

# BOX 4-5-9

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE OF A.A.

Vol. 21 No. 5

October-November 1976

## WORLD SERVICE MEETING CONVENES IN OCTOBER

Thirty-six delegates from five continents will gather in New York City for the biennial (fourth) A.A. World Service Meeting Oct. 7-9, the largest ever held.

Two delegates each, chosen by local general service boards, will represent Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Central America (Northern Zone), Central America (Southern Zone), Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and U.S./Canada. Brazil was not represented at the London meeting in 1974.

Delegates will be G.S.O.'s guests Saturday evening, Oct. 9, for the annual New York Intergroup banquet and dance saluting the 42nd anniversary of the sobriety of A.A.'s late co-founder Bill W., whose widow Lois will be present.

## LANGUAGE OF THE HEART HEARD ROUND THE WORLD

### Irish Invite English!

When the Ireland A.A. General Service Conference met in February, it invited observers from England. John M. and Bill S. attended. In addition to learning much about Irish A.A., they were able to share with the Irish some of the older A.A. experience in England.

### Rotation Illustrates Humility

"I am out of a job in A.A. at the moment," writes T. H. P., Auckland, New Zealand. "I turned down nomination for our General Service Board, as I felt others could  
(continued on p. 5)

## Price of Big Book Reduced, Discount on Pamphlets Improved

Reducing the price to A.A. groups of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" from \$5.75 to \$5.15 was one of several steps taken by the General Service Board to lower prices of A.A. literature, effective Sept. 15.

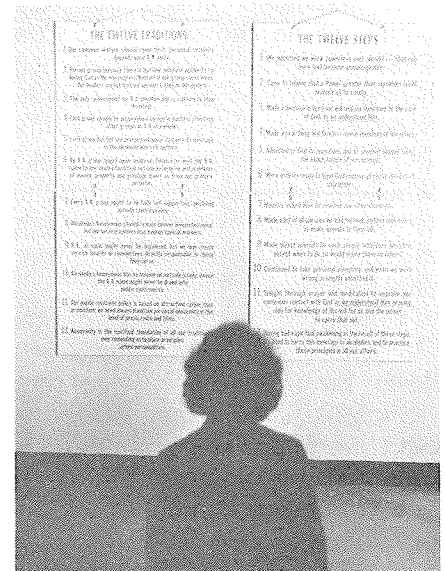
The price and discount benefits can be continued (or even increased) only if group contributions increase, A.A. World Services, Inc., emphasized.

In recommending to the board that the lower prices be tried one year, A.A.W.S. was following the 1976 General Service Conference recommendation that income from sales of literature be reduced, to draw attention to the fact that "the Conference structure and A.A. unity depend upon a solid base of group support."

The new prices will cut income from literature sales an estimated \$160,000 for 12 months. In its statement to the board, A.A.W.S. recognized that "interested group participation through contributions is necessary if the cost of literature to the Fellowship is to be reduced," as it now has been.

The quantity discount structure for both books and pamphlets has been liberalized, primarily to benefit smaller A.A. groups, committees, and offices.

The new Literature Order Form enclosed with this bulletin shows the reduced prices. Also enclosed is a new catalog of all G.S.O.-published material (in English —  
(continued on p. 6)



*New Traditions display joins the Steps on walls of meeting rooms.*

## TRADITIONS DISPLAY, '76 CONFERENCE REPORT, DIRECTORY NOW READY

A mammoth (6' x 3') hanging display of our Twelve Traditions — to match the popular Steps display — is now ready for A.A. meeting rooms. The Traditions are printed in black (red headline and numerals) on a white enamel background. The Masonite display folds into two 3' x 3' sections for carrying and storage, and has a heavy brass chain for hanging.

Including shipping charges in the U.S., each display costs \$25.00 (the pair for \$40.00). The Steps and Traditions wall displays are too large to go parcel post, and  
(continued on p. 6)

Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 468 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10016.

© Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976

Mail address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N. Y. 10017.

Subscriptions: Individual, \$1.50 per year; group, \$3.50 for each unit of 10 per yr. Check — made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc. — should accompany order.

## 1977 CONFERENCE PLANS UNDER WAY

A statement about the A.A. group, to be chosen by the Conference Agenda Committee, will be the theme of the 1977 General Service Conference, April 17-23, 1977. Several parts of the week's schedule are already set, according to the trustees' Conference Committee and Mary Ellen W., Conference secretary.

Following suggestions of the '76 Conference, the agenda will cover the importance of rotation (among A.A. "servants") throughout the Fellowship, communication and cooperation among all levels of service, the importance of the alternate in A.A. service positions, the Grapevine, A.A. directories, and the Conference Charter and Warranties.

Agenda suggestions from delegates, G.S.R.'s, and D.C.M.'s should reach G.S.O. by October 1, according to a 1976 Conference Advisory Action.

A workshop on the A.A. group will have no specific questions to be explored, but several related topics will be suggested.

Also resulting from suggestions of the 1976 Conference will be several schedule shifts. For example, the opening dinner and A.A. meeting will be Sunday evening, rather than the usual Monday. Conference committee meetings will be Monday and Tuesday, so reports to the full Conference can begin Thursday. The delegates' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening.

## HOW THEY WORK (BIG BOOK MEETINGS)

A.A. meetings based on study and discussion of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" have started in many places, perhaps partly because of a big front-page Box 4-5-9 story on them (Oct.-Nov. 1974).

Here is material on how two such meetings are conducted.

"At first, I had my doubts about such a meeting," writes Ed S., Hamilton, Ont. "But attendance is as high as 40. We start to read, each person taking a paragraph in turn, until someone interrupts and wants something discussed or wants to share an experience.

"It is real sharing," says Ed. "We are proud of our group, and I am grateful for its existence. It has taken me back to my first few days in A.A. and returned to me the enthusiasm for life I thought I had lost after two years of A.A. sobriety."

In Winnipeg, Man., some such meetings are more formally organized. Tom G. writes, "The Big Book is a text, and we study it. We take our instructions from the book, literally, without any interpretation or shading.

"We begin reading at the beginning of the book and do each Step as we come to it. We believe the Steps are meant to be done together in the group, and that is how we try to do them."

In this group, regular attendance is stressed; Tom says that anyone who misses two meetings gets left out of the discussion. "Recovery takes time and effort and a certain amount of perseverance. One member came with a broken leg in a cast."

The group runs a series of 22 meetings on the Big Book (up to page 164 in the second edition or the new third), then discusses the Twelve Traditions and the Third Legacy for about a month before starting the next book series. At another weekly meeting, the stories in the Big Book are discussed.

Other groups use different methods, and we'd love to hear yours if you have not written us about it.

## LONERS AREN'T LONELY

Vladimir has remained sober in Czechoslovakia since a three-month stay in an "antialcoholic" psychiatric clinic in 1974. He writes great letters, such as one about his first sober vacation with his family, and another thanking us for A.A. books. "The excellent 'Living Sober' belongs to my daily readings now," he said.

Not long ago, we put Vladimir in touch with Karol, another Loner in — yes — Czechoslovakia, but in another city.

Maybe they will write us some day with news like this from Woody C., Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico:

"I found a group 12 kilometers away. We talked to each other from the heart and mind, not verbally. Then those wonderful guys started to show up at my lonely Monday meetings. They can't afford a car, but hire a cab and pay \$3.00 (American) to get to my meeting, then cab back to their own group!

"I'm twelfth-stepping two local Americans," Woody says, "and have hopes."

Don F., Laona, Wis., has been alone with his Higher Power in the north Wisconsin forests since 1960. Five groups he started died. But now he is trying in Laona — and five showed up for the first meeting. "If the good Lord wants a group here, He'll see to it," Don writes serenely.

## STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

To learn which G.S.O. staff member handles group correspondence with your area, check the enclosed assignment sheet. Biennial assignment rotation was last year, but a few job shifts have been made since the 1976 Conference.

## Central Office Corner

### JUST THREE CENTS A DAY

*This is the conclusion of a three-part article about money and A.A. by George M., Annandale, Va.*

Using the formula suggested last time for distribution of A.A. group collections (*after* group expenses are paid), we come up with the following suggestion of a year's contributions (*after* those to the group) for a conscientious A.A. member who wants to help keep *all* of A.A. self-supporting:

For the local intergroup	\$ 7.30
For the area general service committee	1.22
For G.S.O.	3.65
	<u>\$12.17</u>

This analysis proposes that each A.A. think of a dollar a month — less than a quarter each week — or about three cents daily:

Of course, many of us are flat broke and in the hole when we arrive at A.A. Never mind. Those of us sober long enough to get finances a bit in order often put in an extra buck or two to make up for that fact, just as someone else did for us.

### NEW A.A. LIFE FOR A TEXAN

Sober three and a half years, LaVerne P. learned she had to leave the good A.A. life she loved in Dallas and move to San Francisco. "I had a little trouble adjusting at first," she writes. "I seemed to have forgotten the Tradition of group autonomy, and I got my feathers ruffled. But I finally settled down and began to enjoy the meetings.

"Then I discovered general service! I found a place where I belonged, where I could do my part of service to the Fellowship in carrying the message and really be comfortable. I'm not good at working with 'wet drunks,' or at ease going into prisons and hospitals, although of course I do both when needed. But I'm really at home typing meeting minutes, reports, group listings, and information cards, mailing, recording data, even stamp-licking!

"Most important, I've learned how our Fellowship is put and stays together. I had been blithely floating up and down on one side of the triangle, never taking much notice of Unity and Service. But my circle is beginning to close around my triangle, and I feel the growth and strength those years in Northern California gave me. I am forever grateful. May I remain always teachable!" says LaVerne, who has just moved back to Dallas.

## G.S.R. Corner

## Trustee Corner

### THREE NEW TRUSTEES SOUGHT

Three A.A. trustees from the U.S. are to be named for four-year terms on the General Service Board at the 1977 General Service Conference in April in New York. Résumés of nominees must be received at G.S.O. by registered mail no later than Jan. 15, 1977.

Each U.S. area may elect a candidate for the general service trustee — U.S.A. vacancy, to succeed Margaret C., Agawam, Mass. Suggested procedures and résumé forms for elections have been sent to all U.S. Conference delegates and area committee officers.

Regional trustees are to be chosen from the East Central Region (Ill., Ind., Mich., Ohio, Wis.), succeeding Bruce W., Waukegan, Ill., and from the Southeast U.S. Region (Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Miss., N.C., P.R., S.C., Tenn., Va., W. Va.), succeeding Dave C., Raleigh, N.C.

For qualifications and details, see "How A.A. Chooses Its General Service Trustees" and "How A.A. Chooses Regional Trustees," pp. 98-102 in the 1975 "A.A. Service Manual," or write G.S.O.

### AN AREA CARRIES THE SERVICE MESSAGE

To let Utah A.A.'s know about the work of the area general service committee, a four-and-a-half page summary of its 1974-75 activity was prepared by Jess B. and distributed to all Utah groups, according to delegate Ike B. The review shows a wealth of loving A.A. service, carrying the message in many ways. For example:

- A judge in A.A. was produced to speak at the University of Utah School of Alcohol Studies in 1974.
- "Determined efforts should be made," the committee agreed, to make more use of the talents of women A.A.'s in Third Legacy work.
- Within just a few months, the committee treasury went from \$39.30 to \$898.83!
- The state hosted the Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly in 1975 — which was only Utah's second year in the Pacific Region.
- Area service meetings were held in various parts of the state, to make it easier for local G.S.R.'s to attend.
- \$50 worth of TV spot announcements about A.A. were bought for TV stations.
- An area service assembly was started.

## Delegate Corner

## A.C.T.S. HELPS ALBERTA EX-INMATES STAY SOBER

When "inside" A.A. members are released from correctional institutions, are they carefully sponsored to help them get a good start on "outside" sobriety?

An "Aftercare Temporary Sponsor" (A.C.T.S.) program is now working wonders in Alberta, and Cliff S., of Calgary, area institutions chairman, has sent us a nine-page report on how it works. The program has been approved by the Alberta assembly.

Cliff sends letters to A.A. institutions chairmen in all nearby communities, explaining the program. Those who get the letter are asked to send the name, a temporary address, and the release date of any A.A. who will return to Alberta. Then one of Cliff's committee members arranges for a temporary sponsor to get in immediate contact with the person being released. In return, if an inmate A.A. member being released from an Alberta facility is headed for some other Canadian province, the institutions committee of that province is asked to sign up a temporary sponsor locally.

Sponsors are not, of course, asked to furnish money, jobs, or housing — just the hand of A.A. friendship. Since the first few hours and days on the street are a turning point in the sobriety and life of an inmate A.A. member, it is critical for the released woman or man to be welcomed into a local A.A. group instantly.

"Inside" A.A. groups are thoroughly informed about the program, as are all correctional officials. It has long been known that this kind of A.A. sponsorship can drastically cut recidivism rates at correctional facilities, so administrators are mostly eager to see the A.C.T.S. program work.

Our congratulations to the Alberta Institutions Committee. If any reader wants information on this program, you may write

G.S.O., and we will forward your letter to Alberta.

## WHO IS A GOOD A.A.?

The Fresno *Pipeline*, newsletter of that city's central office, ran a dandy set of questions. Maybe members of your group would like to discuss them at a meeting some time. Here they are:

**Am I a good A.A. when . . .**

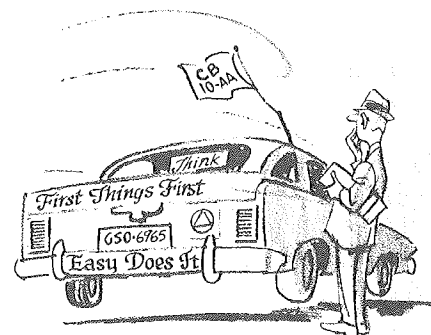
- I talk so long at meetings that others do not get a chance?
- I interrupt when others are trying to talk?
- I break Tradition Three and will not help a person who has a dual problem?
- I frighten an already frightened person with all the dangers in the world?
- I treat anyone as though I was the only one with a brain?
- I criticize people who have already been criticized all their lives?
- I throw an A.A. saying at someone instead of being an understanding friend?
- I forget that the person I dislike may have come a lot further up than I?
- I refuse sympathy or understanding to someone who wants and needs it?
- I criticize people holding offices that I couldn't handle nearly as well?
- I am envious of those doing the work that I am too lazy or scared to do?
- I talk so loud that no one else can have any peace of mind?
- I start a project and expect everyone else to feel the same way I do about it?
- I unload all my troubles on others, never giving them a chance to unload, too?
- I want attention when I say something, but don't listen to the other fellow?
- I quit counting my blessings and stop being thankful?

- I leave all the calling to the other person?
- I work so hard with someone who doesn't want A.A. that I am not ready to help someone who does?
- I think being kind ends with A.A. members only?
- I think that I am the only one who has problems, because I am the only one telling them?

The writer of the questions added, "Most of these are things I do or resent in someone else, so I'm not a good A.A.; but I am very grateful that God, through A.A., has helped me in spite of these defects."

## QUESTION ON A.A. FADS

Some A.A.'s are now flashing A.A. signals on their auto license plates and on Citizen Band (C.B.) radio. One California member has a car license bearing the initials "GSO." Another has her sobriety date, in numerals. A Texan gets his



mail at P.O. Drawer AA. At an informal weekly Coffee Break held by C.B. radio fans in Brooklyn, N.Y., code expressions are heard suggesting that one A.A. is looking for another. Some A.A.'s like to sport A.A. slogans on their auto bumpers; others wear jewelry bearing symbols or sayings suggestive of A.A.

Such fads are not to the taste of all A.A.'s, of course, and G.S.O. neither endorses nor opposes them. Do you?

## ARE THESE REALLY A.A. MEETINGS?

Many classes, programs, and therapy groups on alcoholism ask A.A. members to help out. These sessions are run by courts, mental health centers, and other institutions.

Members experienced at this have found it very important to explain to those present that such a class is *not* an A.A. meeting. It may be a meeting *about* Alcoholics Anonymous, but that is not the same thing as a regular A.A. meeting.

The difference is clear. When professionals conduct classes or group therapy under the auspices of an institution of any sort, and charge fees, that is *not* an A.A. meeting.

A.A. meetings are *not* under the auspices of any institution, are *not* run by professionals, are *free*, and are conducted solely by A.A. members — without pay.

In one state, problem drinkers pay to attend non-A.A. meetings run by a department of the state government, Lou G. writes us. That is a good example of what is *not* an A.A. meeting, though it probably does a lot of good in its own way.

A member in the West Central Region said a county health meeting for court referrals calls itself "First Step A.A.," but is not an A.A. group. It was suggested that experienced members have a friendly talk with those in charge and explain how such a misnomer can lessen the effectiveness of A.A. when the referrals are finally encouraged to attend regular A.A. meetings.

Such suggestions are among the many helpful tips you can find in A.A. Guidelines on Court, A.S.A.P. and Similar Programs, Guidelines for Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field, and the pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate," which give good A.A. experience on working with all kinds

of non-A.A. alcoholism programs and facilities.

## AUTHORITY SHOULD EQUAL RESPONSIBILITY

If you want to read a beautiful message on trust, read Bill's essay on the Tenth Concept. It says, "Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority . . . always well defined . . ."

That last is a simple idea. When people start to work together, it's good to figure out in advance exactly who is going to do what. If we don't, it's meeting time, and everybody thinks someone else is making the coffee. No coffee!

Or let's say the group secretary has responsibility for getting the cookies, and with the *responsibility* has the matching *authority* — to choose the cookies. But the limits of the responsibility must be clear, too — to function within a budget, for instance.

When delegated authority is operating well, it should not be constantly interfered with, Bill notes. The "group conscience" has the *ultimate* authority, and the "trusted servant" has the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other, and with careful definitions and mutual trust, we can attain a harmonious working balance.

## LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

(continued from p. 1)

benefit more from being on the board than I could benefit A.A. by being on it.

"I had quite an argument with myself about climbing down, considering my experiences at the World Service Meeting and everything. But I feel jobs in A.A. were made to go around. Since I have had one year out of a position in the last 12, a backseat for a while would do me good.

"I'm a willing horse if I'm wanted, but there are others more capable than I. There has to be room for them, but not if blokes like me keep hogging the limelight.

"There are various committees in mind for A.A. affairs, so I don't think it will be long before I'm doing something again."

## Gift of 280 Big Books

In 1975, Saskatchewan delegate Bill D. heard about a country overseas with a great need for Big Books — but also with a tremendous shortage of money. He told his home members.

About a year later came the good news: 280 copies of the Big Book were distributed to the groups and Loners of the nation that needed them so badly — the gift of Saskatchewan A.A.'s.

What can we say about such an expression of Canadians' A.A. love and willingness to carry the message to alcoholics they'll never meet? Big hearts are not rare in A.A., but such an act makes us swallow hard every time.

## First Anniversary in Israel

The Shalom Group in Jerusalem hosted a two-day convention to celebrate the first anniversary of Israeli A.A., Jay S. writes us. About 30 attended. Twice-weekly meetings are held in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, in both English and Hebrew.

Israeli A.A.'s are particularly grateful to Canadian A.A. members in the United Nations forces in the Middle East. The Canadians travel from Damascus and Ismailia, from the Sinai and the Golan Heights to Tel Aviv to share their experience.

## Fiji Loner Getting Company

As A.A. Loners everywhere did in A.A.'s earliest days (they had to — to stay sober), Syd W., Suva, Fiji, is twelfth-stepping to get an A.A. group going. Recently, he wrote that two new members had

(continued on p. 6)

## LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

(continued from p. 5)

made seven weeks and another, three, so perhaps by now Fiji meetings are a regular reality. Nonalcoholic Fr. Vince McCarthy is helping Syd.

Once before, a local group formed, largely sponsored by a New Zealand member, but when he returned home, meetings stopped. We hope Syd, who has returned to where his alcoholism began, has lots of good company soon.

### The Payoff – 15 Years Later

Only a few A.A.'s lived in one large Latin American city about 15 years ago, so member Bob was surprised to get a long-distance call from a nice old woman in Chicago. Her nephew, she said, was newly sober and en route to Bob's town. Would Bob help him? She had found Bob's name in an A.A. directory.

Bob called the nephew's hotel, but he had left for a nearby town. Bob's dad agreed to try to contact the young man during a business trip the next week. Too late. The guy had left the local hotel to reside in the local jail.

A month later, Bob got a call from a large local hospital. A man had walked in and collapsed, they said, and he had Bob's name and telephone number in his pocket. Bob and other A.A.'s visited him and took him to A.A. meetings until he left for Chicago a few weeks later. End of story?

Nope. Just before Bob visited us recently, he got another call from Chicago. Yep. It was that fellow, all right. He had just had his 15th A.A. anniversary and was calling Bob to thank him for that help so many years ago.

### New Deaf Group in London

Bill C., Pomona, N.Y., brought us this good news from London. Also, Ron F. wrote about it. On a visit, Bill learned the South Hamp-

stead Group has begun meetings for deaf alcoholics. An interpreter from the British Theatre for the Deaf helps. Fifteen attended the first session. Let us know if you want to contact the group.

### TOO MANY NEW MEMBERS?

Not long ago, many A.A.'s prayed that more and more alcoholics would get to A.A. Now, it's happening – in part because treatment centers send patients to A.A. meetings. This opens great opportunities for groups that grasp the challenge and figure out good ways of handling mass Twelfth Step work.

The situation first occurred in 1939 in Cleveland, Ohio, and any concerned A.A. can read how it was handled then on pp. 21-22 of "A.A. Comes of Age."

But more help is also available. In some areas, the institutions committee works with the committee on cooperation with the professional community (and local groups and central offices) to find original ways to twelfth-step droves of prospective new members, even reluctant ones.

A collection of experience on this subject has now been compiled at G.S.O., and any member may have a copy free.

### NOW READY

(continued from p. 1)

can be shipped to a street address only. Freight charges are added to orders from Canada.

The *Final Report* of the 1976 General Service Conference, with more illustrations than any previous issue, was mailed in July, and any member may have one for \$2.00 (50¢ cheaper than 1975). This publication (confidential) gives complete proceedings of the April session and G.S.O. financial data in its 60 pages.

The new 1976 *Eastern U.S. A.A.*

*Directory* was also mailed in July to every group listed in it. For the first time, it lists all A.A. central offices and answering services in the U.S. and Canada, to make it much easier for traveling A.A.'s to locate a meeting or a fellow member. Any member may have one for 75¢. The Western U.S. and Canada directories will follow, and in 1977 the new overseas and institutions editions will be issued. Directories are confidential – for A.A. use by members only.

### PRICE OF BIG BOOK

(continued from p. 1)

any member who asks may have a special order form for A.A. literature translated into other languages).

Pamphlets will now be available at a 5% discount on quantities of only 100, instead of 250, and the 5% discount for books will be available on 20 copies, instead of 40.

In addition, the amount of free literature G.S.O. gives away (to new groups, prisons, hospitals, and institutions and public information committees) is to be doubled – reaching a retail value of approximately \$76,000.

The lower prices and the reasons for them are explained in a statement sent to all G.S.R.'s to be read to their groups, and in a letter going to each group with its quarterly contribution statement.

### CLOSED MEETING TOPICS FROM THE GRAPEVINE

*October*: "Absolute Honesty" and happy sobriety; "Lust" as a wide-range defect; "Compliance," a long-term process; "Let the Bum Find Us" – or attract him to A.A. with public information?

*November*: "classic" issue, reprinting top articles on agnosticism, marital adjustments, value of G.S.O. to local A.A., quest for "comfortable sobriety."