



# ABOUT A.A.

*...a newsletter for professional men and women*

July 1979

## Landmark A.A. Film Approved for Release

"A.A.—An Inside View," a 28-minute color film about A.A., has been approved for limited distribution by the 29th meeting of the General Service Conference (a body of representatives which meets annually to consider and decide upon matters of general importance to the Fellowship).

Historically a landmark for A.A., the film is the first visual documentary about A.A. ever made for viewing by the general public. Put together by professional filmmakers Karen and David Crommie (nonalcoholics), it takes the viewer into A.A. meetings, conventions, and roundups. The film's aim is less an attempt to instruct the nonmember on the principles and operations of Alcoholics Anonymous than it is to convey an impressionistic sense of what it's like to be an alcoholic recovering in A.A. Using special filming techniques and the voices of A.A. members, the film is careful to protect the anonymity of the A.A.'s it depicts going about their daily lives.

Before it is released for general media presentation, it will circulate for one year within A.A. and among other groups with a direct interest in helping sick alcoholics, such as treatment programs and professional groups.

Technical improvements on the sound track are underway. *When these have been completed, copies of the film will be available for distribution.* The next issue of *About A.A.* will contain information on procedures for requesting the film.

## M.D.'s Take Professional Courses on A.A. Program

A course whose primary focus is the Twelve Step program of recovery of Alcoholics Anonymous is currently being offered under the auspices of The Committee on Public Health of the Medical Society of the County of New York with the New York Academy of Medicine. A 25-credit course for physicians in active practice, attendance at A.A. and Al-Anon meetings will be a major requirement.

Probably the most extensive formal professional-educational activity for physicians ever undertaken to help doctors better understand the A.A. approach to recovery, 18 credit hours will be awarded for meeting attendance. Schedules and locations are supplied to registrants, along with forms for recording attendance.

Commenting on the course's approach, the announcement states: "The basic process of recovery from alcoholism is well exemplified in the Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. This program has evolved and been tested for nearly half a century and may be, almost without exception, the operative element in all modern recovery programs. The experiential method of learning about this dynamic process is the best and only way fully to understand it."

Another component of the coursework involves discussions between registrants and faculty based on written summaries by registrants of their questions and reactions to the meetings they have attended. The course description concludes: "Emphasis will be on understanding the nature of alcoholism and recovery through the Twelve Step program, as differentiated from the medical specialization directed toward the results of alcoholism, and on enhancing the role of the physician in combating this modern plague."

## New Trustees: A Banker and an M.D.

Frank P. Smeal, a New York investment banker, and Kenneth H. Williams, M.D., Pittsburgh, Pa., have joined the five other nonalcoholic trustees on our General Service Board.

Mr. Smeal succeeds Arthur J. Miles as Board Treasurer. Since 1977, he has been a partner and member of the management committee of Goldman, Sachs & Co., an investment banking firm. He had been executive vice-president and treasurer of Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., New York.

Dr. Williams is assistant professor of psychiatry and internal medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and previously taught at Yale University, New Haven, Conn., and Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. In the past, he had been a guest speaker at

A.A.'s 1975 International Convention in Denver, Colo.

Since its inception, A.A. has had distinguished nonalcoholic friends. We welcome Smeal and Williams to these ranks.

### **Questionnaire Responses Mostly Positive**

Hundreds of readers responded to the questionnaire we mailed last May and offered their comments and suggestions on how the bulletin may better serve you. Most of the comments were positive, emphasizing how *About A.A.* has been helpful in the past.

However, the question "Is there any area where we could provide you with more information" did reveal some fundamental misunderstandings on what A.A. can and cannot do. In short, we *can* tell you about the A.A. program of recovery, about our Traditions, Steps, and history, and we can share the cumulative experience of 44 years of recovery from alcoholism, encompassing more than one million members worldwide. We can provide some statistics but they are, of necessity, *estimates* on the number of members and the number of groups which choose to be listed at G.S.O. (33,241 worldwide, as of this spring). In addition, each year we ask all groups known to us to give G.S.O. an estimate of the number of their members. Responding groups probably base their figures on the number of chairs filled at any given meeting, since there are no rosters or formal procedures for counting heads or keeping track of individual members.

At three-year intervals, beginning in 1968, our General Service Board has tried a "sobriety census" of three percent of the known groups in each state and province of the U.S. and Canada. The findings have been remarkably consistent, and are, we think, reliable. We sent you the latest of these survey results last autumn.

Our Fellowship is one of peers, nonprofessionals whose range of competence does not extend to conducting scientific research, education about drinking, or running alcoholism programs for employers. We are not affiliated with any other organization interested in alcoholics or alcoholism.

Therefore, we suggest you contact organizations such as the National Council on Alcoholism, which are set up to provide or refer you to information you may be seeking, such as the following (which were requested by our questionnaire respondents):

- Transcripts of important scientific gatherings.
- Lists of teaching aids.

- Lists of professional publications on alcoholism.
- Statistics on professional treatment programs.
- Lists of treatment facilities.
- Reports on prevention activities.
- Medical data or new findings.
- Lists of funding sources.

Several responses revealed some confusion about Alateen, assuming it was for teenage alcoholics. It is not. It is for youngsters who must cope with an alcoholic family member, usually a parent, and neither Alateen nor Al-Anon (for others who are relatives of or closely associated with alcoholics) is affiliated with A.A. They are separate organizations and A.A. does not speak for them or represent them in any way, although the Fellowships do *cooperate* with one another. For information on Alateen and Al-Anon, write to the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, P.O. Box 182, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10010.

The current public recognition of teenage alcoholism and the influx of youthful alcoholics into A.A. is being met by a growing number of "young people's groups" which *are* a part of A.A. Youngsters attend these groups and also any other A.A. meetings they choose.

### **H.E.W. Secretary Receives Two-Millionth Big Book**

The two-millionth copy of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was presented to Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph A. Califano Jr., at A.A.'s General Service Office on June 6. Lois Wilson, widow of the author and co-founder Bill Wilson, made the presentation.

The inscription reads, in part: "Presented . . . in appreciation of the efforts of the United States Government in the field of alcoholism."

Dr. John L. Norris, chairman emeritus, General Service Board, presided over the ceremonies, which were attended by A.A. trustees and staff.

### **Enclosure**

With this issue of *About A.A.* we are enclosing a reprint from the A.A. Grapevine, the international monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. Entitled "What A.A. Meetings Taught a Non-A.A. Counselor," by Lee A. Grutchfield, M.Ed., the five-page article recounts the author's personal experience with attending A.A. meetings and how it broadened his concept of alcoholism.