

ABOUT A.A.

... a newsletter for professional men and women

December 1976

A.A. Membership Reaches One Million Mark

A.A. as a whole displays a deep lack of interest in statistics. They make some members downright nervous.

Nevertheless, most of us admit we are glad A.A. is bigger today than it was as a tiny, struggling band of nameless but sober drunks in Akron, Ohio, some four decades ago. Would they stay sober? Could their little association survive? Would it ever help any significant number of sick alcoholics? Then, no one knew.

But figures announced this year by John L. Norris, M.D., nonalcoholic chairman of our General Service Board, to our 1976 General Service Conference (an annual representative assembly in New York) suggest some answers to those questions.

Using membership estimates submitted annually by the 28,000+ A.A. groups, our General Service Office (G.S.O.) estimates the total A.A. membership worldwide has now passed one million.

To arrive at this estimate, G.S.O. used the assistance of A.A. members skilled in modern techniques of statistics, especially sampling. However, since no actual membership records are kept, the membership figure must always be purely an estimate. We believe it is a conservative one.

The percentage of members who stay sober, along with their age, sex, and occupation, can be checked in our pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous—a Community Resource for Coping With a National Health Problem," which we sent you last year. (Next year, we'll do another survey—see page 3.)

For most A.A. members, statistics remain cause for indifference. We believe it is fair to say that in the majority of A.A. lives, only *two* figures are of any real weight: One is the next alcoholic to turn up needing A.A. help, and the other is the A.A. member who gives the help in order to keep on living sober.

A.A.'s like to tell this tale, printed in "A.A./30," the souvenir book for our 30th Anniversary International Convention, in Toronto in 1965. It seems two drunks (working their way toward A.A., we hope) had never seen an ocean, but finally found themselves on a California peak from which they could see the Pacific swelling to the horizon. After an awed silence, one said, "Whoo-ee! Just look at all that water!"

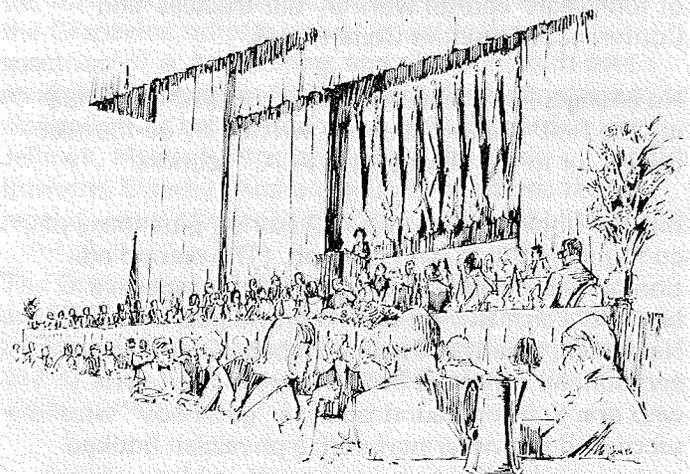
His buddy nodded solemnly. "Yep," he replied, "and just think—that's only the top of it."

So much for statistics.

International Cooperation Furthered for 18 Countries or Zones Having Own A.A. Services

Delegates representing A.A. in 18 nations and global zones convened in a World Service Meeting (W.S.M.) in New York in October to discuss common challenges and opportunities. It was the fourth and biggest W.S.M. so far, since the third, in London in 1974, seated only 17 delegations.

The invitation to send delegates is extended to



A.A. World Service Meeting delegates were seated on a flag-bedecked dais as guests at a dinner honoring the memory of A.A. co-founder Bill W.

A.A.'s in all countries (or zones, as in Central America) that have an A.A. structure or office sufficiently strong to serve local A.A. groups, as our own General Service Board and G.S.O. in New York do for the United States and Canada. Like every other place represented, U.S./Canada had two delegates.

Other representatives came from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Central America (Northern and Southern Zones), Colombia, Finland, French-speaking Europe, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. All delegates spoke English.

"Carrying the A.A. Message Behind the Iron Curtain," a report by Finnish and German delegates, stirred much interest. Other topics discussed included: A.A. publications and their distribution; how A.A. works in correctional and health systems around the world; building an A.A. service structure; "special interest" A.A. groups; and communications among A.A.'s in countries with a common language.

New A.A. Publications Reflect Changing Times

The third edition of the basic A.A. text, "Alcoholics Anonymous," was published in September. (The second came out in 1955; the original, in 1939.)

It contains 13 new stories (case histories) reflecting a more up-to-date, accurate sample of today's A.A. membership than the previous edition.

Over 1,450,000 copies of the first two editions were distributed. The latest revision is the product of four years' careful work by our trustees' and Conference Literature Committees.

No changes have been made in pp. xxiii-312, including the first 11 basic chapters written by co-founder Bill W., or in the "Pioneers of A.A." section.

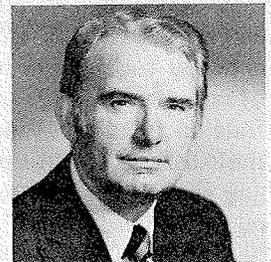
But the book now contains 42 stories, plus those of co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob. (The second edition had 38.) The new ones are by: teenagers—a boy and a girl; two retirees—a movie publicist and a Navy man; a native American from a Canadian reservation; an officer in India's army; a housewife who drank at the Laundromat; a "good boy" who succeeded but never matured; a physician hooked on booze and pills; two ex-convicts—a black woman and a man who was a five-time loser; a waitress-barfly; and a successful business executive. This represents a much wider spectrum of alcoholics than we used to see in A.A.

"Do You Think You're Different?" (enclosed) is the newest A.A. pamphlet, in which 13 different groups are represented. In its 32 pages, it tells case histories of an agnostic, a black, an octogenarian, a gay man, an atheist, a movie star, an American Indian, a teenage girl, a clergyman, a lesbian, a Jew, and dramatically "low bottom" and "high bottom" cases.

So if you know any alcoholic who says, "A.A. can't work for me, because I'm . . . (one of those)," you might pass along this pamphlet.

New York Attorney Named Nonalcoholic A.A. Trustee

Michael Alexander, Esq., was elected a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee member of our General Service Board in April. A partner in the New York law firm of Smith, Steibel, Alexander, and Saskor, P.C., Mike was long an associate of the late Bernard Smith, a highly significant figure in the history of A.A., as readers of "A.A. Comes of Age" know well. Mike himself has been legal adviser to the board for 20 years.



Graduated from the University of Pittsburgh and Harvard Law School, Mike was a captain in the U.S. Army. He is a director of the British American Chamber of Commerce, past president of the Consular Law Society, a trustee of the Foundation for International Child Health, and a director of the Ireland-U.S. Council for Commerce and Industry.

Besides Alexander and Dr. John L. Norris, our non-alcoholic trustees now are: John D. Bealer, M.D., Bethlehem, Pa.; Milton A. Maxwell, Ph.D., Olympia, Wash.; Arthur J. Miles, New York; and Gordon M. Patrick, Don Mills, Ont. Fourteen A.A. members also serve on the board.

Lawyers and Doctors in A.A.

Ten British physicians attended the eighth mid-winter session of International Doctors in A.A. (I.D.A.A.), in Montclair, N.J., early this year. The 29th annual meeting of I.D.A.A. attracted several hundred doctors and dentists to Los Angeles in August.

The second annual Lawyers in A.A. meeting was held in Buffalo, N.Y., this fall. Twenty attorneys

attended, and a reunion on an annual basis is planned, with the next meeting scheduled for late September 1977 in Canada.

Any physician, dentist, or attorney who is a member of A.A. is welcome to attend the appropriate official gathering. To contact I.D.A.A. or Lawyers in A.A., write G.S.O.

A.A. Literature Prices Reduced

A.A. has got to be the only organization in the world *reducing* prices these days! But that is exactly what we did with prices of some A.A. literature in September.

The price of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was lowered from \$6.25 to \$5.65. The discount structure for books, booklets, and pamphlets bought in quantity was also liberalized. (For details, write for the new order form and catalog of A.A. Conference-approved literature.)

A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.), took these steps in response to a recommendation from our 1976 General Service Conference that income from publishing operations be reduced. A.A. groups, in turn, are asked to increase their voluntary support of A.A.'s world services.

In addition, the amount of donated literature G.S.O. gives away (to new groups, prisons, hospitals, and institutions and public information committees) is being doubled.

Additional Recent A.A. Publications May Interest Professional Community

Three more A.A. items published lately may be of use to professionals and others employed in the alcoholism field. They are:

"Questions and Answers on Sponsorship—Revised." This 26-page update emphasizes the value of A.A. sponsorship for the sponsor, as well as for the newcomer. It reflects what goes on in A.A. circles today as compared with 20 years ago.

"Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?" offers a fresh view of the material in two older leaflets, "The Alcoholic Husband" and "The Alcoholic Wife," now discontinued. Its 20 pages also encourage the reader to contact Al-Anon Family Groups or Alateen, P.O. Box 182, Madison Square Station, New York, NY

10010. You'll find a copy enclosed.

Each November issue of our movement's magazine, the A.A. Grapevine, is a "Classic Grapevine." The 1976 edition contained reprints of three articles of historic interest: (a) the 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* piece on A.A. that first put A.A. on the map as far as the mass public was concerned; (b) Lois W.'s 1944 Grapevine article about her situation as the nonalcoholic wife of A.A. co-founder Bill W. and her eventual decision to apply A.A.'s program to herself, an idea that led to the start of Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen; and (c) the story of A.A.'s first "self-proclaimed atheist"—he joined in 1938—whose influence counterbalanced the original religious fervor of the tiny Fellowship, and helped keep the A.A. program free of any demands for orthodox belief.

Grapevine (GV) circulation now totals over 89,000 per month. Unlike most other magazines, the GV depends on its readers for both articles and finances. It accepts no advertising of any kind, and no subsidy—not even from the A.A. General Service Board. It is incorporated separately from A.A. World Services, Inc.

Highly personal opinions juice up the Grapevine's pages, since its pieces are the work of individual A.A. members, not A.A. committees. It is a forum for healthy disagreement, and does not publish "official" A.A. news nor purport to speak for A.A. as a whole.

Many readers turn first to its cartoons and "Once Over Lightly," a collection of humorous tidbits of the sort A.A.'s like to tell on themselves. We think the Grapevine reflects a wide, contemporary spectrum of A.A. thinking, and occasionally it uses an article by a professional (non-A.A.) authority on alcoholism. It has carried articles by Haggard, Jellinek, Maxwell, Norris, Block, Trice, Fox, Edwards, Dancy, Aharan, and many others. It also reprints news of scientific findings on alcoholism.

The Grapevine costs 50¢ per copy. Subscriptions are \$5.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada, \$5.50 in all other countries, and may be ordered by writing to P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10017.

New A.A. Survey Ahead

In 1977, as in '68, '71, and '74, our General Service Board will again conduct a survey of a sample

of A.A. groups throughout the U.S. and Canada. The 1974 results are shown in the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous—a Community Resource for Coping With a National Health Problem." Results of the first two surveys have been published in several professional, non-A.A. journals and books.

Findings of the '77 study will be made public at some appropriate forum after they are analyzed late next summer.

At the Grass Roots . . . In response to many requests from A.A.'s, our General Service Board's Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community has prepared, for use by local A.A. units, Guidelines on forming local C.P.C. committees. . . . In preparation is a paper containing suggestions for agencies referring clients to A.A. It should also be helpful to alcoholics so referred. The material will incorporate long experience by many such agencies and many local A.A. groups. . . . About every six weeks, a group of Cornell University medical students attends an A.A. meeting in our New York office. Does this happen in other localities? . . . John L. Norris, M.D., our nonalcoholic board chairman, spoke this summer at the Cleveland Academy of Medicine on the role of A.A. in the treatment of alcoholism. . . . A.A. board members, board committee members, or staff also participated in: the Women and Alcohol Conference, Cherry Hill, N.J.; the University of Nebraska Summer School of Alcohol Studies, Lincoln, Nebr.; the Sixth Annual Conference on Alcoholism at the University of Delaware; the third alcoholism seminar at the University of Louisville, Louisville, Ky.

At the North American Level . . . Our General Service Board will hereafter have a representative as liaison-observer at meetings of the Advisory Council on Occupational Alcoholism. This year, A.A.'s from G.S.O. continued to sit with the N.I.A.A.A. advisory council, and met with the Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration of H.E.W. . . . For the National Alcoholism Forum held in Washington, D.C., this year by the National Council on Alcoholism, three busy professional people accepted our invitation to be panelists in workshops on "Rehab Center Bridges to A.A. Sponsorship." They are: Miles Conway, Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Ill.; Susan Deacons, M.D., Smithers Alcoholism Treatment and Training Center, New York; and John M. Fraunces, S.J., Chit Chat Farms, Wernersville, Pa. We are grateful for their help. At a separate "sharing session" in Washington, A.A. members shared "their experiences in their dual roles as A.A. members and as profession-

als serving the alcoholic client in the community," according to the printed program. . . . At the September meeting of the Alcoholism and Drug Problems Association of North America, in New Orleans, under the auspices of its Private Rehabilitation Section, Art Baker, director of Guest House, Lake Orion, Mich., chaired a program entitled "A.A. and the Private Service Deliverers—Examples of Effective Cooperation." Representatives of Palm Beach Institute, Lutheran General Hospital, Chit Chat Farms, and Guest House Sanitoriums participated, along with a G.S.O. staff member. In other sections, our nonalcoholic trustee Gordon Patrick, of Don River, Ont., spoke on utilization of A.A., and Russell Smith, M.D., of Brighton Hospital, Detroit, gave a paper entitled "A Physician Looks at A.A. as a Therapeutic Model." . . .

Those men and women you see seated at the Alcoholics Anonymous booth in the display hall at gatherings of national professional societies are *not* models hired for the purpose, nor are they professional authorities on scientific aspects of alcoholism. They are A.A. members who live in the community where the meeting is held. They volunteer to help out at the booth without pay, and they take time off from their usual occupations to help out. They are happy to chat with anyone who stops by, and will take your name and address if you want some specialized information on A.A. During the past year, you may have seen them at: national meetings of the Adult Education Association (New York City), American Association of School Administrators (Atlantic City), American Bar Association (Atlanta), American Correctional Association (Denver), Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America (New Orleans), American Nurses Association (Atlantic City), American Personnel and Guidance Association (Chicago), American Orthopsychiatric Association (Atlanta), American Public Health Association (Miami Beach), Association of Trial Lawyers of America (Las Vegas), National Catholic Educational Association (Chicago), National Conference on Social Welfare (Washington), National Council on Alcoholism Annual Meeting (Washington), National Drug Abuse Conference (New York City). . . .

During our final A.A. General Service Board week-end of the year, we were privileged to have the director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (N.I.A.A.A.), Dr. Ernest Noble, speak to us at our Policy Committee meeting. He shared with us his professional views on alcoholism and brought us up to date with news of the field, with the focus on A.A.'s role as he sees it.