

1992 Membership Survey Form Gets a Facelift

It's again time for that confidential—and anonymous—survey of the A.A. membership. Its purpose is to keep members informed on current trends in membership characteristics, and to provide information about ourselves to the professional community and the general public as part of the effort to carry the message.

Distributed every three years since 1968, the one-page questionnaire will go out this summer with a new facelift, thanks to an Advisory Action of the 1991 General Service Conference.

Most changes are minor, such as tightening questions and updating obsolete terms. Other changes are more substantial. For example, question 9—"What is the specific nature of your employment now?"—has been removed, as has question 17: "Has your doctor been to an A.A. meeting?"

One pivotal question which eluded consensus in 1991 was number 14: "In addition to your alcoholism, were you addicted to drugs?" When it came to retaining the question or eliminating it altogether, the Conference split down the middle. Therefore, it was recommended that a subcommittee of the trustees' Public Information Committee study the pros and cons, with their findings to be reviewed by the 1992 Conference this spring.

Says Jane S., a director of the A.A. Grapevine and chairperson of the subcommittee: "The word 'drugs' is the elephant in the living room, and both the yeas and the nays are highly persuasive."

Those favoring removal of the question advance a number of arguments: What is meant by the words "another drug"—which could be anything from caffeine to cocaine? Why is such a question the business of A.A.? We are not a social agency; we are interested only in staying sober and helping other alcoholics. . . .

Proponents of the question are equally protective of A.A.'s singleness of purpose, but contend that to stop asking questions is not a useful response if we are to learn about ourselves. Moreover, having current facts about our escalating numbers of dually addicted members assures that information is at hand when requested.

After the Conference and its committees have completed the Advisory process, the survey questionnaire,

which is printed in English on one side and in Spanish on the other, will be mailed to U.S./Canada Conference delegates representing approximately 51,500 groups. Once tabulated and analyzed, the results will be published in a revised version of the illustrated leaflet "Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey"; in a table-top display with the same title; and in complete report form. For news of their availability, watch future issues of *Box 4-5-9*.

Trust and Candor Color European Service Meeting

The theme "Living Sober" well described the Sixth European Service Meeting (E.S.M.) held in Frankfurt am Main, Germany last fall. Thirty-two delegates from 18 European countries presented progress reports with warmth and humor. They also shared their problems openly with the hope of receiving help; and many took home some very workable solutions, according to Lois F., the U.S./Canada General Service Office's staff member serving on the Overseas assignment. Here are excerpts from her report:

Netherlands—The delegates reported that some years ago, in a period of financial crisis, the General Service Board had not only sought support but had said yes to a government grant. The board knew this would violate the self-support Tradition but concluded that, compared with allowing A.A. to disappear altogether, it was the lesser of two evils.

Many of the A.A. groups opposed the move, and to avoid an impending schism, the board instituted an ad hoc "Committee of Wise Men" to investigate the matter. After five years of study, the "Wise Men" have offered concrete recommendations for effecting a unified, effective A.A. community in accord with A.A. Traditions.

Finland—In this bilingual country, Swedish is spoken in about 30 groups. In addition, there are some English-speaking groups, as well as some small ethnic minorities, such as the Lapps, for whom Finland has published a Lapp-language A.A. pamphlet.

Germany—With the removal of "the wall" in Germany, the people of the two parts of Germany are

Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 468 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y., © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1992.

Mail address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Subscriptions: Individual, \$3.50 per year; group, \$6.00 for each unit of 10 per year. Check—made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc.—should accompany order.

getting to know one another. Alfred W., delegate from Germany and chairperson of the European Service Meeting, reported that for the first time A.A. in Germany is united. Prior to unification, A.A. groups in East Germany existed only underground.

Russian Federative Republic—Delegate Yuri D. chairs the year-old All-Russian Society of Alcoholics Anonymous. His interpreter at the E.S.M. was a bilingual Al-Anon member, Veniamin M., who has dedicated himself to A.A. because his son was imprisoned for alcoholism.

There are about 80 A.A. groups with approximately 800 members in this restive land. They have established friendly relations with the A.A. Fellowships of the Ukraine, the Baltics and Byelorussia, which are part of the Western Region Intergroup.

The two delegates to the E.S.M. expressed interest in publishing and distributing A.A. literature some time in the future. They said that to do so would help them maintain their service offices.

At present, Lois says, "the European Service Meeting has no contact with Spain, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Yugoslavia. There have been, however, some interstate A.A. contacts between France and Spain; and Austria and Slovenia (Northern Republic of Yugoslavia), where there is now an A.A. group. Additionally, Italy is making contacts with Greece at the group level."

A.A.W.S. Assumes a Close But Ancillary Role in Intergroup Seminars

It was a special moment at the 1991 Central Office/Intergroup Seminar in Memphis, Tennessee. Approximately 180 office managers and steering committee chairs from across the U.S. and Canada had just voted resoundingly to assume full organizational and financial responsibility for future Seminars.

"We're really shifting gears," says Indie C., manager of the Memphis Area Intergroup Association, which hosted the fall Seminar. "It's like we were guests at a

wonderful party year after year, enjoying the whole thing without having to flick a finger—then finding ourselves in charge of everything from soup to nuts and having to pay for them, too. But there's a difference: In this situation, our intergroups will still have the guidance of A.A. World Services to rely upon."

The new arrangement symbolizes the relationship between the two entities—*independent but close*. It is expected to examine the overlapping and duplication of services that have occurred over the years and to clarify lines of communication at every level of A.A. service.

The Seminar, which has been held annually since 1986, is conceived as a forum for the sharing of common interests, problems and ideas. Importantly, it also is where the intergroup managers can familiarize themselves with A.A.W.S. literature distribution process and contribute their thinking about it. Every intergroup in the U.S./Canada will continue to have the opportunity to be represented at the Seminar by one spokesperson. A.A.W.S. will be represented by an A.A.W.S. trustee/director and a General Service Office liaison.

The 1991 Seminar further voted to establish a Policy Committee for the purpose of taking a continuing inventory of Seminar activities. At present—after a drawing of eligible names placed in a hat—it is comprised of eight intergroup/central office representatives, one from each General Service Conference region. The two A.A.W.S. representatives also have a voice.

Noting that "A.A.W.S. stands ready to help the intergroups in every way we can," Class B (alcoholic) trustee Harold G. voiced the sentiments of many when he said, "I am confident that we can go forward in unity with the rich body of experience we have to share."

The 1992 Seminar will be held in Mesa, Arizona.

Join G.S.O.'s A.A. Birthday Program

The Self-support Committee of the A.A. World Services Board has initiated an individual A.A. Birthday Program, hoping to reach individual A.A. members. This birthday program will be a supplement to the already existing Group Birthday Plan that many groups participate in regularly.

Enclosed with this issue of *Box 4-5-9* is a flyer explaining our new Birthday Plan. Those who fill out and return the form, stating their A.A. Birthday (or anniversary), will receive a personal note from G.S.O. just prior to their important date. Those who participate in the plan will receive a thank you letter for their contribution.

If you would like more of these letters to hand out to your group, or to place on your group's literature table, please write to Group Services Coordinator at G.S.O. You are also free to make copies for distribution.

The A.A. Grapevine—A Family Album

Have you ever been puzzled by a picture of yourself from an old family photo album? How could that tiny little baby actually be me, you might think. But as you look a little closer, you begin to see some similarities—the familiar eyes, the characteristic shape of the head, that nose. “Yup, that’s me,” you can finally say. And, as you continue on, flipping forward through the years, the photographs get more current—the hairdos and the cars in the background begin to resemble those of modern times—and the pictures of yourself get closer and closer to the way you look today.

Well, the Grapevine is like that, too. Written, edited, and illustrated by A.A. members from around the world, the Grapevine, as A.A.’s international monthly journal, is uniquely positioned—a sort of roving photographer—to catalog these changes and to provide a series of “snapshots” of the ever-expanding and ever-evolving A.A. family. With newcomers finding their way to A.A. meetings all over the world in increasing numbers, bringing with them the values and perceptions of their own particular generation, culture, or geography, the Fellowship continues to evolve and grow, and month after month, without fail, the Grapevine adds yet another snapshot to the Fellowship’s family photo album.

Founded in 1944, principally as a local newsletter aimed at enhancing communication between groups in the New York metropolitan area, the Grapevine soon caught on nationally and was adopted by the A.A. General Service Board. As Bill W. expressed it in a 1946 letter, “the Grapevine will be the voice of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. Its editors and staff will be primarily accountable to the A.A. movement as a whole. . . . Within the bounds of friendliness and good taste, the Grapevine will enjoy perfect freedom of speech on all matters directly pertaining to Alcoholics Anonymous. . . . Like the Alcoholics Anonymous movement it is to mirror, there will be but one central purpose: The Grapevine will try to carry the A.A. message to alcoholics and practice the A.A. principles in all its affairs.”

The A.A. Grapevine is the centerpiece of the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., which also makes available reprints of Grapevine articles in book and audio cassette form. It is one of the two operating entities of the General Service Board, with a board of directors, staff, and financial operation separate from that of A.A. World Services, Inc. Unlike A.A.W.S., whose principal service responsibilities revolve around operation of the General Service Office and include the development, production and distribution of A.A.’s Conference-approved literature, the Grapevine does not accept group contributions. While the Grapevine does have a small donation fund

whereby A.A. members who are unable to purchase subscriptions—prisoners, hospitalized members, etc.—may receive them on a limited basis, by virtue of its corporate charter, the Grapevine cannot use contributions from A.A. groups to cover operating expenses.

Paradoxically, from its beginnings, while the Grapevine has had most of the same expenses as commercial publishing companies (paper, printing, distribution costs, etc.), it has had very few of the corresponding sources of revenue that non-A.A. publishers have. Foremost on this list is the fact that the Grapevine does not promote itself or accept advertising—a powerful source of income for nearly all commercial magazines. The Grapevine also has no opinion on outside issues, and makes no political (or other) endorsements which might generate funds. And, because of A.A.’s anonymity Traditions, the Grapevine can’t even pump up circulation and sales with a few “inside scoops” on well-known personalities. Nevertheless, Grapevine circulation has continued to climb steadily, sometimes in unpredictable fits and starts, yet always in tune with the slogan, “Progress, not perfection.”

Paid circulation and finances, however, are not the



sum total of what the Grapevine is all about. The spirit of the Grapevine and its central purpose, as outlined by Bill W., is to carry the A.A. message. "Don't drink and go to meetings" is one of those golden A.A. nuggets that can apply to just about any situation or problem that might come up during a day's worth of sobriety. However, not everybody can get to a meeting, and even if you can, sometimes you need more. That's where A.A.'s "meeting in print" can come in handy, offering a lifeline between one suffering alcoholic and another, regardless of place and time.

Over the years, many readers have found the pocket-size magazine crucial in bridging the gap between treatment or correctional facilities and the A.A. program. For Loners living miles away from meetings, and for members who are homebound, disabled or incarcerated, it offers spiritual and emotional sustenance. As one member writes, "Despite attending several meetings a week, I could not stay sober and decided to leave A.A. for good. But my Grapevine kept coming and I'd read it from cover to cover, often smiling through my tears in spite of myself. During four months of self-imposed isolation, the Grapevine kept that spark of willingness alive and finally led me back into the Fellowship." Throughout the U.S. and Canada, A.A. service committees gather up old Grapevines and carry them into jails, hospitals, treatment centers, and doctor's offices, regardless of the recipient's ability to pay, and these magazines serve as Twelfth Step emissaries par excellence.

Throughout 1992, the Grapevine will reprint Bill W.'s series on the Twelve Traditions written in the late 1940s, featuring one Tradition a month. In addition to Bill's historical articles, each Tradition will be further amplified by at least one current article dealing with the application of each Tradition in today's world. There will also be special issues on oldtimers, the A.A. Preamble, and anonymity. Young people in A.A. will receive particular attention, as will alcoholism as a three-fold illness and "A.A. Around the World."

As the result of an Advisory Action of the 1991 General Service Conference, the Grapevine now carries a monthly article in Spanish. There is a large and growing segment of Spanish A.A.s who are part of the service structure of the U.S. and Canada, and it is hoped that these articles will give them the voice they want and need.

So, if you haven't done so recently, why not take a look at an old Grapevine or pick up a current copy at your group's literature table. It's more than likely that before too long you'll come across something that's as pertinent today as it was back then. Maybe you'll find an article on the Steps or Traditions, or about carrying the A.A. message. And, as you look a little closer, you may just find yourself saying, "Yup, that's me!"

Services at G.S.O. A Day in the Life of the Group Services Coordinator

Responsibility for Group Services at the General Service Office is a little like being the old woman who lived in a shoe. Of all the staff assignments, this is one of the most diffused and demanding; and when you think that there are about 51,500 groups in the U.S./Canada, with more than a million members, it's not hard to understand why.

Veteran General Service Office staff member Susan U.—who in no way looks like the old woman in the shoe—often packs a week's work into a day on the Group Services Desk. Basically, her chief responsibility is to provide communication services to the Fellowship. This calls for her to don a number of different hats as producer, writer, editor, consultant, arbitrator, diplomat, librarian, financial expert and, yes, clairvoyant.

Among other things, the Group Services coordinator oversees the service material: the 15 A.A. Guidelines, Group Handbook, self-support materials and G.S.R kits. Most of this material is available in English, Spanish and French. Unlike A.A. Conference-approved literature, which results from Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference, service material reflects A.A. experience and information that is shared through G.S.O.

An exciting project on the front burner is production of the video cassette of the Big Book in American Sign Language. "For this I put on the producer's hat," Susan explains. "I work out a budget with A.A. World Services, find the 'talent,' draw up contracts, arrange for studio space and, hopefully, get everything to synchronize. It's been a learning experience all the way around—and that includes learning how to use the TDD (a telecommunications machine for the hearing impaired) here at the office."

In a typical week, Susan says, there also may be a meeting about the service files, which are continually updated, or group records. The New Group Information Form has been revised, she notes, and is working out well.

Another aspect of Group Services entails responsibility for producing the five A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S.; Western U.S.; Canadian; International; and Correctional Facilities.

Then there are all the meetings to attend when you serve on the ad hoc Self-Support Committee and participate in Central Office/Intergroup Seminars. The Group Services coordinator further acts as a secretary of the trustees' Nominating Committee, which has had a busy season interviewing applicants for the position of general manager at G.S.O., and for successors to trustees about to rotate off the General Service Board.

"Maintaining one-on-one contact with other A.A.s is certainly the most rewarding part of my work," says Susan, who also tends to correspondence with A.A.s in the Northeast Region. "That, and representing G.S.O. at various meetings and Regional Forums, where I'm able to meet some of the wonderful A.A.s I write and talk to on the phone every day. They are what this assignment is all about."

In Spirit of Cooperation, A.A. Is Friendly with Our Twelve-Step Friends

Today when large numbers of people suffering a variety of problems other than alcoholism are being directed to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, causing confusion among our members and friends in other twelve-step groups alike, A.A.s in service are taking every opportunity to make our primary purpose clear.

For Fran P. of Spokane, Washington, a director of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. and a member of the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community, the first Twelve Step/Twelve Tradition Fellowships Conference, held in Phoenix, Arizona last June, presented just such an opportunity. Forty representatives of 16 organizations using adaptations of A.A.'s Twelve Step program gathered to share their experience, strength and hope in the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation. They included Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Co-Dependents Anonymous and Debtors Anonymous among others.

Tracing the "growing pains" of A.A.'s world service structure in his keynote talk, Fran described how our founders, with a little help from John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his friends, narrowly avoided the temptation to professionalize the Fellowship and so diffuse its goal. "Certainly," he stressed, "the major source of our strength through the years has been our singleness of purpose."

Noting that "many treatment facilities presently combine alcohol and drug addiction rehabilitation under 'substance abuse' or 'chemical dependency' programs," Fran said that "alcoholics along with nonalcoholics often are introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend meetings after they leave the rehab center. Our Traditions suggest, however, that while anyone is welcome to attend open meetings, only persons with a *drinking* problem may participate in closed meetings or become A.A. members."

In conclusion, Fran said: "Our history—first one alcoholic, then two, then a group, and finally a multi-

tude—reflects the singularity of our commitment as together we strive to solve our common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"We are happy to share this legacy with all our friends in the spirit of cooperation but not affiliation. We also welcome the opportunity to share our principles and methods with self-help groups—but only they can provide the ingredient essential to success: their members' common bond."

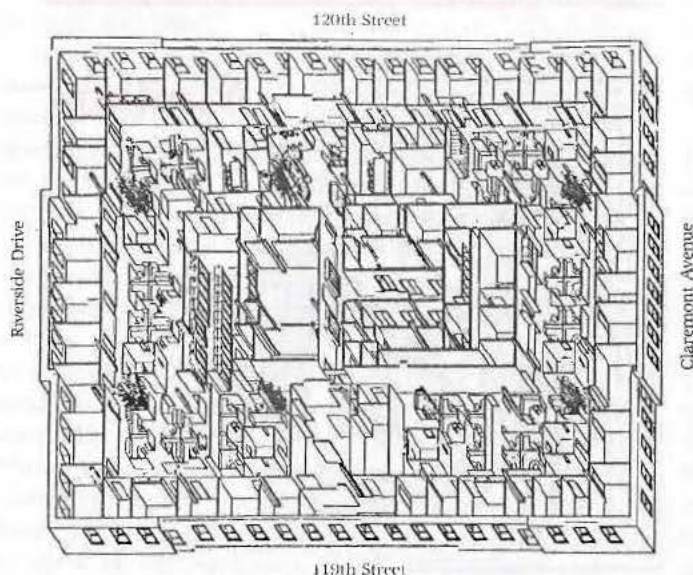


Mailbag

- Don N., of San Bernadino, California, writes that he loves to read *Box 4-5-9*. Referring to an article in the Aug./Sept. 1991 issue, "Oldtimers Share Their Concerns About Unity," he says: "I've been to meetings all over, from California to Alaska. Everywhere I hear the same things about how A.A. meetings are changing. We need the oldtimers to give more. When they stop, they may go on a dry drunk. I have to do my A.A. work by attending different meetings, working with newcomers and staying away from 'sloth.' I love life, thanks to A.A."
- In response to the same article, Jack H., of Sun City, California, writes: "I am in agreement that the terms 'alcoholic thinking' and 'alcoholic personality' are used to great excess and without understanding." Jack thinks more Big Book Study meetings—with more study and less discussion—would be helpful.
- The oldtimers article also brought a response from Walter H. in Mulgrave, Nova Scotia: "There are young people still coming through the A.A. doors who need the oldtimers . . . without their knowledge of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts, and how to find an answer to problems, personal or otherwise, how would A.A. grow? God has given me sobriety and millions of A.A. friends around the world. I hope I never get complacent."
- Clovis B., of Seffner, Florida, writing about the same article, said: "Although a member of A.A. for 17 years, I've never thought of myself as an oldtimer, but just one

whose imagination was fired by the chapter 'A Vision for You,' page 151 of the Big Book."

Countdown to G.S.O.'s Moving Day



*Axonometric View of 11th Floor
475 Riverside Drive*

Under the direction of Susan Dougherty and Jack Suben, of the design firm of Suben/Dougherty Partnership, there is much activity at 475 Riverside Drive—G.S.O.'s future home. On the 11th floor and part of the 10th, walls have come down and gone up again, electricians have installed wiring for air conditioning and computers, and telephone lines have been run. Now finishing touches (lighting, carpentry, painting and the like) are in progress.

Back at 468 Park Avenue South, John Kirwin, G.S.O.'s assistant controller and business administrator, is busy talking with moving companies, arranging for office and department signs, working out installation of plants, coffee stations and the myriad details so commonplace to a move of this kind.

Furniture is due to be delivered in mid-February, and installation of the cubicals, fabric panels and work stations will be done on-site and require two to three weeks.

On some as-yet-unknown Friday in mid-March, G.S.O. and Grapevine employees will pack up for the movers, who will complete the entire operation (computers included) over that weekend, and everything will be ready for business as usual Monday morning.

Designing G.S.O.'s new home has been "a wonderful project," says Susan Dougherty. "We have enjoyed a rapport with everyone and we found the work relationship just flowed. We have also been intrigued by all we have learned about Alcoholics Anonymous."

The next issue of *Box 4-5-9* should bring you another update and photographs of work in progress.

Service Veterans 'Pass It On' at Montreal Seminars

In Southeast Quebec, Canada, some trusted A.A. servants who have rotated out of office don't just fade away, taking their valuable experience with them. Thanks to an enterprising service training program sponsored jointly by the Montreal Intergroup and area general service office, they can and do "pass it on" to those who follow them into service.

"The goals of the seminars are at once practical and spiritual," explains area delegate Paul B. "By sharing their knowledge and experience, seasoned servants give newcomers a realistic, practical grasp of the structure and functioning of A.A. services at all levels. And by awakening in newcomers the spirit of service based on the A.A. Traditions, the seminars encourage them to serve. At the same time, they provide leadership in the responsible and democratic manner suggested by the Twelve Concepts for World Service."

Adds Jacques F., program coordinator and an appointed committee member serving on the trustees' Public Information Committee: "The seminars really do emphasize the spirituality of service. One participant told us, 'It's amazing! I've been exposed for the first time to the workings of A.A. as a whole. I feel as if I've found the hidden face of the moon.'"

Now two years old, the "service school," as it's affectionately known, "is addressed to all servants at the group, intergroup and area levels," according to Jacques, "but it deals particularly with the challenges faced by new group chairpersons, general service representatives and intergroup representatives."

Rotating panels of "professors"—most of them present and past general service and intergroup officers—provide monthly two-day sessions in French, as well as classes in English presently held four times a year. The weekend sessions are held in Montreal; some one-day classes also have been organized in outlying districts in response to local requests. All A.A. members are welcome to attend the training school sessions, which are free of charge.

Among the specific aims of each session: to give new

servants the necessary information that will enable them to better inform the conscience of their groups, committees and districts; to examine certain conventional notions and prejudices, particularly those concerning anonymity, nonprofessionalism, authority and responsibility, to encourage use of service literature as a reference tool and as spiritual nourishment; and to promote service sponsorship.

Each two-day program consists of a series of one-hour presentations, utilizing audiovisual aids and documentary material, on subjects ranging from the history of A.A. services to approaches to group problems. "It's all very exciting," comments Jacques. "People come from all over the area, and from other areas, too. Often their groups fund their traveling expenses. Once here, they discover the scope and importance of service. Just as they use the Steps for personal rehabilitation, they learn to use the Traditions for *social* rehabilitation. They realize that A.A. is truly a democratic society—from the autonomy of every single group on through to the General Service Conference."

With enrollment for each weekend session limited to about 25, the classes have been "sold out" almost since the beginning. In 1992, Jacques predicts, "we expect to increase the number of school sessions, refine and improve the course content, and expand the roster of available 'professors.'"

"We are so happy to have found a way to reinvolve our past trusted servants, especially the delegates and trustees, and to make their experience available to new generations of A.A.s. To a member, these practiced A.A. hands feel the same. And at the start of many training sessions, one or another of them is apt to share Bill W.'s reflections on learning in *As Bill Sees It* (p. 169): 'We all find that the time comes when we are not allowed to manage and conduct the functional affairs of groups, areas, or, in my case, A.A. as a whole. In the end we can only be worth as much as our spiritual example has justified. . . . I have become a pupil of the A.A. movement rather than the teacher I once thought I was.'"

Just What Is a Prudent Reserve?

Prudence. An old-fashioned word that *sounds* reliable. According to Webster it means "frugal" . . . "provident" . . . "shrewd in the management of practical affairs." And Bill W., who used the word a lot, told the First World Service Meeting in 1969 that "prudence will guarantee our effectiveness, safety and survival as nothing else can."

Most often in A.A. today, "prudent" is used to describe the desirable size of a reserve fund, whether at

the level of the group or of the General Service Office. It is generally agreed that while too large a reserve violates our Seventh Tradition of self-support, putting aside enough for a rainy day does not.

The 1977 General Service Conference redefined a prudent operating reserve for the General Service Office and the Grapevine as an amount that may equal, but should not exceed, the preceding year's combined operating expenses. Groups and other A.A. entities may keep anywhere from one to three months reserve, often depending on local needs.

Says Patti W., a past delegate from Utah and manager of the Central Office in Ogden: "Only our strongest groups have a reserve fund of more than \$200; most of them are just struggling to fulfill their current obligations and stay afloat."

At the Utah Central Office, she notes, "group contributions have dropped steeply, from \$12,000 in 1990 to \$8,000 in 1991. This, even though 92 percent of the groups contributed. The problem is that the volume is down, and we're feeling the pinch."

The depressed economy obviously deserves the lion's share of the blame, Patti concedes, "and there's not much we can do about that." However, she firmly believes in "changing the things we can," and elaborates on one of them: "If A.A.s were less tempted to spend money at forums, roundups and the like on 'drunk junk'—T-shirts, trinkets and other items imprinted with the A.A. logo—they'd have more to put in the group basket."

At a recent area assembly, she relates, "a non-A.A. group held a raffle and sold all kinds of memorabilia, from cups to coins. The result? Sales of A.A. literature went down the drain and we wound up with only \$50. In contrast, no drunk junk was sold at our October roundup and the literature did well, to the tune of \$200."

Southern California delegate Jackie J. estimates that as many as 80–85 percent of the groups in her area maintain a reserve. "Of those who do," she says, "most seem to average a set amount that will cover two-to-three-months' expenses at the most. It's the rent they worry about; once that's covered for a couple of months, they tend to apply the overage to essential A.A. services, generally using the 50-30-10-10 plan—50% to Central Office; 30% to the General Service Office; 10% to the area committee; and 10% to district."

Is this living dangerously? "No," says Jackie. "The groups know that in the advent of a shortfall, their members will dig deeper into their pockets and come up with the difference, so long as they know it's for a good cause."

However, she adds, "it may be that some groups are skating on thin ice. The recession is being felt in California. Rents are high, not to mention food and other commodities, but incomes are stagnant and increasingly nonexistent as the unemployment rate rises. Our members are big on self-support and continue to give, but

the contributions per capita have certainly fallen off.”

Both Jackie and Patti point out that each group must decide for itself what constitutes a realistic reserve fund. “A good way to determine this,” Jackie suggests, “is to arrive at an informed group conscience through a sharing session in addition to the usual business meeting—and maybe more than one, since the group tends to move slowly on sensitive issues.”

The important thing to remember, Patti adds, “is that A.A. groups are spiritual entities, not businesses. Our Tradition of self-support has served us well for more than 50 years. If we pay close attention to it, we’ll know the prudent thing to do.”

Deadline for Directory Information —March 15, 1992

Printouts corrected to show up-to-date group information and returned to G.S.O. by the areas, will be used to produce the 1992/93 A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian. These confidential directories list groups and contacts; delegates and trustees; central offices/intergroups; and special international contacts.

So, a reminder for area delegates: If you haven’t already returned your printouts, please remember that the *final* deadline for inclusion in the directories is March 15, 1992.

Treatment Facilities

‘High Tech’ Approach Is Strictly Personal In Western Missouri

It’s just a questionnaire, and pretty short at that. But in Western Missouri, A.A.s have used it effectively to carry the message—before knowing the answers.

“A while back, we were long on confusion and short on unity,” explains Dave H. of Carthage, who chairs the District 12 Treatment Facility Committee. “We couldn’t keep a chairperson and our projects had come to a virtual standstill.

“Nature abhors a vacuum and, sure enough, some

individuals not involved in service would amble into a treatment center occasionally and say something like, ‘I’m Joe Blow and I’m a recovered alcoholic.’ Then, having established credentials, they’d spout their opinions on everything from the Big Book to drug abuse. Needless to say, that kind of behavior didn’t exactly endear A.A. to the treatment folks!”

It did light a fire under the T.F. committee, according to Dave. “We realized things had gotten out of hand and we’d have to pull together.” As part of a new, galvanized approach, the members developed a simple six-part, multiple-choice questionnaire that asked such questions as: “Is Alcoholics Anonymous currently providing services for your facility?”; “How would you rate the persons representing A.A. in your facility?”; and “If your facility is not currently receiving any of our services, how can we help you?”

Now comes the important part. The members didn’t just mail, fax or access the questionnaires and wait for replies to drift back. They hand-carried the form into the facilities last summer and “surveyed” the administrators in person.

“Those people were so excited,” Dave reports. “Nobody had ever before walked in and asked, ‘What can we do for you?’ It was always the other way around.”

The T.F. committee is presently revising its questionnaire in anticipation of another “on-the-spot” survey. “We think we’ve made a lot of progress,” Dave observes. “We’ve been able to put literature and literature racks in the treatment facilities and take some meetings inside regularly. So we’re not really looking for answers as such to the questionnaire—we just want to keep communicating the A.A. message.”

Correctional Facilities

Creative Funding Follows Spirit of Seventh Tradition

“Our problem is financial. We have limited means, yet the inmates are asking for literature. How can we raise the funds to buy what we need?”

This question has become a frequent refrain at all levels of service including the General Service Office, where more than 90 percent of the letters that cross the Correctional Facilities desk contain requests for free literature. In the spirit of A.A.’s Seventh Tradition of self-support, the search is on for financing approaches

that make practical as well as spiritual sense.

A number of area C.F. committees report success with "creative funding," which they gladly share. In Southeast Texas, for example, Martha W. reports that "a system of matching funds largely pays for literature going into our 17 area correctional facilities."

Martha, a past delegate, explains that "the Houston C.F. Committee functions as part of intergroup. At our annual conference, we have inmate speakers from the state prisons, then pass the basket. We collect about \$1,000, which intergroup matches. That gives us \$2,000 to work with."

From time to time, Martha notes, "the Houston Area C.F. Committee holds one-day workshops. These don't raise funds directly; but in orienting A.A.s to correctional facility work, they raise their consciousness to the urgent need for literature. This is important, because so many of our members have no idea of how widespread alcoholism in our jails and prisons is. When they do understand, they're more apt to help."

Martha notes that libraries in the area prison units are well-stocked and maintained by the district C.F. committees. "Individual A.A.s also contribute books, pamphlets and Grapevines," she adds. "I remember, for instance, when a former Class B (alcoholic) trustee personally sent a case of Big Books to a nearby prison. They were snapped up as fast as you can breathe."

Up in Kansas, according to Bill O'S., immediate past chairperson of the state C.F. committee, building the prison libraries also has been a priority. Even recently acquired Big Books and Twelve and Twelves, he notes, are dog-eared from use.

In Kansas, Bill explains, "we have a yearly sum of approximately \$1,000 that is allocated for literature. It's the biggest item in our budget but still meager. Last September we started placing yellow contribution cans at our meetings—a variation on the pink cans being used at groups in Colorado, California and elsewhere. It's a little early to tell, but these seem to be working well. As we tell our members, even the smallest contribution helps."

In Northeast Ohio, the area C.F. committee is covering its literature needs, thanks to in-depth membership support. Says chairperson Joan A., "we make our groups aware of the need through periodic appeals to 'dig deeper,' and they respond generously. My home group alone contributes about \$200 a year in four \$50 increments." In a sense, she says, "the Akron Intergroup, of which we're a part, has committed itself to being a bottomless pitcher. Intergroup sets aside \$100 at a time for the literature; when that's gone, it deposits another \$100 in the account. The icing on the cake has been provided by the area assembly, which recently voted to give each of its service committees \$200 annually toward expenses."

In the Tradition of self-support, Joan comments, "the

basket is passed at many of our prison meetings, but A.A.s inside have little money, and funds generated for the purchase of literature are as negligible as the need is great. However, our area membership responds very positively, knowing that 'but for the grace of God, there go I.'"

Martha W. agrees. At a Southeast Texas Area convention, she relates, a speaker inquired, "How many of you have ever been in prison?" About 100 people raised their hands. The speaker looked around. "How many of you *should* have been in prison?" he asked, and everyone in the crowded room stood up. "That," says Martha, "tells what our commitment is all about."

P.I.

A.A. Takes to the Air On Connecticut Radio

"Please call 777-7506 and join us for an open A.A. meeting on the air."

The program is Open Air New England, the A.A. guests are in place, and the calls are tumbling in from A.A. members, Al-Anons, friends and relatives of alcoholics, and other interested persons. "My boss has a problem with alcohol and I might have a little one too," says the first caller tentatively. "You've come to the right place," responds Connecticut P.I. chairperson Louise A., and the chemistry that she calls "magical" once again warms the small Hartford studio.

For the past two years, Louise, her husband Norm A. and several other A.A.s have participated in Connecticut Public Radio's regularly scheduled A.A. Meeting on the Air, which airs every six weeks from 4:00-5:00 p.m. "It all started," Louise relates, "when Faith Middleton, the nonalcoholic host of New England on the Air, sought volunteers to 'conduct a meeting' as a trial balloon. After a false start, it took off, and now we regard it as an important part of our P.I. effort."

There is no pre-prepared script. Typically, Louise shares aspects of her own recovery, then suggests a topic for discussion—anything from slips to sponsorship to anonymity and gratitude. Soon the phones are ringing, people are talking about sobriety, and, says Norm, "the studio takes on the feel of an A.A. meeting in a church basement."

Between them, Louise and Norm have more than 40 years of sobriety; both are past delegates and service veterans. But that doesn't guarantee that questions will be easy to answer. "One fellow who called was bombed

out of his mind," Norm recalls. "He said, 'Are you trying to tell me that on just two beers I'm an alcoholic?' I said I couldn't tell him that—only he could—and that all I could do was share my experience, strength and hope. I suggested he go to an A.A. meeting and then make up his mind."

Then there was the caller who said, "I'm addicted to drugs as well as alcohol and go to two Twelve Step programs. How does A.A. feel about that?" Norm replied, "A.A. has no opinion. If you're staying comfortably sober, that's the bottom line."

Louise tells of the day a caller reported, "There is a woman drunk in a doorway down the street. Can you do something?" At once, a general call went out over the air and, thanks to some attentive A.A.s, the woman was given appropriate assistance.

"We've known for some time that this program was a good thing," Louise says, "but it took a trip to the local hospital to really bring it home. Because of some numbness in my arm (that turned out to be a false alarm), I had to forsake my October radio interview for the emergency room. After the examination, the doctor gently chided me for making him and the attendant cardiologist miss their favorite show—the A.A. Meeting on the Air! I was completely nonplussed and delighted."

The program is so successful, Louise notes, that the principals of Open Air New England "have been seeking funding for more air time. Meanwhile, we are grateful for the opportunity to make this an ongoing P.I. commitment."

C.P.C.

Taking A.A. to Professionals Is A Labor of Love

Carrying the A.A. message to professionals where they congregate—at their meetings and conventions—requires organization, patience, money, and a lot of time and energy. But many committees on Cooperation With the Professional Community are finding their labors of love amply rewarded.

"Last fall," reports Pat M., chairperson of the Southern Minnesota Area C.P.C. Committee, "we exhibited at the 1991 International Convention of the American Correctional Association. For us, and for members of the area corrections committee, it was hard work, but we were proud to be able to extend the hand of A.A."

Using the portable C.P.C. Professional Exhibit maintained by the General Service Office, Pat and her fellow volunteers took turns at the booth over the three-day convention. "The 4' x 7' unit weighs only 50 pounds, case included, and is easy to handle," she notes. "The colors, Big Book blue and white, are attractive and eye-catching. We talked to many people, gave them literature, and dispelled some misconceptions of what A.A. is and isn't."

One afternoon, she relates, "a group of Hungarian visitors stopped by the booth. Amos Reed, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee and an authority in the corrections field, happened to be there. With the help of the interpreter, he explained in detail how the Fellowship works and suggested A.A. as a possible alternative to incarceration in the case of alcohol-related crimes. We then gave the gentlemen a copy of the Big Book and told them they could pick up a Hungarian translation from G.S.O. while in New York. They were amazed."

Gazing about the exhibit hall, Pat was saddened to see booth after booth featuring security locks, riot-control suits and electrical fence wire. "Everywhere I looked," she exclaims, "there were items designed to keep people inside our jails and prisons. In the midst of it all was A.A., which is interested only in helping the alcoholic offenders—and there are so many of them—get sober and out for good. Suddenly I realized how vital our presence there was."

Good Things Can Happen At Small Conferences

"I'm aware that A.A.s carry the message successfully to prestigious professional conventions," says Harry J., "but let's not overlook the smaller meetings. Many of these draw counselors and others who work up front with alcoholics at local schools, courts, mental-health centers and treatment facilities."

Harry, a member and past chairman of the Northern Virginia Intergroup C.P.C. Committee, bases his observation on experience. Recently he helped to staff an A.A. exhibit at what was billed facetiously as "The First Annual 'Unabashed' Networking Conference for Mental Health Professionals" in Annandale. "I was struck," he says, "by the heavy table traffic and sustained interest in the Fellowship. I'd say that half of the approximately 150 attendees stopped by to talk with us and pick up literature."

"These people generally do not enjoy high visibility at the big conventions; yet, it is important that we reach out to them wherever they are. When informed, they refer and guide more alcoholics into our program of recovery than we may realize. In fact, if they didn't exist, we'd have to invent them."

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.

February

- 1.2 — *Brawley, California*. Second Imperial Roundup. Write: Ch., 860 Brentwood, Holtville, CA 92250
- 6-9 — *Reno, Nevada*. 28th International Women's Conf. Write: Ch., 20184, Reno, NV 89515-0184
- 7-9 — *Dayton, Ohio*. East Central Past Delegate Conf. Write: Ch., Box 804, Troy, OH 45373
- 14-16 — *Little Rock, Arkansas*. Winter Holiday. Write: Ch., 7509 Cantrell Road, Suite 236, Little Rock, AR 72207
- 14-16 — *Greeley, Colorado*. 41st Stampede. Write: Ch., 2644 11th Ave. #D, Greeley, CO 80631
- 14-16 — *Louisville, Kentucky*. 41st State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 37137, Louisville, KY 40233-7137
- 14-16 — *Danvers, Massachusetts*. NERAASA '92. Write: Ch., Box 151, Brockton, MA 02403
- 14-16 — *Syracuse, New York*. Fifth Annual Salt City Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 871, Syracuse, NY 13205
- 14-16 — *Cincinnati, Ohio*. CINCYPAA 1992. Write: Ch., Box 19338, Cincinnati, OH 45219
- 14-16 — *Kings Island, Ohio*. Ninth S.W. Ohio Mini-Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12-653, Hamilton, OH 45012
- 14-16 — *El Paso, Texas*. 30th Annual Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 3115, El Paso, TX 79923
- 14-16 — *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. 20th Annual North Shore Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 91086, West Vancouver, BC V7V 3N3
- 14-16 — *Ostend, Belgium*. Third Intergroup 1 North Sea Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3, B.8000, Brugge 1 - Belgium
- 14-17 — *New Bedford, Massachusetts*. Third Annual S.E. Mass. Round-Up (sponsored by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box E-736, New Bedford, MA 02742-0736
- 21-23 — *Virginia Beach, Virginia*. Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 9332, Virginia Beach, VA 23450
- 22-23 — *Savannah, Georgia*. District 16-C Weekend Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 1333, Norcross, GA 30091
- 26-March 1 — *St. Simons Island, Georgia*. 30th Epworth-by-the-Sea. Write: Ch., Box 892, Statesboro, GA 30458
- 28-March 1 — *Anaheim, California*. Eighth Orange County Conv. Write: Ch., Box

- 28809, Santa Ana, CA 92799
- 28-March 1 — *Kansas City, Kansas*. 10th Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 28-March 1 — *Middleburg Heights, Ohio*. 17th Annual N.E. Ohio Mini-Conf. Write: Tr., 6615 Cleveland Rd. Lot E.4, Ravenna, OH 44266
- 28-March 1 — *Afton, Oklahoma*. 15th Four-State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2146, Joplin, MO 64804
- 28-March 1 — *Corpus Christi, Texas*. 38th Annual CBIA Jamboree. Write: Ch., Suite #44, 3833 S. Staples, Corpus Christi, TX 78411
- 28-March 1 — *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*. Great Lakes Regional CYPAA. Write: Ch., 2728 N. Maryland, Milwaukee, WI 53211

March

- 6-8 — *Gulf Shores, Alabama*. Eighth Annual District #19 Gulf Shores Jubilee. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536
- 6-8 — *Santa Cruz, California*. Fourth Annual Santa Cruz Young People's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3467, Santa Cruz, CA 95062
- 6-8 — *Portland, Oregon*. PRAASA. Write: Ch., Box 347, Portland, OR 97207
- 6-8 — *Providence, Rhode Island*. NERD '92. Write: Ch., Box 9342, Providence, RI 02940
- 6-8 — *Eau Claire, Wisconsin*. 33rd Anny Weekend - Alano Group 12. Write: Ch., Box 292, Eau Claire, WI 54702-0292
- 6-8 — *Victoria, British Columbia, Canada*. 41st Annual Rally. Write: Comm., Central Ofc., 8-2020 Douglas St., Victoria, BC V8T 4L1
- 12-15 — *Greenville, South Carolina*. 45th State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 85, Greenville, SC 29602
- 13-15 — *Sioux Falls, South Dakota*. Sioux

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

February (page 41): Old-timers; group conscience.

March (page 23): Working with young alcoholics; responsibility.

- Empire Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 182, Sioux Falls, SD 57101
- 13-15 — *Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*. WRAASA. Write: Ch., 661 Millbourne Road E., Edmonton, AB T6K 4N3
- 14-16 — *Victorville, California*. Eighth Annual High Desert Conv. Write: Ch., Box 141, Barstow, CA 92312
- 19-22 — *Miami Beach, Florida*. Florida Roundup '92 (sponsored by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 030237, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33303-0237
- 20-22 — *Omaha, Nebraska*. 12th Annual District 2 Mini-Conf. Write: Ch., Box 24925, Omaha, NE 68124
- 27-29 — *Goodyear, Arizona*. West Valley Roundup 2. Write: Ch., Box 1491, Surprise, AZ 85374
- 27-29 — *Monterey, California*. NCCAA 45th Annual Spring Conf. Write: Ch., 1046 Irving St., San Francisco, CA 94122-2290
- 27-29 — *Portland, Maine*. MCYPAA '92 Conference. Write: Ch., Box 7716, Portland, ME 04112
- 27-29 — *Cherry Hill, New Jersey*. 28th Annual Southern New Jersey General Service Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6, Clementon, NJ 08021

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on April, May or June events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by *February 10*, the calendar deadline for the April/May 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 — more events listed on reverse side

April

- 3-5 — *Springfield, Illinois*. Southern Illinois Area Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6222, Springfield, IL 62708
- 3-5 — *New Orleans, Louisiana*. Annual Deep South Conv. Write: Ch., 4041 Tulane Ave., New Orleans, LA 70119
- 3-5 — *Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada*. Southern Alberta Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 212, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Y5
- 10-12 — *Providence, Rhode Island*. 16th State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 9342, Providence, RI 02940
- 10-12 — *Superior, Wisconsin*. 47th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 996, Superior, WI 54880
- 17-19 — *Eureka Springs, Arkansas*. 16th District #1 Conv. Write: Sec., 1057 Hendrix St., Rogers, AR 72756
- 17-19 — *San Diego, California*. 15th San Diego Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 83689, San Diego, CA 92138-3689
- 17-19 — *Pretoria, Republic of South Africa*. South African Annual Conv. '92. Write: Ch., Convention 1992, Box 6508, Pretoria 0001, Republic of South Africa
- 24-26 — *Moline, Illinois*. 1992 NIA Spring Conf. Write: Ch., RR #3, Kewanee, IL 61443
- 24-26 — *Lincoln, Nebraska*. Spring Fling '92 Conf. Write: Ch., Box 30852, Lincoln, NE 68503
- 24-26 — *Minot, North Dakota*. First Annual 12 x 12 Seminar. Write: Ch., 700 16th Ave. S.W., Minot, ND 58701