

Stories Being Reviewed for a Possible Fourth Edition of A.A.'s Big Book

An Advisory Action of the 1997 General Service Conference recommended that "A draft Fourth Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, be developed and a progress report be brought to the 1998 Conference Literature Committee."

The Action repeated stipulations set forth in a 1995 Conference Advisory Action: namely that the first 164 pages—the Preface, the Forewords, the section entitled "The Doctor's Opinion," the chapter "Dr. Bob's Nightmare" and the Appendices "remain as is." Additionally, another '97 Action called for "a publication of stories dropped from the First, Second and Third Editions of the Big Book be developed, and a progress report brought to the 1998 Conference Literature Committee."

There is perhaps no one piece of literature that A.A. members feel as intensely caring about as the Big Book, often referred to as "A.A.'s basic text." Some can almost see themselves sitting in on what co-founder Bill W. referred to as the start of the "book yarn" in the living room of A.A.'s other founder, Dr. Bob, and his wife, Anne, in the late fall of 1937. In a talk Bill gave in Fort Worth, Texas, years later, he recalled, "Sitting there, Smitty [Dr. Bob] and I . . . began to count noses. How many people had stayed dry; in Akron, in New York, maybe a few in Cleveland? . . . When we added up the total, it sure was a handful of, I don't know, 35 or 40 maybe. But enough time had elapsed on enough really fatal cases of alcoholism, so that we grasped the importance of these small statistics."

For the first time, Bill continued, "Bob and I saw that this thing was going to succeed. . . . I never can forget the elation and ecstasy that seized us both." But adding up the three long years it had taken for "a couple of score of drunks"

to sober up, they realized there had been "an immense amount of failure." And they wondered, "How could we transmit our message to [alcoholics] and by what means . . . how could this light be a reflection and transmitted without being distorted and garbled?"

Then, he related, "we touched on the book. The group conscience consisted of 18 men good and true . . . and the good and true men, you could see right away, were damned skeptical about it all. Almost with one voice they chorused, 'Let's keep it simple—this is going to bring money into this thing, this is going to create a professional class. We'll all be ruined.' 'Well,' I countered, 'that's a very good argument. Lots to what you say . . . but even within gunshot of this very house, alcoholics are dying like flies. And if this thing doesn't move any faster than it has in the last three years, it may be another 10 before it gets to the outskirts of Akron [Ohio]. How in God's name are we going to carry this message to others? We've got to take some kind of chance. We can't keep it so simple it becomes an anarchy and gets complicated.'"

The rest is history. Launched on a shoestring, "the book" was published in 1939 under the title of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, although many other names had been suggested, including *One Hundred Men*, *The Empty Glass*, *The Dry Way* and *The Way Out*. According to an A.A. biography of Bill ("Pass It On," page 202), he later acknowledged, with a poke at his own egotism, that he "had even proposed calling the book *The B.W. Movement*." Interestingly another name, *One Hundred*

Men, fell by the wayside because of the objections of Florence R., then A.A.'s only female member. The title page, however, did describe the book as "The Story of How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism."



Left to right: First, Second and Third Editions.

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By the second printing, this had been changed to “Thousands of Men and Women,” and the Second and Third Editions say “... Many Thousands....”

Shortly after publication the new book was featured on the air by popular radio commentator Gabriel Heatter, and three days later A.A.’s founders lugged empty suitcases to their post office box in anticipation of a deluge of orders—only to find two lone inquiries. Initially sales lagged, and the young Fellowship found itself saddled with nearly 5,000 unsold books and large incidental debts. Then, in March 1941, the now-famous article about A.A. by Jack Alexander appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and sales soared. A second printing was scheduled almost immediately.

It is common knowledge that the initial draft of the Big Book was written by Bill W. when he was not quite four years sober. But he did not complete it alone. The book was a collective creation, since each chapter was “edited” by A.A. members in Akron and New York City—all of them sober less time than Bill. This cooperative effort, reflecting the shared experience and consensus of the small Fellowship as a whole, set in motion the group conscience process of decision-making that characterizes A.A. today.

Importantly, the book provided the name for a small movement that until then had been known simply as the Alcoholic Foundation, with but 100 members. Today the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has an estimated 2 million members in 146 countries, and its Twelve Step way of life serves as a model for Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous and many other fellowships.

It took 35 years to sell the first million copies of the Big Book. Now A.A. distributes more than a million every year in the English-language edition alone, and sales by the end of 1996 passed the 18-million mark. The 575-page volume is available in hard- and soft-cover, and the basic text has been published in 34 languages, including: Afrikaans, Arabic, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, Flemish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese,

Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and Swedish. A pocket-size Little Big Book, which duplicates everything in the Big Book except the Personal Stories of recovery told by members other than co-founders Dr. Bob and Bill, has been available since August 1993.

Over the years, three editions of the Big Book have been issued: the second in 1955 and the third in 1976. In the A.A. Archives there is a copy of a letter with Bill’s notes for the Second Edition, as well as some cautionary words from Bill: “The main purpose of the revision is to bring the story section up-to-date, to portray more adequately a cross-section of those who have found help. The audience for the book is people who are coming to Alcoholics Anonymous now. Those who are here have already heard our stories. Since the audience for the book is likely to be newcomers, anything from the point of view of content or style that might offend or alienate those who are not familiar with the program should be carefully eliminated.”

Bill further listed some Basic Editorial Approaches that stand up today, more than 40 years later. Among them:

“1. The desire to reproduce realistic stories should not be overemphasized to the extent of producing an unrealistic book.... There should be no shrinking from the job of editing ruthlessly if such editing will preserve the story, without the realism.

“2. Profanity, even when mild, rarely contributes as much as it detracts. It should be avoided.

“3. All minor geographic references should be avoided.

“4. The stories should be organized coherently, either in terms of chronology or of the specific points the individual is trying to make.

“5. ‘Selling’ or other ‘gimmicks’—editorial and otherwise—should be avoided. The story section is not a popular magazine. The appearance and approach should be straightforward, without frills.

“6. Humor should stem from the character of the storyteller and of the situations he describes, not be the result of gags.

“7. The end results of editing should be that the stories will be suitable for reading aloud—at closed meetings, etc.—without embarrassment.”

In all three editions of the Big Book issued to date, the basic text, contained in the first 11 chapters, has remained the same. The personal stories section has been altered or changed in some instances, though, to represent changing patterns in A.A.’s membership—for example, the increasing numbers of women, young people and those alcoholics who were also addicted to drugs. The effort to meet alcoholics where they are may be one reason why the Big Book is often called A.A.’s most effective sponsor.

Stories for Fourth Edition

The trustees' Literature Committee's Subcommittee on the Fourth Edition of the Big Book has begun its preliminary work on the project. Bill W. wrote in a 1954 letter to then chairman of the board (nonalcoholic) Bernard Smith, "The story section of the Big Book is far more important than most of us think. It is our principle means of identifying with the reader outside of A.A.; it is the written equivalent of hearing speakers at an A.A. meeting; it is our show window of results.... The main purpose of the revision is to bring the story section up to date, to portray more adequately a cross section of those who have found help...."

The Preface in the Big Book (page xii) clearly states the criteria for changes in the Big Book, "All changes made over the years in the Big Book (A.A. members' fond nickname for this volume) have had the same purpose: to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately, and thereby to reach more alcoholics."

In gathering stories to be considered for inclusion in a possible Fourth Edition, the subcommittee will use all possible A.A. Fellowship resources. The emphasis will be on A.A. stories which reflect a broad range of experience and diversity. The most important thing is to find good A.A. stories and then, among those, to identify some stories that reflect the experiences of folks not now well represented in the Big Book.

The committee will look at documents of up to 3,500 words, double spaced. The deadline for receipt of manuscripts is June 1, 1998. The words "Fourth Edition" should appear on the outside of the envelope and at the top of the first page. Your mailing address should also appear on the first page of the manuscript and you should keep a copy for your own files. Mail to: Literature Coordinator, General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Immediate G.S.O. Staff Opening

The General Service Office reports the early retirement of A.A. staff member Pat R. Interested A.A. members with at least six years of sobriety are asked to contact the Staff Coordinator for an application form.

Among the qualifications: active A.A. membership; good communication skills, both written and verbal; ability to work as part of a team; and availability to travel, and speak at, A.A. events.

International Convention Information

2000 International Convention Theme

"Pass It On—Into the 21st Century" was selected as the theme for our international celebration of A.A.'s 65th anniversary, June 29-July 2, 2000, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Thank you for responding to the call; we received 253 suggestions from A.A. members worldwide. The trustees' International Convention Committee considered each suggestion carefully and the General Service Board approved their selection at their August meeting. Thanks again for your very much appreciated input.

Other Convention Information

G.S.O. is beginning to receive requests for information on registration and housing for A.A.'s 65th Birthday party. Please do not write or call G.S.O., as this information will not be available for some time.

Registration/housing forms will be sent to all A.A. groups on our mailing list, as well as to intergroup/central offices, in September 1999. Notification of these procedures will appear in *Box 4-5-9* several times prior to September 1999, as well as information on other plans for this big celebration.

An A.A. Love Story

She has been sober for 35 years, and though physical ills have slowed her down, Madeline N. of Melbourne, Florida, is even more enamored of A.A. now than she was in her early cloud-nine days.

In an interview in the July *Unifier*, the newsletter of North Florida's Brevard Intergroup, in Melbourne, Madeline speaks nostalgically of the 33 years of marriage and "program" she shared with her husband, Al, noting that since August 1996 he has been "back in the big meeting in the sky with Bill W. and Dr. Bob." The story goes on to say that Al's sponsor was one of the original 100 who contributed to the writing of the Big Book.

Madeline is quick to acknowledge in the interview that "the honesty we learned in A.A. is what made our wonderful marriage last all the years we were sober together." Today, alone and plagued by health problems, she is convinced that "when your cross is heavy, God will help you carry it."

Back in the mid-'60s, Madeline shared the excitement of starting a meeting in The Bronx, New York, called the Friday Nighters, and even now remains in contact with one of the first members to sober up in that group. Noting that the slogans have "saved my life," she says she learned to take an inventory of both the good and the bad—something she highly recommends—and was genuinely surprised to come up with "a lot that was good." During the difficult times that inevitably crop up in life, the article concludes, "Madeline has always reminded herself that a drink won't help. On the contrary, she believes it would cause her to lose all the good in a heartbeat."

Mission to Cameroon: Bonjour, A.A.!

Although A.A. started in Johannesburg, South Africa, more than 50 years ago, it has been notably absent in other African countries, including the French-speaking, West African Republic of Cameroon—until this past May. That was when Jean Yves M., current World Service Meeting delegate for French-speaking Europe, and his alternate, Jean Francois L., embarked on a Twelfth Step mission to carry the A.A. message to Cameroon, they explain, "in response to a pressing request for assistance."

Jean Yves and Jean Francois flew on May 6 into Yaounde', the capital of Cameroon, "where we were met by our contact Donatien, and his wife, who had arranged an A.A. orientation session with the media. We distributed press kits and were able to arrange the airing of spot public service announcements we had brought with us."

The following day, in what they dubbed "a marathon of natural allies," the A.A.s "met the director of prisons, who told us that he considered himself an alcoholic. His candor surprised us in view of the fact that there is a great taboo and humiliation regarding alcoholism, which appears to be a part of everyday life. The 'incurables' are virtually anathema; sadly all too numerous, they tend to die young."

During a trip to the Public Health Center the two Jeans "learned from the chief physician that in this Cameroon province nearly 45 percent of those admitted to the hospital, for whatever reason, are alcoholics. In the underprivileged social strata particularly, alcohol plays a very destructive role." On a note of optimism, the visitors observe, "the chief physician and his colleagues knew about the Fellowship and 'its power' and were delighted to have the A.A. literature we gave them."

Covering a lot of territory, the French A.A.s spoke with the clergy at African Great Mass services and attended several receptions, where they encountered "enormous interest in A.A. and several requests for assis-

tance." They also conducted several public information meetings: one at a high school, with 81 teachers, to explain what A.A. is and how to get in touch with Al-Anon and Al-Ateen, and another at City Hall, attended by 31 officials. "Everywhere we went," they report, "interest in A.A. ran high."

A highlight of their stay was a trip to the local prison, where they were instrumental in forming an A.A. group. "At the end of an open meeting," the visitors report, "51 A.A. group members remained alone with us—under the surveillance of armed guards—and, with the permission of the director, handed us letters describing their problems and complaints." Several days later their visit to yet another prison saw a "second A.A. birth—a closed meeting with 23 members that ended with the formation of a group."

Jean Yves and Jean Francois point out that the success of their A.A. mission must ultimately be measured by the creation and growth of A.A. groups. "Today we do have a small toehold in Cameroon," they acknowledge, "but we're hardly home. It is too early to propose a detailed structure, but in practice we feel it is vital for us to: (1) reply in proper order to all who have contacted us; (2) maintain permanent contact with existing group committees; (3) encourage sharing in open or closed meetings and supply literature; (4) develop relations with multidisciplinary networks—health, law, penal, social, religious, and more; (5) include our Al-Anon and Al-Ateen friends; and (6) be prepared to lend our experience, support and presence wherever they are needed."

Unity in A.A.: Today's Legacy Is Tomorrow's Lifeline

The topic at the General Sharing Session was "A.A. Unity—Today and Tomorrow," and participants nodded in recognition of a truism as chairman of the Sharing Session, Class B (alcoholic) trustee Tom M., pointed out that unity in A.A., like the Steps and Traditions, is never static, always moving and ever in need of "revisiting." "Are we telling the A.A. unity story to the groups?" the Floridian asked. "Are there additional methods that we can use to better relate what A.A. unity means to our Fellowship in the fullest spiritual and practical sense?"

Gathered together in the Crowne Plaza-Manhattan Hotel on a hot August afternoon for this special time of board weekend—the quarterly meeting of A.A.'s General Service Board—the trustees, directors, appointed committee members and G.S.O. and GV staff listened as

A.A. Archives Scrapbooks



Montage of offset reproductions of various newspaper clippings about Alcoholics Anonymous. The second scrapbook, covering 1943, was published this year. (M-66); \$65.00. The first volume covers articles from 1939 to 1942. (M-42); \$75.00. Both spiral bound volumes measure 18" x 16 1/2".

G.S.O. staff member Richard B. offered a historical perspective of A.A. unity, including co-founder Bill W.'s vision of its long-term practical and spiritual aspects.

"I've only to go to Tradition One to remind myself of the significance Bill attached to unity," Richard said. "Stressing that the unity of A.A. 'is the most cherished quality our Society has,' Bill stated that 'our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or A.A. dies. Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the lifegiving grace of God; His gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their caves, alcoholics would reproach us and say, 'What a great thing A.A. might have been!'"

However, Richard noted, "I didn't learn about unity just from our literature or from being in the service structure. No, I learned through trial and error and some shaky first months around, but not *in*, A.A. that the oldtimers were right: I'd have to make an effort to pick up the tools that A.A. offered and try to live by some principles. There were warnings that told me, 'If you

don't, you're doomed.' So I joined a group, got a sponsor and started to work the Steps. Arriving at Step Twelve, I began to understand a paradox of A.A. that had baffled me—that after experiencing a spiritual awakening as a result of the Steps, I'd have to give away this gift in order to keep it. In other words, pass it on. Work with a drunk. If we don't hang together, we'll die alone. Carry the message. Don't say no to A.A. Make it the most important thing in your life, and you'll have a life."

Another speaker, Grapevine director Greg T. focused on the crucial role of unity in A.A.'s future. He suggested that members might foster unity more effectively through strengthened ties with their home groups and greater emphasis on communication, prayer and sponsorship. Of this last, he observed, "Unity is required to work with others effectively for the common welfare of all A.A.s, one drunk at a time. In service, as in recovery, we need empathetic sponsors who have been there before us, to keep us on the beam."

Focusing his attention on the home group, Greg said, "Called the 'heartbeat of A.A.,' the home group is the

deepest source and most tangible example to the individual member of A.A. unity. Importantly, accepting and following all Twelve Traditions is an almost-absolute guarantee that our unity will prevail into the 21st century. The litmus test is the spiritual state of each and every home group—the laboratory of personal sacrifice, ego deflation and spiritual growth.”

During the discussion period of the General Sharing Session, participants shared their thoughts on how A.A.s could best foster a unified fellowship of alcoholics in action. Among the suggestions:

- Protect our Fellowship—the Twelve Traditions are nonnegotiable.
- Continue to talk to each other, one-to-one and through new communication channels such as the Internet.
- Understand that a group has the right to be wrong.
- Convey to the newcomer that A.A. unity is the lifeline not just of the group but of A.A. in its entirety.

“Today,” Greg said at the conclusion of his talk, “we look with hope and confidence to the future of A.A. We draw strength from our groups, our literature and our shared experience. We look to each other for information, spiritual guidance and support. And we reaffirm that ‘our common welfare should come first.’ How then can we fail to be sober, unified and of help to our fellow alcoholics?”

Grapevine Reps— ‘Giving It Away’

Have you wondered what a Grapevine representative does? Or maybe thought about being one? And did you know that the GvR has a catbird seat in service? As the only contact between the group, intergroups, district or area and the Grapevine office, the GvR takes a lead in alerting members to the Twelfth Step value of this magazine written by alcoholics for alcoholics—and consequently gets a chance to move in ever-widening circles of A.A. service.

Writes district (8) chairman Mike M., of Shellburg, Indiana: “I feel privileged to help get the Grapevine into the hands of alcoholics who don’t have the physical freedom to go to a meeting whenever they wish. Recently groups and individuals have come forward to host subscriptions into local prisons, hospitals, treatment centers and other institutions. I feel as though hours could be spent, pen in hand, seeking words to illuminate the gratitude and love I have for the Grapevine, and how it continues to enhance my sobriety.”

The service post of GvR is hardly new; in fact, it is mentioned in A.A. literature dating back to 1953, and a



This pamphlet is the result of a 1997 General Service Conference Advisory Action for a pamphlet "...Providing basic information on the A.A. Grapevine magazine and its place in Alcoholics Anonymous..." Available from G.S.O. (P-52), 25 cents.

number of groups have had GvRs for the past 30-odd years. But it was in 1977 that the General Service Conference issued its first Advisory Action on the subject, recommending that “delegates be responsible for establishing area Grapevine committees, using the area and district structure to achieve the goal of a Grapevine representative in every group.” In subsequent Actions in the 1970s and ’80s, the Conference further recommended that Grapevine committees work with other service entities to increase the use of the Grapevine as a tool for carrying the A.A. message.

Only nine years younger than the Fellowship itself, the Grapevine was the brainchild of several New York members who in 1944 had the “crazy idea” of starting an area newsletter in order to foster “knowledge and understanding among groups.” After receiving a nod from A.A. co-founder Bill W., the six “ink-stained wretches,” as he affectionately dubbed them, managed—on a wing and prayer and lots of elbow grease in place of money—to put together the first eight-page, tabloid-size issue. The Grapevine caught on, held and burst its local seams; and by 1957, when he penned *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (page 31), Bill was calling it “our biggest and best means of communicating current A.A. thought and experience in staying sober, in hanging together, and in serving.”

Today’s Grapevine is a pocket-size, 64-page journal (sans ads of course, in the spirit of A.A.’s Seventh Tradition of self-support) that is distributed internationally. And July 1996 saw publication of the first issue of a Spanish-language edition of the Grapevine, *La Viña*, which has been welcomed by thousands of Spanish-speaking members throughout North and South America and Spain—some of them serving as RLVs (Representantes de La Viña). The six ink-stained wretches have multiplied into a staff of about 20 employees. They work under the aegis of the A.A. Grapevine, Inc.,

which is organizationally separate from A.A. World Services and the General Service Office, with its own board of directors, staff and financial operation. For many years the A.A. Grapevine has also produced books and audiocassettes which are anthologies of previously published material.

Group GvRs see to it that at meetings copies of the Grapevine are available and displayed, and show members how to use both the Grapevine and its spinoffs as tools of recovery at meetings, conferences and workshops. They may encourage the giving of Grapevine subscriptions to members who have achieved 90 days, or their first year, of sobriety . . . or suggest using a topic, brief quote or article from the magazine as the basis for sharing at discussion meetings. Among 80 ways on how best to use the Grapevine that were listed in the Fall 1996 issue of *The GvR News*, a quarterly newsletter published by the A.A. Grapevine: Give a copy of the Grapevine to your significant other, relatives and friends "because they're always asking you to explain A.A. to them"; "read the Grapevine instead of yelling at your boss, your mate, your kids or your dog"; read it "when you fall in love . . . when you fall out of love"; and read it "to keep your sense of humor," and to "remember that we're all part of a worldwide Fellowship of recovering alcoholics."

Almost from its beginnings, the Grapevine has been perceived, the way Bill W. put it, "as the monthly mirror of A.A. in action." Many a GvR comes to see the Grapevine as a family album, sort of a 3-D mirror that reflects the experiences of fellow alcoholics who have found sobriety in A.A. and in gratitude and hope are "giving it away." The GvR quickly understands that the Grapevine provides the opportunity for individual A.A.s to make their voices heard in a public forum. And the GvR is vital to the Grapevine's efforts to make sure those diverse voices go on being heard.

A.A.s in Japan Welcome Visitors to '98 Winter Olympics

Come February 1998, let the Games—and English-speaking A.A. meetings—begin! Groups and individual A.A. s in Japan are preparing to make A.A. fellowship readily available to athletes and visitors to the Winter Olympics, which will take place from February 7-22 in Nagano, in the heart of Japan, and neighboring venues.

Says Yukie Y., of Japan's General Service Office, who is fluent in English: "The Nagano District Service Committee is planning to set up a special meeting place

for our English-speaking guests. Additionally, some of the local groups expect to open their meetings to English-speaking visitors and are arranging to have interpreters on hand whenever possible.

Yukie notes that Nagano has a sister city in the United States—Clearwater, Florida—and says that "Clearwater will send a mission to Nagano during the Olympics to help the Nagano host committees." She adds that Hayashi, a former World Service Meeting delegate from Japan who speaks English, "is hoping to get assistance from some members of the mission."

Japan hosted 1964's Summer Olympics in Tokyo and the 1972 Winter Olympics in Sapporo, so it has been a long time between Games for the Land of the Rising Sun. "We welcome the exciting opportunity to be of service to our members and A.A.s from all over the world at the 1998 Winter Olympics," says Yukie. "We look forward to greeting them with A.A. love and fellowship."

A.A. in Japan started in 1948 with an English-speaking group formed in Tokyo by a U.S. soldier serving with the post-World War II occupation forces. But another 18 years went by before the first Japanese group was formed in 1965. Today there are more than 300 groups, approximately half of them located in the greater Tokyo area.

For more information you may contact: Japan General Service Office, c/o Tachibana Bldg., 9th Floor, 2-23-3 Ikebukuro Toshima-Ku, Tokyo 171, Japan.

Al-Anon and A.A.— The Ties That Bind Are Close but Apart

The Al-Anon Family Groups and Alcoholics Anonymous have a unique kinship formed on the twin anvils of alcoholism and recovery through A.A.'s Steps, Traditions and Concepts. Naturally drawn together by their common ties, the two Fellowships nonetheless have differing purposes: In A.A. our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help others recover from alcoholism; in Al-Anon members seek to understand and cope positively with the effects of someone else's drinking on themselves and to help the families and friends of alcoholics.

Even though both Fellowships are concerned with the consequences of alcoholism—and although Al-Anon's program of recovery is based on an adaptation of A.A.'s—historically they have functioned closely but not in each other's shadow. This separate functioning has served both A.A. and Al-Anon well. A.A.'s policy of "cooperation but not affiliation," in the spirit of Tradition Six, was recognized circa 1951, when the first Al-Anon service office opened its doors (*"Pass It On,"*

page 359). And so, each entity has its own General Service Board, General Service Office, Conference, publishing company and directory; each has further established its own policies and maintained its own services and intergroup offices.

A question sometimes asked is, Can a group be affiliated with both A.A. and Al-Anon? The response, as noted in the A.A. Guidelines on The Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon: "It is suggested they not be combined but remain as separate groups. This enables both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their messages more effectively. Thus the group name, the officers and the meeting should be either A.A. or Al-Anon, but not both." The Guidelines further suggests, "Whether open or closed, A.A. group meetings are conducted by A.A. members. At open meetings, non-A.A.s may be invited to share, depending upon the conscience of the group." Certainly all are welcome to attend open meetings of both A.A. and Al-Anon groups.

In response to the query, How can A.A. and Al-Anon cooperate in area and regional conventions and get-togethers? the A.A. Guidelines explain: "In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a convention would be either A.A. or Al-Anon—not both. However, most A.A. convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning its own program, and the committee arranges for facilities to house the Al-Anon meetings."

Over the years, Al-Anon has become the most widespread group resource for the families of alcoholics—and frequently a godsend for those of recovering A.A.s. As a way of saying thank you, A.A.'s General Service Conference issued a formal proclamation in 1969 that stated: "Whereas it is the desire of this Conference to acknowledge A.A.'s debt of gratitude [to Al-Anon], be it resolved that A.A.... hereby does recognize the great contribution that the Al-Anon Family Groups have made and are making in assisting the families of alcoholics everywhere."

Al-Anon's First International Convention

Since 1955, A.A. has welcomed Al-Anon's participation in A.A. International Conventions. For the first time, Al-Anon will be holding an Al-Anon International Convention, July 2-5, 1998, in Salt Lake City, Utah. We wish them a joyous and successful celebration. A.A. will participate in this event by providing A.A. meetings for A.A. members who are attending. Al-Anon assures us that they will be joining us again as participants in A.A.'s 11th International Convention in 2000, in Minneapolis.

C.P.C

Commitment and Practice Make Perfect in Calgary

On June 11 about 60 lawyers, educators, doctors, clergy and other professionals left a luncheon at the Crossroads Hotel in Calgary, Alberta, most of them sated and satisfied by food for thought as well as the palate. One guest, a counselor, penned a thank-you note afterward. "I met some great people and enjoyed the speeches immensely," she wrote. "Also the food. If you have boring speakers, you must have great food, or vice versa, but you had both well covered and impressed your audience!"

"Our message went over extremely well," reports Murray W., chairman of the Alberta Northwest Territory Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community that hosted the event. "But, for sure, I know a big reason why we had good attendance and were able to pass on the A.A. message so clearly was because we'd done our homework and were thoroughly rehearsed."

In planning the luncheon early last spring, the Calgary committee decided that the format would include a speaker and a panel of five A.A.s. Invitations were sent out in May and, a week or so later, committee members followed up with phone calls. "Contacting 600 professionals who mainly could be reached only during their lunch hours took a lot of patience and determination," says Murray, "but it proved to be effective in getting these busy people to commit."

Then, just days before the luncheon, he relates, "we had a mock seminar, which our local Freedom Group arranged for us to hold at a local hospital. They also provided coffee and more, and showed how the support of local groups to C.P.C. and other service committees can make a big difference. We did a table setup and a seminar, followed by a Q&A period. Believe me, the A.A.s gave us panelists a hard time—they made any questions we received during the actual luncheon look like a piece of cake. At the mock session it was recommended that we brush up on our knowledge of A.A.'s Twelve Traditions so we could answer both practical and philosophical questions more thoughtfully. We did, and this proved beneficial to the luncheon guests and to each of us personally."

Pleased with its success, the Calgary C.P.C. committee plans to make the luncheon an annual affair. "A big reason for the good outcome, and for our progress in other areas," Murray points out, "is that our committee is

made up of active A.A.s working closely together. We have nine subcommittees on areas categorized generally as clergy, doctors, E.A.P. (employee assistance programs), educators, institutions, police, treatment facilities, seniors and unions. If there's overlap of responsibility, or if a committee needs help, everyone pitches in—a spirit of cooperation I find remarkable in view of the fact that, until last January, ours was a small, sluggish committee. But there's a dozen or so of us now; we are close, meet monthly and communicate often in-between. We're in this thing to carry the A.A. message of recovery into the community, and we feel it's important to do it every which way we can."

Murray's sense of urgency was explained in an editorial about C.P.C. that ran in the June/July issue of the *Westword*, the newsletter of the Calgary Intergroup. "Despite rising public awareness of alcoholism as an illness," he was quoted as saying, "many professionals who have daily encounters with the suffering alcoholic simply don't know what to do with a drunk."

Sharing firsthand experience as an illustration, Murray recalled, "I remember going to a doctor during my drinking days because I was shaking so." When asked if he drank, Murray lied, as nonchalantly as he could: "Oh, sure, maybe half-a-dozen beers a week." Whereupon the doctor recommended upping his intake to at least two beers a day "to calm the nerves." Murray promptly complied. Another time, when he found himself in the hospital after an overdose of pills and lots of alcohol, Murray was interviewed, he says, "by a number of professionals, including a particularly well-respected psychiatrist. Their diagnosis: 'woman problems.' They released me the next day, with no follow-up. I can't say for certain, but perhaps if I'd been told about alcoholism and A.A. on either of those occasions, I might've quit drinking a lot sooner."

Murray and his fellow C.P.C.s believe unequivocally that anyone who deals with alcoholics on the front lines of counseling or treatment qualifies for C.P.C. attention. Says Murray: "An active C.P.C. committee can contribute by letting professionals know about A.A. and its program of recovery by being available to them whenever they call on us for help."

P.I.

Communication in A.A. Isn't All Talk

"Because of our kinship in suffering, and because our common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves

only when constantly carried to others," A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote in 1960 on the occasion of the Fellowship's 25th anniversary (the Grapevine's *A. A. Today*), "our channels of contact have always been charged with the *language of the heart.*"

Jorge C., of El Paso, Texas, agrees heartily. "I am able to serve as chairman for Public Information in my Northwest Texas Area 66," Jorge wrote in July, "and for this gift I am grateful to A.A. and to my Higher Power." Remembering back, Jorge continued: "At my first assembly I offered assistance to all the districts from my area, and shortly afterward I realized that language was not a barrier, even though I couldn't speak English. With patience and support from all of you, I was able to stay sober and do my service.

"At my second assembly, I started to deal with work tables covering what P.I. was, how it worked in the area and how to improve the effectiveness of the P.I. committees.

"At my third assembly, I started working with probation officers, schools, hospitals and police stations, always making sure to leave pamphlets and literature on A.A.

"At my fourth assembly, I started to help develop goals as to how to better take the A.A. message into our community, including newspapers, libraries, medical offices and hospitals. I thank the A.A.s in El Paso's District 7, who have made these goals happen, and for all the support they have given.

"And then, my fifth and sixth assemblies: All the area knows about the gains and the failures. The gains belong to you; the failures belong to me. We continue to work with all 14 districts in our area, even though sometimes only seven or eight members attend the meetings."

As Jorge was preparing to attend his seventh assembly in San Angelo the first week of August, he expressed "gratitude for a Fellowship that depends on one language—the language of the heart."

Correctional Facilities

Outside Sponsors Link Insiders to the Wide World of A.A.

"In 1991," says Dennis B., "then Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Amos Reed told the General Service Conference

that 'a significant part of our Fellowship is locked up right now in jails, prisons and juvenile detention centers.' Those of us who have been carrying the A.A. message 'inside' recognize the truth of this statement. We are only as strong as our weakest links in A.A.'s chain of recovery, and so it follows that the health, or lack of it, among our groups behind the walls will have a huge influence not only on the ability of inside members to stay sober but on the long-term strength of the entire Fellowship. That is why I believe that outside sponsorship is more important than ever."

For Dennis, Correctional Facilities chair of Central Southeast Ohio (Area 53), sponsorship is as integral to A.A. life as breathing. "About four years into my own sobriety," he recalls, "my sponsor started taking me with him to the meetings of the Insiders New Hope Group at the Madison Correctional Institute, in London (Ohio), that he guided. I tagged along more than two years before he rotated out and left me in his place; but for him I would have made lot more mistakes, would have been less willing to put A.A. principles before popularity when challenged. Both the inmates and I were learning together that A.A. is not a place where we go once or twice a week but a way of life that we live on a daily basis."

In one sense, Dennis points out, "sponsoring a group inside is not much different from sponsoring an individual, except for the size of the task. An inside group looks to its sponsor for the same things I look to my sponsor for: direction, support, focus and experience." Yet, in another sense, he adds, "the job of outside sponsor is one of the most demanding in A.A., often requiring the member who serves to act variously as the group's D.C.M. (district committee member), G.S.R. (general service representative) and a member of C.P.C. (Committee for Cooperation With the Professional Community).

"Like a D.C.M., for instance, the outside sponsor can nurture the health of an inside group and be a link between the group and the whole of A.A. Or the sponsor may represent the group at area assemblies if the group's G.S.R. is unable to attend (I don't know of any cases in Ohio where an inside member is allowed out to attend assemblies or other service activities), so the outside sponsor becomes the voice of the group within A.A. Reminding the group that it is part of something worthwhile that extends far beyond the jail or prison is one of the most important services an outside sponsor can provide. I've seen the attitude in a group change within a matter of weeks when the members began to realize that they were as much a part of the Fellowship as any other A.A. group."

Importantly, Dennis notes, "the sponsor may be the only C.P.C. representative some correctional administrators and staff ever see. The sponsor becomes the 'face' of A.A. to staff, and sponsors' attitudes and actions reflect directly upon the entire Fellowship. They can have a

strong positive or negative affect on our ability to continue to carry the A.A. message behind walls." Here Dennis injects a caveat. "Despite the responsibility the outside sponsor carries," he says, "there seems to be little attention paid to this important service within A.A. There is no place for an outside sponsor in our service structure—except as a member of a C.F. committee—and little shared experience to be found in our literature that a new outside sponsor can look to for guidance. Here in Ohio our live-wire area C.F. committee is working hard to educate A.A.s to the need for outside sponsors, but I believe that we all can and must do a better job of sharing our experience with this important Twelfth Step work."

Meanwhile, at the Madison Correctional Facility, the Insiders New Hope Group recently held its annual workshop for members, with the theme "Living Alcoholics Anonymous," and on August 27 celebrated its 10th anniversary. Dennis attributes the strength of the group to "a combination of good inside leadership and strong outside sponsorship." For a population with a built-in turnover, he says, "there is amazingly strong sobriety. We have members who are five and six years sober and increasingly comfortable in a program that prepares them for life both inside and out. They come to realize that as members of A.A.'s community at large, they don't have to struggle alone anymore. And upon release, they can choose *not* to go back through the revolving prison door. Sober, they do have a choice."

Last year, in the annual anniversary newsletter published by the Insiders New Hope Group, a member named Victor expressed feelings shared by many of his fellow A.A.s. "More than four years ago," he wrote, "I came to this Fellowship in a hopeless state—you people gave me hope. I came with no direction—you led me through the Steps. I came with no understanding—you helped me to understand. It was you, through God's guidance, who helped me regain my life. I am forever in debt to God and A.A. Thank you for caring."



Sign in garden as you leave the home of A.A. member Barbara B. and her husband Don (Al-Anon), Lewes, Delaware.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided.

October

- 3-4—*Lincoln, Nebraska.* Big Red Roundup. Write: Ch., 3840 S.70th St., Ste. 127, Lincoln, NE 68506
- 3-5—*Sydney, Australia.* NEWYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 3091, Sydney, 2026, Australia
- 3-5—*Bakersfield, California.* 46th Southern California Conv. Write: Ch., 1533 Hi-Point St., Los Angeles, CA 90035
- 3-5—*Crescent City, California.* 11th Annual Sobriety by the Sea Rally. Write: Ch., Box 871, Crescent City, CA 95531
- 3-5—*Sacramento, California.* NCCAA 50th Annual Fall Conf. Write: Tr., Box 508, Rocklin, CA 95677
- 3-5—*Twin Falls, Idaho.* Idaho Area Fall Assembly & Conv. Write: Ch., Box 976, Twin Falls, ID 83303
- 3-5—*Sunman, Indiana.* SUNYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 62193, Cincinnati, OH 45262-0193
- 3-5—*Ames, Iowa.* Area 27 1997 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., 843 West 19th St. #41, Ames, IA 50010
- 3-5—*Lafayette, Louisiana.* 14th Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502
- 3-5—*Rochester, New York.* 17th Annual Rochester Conv. Write: Ch., 10 Manhattan Square Dr., Rochester, NY 14607-3997
- 3-5—*Rapid, City, South Dakota.* Area 63 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 845, Rapid City, SD 57709-0845
- 3-5—*Tacoma, Washington.* 1997 West. Washington Area Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 39275, Tacoma, WA 98439-0275
- 3-6—*Amarillo, Texas.* Top of Texas Roundup. Write: Ch., 1703 S. Taylor, Amarillo, TX 79101
- 3-6—*Syria, Virginia.* Heaven on Earth Day VI. Write: Ch., Box 31, Bowie, MD 20719
- 9-12—*Reno, Nevada.* Seventh Annual NIA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 835, Wadsworth, NE 89442
- 10-12—*Monaco, France.* "A Dream Come True" Monaco Conv. Write: Ch., 53 Rue Caffarelli, 06000 Nice, France
- 10-12—*Dordrecht (near Rotterdam), The Netherlands.* Big Book Study Seminar. Write: Ch., Harstenhoekweg 74, 2587-SM The Hague, The Netherlands
- 10-12—*St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.* 33rd NS, NF and LB Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 26074, St. John's, NF A1C 5T9
- 10-12—*North Bay, Ontario, Canada.* 42nd Annual Northeast Area Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1165, North Bay, ON P1B 8K4
- 10-12—*Morrilton, Arkansas.* ARKYPAA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 250309, Little Rock, AR 72225

- 10-12—*Chanute, Kansas.* Sixth Annual SE Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 1319 Main, Parson, KS 67357
- 10-12—*Uniondale, New York.* Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3980, Hempstead, NY 11550
- 11-12—*Dickinson, North Dakota.* Fall Fellowship Round. Write: Ch., Box 1764, Dickinson, ND 58602
- 17-19—*Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica.* Third Annual Int'l. Conv. in Costa Rica. Write: Ch., APDO #297, Puerto Quepos, Costa Rica
- 17-19—*Campbell River, British Columbia, Canada.* Campbell River, District 3, 24th Rally. Write: Ch., Unit F, 1360 Home-wood Campbell River, BC V9W 6Y1
- 17-19—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.* 53rd Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 505-365 Hargrave St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 2K3
- 17-19—*Daytona Beach, Florida.* Third Annual Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 4911, South Daytona, FL 32121
- 17-19—*Austin, Minnesota.* Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903
- 17-19—*Kiamesha Lake, New York.* 27th Annual Northeast Regional Conv. (NERC). Write: Ch., 76 Kelly Drive, Edison, NJ 08820
- 17-19—*Columbus, Ohio.* 11th Annual Area 53 General Service Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2131, Columbus, OH 43216
- 17-19—*Milwaukee, Wisconsin.* 46th Annual Southern WI Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 262, Oak Creek, WI 53154-0262
- 24-26—*Columbus, Ohio.* 12th Intergroup/Central Office/A.A.W.S. Seminar. Write: Central Ohio Fellowship Intrgrp, 1561 Leonard Ave., Columbus, OH 43219-2580
- 24-26—*London, Ontario, Canada.* 44th Annual Western Ontario Conv. Write: Ch., Box 797, Mount Brydges, ON N0L 1W0
- 24-26—*St. Cloud, Minnesota.* 15th Annual St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302
- 24-26—*Prospect Park, Pennsylvania.* Philadelphia Big Book Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 844, Devon, PA 19333
- 24-26—*Lynchburg, Virginia.* VA Area Comm. Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 3383 Whipple Court, Annandale, VA 22003

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

October (pages 56-59): Oldtimers corner

November (pages 32-43): From the Grapevine archives

- 24-26—*Bellingham, Washington.* 10th Annual Mt. Baker Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 28231, Bellingham, WA 98228
- 30-November 2—13th Annual MCYPAA Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1388, Ellicott City, MD 21043
- 31-November 1—*Cornwall, Ontario, Canada.* Cornwall 50th Anniv. Conf. Write: Ch., 409 3rd St. E, Cornwall, ON K6H 2E6
- 31-November 2—*San Bernardino, California.* Inland Empire 10th Annual Conv. Write: Ch., 3076 Priscilla St., Riverside, CA 92506
- 31-November 2—*Flagstaff, Arizona.* 1997 Arizona Area Conv. Write: Ch., Box 566, Flagstaff, AZ 86002
- 31-November 2—*Branson, Missouri.* Western Area of Missouri Conv. Write: Ch., 538 E. Edgewood St., Springfield, MO 65807
- 31-November 2—*St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.* Promises in Paradise. Write: Ch., Box 1083, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

November

- 7-9—*Jekyll Island, Georgia.* Recovery Weekend III. Write: Ch., 161 Washington, Ave., Fitzgerald, GA 31750
- 7-9—*Cincinnati, Ohio.* 5th Annual Buckeye Roundup. Write: Host Comm., Box 5314, Cincinnati, Ohio 45205

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on December, January, February events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by October 10, the calendar deadline for the Holiday issue of Box 4-5-9.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Flip up this end of page - for events on reverse side

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board



- 7-9—*Cincinnati, Ohio*. Fifth Annual Buckeye Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 5314, Cincinnati, OH 45205
- 7-9—*Houston, Texas*. Spirit of Houston Conf. Write: Ch., Box 228, Spring, TX 77383
- 8-9—*Fargo, North Dakota*. Fargo's 50th Birthday "One Day At A Time." Write: Ch., Box 1303, Fargo, ND 58107
- 13-16—*Helen, Georgia*. Chattahoochee Forest Conf. Write: Ch., Box 30459, Statesboro, GA 30459
- 14-16—*Fitchburg, Massachusetts*. 34th Annual State Conv. Write: Regsr., Box 344, Westminister, MA 01473-0344
- 21-23—*Fontana, Wisconsin*. Eighth Annual McHenry's Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 213, Kingwood, IL 60072
- 22-23—*Buffalo, New York*. 56th Buffalo Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 522, Amherst, NY 14226-0522
- 28-30—*Hamilton, Bermuda*. Bermuda Conv. 1997. Write: Ch., Box 178, Warwick WKBX, Bermuda
- 28-30—*Diamond Head, Mississippi*. Gratitude Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7851, Gulfport, MS 39507-7851
- 28-30—*Omaha, Nebraska*. Great Plains Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 34222, Omaha, NE 68134

December

- 5-7—*Houston, Texas*. Southwest Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 26-28—*Joplin, Missouri*. Winter Holiday XVII. Write: Ch., Box 626, Monett, MO 65708

January 1998

- 23-25—*Blytheville, Arkansas*. 41st Annual Tri-State Coon Supper. Write: Ch., Box 675, Blytheville, AR 72316