

In A.A.— November is Gratitude Month

For many decades now, we in the Fellowship have formally carved out from the calendar the month of November as a time to express our collective gratitude for our individual sobriety. Interestingly, no one is exactly sure why that month was originally chosen, though its connection with Thanksgiving seems obvious. A.A. co-founder, Bill W., thought for a while that his sobriety had begun in November, but later calculations established the date of his new beginnings as December 11.

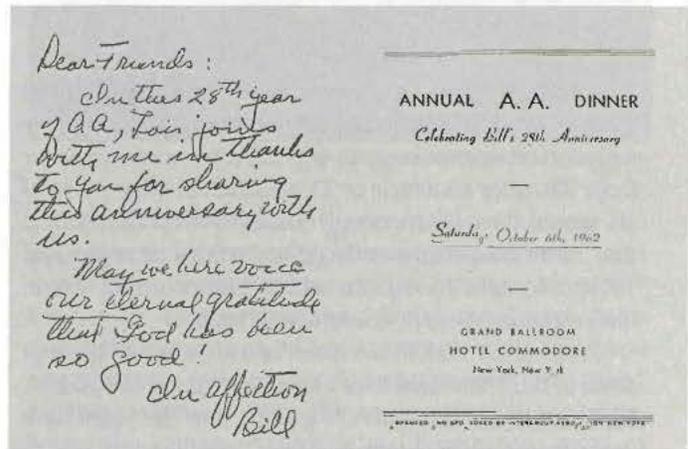
Misty origins notwithstanding, Gratitude Month has, since the 1940s, been November and our shared thankfulness over the years has taken many forms and will continue to do so as our membership widens.

The General Service Board began giving small gratitude dinners in the 1940s. These were precursors to the much larger Gratitude Luncheons that were orchestrated during the 1960s as a Public Information effort of G.S.O.

A.A. Traditions were the undeniable anchor of our new sober life, Bill W. thought when he wrote, "What then could be more appropriate than to set aside Thanksgiving week for discussion of the practical and spiritual values to be discovered in our Traditions?" The Traditions, he wrote in November 1949, "are a distillate of our experience of living and working together. They apply the spirit of the Twelve recovery Steps to our group life and security." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 96)

The first sealed and approved, official recognition of an A.A. "Gratitude Week," to be specifically designated to coincide with Thanksgiving week, dates back to 1956. That year, at the Sixth General Service Conference, delegates approved a motion to that effect, stipulating that "this action be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help support A.A.'s worldwide services."

Carrying the message, expressing gratitude, as well as wanting to make a gesture of appreciation for the numerous published articles, books, and radio and TV interviews relating to A.A. that year, were what motivated a number of Gratitude Luncheons. These were held,



G.S.O. Archives

always in November, during the 1960s at New York City's Roosevelt Hotel—where, incidentally, members of the media who might care to have a drink, were assured, in the invitation by General Service Board chairman (nonalcoholic) Dr. John L. Norris, that "cocktails will be served at 12:15 in the Library, and the luncheon will end promptly at 2:00 p.m."

Well-attended functions, these luncheons drew a sizeable, wide-ranging representation from the media, and served a double purpose: to thank the writers and commentators who attended for their contributions to A.A. in the preceding year and to, in the words of a G.S.O. memo written at the time, "advance A.A.'s public relations by bringing editors, publishers, writers and broadcasters in personal contact with sources of reliable information on the movement." A typical list of invitees to the 1965 luncheon, who had published articles and books on the Fellowship were from *The New York Times*, *Medical World News*, *McCall's Magazine*, Macmillan Publishing Company, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and many other news and publishing organizations.

Bill W. always addressed the gatherings, as did Dr. Norris, and, in addition to a question and answer period at the end of the proceedings, there was always plenty of A.A. literature available for the guests to take along. In 1965, Bill sent an autographed copy of the newly-released *A.A. Comes of Age* to each guest.

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Although those who came to the luncheons found them helpful and informative, the board thought they were too expensive a way to say thank you, when a letter from Bill, after an article or TV production was completed, would have been enough. Others voiced the opinion that more cooperation offered on articles or radio and TV spots might have been more helpful. In any event, the luncheons were discontinued in 1968.

Gratitude. We all know it serves us best when it's kept alive, in our individual lives and in our group conscience. Realizing this, countless A.A. groups over the years have used the month of November (for Canadian groups, it's October), to open the door of gratitude even wider. It's a sure way of insuring a continued healthy sobriety, group unity, and to avoid complacency and stagnation. Many groups observe Gratitude Month by holding Traditions meetings and taking up special contributions to the General Service Office for A.A. services worldwide.

This is an opportunity for all A.A.s to think of new and expanding ways to express and share their gratitude. For example, groups could hold topic meetings during the month on the power and different faces of gratitude: "How Grateful Are We?"; "Gratitude is *not* Passive"; "Giving it Away."

How about trying something new—something your group has never done before, which will make the members' gratitude more tangible and real?

Traditions meetings, of course, always bring home to us all over again the richness of our A.A. heritage, strengthening not only our gratitude but the sobriety of A.A.s, old and new.

In deepening our appreciation of A.A.'s Traditions during Thanksgiving week, Bill wrote, "We could thus reinforce our faith in the future by these prudent works; we could show that we deserve to go on receiving that priceless gift of oneness which God in his wisdom has so freely given to us of Alcoholics Anonymous in the precious years of our infancy." (*ibid*)

So how about it? Let's give Gratitude a real send-off this year!

New Spanish Translation of Twelve and Twelve

A new, more uniform, and consistent Spanish translation of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is scheduled to come off the presses early in 1995.

Many in the Fellowship did not realize that the existing Spanish edition of the Twelve and Twelve, first published by A.A.W.S. in 1985, was a composite, the Steps translated by one Spanish-speaking service structure, and the Traditions by another. These translations, prior to 1985 had been published as two pamphlets.

"We wanted to make a smooth translation, with a consistent text that flowed," G.S.O.'s nonalcoholic, Spanish translator, John de Stefano, says. "While there were no errors of fact or substance in the earlier versions, there were cultural idiosyncrasies and stylistic differences in the two translations."

The new text, which took ten months to complete, is also consistent in the references and citations to other A.A. books. The new translation is a result of the combined efforts of G.S.O.'s two Spanish translators and Danny M., G.S.O.'s Spanish Services coordinator. In keeping with the spirit of the First Tradition, the new translation will be shared with the Spanish-speaking countries, members of CIATAL (Ibero-American Commission on Translations and Adaption of A.A. Literature).

"The quality of the work is terrific, and much clearer," says Danny M. "Bill's writing," Danny continues, "particularly the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* essays, is perhaps one of the most cumbersome to adapt linguistically. This new translation falls spiritually into the scope and depth of our recovery program. It also enhances the simplicity and directness of Bill's work."

A.A. Literature in Braille

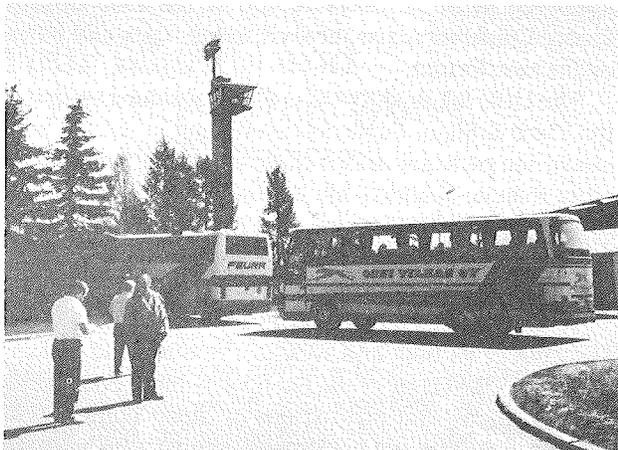
Three basic recovery pamphlets are now available in Braille: "This is A.A." (M-63) .15; "Is A.A. For You?" (M-64) .10; "44 Questions" (M-65) .20.

Braille editions of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, (M-34) \$17.00, and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, (M-35), \$5.60, are also available from the General Service Office or your local intergroup/central office.

Russian A.A. Grows Strong

Last May 17, a Canadian and two Americans traveled to Petrozavodsk, Russia, to join in that country's Sixth A.A. Service Conference: two Class B (alcoholic) trustees-at-large—Larry N. (U.S.) and David O'L. (Canada); and John G., the General Service Office staff member on the International desk.

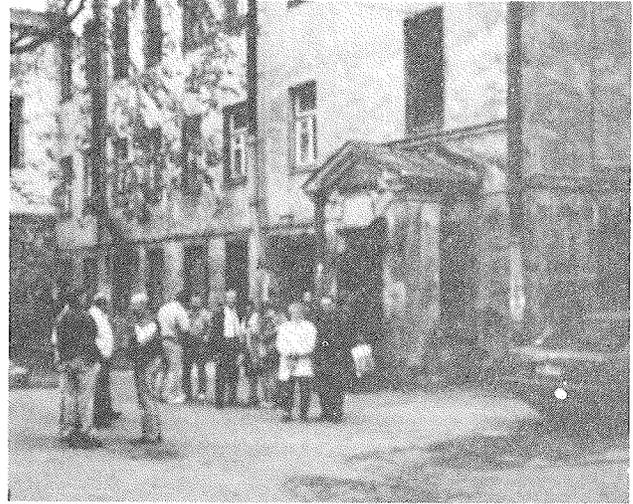
Before going to Russia, the three touched down in Helsinki, Finland, where they visited the General Service Office as well as the intergroup, where A.A. meetings are held at various times during the day. John says he will not forget the ensuing bus trip to Petrozavodsk. "There were 25 Finnish A.A.s aboard, including the driver," he relates, "and it was a pleasure to travel with those wonderfully good-humored people. We rode all day and arrived in St. Petersburg toward evening; after checking into the hotel, we were promptly taken to an A.A. meeting called Our Way. It was very upbeat, and translations were made from Finnish to Russian, and from English to Russian."



Bus from Finland being cleared at Russian boarder.

This meeting is one of 58 A.A. groups in Russia—"amazing," says Dave, "when you realize that six years ago there were only 17, with the first group, the Moscow Beginners Group, having started in 1987. And remember, unlike the United States, where A.A. and its groups are autonomous, in Russia they have to answer to various government entities, including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which only recently has recognized Russian A.A. as an international organization."

Comments Larry: "As soon as we entered the meeting in St. Petersburg we could feel the spiritual strength and A.A. friendliness. Immediately after the meeting it was announced that a couple of the group's members wanted to go to the Petrozavodsk Conference but needed help with their expenses."



Outside the Our Way Group meeting in St. Petersburg.

"The hat was passed, successfully, among the approximately 50 people present," John reports, "and our newest friends joined us on the bus the next morning. As we rolled and bumped along, the Finnish A.A.s took turns sharing their experience, strength and hope over the bus's loudspeaker. We visitors also were asked to share, which we were able to do thanks to the translating of a Finnish woman named Dorita, who acted as our interpreter throughout the trip and was a godsend.

"On the night of May 20, the visitors arrived in Petrozavodsk, which sits on Lake Onega in the north-west corner of Russia and is small," John says, "compared to Moscow and St. Petersburg, with a population of about 300,000 people." At that time of year, he notes, the city seems bathed in perpetual light, since the sun rises around 4:00 a.m. and doesn't set until nearly midnight.

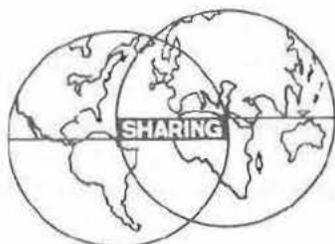
At the hotel, Larry, Dave and John met a contingent of A.A. members from California and promptly set up an impromptu meeting for the next morning. "The Finnish A.A.s joined us," says Larry, "and we had a great time. It's indeed a small world when you run into fellow A.A. members from America in the middle of a small Russian city." That same afternoon the trio met briefly with Yuri D., who heads the General Service Board, then were bused to the conference site a mile or so away. After taking care of old business and electing four new members to the board, for a total of nine, the 40 delegates turned to a discussion of literature.

Recalls Dave: "There was much talk about producing an improved Russian translation of the Big Book, with recovery stories from Russian A.A.s. The Russian Service Council had planned to request a loan from A.A. World Services, New York, in order to produce the book. But after discussing the pros and cons at the conference, and later with us, the board took a group conscience and decided they wanted to do it themselves. However, no

organization in Russia enjoys nonprofit status as we do in the U.S., so the tax bite is deep."

In the West, adds Larry, "no social-position structures impede our Twelfth-Step efforts as they do in Russia. Everything is so much more difficult there, even getting a letter from one end of the country to the other without someone's opening or stealing it in search of cash. Just ordering A.A. literature is a trial; it's less frustrating to ride the train for a few hours and pick it up in person."

Over here in the U.S. and Canada, thousands of miles away, Larry stresses, "we can and do make a difference. When A.A.W.S. provides Russian alcoholics with A.A. books and pamphlets they can read in their own language, it's because we make this possible through our contributions to G.S.O. It is a very meaningful way in which we carry this A.A. message."



A.A. Around the World

The A.A. message continues to encircle the globe, spreading across national borders at an ever more rapid pace, and getting translated into more and more languages. Letters, faxes, queries continue to pour in from every known country. Here's a general update of what's happening, and where, from John G., who serves on G.S.O.'s International desk.

- Translations of the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Living Sober*, and a good many pamphlets keep coming in a steady stream. (All of these are checked for accuracy and, when deemed not good enough and a need for the work is determined, it is sent to a translation service, subject to A.A.W.S. Board approval). There are new Big Books in Chinese, Thai and Persian; a Lithuanian *Living Sober* and a mixed bag of books and pamphlets out now in Ukrainian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Rumanian and Hungarian.
- The World Service Meeting International Literature Fund, set up in 1990, is providing more financial support to the worldwide translation efforts. Contributions come to the Fund from service structures in countries other than the U.S. "This should be an international effort because so many countries have come of age and are self-supporting," John says.
- There are A.A. groups galore. Poland, which opened its doors to the Fellowship 25 years ago, now boasts 850 groups. By contrast, Russia, where A.A. started up relatively recently, has about 58 on-going groups. "It's diffi-

cult to become self-supporting in Russia," says John, "because of the economic and political climate. Each group is barely making it and there's not much money left to send to the main office in Moscow." Also, there are more groups now in Lithuania "and a little bit is going on in Latvia and Estonia," John says. A.A. in Cuba continues to show signs of solid growth.

- Thirty-seven delegates from 25 countries will get together at this year's World Service Meeting, in Cartagena, Colombia. Their topic: "Back to Basics."

The 'Little Big Book' Is One Banner-Year Old

The "Pocket" version of *Alcoholics Anonymous* celebrated its first birthday in August; and, judging from the total sales of approximately 200,000 copies to date, it has enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome from the Fellowship. North Carolina delegate Ron S., who was very much on hand when publication of the Little Big Book was approved by an Advisory Action of the 1993 General Service Conference, has received many notes and letters on the new format.

The Little Big Book, 3 1/2" x 5", an abridged version of the Third Edition, duplicates everything in the Big Book except the personal stories of recovery told by members other than co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob (whose stories are included). Over the past months many satisfied members have put praise to paper for the slim 1/2"-thick, blue, softcover volume.

Writes James T., a member of the U.S. Army: "Because of its bulk and weight, I've often had to leave my unabridged copy of the Big Book behind, even during duty positions that put me out of direct contact with other A.A.s—but the pocket-size edition goes with me everywhere and is a valuable tool in my continuing recovery from alcoholism. Furthermore, because my job could place me at risk of capture in case of war, the ability to have on my person a copy of the Big Book—which qualifies as protected, spiritual material under the Geneva Convention—could literally be a lifesaver."

Another pleased member, Jackie M., says, "I have two Little Big Books, one in the glove compartment of my truck and one in my tool box at work. Because of their small size, I have A.A. with me wherever I go. Also, the inmates at the prison where I attend meetings tend to prefer the pocket edition because of limited personal storage space."

Michelle M. was one of a number of people who wrote to say they keep a copy in their purse or pocket at all times. And Patricia W. echoed the sentiments of many when she noted that while she carries the mini-

version of the Big Book around with her, she still treasures her well-thumbed unabridged editions, both the original hardbound and softcover portable version. "The small book would never be my only one," she explains, "because it does not include information [in the personal stories] that I consider to be important, but it has proven to be of more frequent service to me in my recovery."

Importantly, observes Ron, "Availability of the pocket version has renewed interest considerably in the basic text of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Despite the opposition of some Conference delegates who sincerely believed that an abridged version of the Big Book would dilute the effectiveness of the A.A. message, others felt differently, and after in-depth discussion, the 'ayes' had it. Like most decisions in the Fellowship, this one came slowly. But it shows, I think, that perhaps our true spirituality as A.A. servants lies in our ability to listen to the Fellowship and provide for its needs. When a compelling need and a desire to fill it come together, it can make for some exciting results."

Four Islands and A Forum—That Won't Soon Be Forgotten

Four islands in the paradise that is Hawaii welcomed A.A.s and their friends to the Fellowship's first portable Forum. The Special Regional Forum, which attracted about 500 people, was held last February 18-21—one island at a time, one day at a time—on Oahu, Kauai, Maui and the Big Island, with local host districts providing the food and coffee served during the Forum, and opening their homes to the visiting trustees and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members for overnight stays.

With welcoming cries of "Aloha!" the host committees on each island greeted the visitors at the airports with vivid pink, purple and yellow leis, handshakes and hugs. Then they were whisked to the Forum site for workshops, sharing and Ask-It-Basket sessions, replete with homemade meals served by the district hosts and their families.

Says Hawaii delegate Anne M.: "The local A.A.s did all the planning, supplied the food and drink, and set up the literature. Moreover, they opened their homes to the Stateside visitors at their own expense. They were thrilled to have a Hawaii Forum that 'island-hopped,' instead of taking place only in Honolulu as it used to, and felt an enormous sense of participation."

For Anne, the event seemed a while in happening, "When I was elected delegate two years ago," she relates,

"my first directive from our area assembly was to suggest holding such a Forum in Hawaii. But never did I imagine that it would come to pass so spectacularly."

The Special Forum in Hawaii may be the forerunner of similar ones to come. In January, a subcommittee of the trustees' International Convention/Regional Forums Committee recommended that, in the future, such events include both urban and remote and/or sparsely populated areas. "These Forums," the report stated, "could be scaled down, be made more mobile in approach and progressive, possibly with fewer people from the General Service Board and G.S.O., and perhaps for shorter periods of time. The Regional Forum coordinator could work with the host trustee in planning variations in the agenda, tailoring each a little more to the particular region."

Future Regional Forums are planned as follows:

1994

- *Southeast*— December 2-4: Royal D'Iberville Hotel, Biloxi, Mississippi

1995

- *Eastern Canada (Special Forum)*— May 12-13; Alma, Quebec
- *Northeast*— August 11-13; West Springfield, Massachusetts
- *West Central*— August 25-27; Sioux City, Iowa
- *East Central*— September 29-October 1; Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- *Southwest*— December 1-3; Holiday Inn Riverwalk North, San Antonio, Texas

Do You Know Your Group's Birthdate?

Are you one of those members who've wanted to celebrate your home group's birthday, but couldn't figure out when it was? If so, take heart—you may now be able to plan the party and candle the cake. This, because the nearly 60,000 U.S./Canada group information sheets maintained and constantly updated by G.S.O. are including the date on which each group was registered with the General Service Office.

For the vast majority of groups, says G.S.O. archivist Frank M., the birthdate listed is fairly accurate. For some, however, the date that appears on the form may be off the mark for two possible reasons: (1) The group went unreported to G.S.O. for a long time, perhaps years; and (2) In the case of about 13,000 groups, the birthdate will appear as the initial computer conversion

date entered in 1976, when G.S.O. switched from manual to electronic record-keeping, and so may be considerably off.

For local archivists, Frank notes, "knowing approximately when a group was founded can be helpful in compiling its A.A. history. In the process, oldtimers often turn up to share their experience and confirm an even earlier anniversary date which, in turn, can be incorporated into the G.S.O. records. These individual group dates, when arranged in chronological order, provide an interesting pattern of A.A. growth within each area."

Noting that groups unlisted to date with G.S.O. now have extra incentive to do so, Frank foresees that, with time, "a small synopsis of each group's history could be gathered from area archivists, included in the regular group file, and made available on a scheduled basis to the incoming general service representative. Ideally, the group's history would be passed on to each succeeding set of officers, who would be encouraged to add to the information bank."

Some other benefits:

- In the long run, this gathering and preservation of group histories could lead to a fuller understanding of each group's place in the overall fabric of the Fellowship, fostering unity and commitment to A.A.'s primary purpose.
- New emphasis on our past could involve many more group members in the information-gathering process and give them a greater sense of belonging to the Fellowship.
- Group members could come to realize that the experience of past A.A.s is available to us as a guide in arriving at creative solutions to present problems—such as "addicts" taking over A.A. meetings, the loss of older members, the introduction of "outside vocabulary," and more.
- There is bound to be an increased yield of memorabilia suitable for exhibits at both A.A. and community meetings and other events.

Are There Accidents? Don't You Believe It!

A couple of years ago, Sergio, an Arizona State prison inmate, was taking a walk in the prison yard when he spotted, lying on the ground, something that caught his attention. Sergio describes the incident: "It was a little piece of red paper, with a Grand Central Station address on it, and I decided to write."

His letter, written in Spanish, landed on the desk of Danny M., who services on G.S.O.'s Spanish Services assignment. Sergio was sent some A.A. pamphlets and information about the Fellowship. But it wasn't until he got hold of the Big Book and began corresponding with

an "outside" sponsor that he became aware of the extent of his drinking problem, he says, and eventually acquired enough serenity and acceptance to live comfortably in his prison environment.

In a recent letter, Sergio spoke of his changing attitudes, growth and gratitude, excitedly sharing the news that upon his release on parole, he will be granted—thanks to his sobriety—custody of his three daughters.

"I'll never forget that my life turned around once I became sober, here inside this place," Sergio writes, "and it's all due to the fact that I wrote to that Grand Central address, and then learned about my disease." He adds that his daughters want to express their own gratitude and celebrate his release by making a trip to the General Service Office.

Viewpoint

Let's Stand Up and Speak Out

Celebrating her 15th A.A. anniversary, Angel S. of Los Angeles, California, expresses gratitude for her sobriety—and gives a wakeup call to action to those who would go to any lengths to protect A.A.'s principles and Traditions:

"On March 28, 1979, an A.A. member carried the message to me, and I have been dry ever since that moment of grace when I said, 'Yes, booze is my problem.' Fifteen years is a long time to stay sober. It is minutes and hours, days and weeks, months and years strung together like pearls on a slender thread. It is commitment and dedication to our primary purpose—carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It is hour upon hour of sitting in meetings, listening and learning from the shared experience of alcoholics who sobered up in A.A., some long before me.

"I wonder what's happened to the oldtimers, those guardrails of our spiritual Fellowship without whom we'd fall off the road? And the plain-vanilla alcoholics, where are they? I see them walking out of A.A. meetings as our common problem and common solution get lost in what sounds like psychobabble in a mental-health marathon. Words mean things. As alcoholics we drank and got drunk, not habituated or stoned. In A.A. 'we admitted we were powerless over alcohol'—not over our co-dependency. And we 'made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God,' but only 'as we understood Him.' I have no quarrel with the language of drug addiction or psychotherapy or applied religion; they have their place. But do they belong in A.A.

meeting rooms, where the subject is alcoholism, a life-and-death matter? Is it not dangerous to dilute our singleness of purpose by blurring the lines of identification, our most powerful bond?

"Many (most) A.A. members have problems in addition to their alcoholism. But it is for that problem with alcohol that they have A.A. to turn to. If I find out, say, that a newcomer's problem is narcotics but not alcohol, I'm right there with an offer to take him or her to Narcotics Anonymous or some other Twelfth-Step meeting where appropriate help is available. Certainly it takes time and effort. But apathy disguised as 'Live and Let Live' takes a bigger toll: We don't mind killing people with misinformation, but we're afraid to hurt their feelings by telling them the truth.

"As unknowing newcomers anxious to be 'cool' clamor or willy-nilly for change, as the language of A.A. is diluted and twisted by outside issues and enterprises, as oldtimers are denigrated by folks glibly saying that 'whoever got up earliest in the morning is sober the longest,' do we just stand by and do nothing? Or do we get back to basics and speak out?

"Before I got sober, I cared little for anything but the bottle. Today I have a cause to live for, to respect, protect and serve...and that is Alcoholics Anonymous and its survival as it was envisioned and set forth by our founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob. I have the courage *not* to change the form and content of A.A. I have the willingness to stand up and speak in defense of our principles and Traditions. The tragedy is that some days I seem to stand alone."

From New York to Guyana— With A.A. Love

Francis M., a Loner from Essequibo Coast, Guyana, wrote to share the following: "It always amazes me, the things happening to people who joined up with A.A. Some time ago I heard someone calling to me by my gate. I saw a gentleman and went to inquire as to what I could do for him. To my astonishment, he turned out to be G.S., all the way from New York. He came to see me and bring me strength, hope and confidence. G.S. and I had only exchanged a few letters. He never indicated that he was going to visit me. So imagine the surprise!

"Like myself, G.S. is a Guyanese who migrated to the States some time ago. He, too, had been sober for a number of years. What really touched me is that he comes from the country of Corentyne and he made that tedious journey to see this lonely alcoholic all the way in the county of Essequibo.

"The worst part of the journey was by speedboat crossing the Essequibo River. This could be a hair-raising experience, because the river can get very rough. Yet my A.A. pal braved all this to come and see me. Although his visit was short, it was worth it. We had a mini-meeting, and then it was time to say goodbye."

Be Sure to Make Your Reservations to A.A.'s 60th Birthday Party!



Here, in San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium, Friday, June 30, 1995, the Parade of Flags from all attending countries will mark the opening of A.A.'s 10th International Convention, followed by the Big A.A. Meeting. Saturday evening the Stadium will be the site of an Oldtimers Meeting, and Sunday morning, the Closing Meeting. If you don't want to miss this exciting event in our Fellowship's history, register now. We hope to see you in San Diego—at meetings, meetings, meetings—including marathon meetings (in English and in Spanish, beginning midnight Thursday and running through Sunday Morning), and at the opening Harbor Block Party and Dance. Watch Box-4-5-9 for further news.

Public Information

Smoothing the Way For Trusted Servants

When advance word had it that the theme for the 1993 General Service Conference would be "A.A. Takes Its Inventory," a wave of self-examination rippled throughout the Fellowship.

"Just about all the trusted servants in our area assembly were doing their standard two-year rotation out of office last December," says Dennis C. of Albuquerque, who at the time was finishing his own term as chairperson of the Area Public Information Committee. "We welcomed the changing of the guard; at the same time, the assembly wanted to make the transition from old to new as smooth as possible. Then we heard about the projected Conference inventory and thought, what better way to begin?"

Bob L., then the area chairperson, asked each of the eight standing service committees to submit an individual inventory in preparation for doing one for the entire area, Dennis relates. Aware that it needn't be awash in red ink, he and his fellow P.I.s divided their balance sheet into three parts: "What We Did Right," "What We Can Do Better," and "Recommendations for Future P.I. Chairpersons."

A long, critical look in the mirror showed the committee that it had done a lot of things right. A sampling: provided A.A. public service announcements to television stations; held a number of public information forums; made a special effort to coordinate efforts with other area committees; furnished informed A.A. volunteers to speak at schools and organizations.

What the committee decided it could do better was stay in better touch with district P.I. committee chairpersons and connect more effectively with educators, medical professionals and others via district and central office committees.

There were nine recommendations listed for future P.I. chairpersons. These included: make public service announcements for radio and TV a priority; maintain regular contact with other service entities in the spirit of cooperation; and keep the General Service Office notified of key activities and utilize its experience and resources.

Comments present area P.I. chairperson Jeff O.: "Much good came of this inventory, both in terms of our committee work and what we, along with the other service committees, were able to bring to the greater area

inventory." Current area chairperson Betty P. agrees. She points out that the inventory-taking process "allowed a lot of people to express their views in the spirit of unity and gave us all a clear sense of what we were doing well and what we needed to do differently."

"One thing I've learned," adds Jeff, "is that wherever there's a breakdown in communication, especially when new people come into office, it's usually not because they don't care—they just don't know. An inventory, whether taken at the individual, group, committee or area level, goes a long way to dispel misunderstanding and is insurance that A.A. will be there for the alcoholics who need our help."

Correctional Facilities

H&I Conference Seeks Cooperation

Being friendly with our professional friends is a goal that the Southern California Hospital and Institutions Intergroup Committee takes very much to heart. "In order to really reach alcoholics behind walls," explains Dave B., immediate past chairman of the H&I conference committee, "we need to make sure that there is maximum understanding and cooperation between A.A.s and the facilities we visit. That's why we made sure to invite treatment facility and prison personnel to our 13th annual conference in May."

Jim Estelle, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee and chairman of the General Service Board, was keynote speaker at the conference, which brought 23 English, Spanish and Al-Anon H&I committees together. To allow for a free flow of information, Dave relates, "open floor microphones were placed in all the workshops. Another innovation this year: We had a marathon-style meeting going round the clock on H&I 'carry the message' topics that proved very popular."

Among the more than 650 conference participants, Dave says, were a pardoned life-sentence prisoner, who was a speaker, and also the warden of the facility where he had been incarcerated. "Now where else but in A.A. would you find such a combination?" Dave asks.

In the large Southern California Area, there are 23 H&I committees, each of which sends a representative to serve on intergroup's ad hoc H&I committee. In toto, the committees send as many as 1,200 panels, or clusters, of A.A.s every month into prisons and other facilities, to share

their experience, strength and hope with alcoholics who need a meeting but can't get out to one.

"With so many people carrying the message," Dave observes, "there are always challenges. The latest one is a new California law that says everyone who goes into a state institution must have been tested recently for tuberculosis. This could hang us up a little, but we'll deal with it. The important thing is to make A.A. available to alcoholics wherever they are."

Everything You Need To Know About Being A 'Bridge' Contact

It's a veritable omnibus of information compacted into an eight-panel flier. Produced by the A.A. Corrections Bridge Program in the Tacoma, Washington Area, it says up front that its purpose is "to connect inmate A.A. members with Alcoholics Anonymous in their community upon release. You are being asked to be that Bridge volunteer..."

Written in clear, spare language, the flier has a message for the inmate as well: The Bridge Program "means you can sign up to be matched to an A.A. member on the outside in your home community upon release. This volunteer will take you to up to six meetings, introduce you around, and help you get acquainted and comfortable among new friends in A.A. During this time, you will learn about sponsors, home groups, working the Twelve Steps and service. Your Bridge volunteer is temporary only and will not follow up or try to control you; nor provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other such services."

Importantly, two end-panels of the flier contain detachable application forms to be filled out and returned to the Bridge Program: One is for A.A.s who are interested in serving as volunteers and "have an active relationship with their own sponsor and a minimum of one year being sober and clean." The other form is for the inmates who would like a Bridge contact. Inside A.A. members are eligible for this program if they have less than six months left to serve and have been attending A.A. meetings inside on a regular basis.

Additionally, the flier provides a rundown of a Bridge volunteer's responsibilities, as well as a volunteer's "don't" list of practical suggestions, such as: "Don't forget yourself or your own personal program of recovery while giving time and energy to others." Finally, the flier offers a suggested reading list of A.A. pamphlets, including "Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities", "Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic"; and "A Message to Correctional Facility Administrators."

C.P.C.

Tower Display Helps Canadians Reach Alcoholics

The display towers were 7 feet high, 4 feet square, contained 8 generous panels and, at \$2,500, seemed a good buy. So last May, when a friend asked Canadian Don MacL., British Columbia/Yukon general service chairman, if he'd be interested in buying one for \$50, he replied, "Oh yeh, and there are three moons in the sky and the sun is falling down." Then he took off for what turned out to be a garage sale and quickly acquired what one A.A. wag calls his "edifice complex."



One of the display's several configurations.

When assembled, Don explains, "the tower can be arranged in any number of configurations. It could be used as a single four-sided tower to display all facets of A.A. services, or as two mini-towers, each one highlighting a particular facet of A.A. Or, say that the Correctional Facilities and Treatment Facilities committees are giving a joint presentation—it could be divided into two smaller tower for use as table-top displays. Best of all, the top four panels are A.A. blue."

The display tower presently is a star resident of the local archives, which occupies space rented from the Vancouver Intergroup. "We'll be using the tower for all sorts of professional meetings and conventions," says Don. "And, for sure, we will share it with intergroup and any district in the area that wants to borrow it. I think the service committees will find the tower helpful. They all work hard to carry the A.A. message, and hopefully they'll find this exciting A.A. tool useful and effective."

HELP BOX 459 TAKE ITS INVENTORY

Box 4-5-9 is taking inventory, and we need your help. Please take the time to respond to the following questions. Your experience is important to us as we plan future issues.

1. Do *Box 4-5-9* articles serve your group's needs and the needs of newer members?

2. How do you share *Box 4-5-9* with your group?

- a. Through business meetings? _____
- b. Through bulk subscriptions? _____
- c. Through a bulletin board? _____
- d. Other ways? (list) _____

3. How can *Box 4-5-9* better reflect news and notes from G.S.O.? _____

4. Are there new and different kinds of articles or features that you would like to see in *Box 4-5-9*?

Please return, before January 1, 1995, to: Literature Desk, Box 459,
Grand Central Station,
New York, NY 10163



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

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1994

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

- 1-2—Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. 43rd Eastern Ontario Fall Conf. Write: Ch., 265 Carling Ave., Ste. 205, Ottawa, ON K1S 2E1
- 1-2—Jacksonville, Florida. Angels are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 6-9—Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Fellowship-by-the Sea. Write: Ch. Box 7281, Dunes Branch, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577
- 7-9—Batesville, Arkansas. First Annual Recovery Unlimited. Write: Ch., Box 4144, Batesville, AR 72503
- 7-9—Modesto, California. NCCAA 47th Annual Fall Conf. Write: Tr., Box 1484, Rohnert Park, CA 94927-1484
- 7-9—Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. 30th Assembly. Write: Ch., 234 Shaft St, Glace Bay, NS B1A 6W4
- 7-9—Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada. 24th Congress of Sherbrooke. Write: Ch., 880, Jogues, App. 301, Sherbrooke, PE J1H 2X9
- 7-9—French Lick, Indiana. Back to Basics Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2003, Martinsville, IN 46151
- 7-9—Kalispell, Montana. Fall 1994 Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2326, Kalispell, MT 59903-2326
- 7-9—Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Serenity Harvest Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12601, Oklahoma City, OK 73157
- 7-9—Ogden, Utah. Ninth Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 9152, Ogden, UT 84409
- 7-9—Seattle, Washington. Coming of Age (sponsored by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., 1202 E. Pike #552, Seattle, WA 98122
- 7-9—Aiken, South Carolina. Carolambda Recovery Weekend (presented by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., 2730 Stepp Dr., Columbia, SC 29204
- 7-9—Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2012, Kelowna, BC V1X 4K5
- 8-9—Tampa, Florida. Angels are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 11-18—Alicante, Spain. Calpe Conv. Write: Ch., Finca San Antonio, Apartado 15, Benisa, Alicante, Spain
- 14-16—Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. 50th Annual Manitoba Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 505-365 Hargrave St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 2K3
- 14-16—Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 20 Pownal St. #3, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 3V8
- 14-16—Big Prairie, Ohio. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 284, Wooster, OH 44691
- 14-16—Vancouver, British Columbia,

- Canada. Sixth Annual Vancouver Roundup. Write: Ch., c/o Central Office, 3457 Kingsway St., Vancouver, BC V5R 5L5
- 14-16—Lafayette, Louisiana. 11th Annual Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502
- 14-16—Rochester, Minnesota. Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903
- 14-16—Merritt, British Columbia, Canada. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1779, Merritt, BC V0K 2B0
- 14-16—Claresholm, Alberta, Canada. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 45, Claresholm, AB T0L 0T0
- 15-16—Hong Kong. 25th Anniv. Write: Ch., 2nd Floor Flat, DD283 Lot 429, Hoi Ha Village, Sai Kung, Hong Kong
- 21-23—Fairbanks, Alaska. First State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 75311, Fairbanks, AK 99707
- 21-23—St. Cloud, Minnesota. St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302
- 21-23—Las Vegas, Nevada. H&I 1994 Service Conv. Write: Ch., 900 E. Karen, Bldg. H, Ste. 216, Las Vegas, NE 89109
- 27-30—Hagerstown, Maryland. MCFPAA 10th Annual Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1388, Ellicott City, MD 21043
- 28-30—Montreal, Quebec, Canada. 35th Montreal Bilingual Conv. Write: Ch., 5789 d'Iberville St., Montreal, QC H2G 2B8
- 28-30—Duderstadt/Gottingen, Germany. European Roundup (sponsored by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 42 08 21, D-12068 Berlin, Germany
- 28-30—Shreveport, Louisiana. Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 495, Shreveport, LA 71162
- 28-30—Ensenada, B.C. Mexico. Fifth Int'l. Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 189003, Ste. 125, Coronado, CA 92178-9003
- 28-30—Amherst, New York. 1994 Fall Conv. Write: Ch., 1340 Millersport Hwy, Amherst, NY 14221
- 28-30—Buffalo, New York. 53rd Buffalo Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 237, Buffalo, NY 14240-0237
- 28-30—Hampton, Virginia. Area Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 7711 Fisher Dr., Falls Church, VA 22043

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted:

October (page 49): Singleness of Purpose

November (page 31): Working one-on-one with another drunk; "A Boot from the Judge"

- 28-30—Bellingham, Washington. Mt. Baker Roundup. Write: Ch., 3212 Northwest Ave., Ste. C323, Bellingham, WA 98225
- 28-30—London, Ontario, Canada. 41st Conf. Write: Ch., 388 Dundas St., London, ON N6A 4Y8
- 28-30—Paducah, Kentucky. 34th Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 9492, Avondale Stn., Paducah, KY 42002
- 29-November 1—Malaga, Spain. National Conv., Write: Ch., Box 170, Aviles, Asturias, Spain

November

- 3-6—Memphis, Tennessee. 20th Annual Bluff City Fellowship. Write: Ch., Box 240831, Memphis, TN 38124-0831
- 4-5—Jacksonville, Florida. Angels are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 4-6—Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. 11th Moose Jaw Roundup. Write: Ch., #314-1315 Wolfe Ave., Moose Jaw, SK S6H 7H7
- 4-6—St. Joseph, Missouri. Western Area of Missouri Conv. Write: Tr., Rt. 3, Box 80-B, Lamonte, MO 65337
- 4-6—Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 37985, Milwaukee, WI 53237

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on December, January or February events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by October 10, the calendar deadline for the Holiday issue of Box 4-5-9.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Flip up this end of page — for events on reverse side



- 4-6 *Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada.* Roundup. Write: Ch., RR#3, Wetaskiwin, AB, T9A 1X1
- 10-13—*Helen, Georgia.* 15th Chattahoochee Forest Conf. Write: Ch., Box 363, Statesboro, GA 30459
- 11-12—*Tampa, Florida.* Angels are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 11-13—*Santa Barbara, California.* 10th Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731
- 11-13—*Pueblo, Colorado.* Winter Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 1101 East Main, No. J-8 Florence, CO 81226
- 11-13—*Okoboji, Iowa.* 11th Annual Pre-Winter Rally. Write: Ch., Box 426, Sutherland, IA 51058
- 11-13—*Albany, New York.* 44th Annual Hudson-Mohawk-Berkshire Conv. Write: Ch. Box 6042, Albany, NY 12206
- 11-13—*Houston, Texas.* 10th Annual Conf. Write: Tr., Box 7727, The Woodlands,

- TX 77387
- 11-13—*Salt Lake City, Utah.* 50th Anniv. Write: Ch., Box 522164, Salt Lake City, UT 84152-2164
- 12-13—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.* 50th Anniversary. Write: Ch., 844 Beaverbrook St., Winnipeg, MB, R3N 1N9
- 12-13—*Riga, Latvia.* Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 156, Riga LV 1010, Latvia
- 18-20—*Mariposa, California.* 11th Annual Yosemite Summit. Write: Ch., Box 1243, Mariposa, CA 95338
- 18-20—*Jekyll Island, Georgia.* A Celebration of Recovery. Write: Ch., Box 1464, Tifton, GA 31793-1464
- 18-20—*The Abbey Fontana, Wisconsin.* Fifth Annual Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 213, Ringwood, IL 60072-0213
- 18-20—*Jonesboro, Arkansas.* Thanksgiving Celebration. Write: Ch., Box 755, Jonesboro, AR 72403
- 24-27—*Queens, New York.* Holiday Share-a-Thon. Write: Ch., 106-03 Metropolitan

- Ave., Forest Hills, NY 11375
- 25-27—*Hamilton, Bermuda.* Bermuda Convention. Write: Ch., Box WK178, Warwick WKBX Bermuda
- 25-27—*East Lansing, Michigan.* MCYPAA. Write: Ch., 1071 Marigold, East Lansing, MI 48823
- 25-27—*Clearwater Beach, Florida.* Suncoast Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1485, Safety Harbor, FL 34695

December

- 2-3—*Jacksonville, Florida.* Angels Are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 9-10—*Tampa, Florida.* Angels Are Happening. Write: Ch., Box 1091, Fernandina Beach, FL 32035
- 10-11—*Neosho, Missouri.* Annual Winter Holiday. Write: Ch., 1409 Hillcrest, Neosho, MO 64850