as well as some things that did not become Actions and some personal experiences. “I do most of it in note form (the Advisory Actions are verbatim, of course). This requires me to *speak* rather than *read*. I find I am better able to keep my audience’s attention this way.”

North Carolina’s delegate Teresa F. says that, “When I give my report at the assembly, I highlight the portions of it that I feel they are most interested in. To try and read a 14-page report to those folks would probably induce comas — there is too much information to digest at one sitting.” Teresa also tried something new this year, “a delegate’s open house at the state convention. I had a display board on what the delegate does and information about the Conference, along with pictures from G.S.O., and my alternate delegate had a display on next year’s Conference theme. There was a reading table in the back of the room with several G.S.O. reports, along with a display of books and videotapes on A.A. history. I also prepared a brief newsletter on topics that will be discussed at the next Conference, and I passed that out, and asked the G.S.R.s and D.C.M.s to take it back to their groups.”

In addition to reporting to the area assembly, most delegates travel to the districts, and in some areas there are special meetings set up for Conference reports. Brenda L. “offers to travel to each district; it is up to the district to invite me, and I have been invited to 19 out of 22 active districts.” This year, she was also invited to give a report at two large open speakers meetings and at the Minneapolis Intergroup Representatives meeting. Alaska delegate Amy O., on the other hand, followed a past delegate’s suggestion in 2002 “that I simply tell the D.C.M.s when I would be showing up, rather than wait for an invitation. That worked very well. My part of the commitment was some 8,000 air miles and approximately 39 hours travel time, but I was able to report to each of our active districts and the Area 2 summer assembly. These reports did not take place at district meetings as such, but at what could be called special meetings. Each of the host districts made arrangements, and oftentimes we enjoyed a potluck supper before the report.” This year, she began soliciting invitations early, and while a few districts did not respond, most did, and she is “hoping to get up to Nome for a report — this would be a first in area history, and would provide Nome A.A.s with a better connection to the area and to the Fellowship as a whole.”

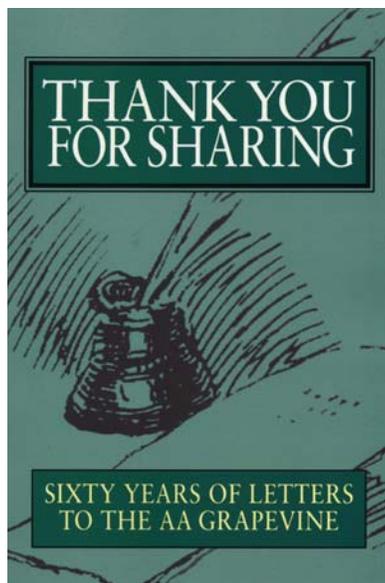
While reporting the 2003 Conference Advisory Actions, delegates also take advantage of the opportunity to widen their approach. Brenda L. says that “Although I believe the committee recommendations and considerations are

important, half of my report is taken from presentations by the General Service Board, A.A. World Services, the Grapevine, finance, and so on. Much of this information is valuable in showing our Fellowship what A.A. does as a whole to carry the message and keep the doors open for the drunk still out there. I have emphasized self-support, and the lack of it from group contributions, and tried to inform people on what A.A.W.S. is and does, the fact that the Grapevine is separately incorporated from A.A.W.S., and so on.”

Amy O. says: “My tendency has been to emphasize the process – a Conference report is a great vehicle for talking about the way the Fellowship tends to its business. Conference week is part of the process itself, and in relating how things unfold within that procedure, I can share the relevant information.”

The heart of any delegate report is what happened at this year’s Conference, but it also serves to begin the process of thought and action that leads up to the following year’s Conference. Conference agenda items originate in the groups, districts, and areas, and when delegates are effective in keeping the membership informed, they go far to ensure the ongoing health of Alcoholics Anonymous.

■ New from the Grapevine



Thank You for Sharing, a selection of letters over the decades to The A.A. Grapevine, has just been published. The volume is a lively forum on such topics as the Lord’s Prayer at A.A. meetings, whether the singleness of purpose principle is in danger, and whether A.A. is for everyone. The book includes letters dating from 1944, the year the Grapevine first published,

and provides an unobstructed view of the thinking of members on issues that have always concerned the Fellowship. Readers can, for instance, see what rank-and-file A.A.s had to say about anonymity in 1947 and again in 1989.

Two hundred pages; GV-13; \$7.95 (five or more copies are \$7.50 each). To order: phone 212-870-3404; fax 212-870-3301; Web site www.grapevine.org; or write A.A. Grapevine, P.O. Box 1980, Marion, OH 43306-8080.

C.P.C.

■ Talking to the Public — In Person and On the Air

A public information luncheon without anyone from the public made no sense to Cec C., who got sober in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in 1952. Cec, who became a trustee in 1976 and served until 1980, was active in Alcoholics Anonymous from early on. Over the years, he spoke regularly at A.A. functions, including numerous P.I. luncheons. More times than not, though, he’d find himself addressing a room full of the same people he’d seen at the previous night’s A.A. meeting. “Why have a public information luncheon when the public wasn’t there?” wondered Cec. “The most you’d see of the public was someone would bring his mother-in-law. It was a real laugh.”

Three hundred miles north of the U.S. border at Montana, Prince Albert has been the site of the Gateway Roundup every year since 1953. It was at this event that Cec and others in the program would eventually organize a P.I. luncheon to which only the public was invited.

The Roundup, which invites speakers from all over North America, is a big affair in the town of Prince Albert, where store-owners put signs in their window-fronts welcoming attendees. The biggest Roundup was in 1965, when 3,100 attended. As Roundups became more common, attendance dropped, and nowadays Prince Albert’s roundup attracts a more manageable 750 persons. “This is about what our meeting hall will hold,” says Cec. The population of the town is 40,000, up from 25,000 in the 1950s.

It was the owner of the local pharmacy who finally prompted Cec to organize a public information luncheon. “My pharmacist said, ‘why can’t the public hear the speakers you bring in for the roundup?’”

He and other like-minded A.A.s in Prince Albert realized, “if we were going to change things, we were going to have to work on it,” says Cec.

Cec, his sponsor, Elmer H. (who got sober 10 days earlier than Cec and who passed away this July), and his sponsee Jack C. went around town “talking to people who worked with people,” to get attendees for their P.I. luncheon. They dropped by the offices of accountants, lawyers, small-business owners, social workers, nurses, ministers, priests, among others.

Given the size of the community, there was no question of protecting their anonymity. As Cec puts it, “we knew everybody, and everybody knew us. We were about as anonymous as the Post Office.”

The result of their efforts was a P.I. luncheon where the only people from A.A. or Al-Anon were the speakers. The first one took place in 1968, when 210 attended, which is about the same number that have attended the event ever since.



Neil Headrick — on the air.

For the past seven years, invitations have been handled by Jim Z., the chairman of the Roundup. Jim has more than 19 years in the program and is a sponsee of Cec's. "A month before the roundup we send a letter to all A.A. and Al-Anon groups in this district, asking if they would like to distribute tickets," says Jim. The groups generally give away about half of all the tickets, while also contributing money to the luncheon, which is self-supporting. "I personally give away the other half," says Jim.

The organizers aim to attract a wide range of the public, and are definite about getting a commitment to attend from those accepting tickets. "Every seat is important. Our invitees make a firm commitment," says Jim. "Also, we like to get a good cross-section from the community."

Among those attending each luncheon are about 16 high school students, usually two each from schools in the area, who are accompanied by school counselors. There are also usually about a dozen student nurses.

A distinctive aspect of the Roundups has been their history of tapping into the airwaves. For 10 years, starting in 1975, the local television station aired a show called "Ask the Alcoholic" each year on the Thursday night leading into the Roundup, following the 11:30 p.m. news.

The broadcast featured four speakers from the Roundup luncheon — on camera but in shadow to protect their anonymity — three from A.A. and one from Al-Anon. The show always generated a lot of interest, with a steady stream of callers, according to Cec. Late in the broadcast, though, it was obvious that some of those calling in had been drinking, he says. This made for some less-than-coherent questions, but kept the proceedings lively, and demonstrated the show was reaching a main target group.

"It was a hell of a show," says Cec. "It would go on for three hours." It was finally decided, though, that the late broadcast was too tough on the sleep schedule of the speakers, who might have been traveling many hours and be getting up early the next day.

The luncheon, though, found its way onto the radio a few years later. Among the public in the lunch hall every year is Neil Headrick, a nonalcoholic, who has a show on 900CKBI Radio, a local country music station. He listens to the speakers and takes notes to prepare for the next morning, when a crew from the radio station sets up the hall for the "Breakfast Broadcast." On stage with Neil are the speakers from the luncheon, and in the audience are a couple of hundred or more attendees from the Roundup. It's a talk-show format, with Neil asking questions of the speakers. Later in the 90-minute commercial-free broadcast, members of the audience are invited on stage to participate. Neil has hosted the show for 12 years.

"The first time I did it, I had my doubts," he says. "I thought no one would want to listen to someone talking about their drinking problems." His doubts disappeared, though, about halfway into the first broadcast. "The speakers are quick-witted and there's always lots of hooting and hollering from the audience." Radio is also a natural medium for protecting the anonymity of the participants.

Neil says he knows first-hand how the show, for which the station donates the airtime, has helped people make it to A.A. and sobriety. "We've had honest-to-goodness success stories of people who have turned their lives around because of this broadcast."

Neil, whose father was among the founding members of A.A. in Prince Albert, says he looks forward to the show every year because it's fun. "The hour and a half goes very fast."

P.I.

■ Carrying the Message Over the Airwaves

The latest 60-second TV spot from Alcoholics Anonymous dramatizes the different faces of active alcoholism. In one scene, a policeman — in full view of passing motorists — ushers into his patrol car an inebriated but shame-faced driver he has pulled over. In another, a couple stand at the backyard barbecue, the wife heatedly berating her beer bottle-toting husband for his drinking. In a third vignette, a mother lies passed out on the couch as her two children look on anxiously.

The accompanying voice-over narration notes, "we know how hard it is to admit that you have a problem. We know because we've been there." It ends with the words, "We're Alcoholics Anonymous. We're in your phone book and on the Web."

This latest public service announcement (P.S.A.), "We Know What It's Like," was approved at the annual General Service Conference in April. Television stations

generally set aside a certain amount of free airtime for “broadcasts in the public interest,” which is when a spot like this one would find its way onto the airwaves.

This P.S.A., though, has been shown on the NBC Astrovision Board in Times Square twice an hour in the whole month of September. The Astrovision Board sits high up on the building famous as the New Year’s Eve venue for the descending ball that counts out the old year. There is a lot of competition for space and it’s a testament to the quality of the P.S.A. that NBC chose it. There is no audio accompaniment on Astrovision, but the broadcasting company felt the spot “told the story even once the audio was removed.”

A.A. is, of course, about “attraction rather than promotion,” and the aim of these modest productions is to spread the word of A.A., not win converts. It can, however, be a shock to an A.A. member to see on television — or on a screen overlooking Times Square — what may look like an ad for the program. But as Bill W. wrote in Concept XI, “we are trying to reach more of those 25 million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. . . . We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television, and radio channels.”

In 1966, the General Service Conference approved the first public service announcements for A.A. Over the years the General Service Office in New York has produced other Conference-approved TV spots, as well as prerecorded public service announcements for radio stations. These are available in English, Spanish, and French from local intergroups/central offices or from the General Service Office, at \$10 each for videos and \$5 for audio cassettes.

The TV P.S.A., “Reach Out,” which was produced last

year, can be viewed on the A.A. Web site at www.aa.org. At the 2002 General Service Conference, it was recommended that a new P.S.A. be produced each year for four years. These new TV spots are replacing older ones.

The latest P.S.A. comes in 60-, 30-, 20-, and 15-second spots, which gives it a better chance of being broadcast, because stations can choose a length that fits their schedules. P.S.A.s most often get airtime through the efforts of local P.I. committees that contact their local television stations. A service piece, “Suggestions for Working with Your Local Radio and Television Stations to Help Carry the Message,” which is available from G.S.O., spells out how to go about doing this. The P.I. Workbook notes that such service in no way violates the principle of anonymity.

Beginning last year, based on a recommendation at the General Service Conference, G.S.O. authorized the central distribution of P.S.A.s. Almost 800 of the larger TV stations and networks in the U.S. and Canada were mailed a copy of “Reach Out.” That P.S.A. was broadcast 11,434 times on TV stations across the U.S. during the second half of last year, according to the company in charge of the distribution. This central distribution is not, however, meant to replace the work of local P.I. committees, which are sent a list of the stations receiving P.S.A.s from the distributor. A.A. committees can follow up with these stations or approach other local TV outlets.

Specific questions can be directed to the Public Information desk at the General Service Office.

It’s difficult to say how many alcoholics find their way into the program as a result of A.A. public service announcements.

But as Bill W. noted, “we must try to carry A.A.’s message to those who suffer alcoholism and its consequences.”



Order Form

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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.

October

- 2-4-Aspen, Colorado. Joy of Living Roundup. Write: Ch., 618 Independence Pl., Aspen, CO 81611
- 3-4-San Pedro Sula, Honduras. XXVIII Convencion Nacional. Write: Ch., Col. Altamira 23, Calle "B" #19D, San Pedro Sulas, Honduras
- 3-5-Sarasota, Florida. Sponsorship Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 17712, Sarasota, FL 34276
- 3-5-Troy, Michigan. 16th Annual Tri-County Conf. Write: Ch., 380 Hilton Road, Ferndale, MI 48220-2590
- 3-5-Kansas City, Missouri. Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 3-5-Mandan, North Dakota. Principles Through Sponsorship Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 211, Mandan, ND 58554.
- 3-5-Columbus, Ohio. Sixth Annual Conf. of Keys to Freedom. Write: Ch., Box 1201, Columbus, OH 43126
- 3-5-Ede/Lunteren, The Netherlands. Convention 2003 Nederlands. Write: Ch., Ptolemaeusstraat 3, 7323 GD Apeldoorn, The Netherlands
- 9-12-Amarillo, Texas. 57th Annual Top of Texas Roundup. Write: Ch., 4864-H Dumas Drive, Amarillo, TX 79108
- 10-11-Kalispell, Montana. 9th Annual Fall Refresher. Write: Ch., 215 West Nickalus Avenue, Kalispell, MT 59901
- 10-11-Montréal, Québec, Canada. 42e Congrès-Région 87. Write: Ch., 1480 Belanger Street, Montréal, PQ H2G 1A7
- 10-11-Montréal, Québec, Canada. 42nd Area 87 Conv. Write: Ch., 5724 Clark, Montréal, PQ H2T 2V4
- 10-12-Montgomery, Alabama. Alabama/NW Florida Area 1 Assembly. Write: Ch., 8121 Lillian Hwy., Lot 45, Pensacola, FL 32506-3771
- 10-12-Petit Jean Mountain, Arkansas. ARKY-PAA XXI. Write: Ch., Box 250309, Little Rock, AR 72225
- 10-12-San Francisco, California. The Spirit of San Francisco Conv. Write: Ch., Box 423832, San Francisco, CA 94142
- 10-12-Pueblo, Colorado. Ocsobersfest. Write: Ch., Box 8394, Pueblo, CO 81001
- 10-12-Spencer, Iowa. 2003 Iowa Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 312, Spencer, IA 51301
- 10-12-Lafayette, Louisiana. Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502
- 10-12-Dayton, Ohio. Ohio State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1736, Dayton, OH 45401-0684
- 16-19-Burbank, California. NAI-AA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 19321, Reno, NV 89511
- 17-19-Melbourne, Florida. Fellowship in Action Weekend. Write: Ch., 1429 Bronco

- Drive, Melbourne, FL 32940
- 17-19-Lansing, Michigan. A Design for Living That Really Works Conf. Write: Ch., 1500 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48912
- 17-19-Rochester, Minnesota. Holding Fast to Our Primary Purpose Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792 Rochester, MN 55903
- 17-19-Mt. Laurel, New Jersey. Northeast Regional Convention. Write to: Ch., NERC 2003, Box 31, Audubon, NJ 08106
- 17-19-Buffalo, New York. Buffalo Fall Conv. Write: Ch., 845 Ellicott Square Building, 295 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203
- 17-19-Greensburg, Pennsylvania. 60th Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., 1470 Blossom Hill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234
- 17-19-Cedar Creek, Texas. 19th Annual Fellowship In The Pines. Write: Ch., 282 Old 71, Cedar Creek, TX 78612
- 17-19-Latham Springs, Texas. 26th Brazos Riverside Conf. Write: Ch., Box 5624, Laguna Park, TX 76644; www.brazosconf.org
- 17-19-Angeles City, Balibago, Philippines. Eighth Fall International Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 308, Manila, 1099 Philippines
- 23-26-Hagerstown, Maryland. Area 29 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., 211, Westowne Road, Baltimore, MD 21229
- 23-26-Costa Brava-Catalunya, Spain. 2003 Costa Brava Conv. Write: Ch., 5 Abeuradors 1-B, Girona, Spain
- 24-26-St. Cloud, Minnesota. Keys to the Kingdom Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302
- 24-26-Madison, Wisconsin. 52nd Annual Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6464, Monona, WI 53716-0464
- 24-26-Gillette, Wyoming. Area 76 Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3343, Gillette, WY 82717
- 24-26-New Brunswick, Canada. Area 81 N.B. and P.E.I. Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 209 Miller Blvd. Dalhousie NB E8C 2A2
- 24-26-Osijek, Croatia. Centrar Stradalnike Domovinskog Rata, Smiciklasova 2 Tvrdca, 31000 Osijek, Croatia; aazegrab@yahoo.com
- 31-Nov. 2-Denver, Colorado. Colorado Area 10 Winter Assembly. Write: Ch., 1935 W. Virginia Avenue, Denver, CO 80223
- 31-Nov. 2-Farmington, Connecticut. 15th Annual Northeast Regional Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 380396, East

- Hartford, CT 06138-0396
- 31-Nov. 2-Jasper, Indiana. 43rd Annual Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 564, Jasper, IN 47546
- 31-Nov. 2-Repentigny, Quebec, Canada. 21e Congrès District 90-08 et 90-18. Write: C.P.134, Repentigny, Quebec J6A 5H7

November

- 6-9-Peoria, Arizona. 16th Annual Dry Camp. Write: Ch., 9520 W. El Caminito Dr., Peoria, AZ 85345; point2point@att.net
- 7-8-Trois-Rivieres, Quebec, Canada. 30e Congres De Trois-Rivieres. Write: Ch., 3-120, rue SIROIS, Trois-Rivieres-Ouest, QC, G9A-2X7
- 7-9-Filchburg, Massachusetts. 40th Anniversary Mass. State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6522, Holyoke, MA 01041-6522
- 7-9-Santa Barbara, California. 19th Annual Santa Barbara Convention. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731; www.sbaaconvension.com or info@sbaaconvension.com
- 7-9-Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. 59th Annual Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 208-323 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2C1
- 14-16-Jekyll Island, Georgia. 6th Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., #34 Glen Falls Drive, Ormond Beach, FL 32174; FWB743@aol.com
- 14-16-Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. Moose Jaw and District Round-Up. Write: Ch., 1051 Warner St., Moose Jaw, SK S6H 5S6
- 14-16-Ocean Shores, Washington. Happy, Joyous and Free-19th Annual Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 995, Ocean Shores, WA 98569
- 21-23-Yosemite National Park, California. Yosemite Summit Conf. Write: Ch., Box 675, Mariposa, CA 95338
- 27-30-Las Vegas, Nevada. 37th Annual Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 43177, Las Vegas, NV 89116
- 28-30-Ventura, California. Congreso Area de Ventura. Write: Ch., 545 S. "B" Street, Suite B, Oxnard, CA 93030
- 28-30-Bloomington, Minnesota. Founder's Day Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 8027, Minneapolis, MN 55408-0027

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the *Box 4-5-9* Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. three months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

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 _____, 20 _____

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

28-30-Diamondhead, Mississippi, 2003
Gratitude Round-up, Write: Ch, Box 7851,
Gulfport, MS 39507-7851
28-30-Everett, Washington, 26th Annual
Everett Conference, Write: Ch, 9819 20th
Ave. SE, Everett, WA 98208

December

5-8-Fuengtrola, Spain, Living In The Solution
Conv. Write: Ch, 29620 Torremolinos,
Malaga, Spain
24-26-Coppertop Cove, Texas, 7th Annual
Christmas Alkathon, Write: Ch, Box 1386,
Coppertop Cove, TX 76522; www.centraltex-
aadists.org; coveAgroup@hotmail.com