

ABOUT A.A.

...a newsletter for professional men and women

Fall 1983

First Woman Nonalcoholic Elected to the General Service Board

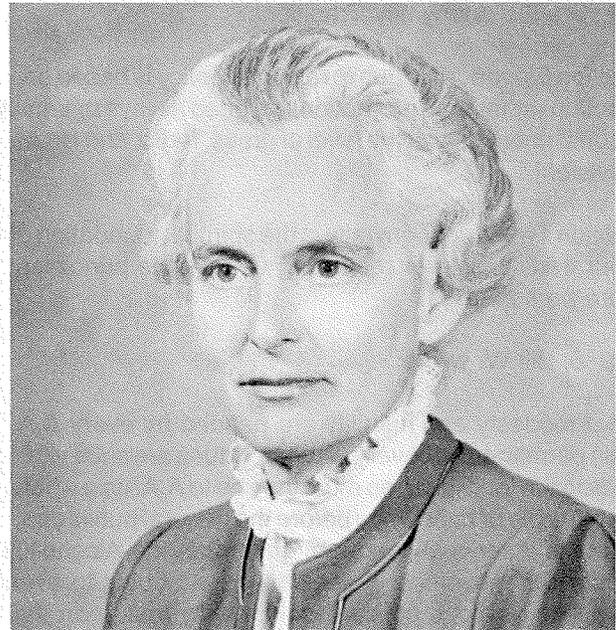
Joan K. Jackson, Ph.D., was elected nonalcoholic trustee of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous on April 23, 1983, becoming the first nonalcoholic woman in A.A. history to serve on the board. Dr. Jackson succeeds Milton Maxwell, Ph.D., who retired in 1982.

Born in Canada, Dr. Jackson became a U.S. citizen in 1958. She has earned degrees in the fields of sociology and anthropology and has taught on the faculties of McGill University, Montreal, and the University of Washington Medical School, Seattle. Dr. Jackson has an extensive background in alcoholism studies. She has engaged in research on Alcoholics Anonymous and on alcoholism and tuberculosis, and has been active in community programs.

With her professional expertise in the fields of alcoholism, sociology, and anthropology, Dr. Jackson also possesses the necessary dedication required to perform her new duties as a member of the General Service Board. She will serve no more than three consecutive three-year terms, along with the six other Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees, in an advisory capacity to the Fellowship.

The General Service Board of A.A. was created by A.A.'s co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., a few oldtime A.A.'s, and several nonalcoholic friends. In 1951 the General Service Conference was established, which assumed responsibility for the guardianship of A.A. Traditions and the direction of A.A.'s principal service affairs. The General Service Board became accountable to the General Service Conference, and its composition and functions were incorporated in the Conference Charter. The board is composed of both A.A. and non-A.A. trustees in a ratio of two to one—fourteen alcoholics and seven nonalcoholics. All are unpaid. Nonalcoholic trustees contribute special skills in several professional fields, including medicine, finance, and legal.

The other Class A trustees currently serving on the A.A. General Service Board are: Gordon M. Patrick, Ontario Ministry of Health, Canada (chairperson); Michael Alexander, Smith, Steibel, Alexander, and Saskor, P.C., New York; W.J. Estelle Jr., director, Texas Department of Corrections; William Flynn, M.D., Georgetown University



Joan K. Jackson

School of Medicine, Washington, D.C.; Frank Smeal, Goldman Sachs & Co., New York; Kenneth H. Williams, M.D., Neumann Addiction Treatment Center, Reading, Pa.

The Traditions—A.A.'s Way of Unity

Replies to the questionnaire enclosed with the December 1982 issue of *About A.A.* indicated what topics our readers would like to see discussed in future issues of this newsletter. One of the most requested topics was information about the A.A. Traditions.

The need for unity within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous was clear from its beginnings. The co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., both realized that they would have to find other alcoholics and share the sobriety they had found or they would probably lose theirs. As A.A. grew, it became increasingly apparent that individuals and groups needed to work together in harmony to meet our purpose as a fellowship—staying sober and carrying the A.A. message to still-suffering alcoholics.

The early days of A.A. taught our founders that certain actions, however worthwhile, might endanger the unity of the Fellowship. All the experience of the early years—the

consciousness of limits, understanding our individual foibles, and the need for personal and collective humility—led to the formation of the principles incorporated in A.A.'s Twelve Traditions. Reflecting a spirit of self-sacrifice, the Traditions have proved vital both for personal recovery in A.A. and for the preservation of the unity of the Fellowship, which is indispensable for personal recovery.

Among the most misunderstood of A.A.'s Traditions, perhaps, are the anonymity Traditions:

Tradition Eleven: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films [television]."

Tradition Twelve: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

In 1946, Bill W. wrote:

"Great modesty and humility are needed by every A.A. for his permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to A.A. as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction, and seldom, if ever, upon promotion." ("A.A. Tradition—How It Developed," page 41.)

And in 1955, commenting on anonymity breaks, Bill wrote:

"[These experiences] tell us that we alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world; that fortified with the excuse we are doing great things for A.A. we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money—the same implacable urges that when frustrated once caused us to drink; the same forces that are today ripping the globe apart at its seams. Moreover, they make clear that enough spectacular anonymity-breakers could some day carry our whole Society down into that ruinous dead end with them." (A.A. Tradition—How It Developed," page 48.)

The principle of anonymity is crucial to the personal recovery of each A.A. member and to the unity and preservation of the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The anonymity Traditions are A.A.'s "spiritual foundation."

Additional information on the A.A. Traditions may be found in the pamphlets, "A.A. Tradition—How It Developed" and "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated." Single copies are available free of charge from A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

A TREATMENT CENTER SHARES ITS EXPERIENCE

A staff member of a treatment center for alcohol and drug addiction, recently wrote to the A.A. General Service Office sharing the center's experience in setting up a communications system between their treatment center and A.A. The program has incorporated the following approaches in establishing this communications network:

1. Being a statewide facility, it was necessary to establish a statewide system.
2. Temporary A.A. sponsors are assigned to residents prior to leaving the center. These sponsors assist the resident in making the transition from treatment to A.A. and work with the person until a permanent sponsor is obtained. (Many temporary sponsors become permanent sponsors.)
3. The sponsor plan was implemented by contacting A.A. area committee officers, area committee members, intergroup officers; also, the program was presented at area assemblies, district meetings, intergroup meetings, and combined A.A. group meetings statewide. Letters were sent to the general service representatives enlisting their support, and assuring protection of anonymity for all A.A.'s who volunteer for the program. Followup visits to group, district, intergroup, and clubs are made, keeping them informed of the program's progress.
4. The program is explained to each resident in the second week of treatment.

Of the residents assigned temporary sponsors, only nine failed to make contact following discharge. Those residents who made contact with their temporary sponsors attended an A.A. meeting within five days from the day of discharge (many attended on the first day of discharge). Of those who attended A.A. the first week, 59 percent have remained active in A.A.; of the 41 percent who had slips, 11 percent have returned to the Fellowship. A total of 63.2 percent of the residents assigned temporary sponsors are now active in A.A. To date, 341 members of Alcoholics Anonymous have volunteered to become temporary sponsors.

SECOND EUROPEAN SERVICE MEETING

Alcoholics Anonymous in Europe held its Second European Service Meeting in Frankfurt, West Germany, February 18-20. Representatives from A.A. in 17 countries attended. The General Service Office staff member on the Overseas assignment was the keynote speaker and reported that the highlight of the entire experience was the attendance of three A.A. members from three European countries for the first time: Denmark, Malta, and Poland.