

about A.A.

a newsletter for professionals and paraprofessionals



From: The Committee on
Professional Relations of
The General Service Board
of Alcoholics Anonymous
P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, N. Y. 10017

September, 1973

This Is Issue No. 2 . . .

. . . of this newsletter. We mailed No. 1 in August 1972. Soon, we began to receive many requests for it. Our mailing list more than doubled in four months.

We were somewhat surprised, but gratified, of course.

We publish only when we have something to communicate. We shall not mail on a schedule which requires publication even when we have nothing to say.

A.A. Is Growing Faster . . .

"In 1970, we saw an 8% growth rate over the previous year. In 1971, the rate was 12%; but in 1972, our size, in number of groups, increased 17% as compared to the previous year, and in estimated membership, 13%," Bob H., manager of the A.A. General Service Office (G.S.O.), New York, told the 1973 annual meeting of the National Council on Alcoholism in Washington, D.C.

This reflects only our own G.S.O. records, of course — the number of A.A. groups registered with us, and the estimated number of members based on data submitted to us by the groups. We feel the "groups" index is more accurate than the "members" one; but both show the same trend.

Other data available to us point in the same direction. For example, our group correspondence, number of literature orders, and subscriptions to *The A.A. Grapevine* (A.A.'s monthly magazine) show similar substantial increases.

Opinions may differ about exactly why A.A. suddenly started growing faster. But the General Service Office manager offered this:

"We at G.S.O. believe that cumulatively all the good work being done by N.C.A. and its affiliates, and by the Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America, as well as by the Federal government's efforts in the field of alcoholism, have had a major effect on A.A., and that is growth."

Agencies A.A. Cooperates With . . .

A.A. now provides at least 47,528 A.A. meetings annually in 914 hospitals and rehab centers, and 50,752 such sessions in 986 correctional facilities.

Thirty-three years ago, Dr. Russell E. Blaisdell invited A.A. members into Rockland State Hospital, Orangeburg, N.Y. In 1942, Warden Clinton T. Duffy of San Quentin Prison, California, invited A.A. to hold meetings there.

These beginnings have, in three decades, led to an estimated 28,955 A.A. members in rehabilitative centers and 34,977 in correctional facilities.

In addition, this year, members of the General Service Office staff or trustees of the A.A. General Service Board or members of the board's Professional Relations Committee have attended sessions of the Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America (A.D.P.A.), Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs, Canadian Foundation on Alcohol and Drug Dependencies, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (N.I.A.A.A.), Summer School of Alcohol Studies of Rutgers University, and the U.S. Jaycees Operation Threshold National Coordinating Council.

Many A.A. members have greeted with genuine satisfaction the birth and growth of all these organizations which do so much in the field of alcoholism beyond

the scope of A.A.'s primary purpose. As our late co-founder Bill W. put it some years ago, "In all probability, we shall never be able to touch more than a fair fraction of the alcohol problem in all its ramifications."

Eaton Visits the General Service Office . . .

Ken Eaton, deputy director of N.I.A.A.A., was a special guest at our eighth Long-Range Planning Committee meeting at G.S.O. in June. Dr. John L. Norris, nonalcoholic chairman of our G.S. Board, presided at the five-hour discussion, which was also attended by four other General Service Board trustees, one ex-trustee, and seven G.S.O. staff members.

Other 1973 visitors to G.S.O. have included: Col. W.D. Barry and Maj. John M. Squires, U.S. Army; Capt. James A. Baxter, U.S. Navy; Dr. Gerald Wall, nonalcoholic trustee of the New Zealand A.A. General Service Board; Leon Gamza, program coordinator for Ayerst Laboratories; and five young French psychiatrists touring U.S. mental health facilities.

What Is "the A.A. Attitude" Today Toward Professional Alcoholism Agencies and Programs? . . .

The nearest thing to a "representative assembly" of A.A. members in the U.S. and Canada is the annual six-day meeting of the General Service Conference of A.A. held in New York each April. First established in 1950, this is *the* continental A.A. event of the year.

It is attended by 90 delegates elected locally in the two countries. Conference members also include the G.S. Board trustees, G.S.O. and *Grapevine* staff members, and corporate directors of A.A. World Services, Inc., and the *Grapevine*.

The Conference structure operates continually through local groups' general service representatives, who meet quarterly, sometimes monthly, in each province and state. Area general service committees meet even more frequently.

Topics of movement-wide interest are the concern of all such sessions and make up the official agenda of the annual New York meeting. These include A.A. literature, financial support of the General Service Office, A.A. cooperation with institutions and other professional agencies, public information, etc.

The Conference has no formal authority over A.A. members, groups, or offices, but its influence is considerable. It is called "the conscience of the Fellowship" and "the voice of A.A."

Its quiet but persuasive advisory actions — sometimes agreed upon only after lengthy consultation — guide the General Service Board and Office and A.A. groups in movement-wide policy and activity.

At the 23rd annual meeting in 1973, the Conference adopted unanimously the following recommendation from its Professional Relations Committee:

" . . . [that] members of the Fellowship cooperate with [professional] agencies dealing with alcoholism, [by] welcoming referrals" and keeping in mind the primary purpose of A.A.

Also recommended were achievement of "good relations with the professional community at the local level" and "use of all means of communication available for communicating to A.A. members an understanding of professional [activities]."

A.A. Outreach Grows, Too . . .

At the local level, A.A. members frequently cooperate with various drinking-and-driving programs, schools, churches, social service agencies, news media, service clubs, industrial organizations, courts, etc.

And here at G.S.O., we have ongoing consultation with antipoverty programs, U.S. Civil Service, U.S. Postal Service, U.S. Department of Transportation, and many others.

New "public service announcements" about A.A. for TV and radio are now being distributed. And exhibits on A.A. are being seen this year at meetings of: (1) American Medical Association, (2) National Medical Association, (3) National Association of Black Social Workers, (4) American Academy of Family Physicians, (5) American Public Health Association, (6) American Orthopsychiatric Association, (7) American Personnel and Guidance Association, (8) Industrial Health Association, (9) National Conference on Social Welfare, (10) National Catholic Education Association, (11) National League for Nursing, (12) New England Hospital Assembly, among others.

Europe Again for Dr. John L. Norris . . .

Dr. John L. Norris, nonalcoholic chairman of our General Service Board, spent three weeks this spring at U.S. Air Force bases in Germany, England, Spain, and Greece, as guest of the U.S.A.F., holding seminars on alcoholism and A.A.

Last year he did a similar tour for the Army and also visited with Cardinal Wright, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy, in the Vatican. Subsequently, Dr. Norris and the Cardinal spent a week in Rochester, Minnesota, with recovered alcoholic priests in A.A.

Before a plenary session of the New York State Medical Society in February this year, Dr. Norris presented a paper entitled "The Alcoholic in Treatment — or A.A. and How to Use It."

At the same meeting, Dr. LeClair Bissell of Roosevelt Hospital (New York City) reported on alcoholism among physicians. She revealed some findings from a study done by herself, Barry Leach, and Barbara Goodman on 100 male alcoholic physicians, all of whom are A.A. members. The study is not yet published.

Do A.A.'s Stay Sober? . . .

As one example, the average length of abstinence (A.A.'s prefer "sobriety") of the 90 area delegates to our 1973 General Service Conference meeting was 11.8 years.

A.A. Calendar — One Year at a Time! . . .

1974 — Third A.A. World Service Meeting, October 1974, London, England. Delegates expected to represent General Service Boards and literature distribution centers in Australia, Belgium, Central America (Northern and Southern Zones), Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and U.S. and Canada.

1975 — weekend of July 4. Fortieth Anniversary International A.A. Convention, Denver, Colorado. Our sixth such event, for all A.A.'s and friends.

Case of the Overgrown Meeting . . .

. . . We got overcome!

"May we send some alcoholic patients to your A.A. group meeting tonight?" asked the hospital director, telephoning the secretary of the local A.A. group.

"Of course! We'd be delighted," said Sec'y.

At 8:00 p.m. the bus arrived at the church, and 60 passengers alighted. They found, in a small basement room, eight sober but flabbergasted A.A.'s and one coffee pot.

Everybody survived this particular crisis sober, but it took several long-distance telephone calls (involving both Washington, D.C., and G.S.O., here in New York) to work out more suitable arrangements. This sort of situation has occurred a number of times in different areas around the country. Now if only the A.A. secretary and the hospital representative had checked things out a little more thoroughly in advance . . .

A.A. Central Offices List Now Available . . .

Professional individuals or agencies who need to communicate with A.A. local offices can now obtain a new worldwide listing of A.A. central or intergroup offices or committees from G.S.O., and it is included with this mailing. Additional copies are available at no cost.

This listing makes referrals to A.A. possible in most communities where there is any substantial A.A. population.

Note: Some of the units listed are staffed only by part-time A.A. volunteers and maintain only mailing addresses or telephone-answering services, not actual office quarters. Nevertheless, this listing avoids the anonymity problems connected with the *A.A. World Directory*.

Communications: Woe . . . and Weal . . .

The alcoholism commission of a midwest state aroused the ire of many of the state's A.A. members by using an A.A. directory as a mailing list to reach A.A. groups.

(The directory is clearly marked "CONFIDENTIAL," "for the use of A.A. members only," and "not to be used as a mailing list.") *(continued)*

The commission meant well; it had a legitimate request to communicate to A.A. groups; but this fact almost got lost in the discussion.

We, here at G.S.O., tried to smooth things out and work out better communications. If you have a problem communicating with A.A. groups, we may be able to help you, too. We don't promise results; we promise effort.

How Far Do One Million Books Reach? . . .

After the millionth, ceremonially bound copy of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" went to the White House, someone figured out it would take a bookshelf almost 28 miles long to hold all the copies published — in English.

It is also available in seven other languages and in Braille, and portions are available in ten additional tongues.

New A.A. Publications . . .

"Came to Believe . . .": a collection of 75 A.A. members' versions, in their own words, of "a power greater than ourselves," ranging from orthodox religious views to humanistic and atheistic interpretations. Paperback, 122 pp., 5 3/8" x 8", \$1.25.

"Understanding Anonymity": seven tips on revealing one's own A.A. membership, plus an explanation of A.A.'s anonymity tradition. Pamphlet, 8 pp., 3 7/8" x 9", 5¢. (Sample enclosed.)

"The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous": brief biographies of the late William G. Wilson and Robert H. Smith, M.D. Photos. Leaflet, 3 7/8" x 9", 5¢.

"Profile of an A.A. Meeting": summarizes in pictographs findings of 1971 survey of some 7,000 A.A.

members in U.S. and Canada. Reveals male-female ratio, age groupings, occupations, lengths of sobriety, effectiveness (slips), etc. Leaflet, 3 7/8" x 9", 5¢.

A.A. Periodicals . . .

The A.A. Grapevine is our digest-size, 48-page monthly magazine, now 29 years old, with a 72,000-plus circulation. Written and edited entirely by A.A. members, its up-to-date articles show the wide range of A.A. experience with recovery and sober living. Besides cartoon and other humor features, it carries news of A.A., alcoholism news from non-A.A. sources, and occasional contribution from professional experts. Subscriptions: U.S., Canada — one year, \$3.50; two, \$6.50. Other countries — \$4.00 and \$7.50. Write: Grapevine, P.O. Box 1980, New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

From New York, each A.A. group is sent bimonthly a brief A.A. General Service Office newsletter, called *Box 4-5-9*. In addition, many regional A.A. offices, committees, or groups publish their own periodicals of local interest, and some distribute various leaflets, booklets, and other non-A.A. materials on alcoholism of special appeal to some segments or areas of A.A. membership.

Only books or pamphlets which carry the A.A. symbol below, however, represent the long-term opinion of the Fellowship broadly enough to merit the legend "A.A. Conference-approved" — thus most nearly reflecting the voice of the *entire* membership.

