

# BOX 4|5|9

News and Notes From the General Service Office of A.A.

VOL. 30, NO. 6 / HOLIDAY 1985



## Anonymity — A.A.'s Greatest Safeguard

Dear Friends,

“Tis the season to be jolly” — so goes the holiday song, reminding us every day of the many moods this season brings to many of us recovering alcoholics. We are reminded of the Christmas story of our own lives, with Christmas past, present and future. Thanks to our Higher Power and our program we have a newer image of ourselves and the reality of what this season is truly about.

There are those members who are joyous because their lives are filled with reunited family and friends; and there are those who feel alone but, really, never are. For all of us there is another song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” that brings a reminder of how we can live the spirit of Christmas via the twelve promises in the Big Book. These promises give us hope and joy, and fill us with the true spirit of the universe — love.

So, to all of you from all of us at the General Service Office, many warm, loving, joyous, happy and sober holiday greetings.

With A.A. love,

Susan  
Finnie  
Cheryl Ann  
Phyllis  
John  
Curtis  
Nimette  
Sparkle  
Lair  
Sarah  
Betty  
Eileen  
Lyla  
Bob



“People who symbolize causes and ideas fill a deep human need. We A.A.s don’t question that; but we do need to face the fact that being in the public eye is hazardous for us. By temperament, many of us tend to be irrepressible promoters, and the prospect of a society composed largely of promoters is frightening. Considering this explosive factor, we need to exercise self-restraint. It is far better to let our friends of the press carry our message for us at the public level.”

So spoke Diane O., Panel 35 delegate from the California Northern Coastal Area, in her candid discussion of “Anonymity at the Public Level” during the Fellowship’s 50th Anniversary International Convention. “We alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world,” she continued. “Fortified with the excuse that we are doing great things for A.A., we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors and money — the same implacable urges that, when frustrated, once caused us to drink.”

In sharing her own experience with anonymity, Diane recalled that countless hours of her childhood “in the wilds of California” were lived “in a fantasy world where I was always in the limelight, thrilling my audience of real-life ducks, rabbits, dog and cat, which my imagination turned into adoring fans.” As she grew older, she “identified with the heroines in every field of endeavor. One minute I was Margot Fonteyn executing a flawless *pas de deux* with Nureyev . . . the next, Maria Callas dazzling opera buffs the world over . . . or Esther Williams cutting a glamorous swath through the water. The theme was always the same: fame and acclaim.”

In her mid-30s, Diane told a large audience of A.A.s at the Convention, “I was poured into a treatment center, then came home to A.A. I quickly found service and loved every minute I spent as a group officer in front of meetings.” After taking personal inventory, at her sponsor’s urging, she recounted, “it became painfully clear that I still enjoyed the limelight too much.

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In the name of service, my ego had reared its ugly head, looking once again for praise and recognition.”

With her sponsor’s help, Diane “began to appreciate that the principles of anonymity — self-sacrifice and humility — reflect eternal spiritual values. They remind me that my personal ambition has no place in the Fellowship, that I am but one small part of a great whole. The unity and welfare of A.A. must come before my personal gain.”

In taking a close look at the Anonymity Tradition, Diane clarified areas of confusion for numerous Convention attendees. Some observations:

“A.A.s of worldly prominence sometimes believe that if they tell their public they are in the Fellowship, they will bring in many others as well. They therefore express the belief that our Anonymity Tradition is wrong — at least for them. They forget their principal aim of prestige and the worldly ambition that held sway during their drinking days. They do not realize that by breaking their anonymity at the public level, they are unconsciously pursuing those old and perilous illusions once more. Moreover, these members endanger our future when they present themselves as messiahs representing A.A. before the public. At this altitude, 100 percent anonymity is the only answer, for it truly is humility at work.

“Nothing matters more to the future welfare of A.A. than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communications. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination. Should we handle this great instrument badly, we shall be shattered by the ego manifestations of our own people. Against this peril, our anonymity before the public is our shield and our buckler.

“We A.A.s frequently speak before semi-public gatherings, letting people know that our own alcoholism is an illness we no longer fear to discuss. If we venture beyond this limit, however, we shall lose the principle of anonymity forever. If every A.A. felt free to publish his or her own name, picture and story, we would soon be launched upon a vast orgy of personal publicity and thus sow the seeds of our own destruction.

“Repeated self-serving anonymity breaks, instead of securing us more publicity, could severely damage the wonderful relationship we now enjoy with the press and public alike. We could instead wind up with a poor press and very little public confidence.”

Diane further noted that, in the Akron (Ohio) cemetery where co-founder Dr. Bob and his wife, Anne, lie, the simple headstone says not a word about Alcoholics Anonymous. “This final example of self-effacement,” she pointed out, “is of more permanent worth to A.A. than any great amount of public attention or any grand monument.”

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## A Lifetime of Devotion . . .

Dennis Manders is retiring, after 35¼ years of service to A.A. as controller and chief administrative officer of the General Service Office, assistant treasurer of the General Service Board, secretary of the trustees’ Finance Committee, and assistant secretary of the trustees’ Employee Retirement Committee.

As he sat in his eighth floor corner office a few weeks ago, gazing at the view up Park Avenue toward Grand Central Terminal, a photo of Bill W. looked down at him from the wall. It was inscribed, “To Dennis: In gratitude — Bill.” On a shelf-top reposed a set of first editions, first printings, of all the books Bill wrote, all autographed by the author. The inscription on the flyleaf of “The A.A. Way of Life” (now entitled “As Bill Sees It”) says it all: “Dear Dennis — For your lifetime devotion to us of A.A., my everlasting gratitude. In affection, Bill.”

Tall and white-haired, with an almost perpetual smile, Dennis is a nonalcoholic who enjoys an occasional martini. He is widely known to A.A.s in service — and especially, of course, to the A.A. staff members at G.S.O. They are accustomed to the admonition from the staff coordinator or general manager, “Get Dennis Manders’ okay on that.” As often as not the answer from Dennis would be, “That’s not budgeted,” or “That’s more than the authorized limit on our expenditures for non-budgeted items,” or “That will have to go to the A.A.W.S. Board,” or “. . . to the trustees’ Finance Committee.”

For as controller, Dennis was responsible for every cent taken in or spent at G.S.O. He knew A.A. inside

out, having worked over the decades with countless General Service Boards, 35 General Service Conferences, a long succession of staff members and no less than five general managers. He helped plan and manage every International Convention from the one in St. Louis in 1955 through the 50th Anniversary Convention in Montreal this year. If you were there, you may have seen him on the registration floor from early morning until 11:00 or 12:00 at night, helping people, making it all run smoothly, exhausted but unruffled.

He instituted important money-saving practices, such as A.A.'s purchasing its own paper by the carload for books and pamphlets, its own cloth for book covers, etc. He helped choose the location and space when the office moved, and negotiated G.S.O.'s very favorable lease on its present quarters. When the Conference told us to expand and refurbish in 1980, Dennis supervised the entire two-year project. In fact, his last task as "senior advisor" before his retirement was to determine space requirements for the current reorganization and anticipated growth of services to a growing Fellowship.

Perhaps most importantly to A.A. members, Dennis was a link to co-founder Bill and to A.A.'s early days. For example, he speaks of the board meeting when the Alcoholic Foundation resolved not to accept outside contributions!

Wise, funny, practical, philosophical — these are some of the words his associates use to describe Dennis. Owen "Bud" Flanagan, A.A.'s outside auditor who has served almost as long, adds bluntly, "Nobody remaining knows as much."

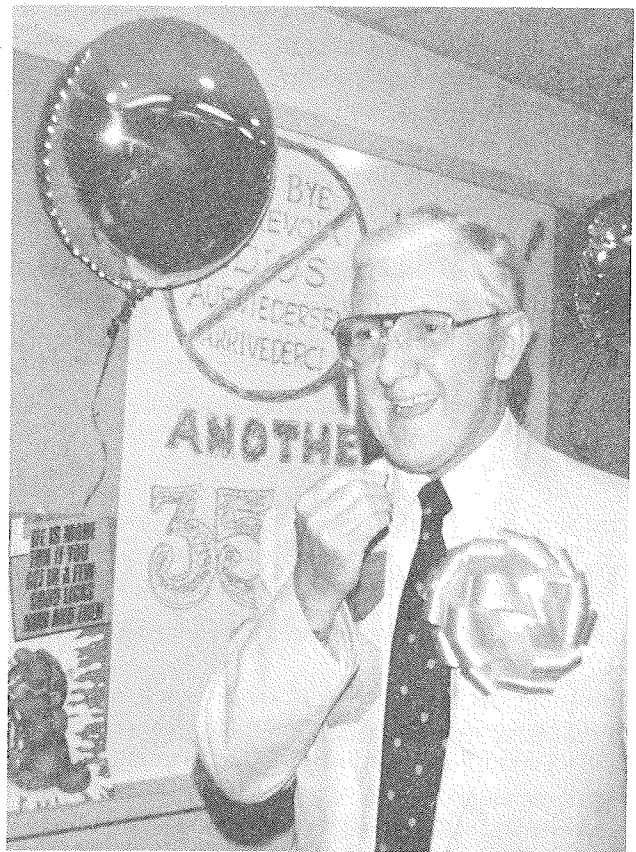
Manders demurs, because he is proud of having provided for his own replacement: Ed Gordon takes over as chief administrative officer and Charles Columbia as controller. Both are veterans of long service at G.S.O.

"I came to work for A.A. as a temporary job until something better opened up," explains Dennis. "That was in August 1950, and here I am over 35 years later. And I have enjoyed all of it, really. We are fortunate if we wake up in the morning and actually look forward to getting to work. That's the way it's been for me.

"When I came, there were only 17 people working at G.S.O. (compared to 100 today) including five A.A. staff (11 today), and Bill W. came in about two days a week. I didn't meet him right away because he was on the road stumping for support of the Conference idea."

Born in Liverpool, England, Dennis came to the U.S. at the age of three with his parents and older brother and sister. (A second brother was born here.) They settled on Long Island, where Dennis remained. At the outbreak of World War II, he joined the Army at age 18 — which also gave him immediate U.S. citizenship so he could serve overseas.

After the war, he worked for the American Chiclé Company, attending City College at night to learn ac-



counting. He moved to Oppenheim Collins department store for a job in retail accounting. There he met Dorris Carroll. They fell in love and decided to marry — but the store didn't permit married couples to work there. So Dorrie looked around for another position. When Dennis was with her at an employment agency one lunch hour, they asked if *he* was interested in a job opening with "a publishing company." The following day, Dennis was interviewed by Wilbur Smith, the outside auditor for Works Publishing Company (as A.A. World Services, Inc. was then called). "Wilbur later became my mentor," Dennis recalls. The day after, Dennis was interviewed by Hank G., an insurance broker who also served as volunteer manager of G.S.O. Not until the two of them went over to 141 E. 44 Street to tour the office did young Dennis (he was 26 years old) learn that the organization was Alcoholics Anonymous!

For the last 12½ years, the Manders have lived in West Babylon, Long Island. Their apartment faces on a lagoon edged with weeping willows and abounding with waterfowl: mallards, egrets and occasional gulls. The trade-off for this serenity is a three-and-a-half-hour daily commute. He rises at 4:45 a.m. to leave home at 6:20 for the station, which gets him to the office at about 8:00 a.m. — and a similar schedule back out at night. "No wonder I'm tired!" chuckles Dennis.

Now they are moving to Sevierville, Tennessee — “smack-dab in the middle of the Smoky Mountains” — to a beautiful retirement home nestled in a wooded glen beside a rushing trout stream. Dennis is a camera buff, a real artist with the lens. His favorite subjects are scenery, flowers, gentle wildlife — which are abundant around his new home. “But I won’t be getting off the A.A. running board completely, either,” he predicts. As evidence, he has been invited to attend the Southeast Region Present and Past Delegates Get-together next February. He will know almost everyone there.

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## The D.C.M.: A ‘Safety Valve’ During A.A.’s Rapid Growth

Until they become involved in service work beyond the group level, many A.A.s don’t realize how vital the district committee member (D.C.M.) is to the functioning of A.A. as a whole.

As leader of the district committee, made up of all the G.S.R.s in the district, the D.C.M. is informed about the group conscience of that district. As a member of the area committee, he or she is able to pass on this thinking to the area delegate and the area committee.

Thanks to the foresight of those who set up the A.A. service structure, the D.C.M. also acts as a safety valve for the rapidly growing Fellowship. Were it not for adding committee members to take care of new groups as A.A. grows, the General Service Conference might soon become unwieldy.

Says Ed M., a Kansas Area D.C.M., “The district should be such a size that the D.C.M. is able to keep in frequent touch with the groups in the district. A district is a geographical area comprised of a certain number of groups; in Kansas, we have 22. When the district grows so big that one D.C.M. can’t keep in touch with the groups, another district should be formed. If the district isn’t split, more committee members may be added, rather than more delegates.”

In the vast majority of areas, a district includes six to 20 groups. In metropolitan districts, the number will be 15 to 20. In suburban and rural districts, the number can be as small as five. When redistricting, approval of the groups within each district involved is essential. The proposed redistricting should be approved by the area assembly.

Myron G., a D.C.M. from Virginia, reports, “Several years ago, the area of Virginia became embroiled in an attempt to redistrict. The procedure was long, a true test of our code of love and tolerance; the plan was

eventually defeated. Out of this situation emerged an active ‘growth committee,’ consisting of voluntary members; all area committee members were invited to participate.”

One suggestion coming from this committee was for participating D.C.M.s to do a “district inventory,” based on the group inventory form in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group.” “Our area has had a positive reaction to these trial inventories,” says Myron. “We feel we’re on the right track. In fact, at a recent assembly, we elected to make our growth committee a permanent standing committee. One suggestion we’ve adopted as a result of inventorying ourselves: We will appoint newly elected D.C.M.s to serve on our standing committees, the way delegates are appointed to committees at the General Service Conference. We anticipate more growth from this service action that will help us to help suffering alcoholics.”

Ed M. acknowledges that becoming a D.C.M. “was all very scary for me. I had neither the experience nor length of sobriety that are suggested, and I didn’t know if I had the time or the energy to do a good job.” However, he adds, “fear has been replaced by gratitude and excitement, and people are very helpful. I know today that I’m not the boss, I’m a trusted servant.”

From Sparwood, British Columbia, outgoing D.C.M. Carol P. writes: “The biggest thing I’ve learned is that it’s okay to make a mistake, okay not to know everything. The most noticeable qualities I saw at assembly and D.C.M. meetings were love, tolerance, patience and forgiveness. Serving as a D.C.M. has been one of the greatest joys I’ve known in my nearly 13 years of sobriety.”

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## Area and Intergroup Newsletters

We A.A. members love to share, not only verbally — at group meetings, larger gatherings and over coffee — but in print, as well. Consequently, newsletters and other local publications abound in Alcoholics Anonymous.

At G.S.O., we’re glad to receive these publications and, by perusing them regularly, to learn what’s going on in the Fellowship all around the U.S. and Canada, and other countries, too. We maintain a list (free upon request, by writing G.S.O.) of the newsletters and bulletins that we know about — approximately 160. Probably more than half of the newsletters are published by central offices and intergroups; most of the remainder by area committees or districts. There are, however, a number of completely independent papers, put out

mostly by individuals, which are inspirational, entertaining, or helpful in nature, rather than carrying news.

Although most of their titles are straightforward, others reflect A.A.'s love of humor and "feel" for our Fellowship. For example, there's *The Grape Free Press* (Kansas Area Committee), *No Booze News* (both Mesa, Arizona and Baton Rouge, Louisiana), *Hello, Central* (Los Angeles, California Central Office) and the *Alki-Line* (Connecticut Area Committee).

Like many other activities in our determinedly anarchistic society, A.A. newsletters occasionally draw controversy. The reason may well be that the editors of the newsletters are often rather autonomous, free to write and edit as they please. Even if they are responsible to a central office/intergroup steering committee or area committee, supervision is seldom exercised on an issue-by-issue basis. (Incidentally, the editors of the A.A. Grapevine enjoy the same traditional editorial freedom.) So it is not surprising that letters sometimes reach G.S.O. disagreeing with a newsletter's content or policy — usually as being in violation of Traditions.

Obviously, G.S.O. has no authority over intergroup or area activities and has no power to enforce the Traditions in any case. But we can share our experience with the kinds of problems that beset A.A. newsletters.

One of the commonest causes of controversy is the coverage of non-A.A. entities, such as Al-Anon, local alcoholism councils, clubs and treatment centers. Readers quite understandably regard this as implying affiliation, contrary to the Sixth Tradition, and the G.S.O. staff often agrees. Similarly, a local A.A. publication may become involved in disagreements over the policy of a governmental alcoholism agency, hospital, etc. — this time running afoul of the Tenth Tradition.

Periodically, a brouhaha develops over a newsletter's use of full names. Indignant members ask if this isn't a violation of the Eleventh Tradition. This is not so easy to determine and ultimately depends on the audience the publication reaches. To facilitate correspondence on service matters, area newsletters may use full names, since they are for internal circulation only; intergroup newsletters are on safer ground using only first names and last initials. (As you may have noted, *this* newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*, uses only first names and last initials. So does the A.A. Grapevine. On the other hand, the *Final Conference Report* and the *A.A. Directories* print full names, but are marked CONFIDENTIAL.)

No photos of living A.A. members, *please!*

The A.A. circle and triangle logo is entirely permissible and appropriate on intergroup and area newsletters. After all, they *are* A.A. publications, and we are glad to have such publications quote from A.A. Conference-approved literature. All we *do* ask is that such quotations be followed by a credit line reading, "Reprinted by permission of A.A. World Services, Inc." This is solely to protect A.A.'s copyrights on your literature.

What is proper subject matter for newsletters? From our observation, the contents often include:

- Announcements of upcoming conventions, conferences, picnics, dances, etc., and following stories on these events.
- Reports of service committees, minutes of meetings, delegates' reports, etc.
- Material on the Traditions and A.A. history — often reprinted from A.A. books, pamphlets, *Box 4-5-9* or the Grapevine.
- Original articles on the A.A. way of life, the recovery program, or similar articles "lifted" (with credit) from other newsletters.
- Individual A.A. stories.
- Almost always, information on groups' contributions to the intergroup or area committee.
- Features such as recipes (!); jokes; A.A. axioms, folk wisdom and homilies; other one-liners; and reprinted cartoons about booze or Alcoholics Anonymous.

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## Deadline for Directory Information

Printouts corrected to show the latest group information are already being returned to G.S.O. by the areas, giving our discreet computer material to produce the 1986 A.A. *Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian.*

The confidential directories act as guides to groups and individuals; they also list special contacts for the deaf, doctors, lawyers, and more. For many an A.A. traveler in a strange city, the directory for that area can be a lifeline.

So, a reminder for area delegates: If you haven't already returned your printouts, please remember that the final deadline for receipt of this information at G.S.O. is *January 15, 1986.*

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## Groups Have Many Styles — One Message

How do A.A. groups manage to be there for the newcomer, help each other, and handle all there is to do without being tightly organized or "cut from the same wood" in how they function? One way is through sharing their experience and ideas, which is what happened at the 35th General Service Conference when delegates from the U.S. and Canada participated in discussions of group responsibilities beyond the Seventh Tradition.

In reporting some of the views expressed by delegates to the Conference during a presentation/discussion moderated by A.A.W.S. director Shepherd R. and in work-

shop sessions that followed, *Box 4-5-9* also includes experiences at the group level shared recently by group chairpersons from around the country.

Panel 34 delegate Christina H. (Northern Wisconsin/Upper Peninsula, Michigan) wondered aloud at the Conference “if you are like me in taking for granted that there will be a meeting place to go to” — chairs set up, coffee made, literature out and the meeting format in place. “Is not each of us responsible,” she asked, “for pitching in to help?”

Most of the group chairpersons we questioned feel that their group members are “good about lending a hand.” However, each group seems to handle the responsibility a little differently. Jim D. of Bessemer, Alabama, says his home group has a guidance committee that is responsible for the logistics of setting up the meetings that are held every night of the week. Members serve six months at a time. In Phoenix, Bill D. observes, “We appoint a fairly new member who has indicated seriousness about the program. It’s usually his or her first group responsibility.” And at Jill J.’s group in Carmel, Indiana, “Someone usually volunteers.” Ann B., of Fort Smith, Arkansas, says her home group also asks for volunteers, “and they often get stuck in the job a long time!”

Both Bill D. and Jill J. note an interesting trend: More and more churches in their areas now ban smoking altogether in their meeting rooms. “Some of our members are taking smoking breaks as well as coffee breaks,” Bill reports.

How do groups carry out their responsibility to the newcomer? In bringing this question before the Conference, Panel 34 delegate Jaime R. of Puerto Rico recalled that “during my early days at the San Juan group, I was never alone. The members were always ready to give the help I needed.”

Chairpersons Jim D. and Clarence S. of Stellarton, Nova Scotia, report that their groups generally maintain greeters at the door to welcome everybody and to identify the newcomer. “Quite a few groups in our area use the ‘chip system,’” Clarence adds, “awarding various colored chips for three, six and nine months of continuous sobriety; the one-year milestone is celebrated with a medallion.”

Says Ann B., “We have no hospitality committee but we should.” And Bill D., when asked how his area looks out for the newcomer at a meeting, commented, “Poorly.” Several groups do have a welcomer at the door, he adds, “but most newcomers are greeted by individual A.A.s. One common practice is for the chairperson of the meeting to ask if anyone present is new or from out of town. When I do the asking, I remind them that I was once new, too, and know how it feels.”

When it comes to focusing on addictions other than alcohol at meetings, groups vary in their posture. Some take a “live and let live” attitude and exercise no re-

straints; others are more concerned. “In our area,” observes Bill D., “a number of members feel we’re being taken by the influx of people hooked on drugs alone. The word is out at rehab facilities: ‘Identify yourself as an alcoholic at A.A. meetings.’ In my home group and others around the area, we say at the start of the meeting, ‘We know there are those among us who are dependent upon chemicals other than alcohol, but we ask that they restrict their comments to alcoholism.’”

It was pointed out during the Conference that, according to recent G.S.O. surveys, almost half of those coming to A.A. leave before three months’ time. What can groups do to keep them coming back? A long list of suggestions from the assembled delegates included: Make the newcomers feel welcome by getting them involved; make beginners meetings available; provide newcomer kits that contain meeting schedules, phone numbers and A.A. literature; and give the new member a Big Book if he or she can’t afford one.

Without exception, all chairpersons contacted said that A.A. Conference-approved literature is kept separate from other literature at their meetings. At Jim J.’s group in Carmel, Indiana, “program literature is the only kind we offer. It was a group-conscience decision.” Panel 34 delegate Richard R. of Providence, Rhode Island, put it another way at the Conference: “We neither endorse nor oppose any causes,” he pointed out, “and, therefore, we have no opinion on non-A.A.’s language of the heart and other approaches. What we offer comes from our A.A. experience, strength and hope as expressed by our group conscience and in keeping with our Traditions.”

From Bill D. comes a reply that’s more common than not. “In our part of Arizona,” he says, “there is a commitment of one group to another. We help each other out all the time.” Jill J. reports a similar state of affairs in Indianapolis, where “we have a strong intergroup. Members of various groups take turns providing meetings at the Women’s Prison, Youth Center for Boys, and the alcoholic/drug wing of our state hospital.”

Most of the group chairpersons contacted feel that their steering committees and individual G.S.R.s, intergroup representatives, and other officers keep the groups well informed. Several chairpersons note that the suggestions in the Group Handbook and the *A.A. Service Manual* also are helpful — and all cite the effectiveness of group inventorying.

The general consensus is that, no matter how well A.A. functions at the group level, there is always room for improvement. As Mary Ann B., Panel 34 delegate from New Mexico, told the General Service Conference, “Perhaps the time has come for us to use our moral independence, our self-directing freedom, to be more thoughtful of how our actions impinge on other groups — and to be more constructive and encouraging as we grow in A.A. unity, love and service.”

## Guidelines in Spanish Available

G.S.O. has recently translated two more Guidelines into Spanish: *Guidelines for Treatment Facilities Committees* and *Guidelines for Correctional Facilities Committees*. These Guidelines are based on the experiences of A.A.s throughout the United States and Canada who carry

our message into treatment centers and behind the walls. They would be helpful to the Hispanic A.A. community and may be ordered from G.S.O.: first ten (10) copies free, additional copies 10¢ each.

A.A.s who hold Spanish meetings in institutions are encouraged to register with G.S.O. so they can receive a service number and be placed on G.S.O.'s mailing list.



## Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

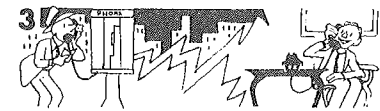
Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober — an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



**1** *Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season.* Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



**2** *Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers.* If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



**3** *Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time.* If a drinking urge or panic comes — postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



**4** *Find out about the special holiday*

*parties, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go.* If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



**5** *Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about.* Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



**6** *If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.*



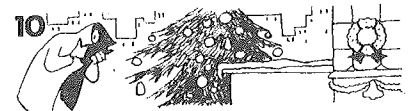
**7** *Don't think you have to stay late.* Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



**8** *Go to church.* Any church.



**9** *Don't sit around brooding.* Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



**10** *Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations.* Remember — "one day at a time."



**11** *Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy.* Maybe you cannot give material gifts — but this year, you can give love.



**12** *"Having had a . . ."* No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

# C.P.C.

## A.A. Reaches Out Through Traveling Exhibits

From the beginning, the Fellowship has sought new directions for cooperation with physicians, clergy, educators and other professionals who frequently are on the front line when it comes to helping the suffering alcoholic. One important avenue of cooperation is making A.A. literature exhibits available for display at meetings of appropriate professional groups.

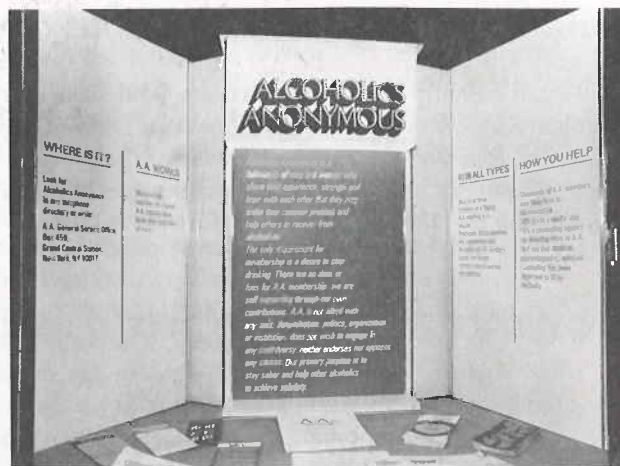
The first such "traveling exhibit" debuted in 1956 at a meeting of the Western Division of the American Public Health Association. According to one candid observer, it was "amateurish and shoddy."

The same observer is quick to praise the six attractive exhibits available today. The one A-unit exhibit is large and is put to work at large events such as meetings of the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association. The three B-units are medium-sized and used at the majority of conferences and conventions. The two C-units are table-top displays, used for smaller events. In all, the displays, which can be staffed or unstaffed, are used at no fewer than 26 national exhibits a year.

In 1984, the C.P.C. Committee reports, the exhibits were responsible for approximately 2,900 requests for A.A. literature and 2,500 requests to be put on the mailing list for *About A.A.*, the triannual newsletter for professionals. Throughout the year, many visitors to the exhibits later mail requests to G.S.O. for other literature as well.

Dissemination at the exhibits of A.A. literature (such as the pamphlet, "Problems Other Than Alcohol,") helps to set forth the position of the Fellowship on problem areas. One such, pinpointed by the C.P.C. Committee, has its origin in the increase of alcoholism and the proliferation of drug agencies, both government and voluntary. In many areas, groups have experienced an influx of potential members from court programs and treatment facilities. Also, since many treatment facilities today combine alcohol and drug addiction under the general heading of "substance abuse" or "chemical dependency," there tends to be confusion in the minds of recently discharged patients as to who qualifies for A.A. membership.

"Hopefully," the C.P.C. Committee report states, "as more A.A. members become active on their local C.P.C. committees, the confusion will be dispelled and we can



look forward to a continuing improvement in our relations with 'outside' agencies."

Some years ago, a number of A.A. members expressed concern about the exhibits, contending that they violated A.A.'s posture as a program of attraction rather than promotion. In 1973, a clarifying Advisory Action of the General Service Conference recommended that G.S.O. and members of the Fellowship "cooperate with agencies dealing with alcoholism" — welcoming referrals, being guided by applicable Traditions, and keeping in mind our primary purpose: the welfare of the alcoholic and his or her recovery. The Conference further reaffirmed that the furnishing of information about A.A. to professional organizations and their membership is not in violation of the Traditions.

## P.I.

### Minnesota P.I. Kit Helps Carry the Message

The Northern Minnesota P.I. Committee has developed a comprehensive "P.I. Kit—Speaking to Non-A.A. Groups," that consists of tapes and a literature album. Copies have been distributed to P.I. officers and committee members throughout the West Central Region.

Says P.I. committee chairperson Dennis B.: "We found that new people were misinformed when speaking about A.A. By putting together a kit, we hope to redress the situation. The idea is to get people thinking about the experience of carrying the message to non-A.A. groups and doing some prior planning."



One of the cassette tapes contains information that will "help those who are doing this type of Twelfth Step work," Dennis explains. There are suggestions about how to handle problem questions that might come up, as well as some suggested solutions. The other two tapes record P.I. luncheons held by the Northern Minnesota Area; they serve as examples of the kind of talk given to non-A.A. groups. Each piece of literature in the kit has been selected because of its proven effectiveness. The cost of the kit is \$20.

The area P.I. committee just completed another ambitious project: a "News Release Kit" that has been sent to the media. It includes G.S.O. press releases, along with items about local and area events. Additionally, in response to a local radio station's request for "newer" spots that differ from those currently available from G.S.O., the P.I. committee has developed a series of 60-second spots. These, says Dennis, are based on an article entitled "Myths and Misconceptions About Alcoholics Anonymous" that appeared in *About A.A.*, the Fellowship's newsletter for professionals. This series, he notes, "is being tested with the cooperation of the radio station. It is also being circulated in the districts and won't be released elsewhere without approval from our own assembly."

The P.I. committee is further involved in developing a video library of all A.A. films and filmstrips, to be made available to district committees. The video library also will loan out materials made for public use to various TV stations. "Rather than sending them expensive copies of videotape spots," Dennis points out, "we'll loan them storyboards (pictorial explanations of the spots) and ask them to schedule their showings. Only then will we send them the spots, and only for the time period needed."

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## Dallas Group Meets Needs of Hearing-Impaired

It all started early this year when a Dallas A.A. had a deaf granddaughter coming out of rehab, and there were no meetings available that could meet her special needs.

Concerned members went to work. Joan S-J. was instrumental in making a public information presentation to Dallas' Deaf Action Center, which agreed to provide meeting space and assistance. In June, the Pilot Group held its first meeting, which attracted 12 people from the center. "Enthusiasm and hope pervaded that room," Joan remembers, "and a sense of relief."

The Pilot Group meets at noon on Monday, Wednes-

day, and Friday; at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; and at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday. All hearing A.A.s are welcome to attend, and many do. Open meetings often draw the nonalcoholic deaf from the community; they seem glad to be there, sharing a "common bond" of another kind.

"What we need," says Don J., "are members who can sign. Once we have enough, we won't have to bring in non-A.A. signers from the Deaf Action Center. We also need signers — better still, interpreters who can "converse" and translate easily with their hands — to serve as sponsors.

At present, several A.A. signers either belong to the group or are available to it; Don is the only interpreter as yet and he worries about the communication gap. "When hearing alcoholics join A.A.," he points out, "we listen to the message of sobriety over and over, and ultimately it can penetrate our fog. But most deaf alcoholics in the Fellowship are denied the benefits of repetition."

Several hearing members of the group are taking signing classes. Their goal: to become proficient enough to communicate with deaf alcoholics on a one-to-one basis. A.A.s are still brought in from outside to chair many of the meetings but, in time, the members hope their group will be self-sustaining.

Sometimes, Don explains, the Deaf Action Center provides an interpreter if there is no A.A. member available to sign. Once a week, group members attend a larger speaker meeting in the Dallas area and so widen their circle of A.A. friends.

There is a special TTY (teletypewriter) number for deaf alcoholics to call and leave a message with the Pilot Group; a member will respond quickly. Further information about the group may be obtained by calling the Dallas A.A. Central Office: (214) 956-7333.

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## Correctional Facilities

### From the Mailbag

In Bucks County, Pennsylvania's local intergroup newsletter, *Interviews '85*, an A.A. tells of a weekend spent with 52 inmates of the Doylestown Prison and Bucks County Rehabilitation Center:

"Nine other A.A. members and I were a part of this

beautiful journey. The reaching and sharing were beyond my wildest dreams. It was by far the most beautiful gift one could ever receive, and I felt truly blessed to be a grateful member of this great Fellowship.

"During the A.A. meeting in the cafeteria, the prison actually came alive, bursting as it did with the human emotions being displayed by the different members who were sharing their experience, strength and hope. You could feel the crippling chains being removed.

"One day at a time, another year has elapsed since my last drink. I am one more year away (but only one drink away) from where I had become a physical and mental slave to alcohol — a slave who wasn't even aware of his slavery. Such is the cunning and the power of the disease of alcoholism.

"The longer I stay around the Fellowship, the more obvious it is to me that the single most powerful element operating in A.A. is love. It enveloped each of us as we first walked through the A.A. door, and it drew us back again and again. The truth is, nothing less powerful than love will usually suffice to overcome anything as powerful as alcohol addiction.

"In multiple ways, we became 'programmed' to drink. A physical compulsion and a mental obsession led to continual consumption of alcohol and, finally, deeply ingrained drinking habits took us to environments from which there seemed no escape. There was the war in our heads where fear clashed with defiance, grandiosity contended with childishness, and independence waged a losing battle.

"The real antidote isn't medicine; again, it's love. Surely, the only force the suffering alcoholic collides with when he musters the courage to go to his first meeting is love."

Don I., chairperson of the Tiny Enfield Group at Iowa State Penitentiary, urges active alcoholics to "seek help now. Don't wait until your problem finds you in prison like me. Had I gotten help sooner, I would not now be serving 35 years for something I don't recall doing in the first place. That is the tragedy of alcoholism!"

Don points out that he's "not cured by any means, but at least I am willing to face the fact that I do have a problem — one that I am doing something about now, not putting it off until I hit the streets."

Writing in *Hilltop View*, the bulletin of the Connecticut Correctional Center at Enfield, Robert L. says it "would be nice to think that incarcerated alcoholics are different from those on the street; but, when the major problem is alcohol, there are no differences. Alcohol makes prisoners of us all."

A.A. looks very difficult from behind bars, Bob continues, "but the fact is that it's a simple program for complex people. The rules are the same for everyone, whether you're from jail or Yale, from park bench or Park Place. A person with this commitment to living a free life, free of alcohol and drugs, has learned to live

all over again. That's what every con wants: another chance."

To walk into an A.A. meeting on the street is a step toward living free, Bob concludes. "But the first step is made by giving A.A. a try here, within the belly of the beast — just today, a day at a time."

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## As the Holidays Roll In A.A. Love Makes a Difference

"Loneliness is no stranger to those of us who suffer from alcoholism," says Bob G., correctional facilities chairperson for Southeast New York. "But there is a special kind of emptiness that is experienced by A.A. members getting sober inside prison walls, especially at the holiday season."

Bob urges A.A.s to write to their fellow members behind bars — "even a few lines, or a card." He remembers another Christmas some years ago when, as a member of the Institutions Correspondence Committee, "I always sent a cheerful Christmas card to whomever I was writing. One fellow wrote back, 'Your cards and letters at Christmas make all the difference between depression and joy.'"

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## Twelfth-Stepping Behind the Walls

"Administrators may be obstacles, but the real problem encountered in prison service work is the Fellowship itself," said Faye W. in his address on "A.A. in Prisons" at the West Central Regional Forum. Faye, Panel 34 delegate from Montana, feels the most essential ingredient in prison work is consistency in bringing meetings inside, and this is where the areas are falling short, mainly due to the difficulty in getting members interested in prison work. He stressed that we can visit with and talk to as many prison administrators as we like, but we will never truly be of service to the incarcerated alcoholic until we bring meetings inside on a regular basis.

"If you have never been involved with prison meetings try it," Faye urged. "And, you don't have to be an ex-con to have a message; anyone with good sobriety who has learned to rid themselves of selfishness and self-centeredness can't miss! But, most important of all, we need your help!"

# BOX 4|5|9 BULLETIN BOARD

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.'s — Via G.S.O.

HOLIDAY 1985

## Please Post Enclosed Cartoon Finance Flyer

Enclosed with this issue of *Box 4-5-9* is a revision of a contribution flyer that was created as a result of a 1985 Conference Advisory Action.

The original version was a blue flyer that inadvertently omitted reference to Area Committees as one of the activities supported by group contributions.

The new version was approved by the present and future chairpersons of the Conference Finance Committee.

## Calendar of Events

### December

- 6-8 — *Dallas, Texas*. Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Ch., Box 459, Grand Central Sta., New York, NY 10163
- 6-8 — *Whitney, Texas*. Young Minds in A.A. Conf. Write: Ch., 2020 Sunset Ct. N., League City, TX 77573
- 6-8 — *Sikeston, Missouri*. Fifth Annual "Five Corners" Conv. Write: Ch., 502 Jackson, Kennett, MO 63857
- 6-8 — *Fairbanks, Alaska*. Fourth Quaterly Assy. Write: Ch., Dist. #2 Assy., 1050 Blanket Blvd., North Pole, AK 99705
- 6-8 — *Charlotte, North Carolina*. First Annual FUNDamental FESStival. Write: Fun Fest, Box 668927, Charlotte, NC 28266
- 6-8 — *Jacksonville Beach, Florida*. Tenth Annual No. Florida/So. Georgia Gratitude Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 51134, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- 12-14 — *Barbados, West Indies*. 25th Anniv. Mini-Conv. Write: Ch., Box 858 E., Eagle Hall Post Office, St. Michael, Barbados, WI
- 24-25 — *Auburn, California*. Fellowship Alkathons. Write: Coord., Box 9174, Auburn, CA 95604
- 24-25 — *London, Ontario, Canada*. Sixth Annual Christmas Alkathon. Write: Ch., 503-309 Wellington Ct., London, Ont. N6C 4P2
- 24-25 — *Phoenix, Arizona*. Alkathon. Write: Salt River Valley Intergroup, 4602 N. 7th St., Phoenix, AZ 85014

- 24-25 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. '85-'86 Christmas Alkathon. Write: Secy., Alkathon, Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419
- 28-29 — *Neosho, Missouri*. Winter Holiday V. Write: Ch., Box 195, Cassville, MO 65625
- 30-Jan. 1 — *San Diego, California*. New Year's Alkathon. Write: Dist. 6, Area Assy., Box 34002, San Diego, CA 92103
- 31-Jan. 1 — *Auburn, California*. Fellowship Alkathons. Write: Coord., Box 9174, Auburn, CA 95604
- 31-Jan. 1 — *Minneapolis, Minnesota*. '85-'86 New Year's Alkathon. Write: Secy., Alkathon, Box 19194, Minneapolis, MN 55419

### January

- 3-5 — *South Padre Island, Texas*. 12th Annual Lower Rio Grande Valley Jamboree. Write: Jamboree, Box 5453, Brownsville, TX 78520
- 3-5 — *Dodge City, Kansas*. Southwest Kansas Conf. Write: Conf. Sec., 1502 First, Dodge City, KS 67801
- 10-12 — *Winston Salem, North Carolina*. Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619
- 10-12 — *Clarksburg, West Virginia*. Jackson's Mill Roundup. Write: Jackson's Mill Roundup, Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26301
- 10-12 — *Beaumont, Texas*. 24th Annual Southeast Area Conf. Write: Conf. Ch., 908 Boston, Nederland, TX 77705
- 11-12 — *Crystal River, Florida*. N. Florida Assy. First Quarter. Write: Secy., 2052 Euclid St., Jacksonville, FL 32210
- 16-19 — *Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*. 12th Annual Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 236, St. James P.O., Winnipeg, Man. R3J 3R4
- 17-19 — *West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. 14th Annual North Shore Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 91953, West Vancouver, B.C. V7V 4S4
- 17-19 — *Houma, Louisiana*. Bayou Land Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 2251, Houma, LA 70360
- 17-19 — *Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*. Sixth Annual Hilton Head Mid-winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
- 17-19 — *Holtville, California*. Fourth Annual Area Weekend. Write: Treas., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92243
- 17-19 — *Arlington, Virginia*. First Annual Delegate's Reunion. Write: Secy., 4733 W. Mediterranean Dr., Glendale, AZ 85301

- 17-19 — *Rosemont, Illinois*. Fourth Annual State Conf. for Young People in A.A. Write: ISCPAA, Box 2564, Des Plaines, IL 60017-2564
- 17-19 — *Holtville, California*. Fourth Annual Area Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92243
- 17-19 — *Midland, Texas*. 16th Annual Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3834, Midland, TX 79702
- 18-19 — *Olean, New York*. 14th Annual Day of Sharing. Write: Ch., 301 Coleman St., Apt. B, Olean, NY 14760
- 24-25 — *Blytheville, Arkansas*. 29th Annual Coon Supper. Write: Conv. Ch., Box 675, Blytheville, AR 72315
- 24-26 — *Kindersley, Saskatchewan, Canada*. 15th Annual Kindersley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1132, Kindersley, Sask. SOL 150
- 24-26 — *Esperance, Australia*. Esperance A.A. Group Conv. Write: Sec., Esperance Group, Box 330, Esperance 6450
- 31-Feb. 3 — *Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines*. Fourth Annual Conv. Write: Conv. Fund, Box 288, Dasmarias Village, Mail Center 3117, Makati, Metro Manila

### February

- 1 — *Chatham, Ontario, Canada*. St. Clair Dist. One Day Roundup. Write: Treas., Box 1032, Chatham, Ont., N7M 5K1
- 7-9 — *Auckland, New Zealand*. 23rd National Conv. Write: Ch., Box 56281, Dominion Rd., Auckland
- 7-9 — *North Little Rock, Arkansas*. Fourth Annual Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Conv. Treas., Box 55269, Little Rock, AK 72205
- 7-9 — *Overland Park, Kansas*. Fourth Annual Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Sunflower Roundup, Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222

## Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

*December* (page 17): Gratitude; discipline; keeping the meeting alive; holidays; oldtimers.

*January* (page 31): Living the Steps; Fourth Step; isolation; the revolving door.

Flip up this end of page — more events listed on reverse side

## February continued

- 7-9 — *Cathedral College, Queens, New York.* Second Annual Bridge Over Troubled Waters Young Peoples Closed Conv. Write: BOTWYPCC, 1930 Holland Ave., Bronx, NY 10462
- 13-16 — *St. Petersburg, Florida.* Second Annual Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 1682, St. Petersburg, FL 33731
- 13-16 — *Miami, Florida.* Third Annual Florida Roundup (sponsored by gay and lesbian A.A.s). Write: Ch., Box 381274, Miami, FL 33238
- 14-16 — *Limerick, Ireland.* Sixth Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Cunnikee, Rillonar, Ballysimon, County Limerick
- 14-16 — *Sacramento, California.* Ninth Annual Spring Fling. Write: Spring Fling, Box 19548, Sacramento, CA 95819-0548
- 14-16 — *Camrose, Alberta, Canada.* Sixth Annual Valentine Roundup. Write: Ch., 4610 - 61st St., Camrose, Alta. T4V 2H7
- 14-16 — *El Paso, Texas.* 24th Annual Jamboree. Write: Jamboree Secy., Box 1405, El Paso, TX 79948
- 14-16 — *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.* 22nd National Women's Conf. Write: NAAWC, Box 32057, Philadelphia, PA 19146
- 21-22 — *Virginia Beach, Virginia.* Tenth Anniversary Conf. Write: Registrar, Box 7261, Virginia Beach, VA 23458
- 21-23 — *Courtenay, British Columbia, Canada.* 35th Annual Comox Valley Rally. Write: Ch., Box 1337, Comox, B.C., V9N 7Z8
- 21-23 — *Lexington, Kentucky.* 35th State Conf. Write: Host Com., Box 23, Lexington, KY 40501
- 21-23 — *Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.* 19th Annual Roundup. Write: Roundup Ch., Central Office, 311-220 Third Ave. S., Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 1M1
- 28-Mar. 2 — *Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.* Eighth Annual Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., 1030 S. Park St., Apt. 1207, Halifax, N.S. B3H 2W3
- 28-Mar. 2 — *Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* 36th Annual Regional Conf. Write: Coord., Metro Toronto Intergroup, 272 Eglinton Ave. W., Toronto, Ont. M4R 1B2
- 28-Mar. 2 — *Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.* 18th Annual Nanaimo Rally. Write: Rally Ch., 779 Townsite Rd., Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 1L6

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## Planning a February, March, or April Event?

Please be sure to send your information on February, March, or April events in time to reach G.S.O. by *December 15*. This is the calendar deadline for the February-March issue of *Box 4-5-9* (to be mailed January 15).

Naturally, G.S.O. cannot check on all the information submitted. We must rely on local A.A.s to describe the events accurately.