

Do We Clean Up Our Act After Meetings?

“... got a call from one of the churches that an A.A. meeting is not cleaning up after itself. They are leaving cigarette butts outside. It is one of those churches that has a lot of A.A. meetings. They are ready to just not have meetings there anymore.” So reads this less than welcome notation from the report of executive secretary Mary M. in the minutes of the Aug. 14 meeting of California’s San Fernando Valley Intergroup, reprinted in the October issue of its newsletter. “Maybe,” Mary points out, “these are the only alcoholics these people see, and we want to put out a good image. So if you can, make sure in your groups, in the halls, wherever, that you pick up after yourselves and leave the place clean. Otherwise, you hurt us all.”

The problem is one that affects us all. As another Californian, John P., noted several years ago in the *Intergroup Newsletter* of the Intergroup Central Office of Santa Clara County (Box 4-5-9, Feb.-March 1997, “A.A. members are not the only ones who share experience. Church people talk to each other too. One pastor’s unhappiness with A.A.s can turn a whole denomination against us. And it’s not only churches—other facilities are increasingly wary of A.A. They see their maintenance and janitorial costs rising to repair the damage we do to their premises, and they worry about the liability claims our abusive actions may expose them to.”

John suggested that in A.A. there is a powerful tool to deal with the problem—“something called ‘group conscience’ that actually can put an end to destructive behavior at an A.A. meeting. It does so by strengthening unity and allowing the membership to speak with one voice, thus placing ‘principles before personalities’ in the spirit of Step Twelve. No one alcoholic in A.A. has authority over any other alcoholic, so admonishing your fellow drunk to shape up carries little or no weight. But a group of alcoholics, speaking out of the group conscience, does have authority and, strange as it seems, even inconsiderate members recognize it. Sometimes they merely leave when the group addresses them, but often they change. Either way, the group has put the common welfare first.”

In the April 1946 issue of the Grapevine (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 23) and often afterward, A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote that for us A.A.s “there is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.” But how can they, if we keep neglecting to clean up our act?

Our Critics Can Be Our Benefactors

“Don’t you hate criticism? Is there anything that pierces deeper than a harsh, judgmental word? I have discovered two kinds of criticism: One is ‘constructive,’ designed in the critic’s mind to bring matters to a positive end. But it is as painful to me as the second kind, which is called ‘destructive.’ Both hurt.”

Speaking at a sharing session at the Crowne Plaza Manhattan on October 28, Arnold R., an A.A. Grapevine director, offered his experience with the topic “How Do We React to Criticism, and How Do We Treat Our Critics?” Noting that “there often is some validity to what our critics say—that’s the burr under the saddle of their words,” he observed, “When it comes to criticism, we think it is more blessed to give than receive—especially if the criticism comes from a difficult person or a group of difficult people. But I thank God for criticism! It can be a terrific stabilizer.”

Arnold admitted to being “most vulnerable when someone criticizes the way I approach our program. In A.A., if you are going to be of maximum service to God and your fellows, you will become a prime target. Our co-founder Bill W. writes in Concept IX: ‘Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. . . . We ought never fail to give [our critics] a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.’” (*The A.A. Service Manual/ Twelve Concepts for World Service*, p. 40)

Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Linda L. Chezem pointed out that “disagreements and critics seem to be a part of the universal human condition. For A.A. to have people who criticize or who hold different views . . . is

Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115 © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001

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

G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site: www.aa.org

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

indicative of the fact that we are a part of humanity.

“How we treat our critics . . . is critical to the ability of the Fellowship to hold the hand of recovery out to the alcoholic. Petty bickering or heavy infighting will hurt or prevent the recovery of those who engage in the pettiness—and discourage a newcomer. So when mistakes are made, we have proved that we are human. Can we also prove that the spiritual life of A.A. truly works by moving on? An important key to how we treat our critics may be found in the phrase ‘accept the things I cannot change.’”

As she watches A.A. work, Linda said, “I see significant variances in the communications links: A simple remark by someone who has followed a concern and has a great deal of information may have an entirely different meaning for the listener who doesn’t. A remark by the latter can so easily cause a misunderstanding. If there are lingering resentments about other matters and the communicants want to take each other on, the resulting war can have tragic repercussions, and the time spent in fighting or gossiping will detract from the effort to carry the message. In the end what is accomplished? Is A.A. as a whole threatened when we deal negatively with criticism? I have to answer ‘yes.’”

Susan U., a staff member at the General Service Office since 1974, says she has been aware of outside criticism of A.A. as well as occasional negative comments from within the Fellowship itself. Two recent TV programs prompted some members to express concern to the producers, Susan said. Others contacted G.S.O., where Public Information staff member Bill A. reminded them of Tradition Ten, which suggests that “Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.” This, Susan remarked, “was an instance in which we welcomed the opportunity to share A.A.’s policy of reacting to criticism with dignified silence.”

In conclusion Susan quoted a delegate who, she said, “had a great impact on me this past year. He said, ‘None

of us rotates out. We rotate *on*, on to the next thing God has in store for us on the journey—a single journey without beginning or end, each of us following parallel paths to the same experience, the experience of God.’ So, dear friends, bring on the criticism—we can handle it just fine. We learn through our critics and remain more committed than ever.”

Bilingual Staff Member Sought for G.S.O.

G.S.O. staff people are members of Alcoholics Anonymous who carry out specific assignments and correspond with A.A.s on all aspects of recovery and service. Additionally, they represent G.S.O. at A.A. functions throughout the U.S. and Canada and provide the primary staff support for the General Service Board.

Applications are now being sought for a bilingual G.S.O. staff member. Fluency in both English and Spanish is required, as well as excellent writing skills in both languages. A minimum of six years’ sobriety is necessary; A.A. service experience will also be a consideration, in addition to the applicant’s willingness to relocate to New York, if necessary. This opening will occur in 2001, due to the retirement of Danny M., Spanish Services Coordinator.

Qualified members may request an application form by contacting: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163. Applications will be accepted up to February 28, 2001.

Correction!!

A Tenth Step is in order. In the Holiday issue we gave the wrong deadline for area delegates to return their group information printouts.

Please note: The *final* deadline for inclusion in directories is **May 1** — not March, as reported.

Printouts, corrected to show up-to-date group information and returned to G.S.O. by the areas, will be used to produce the 2001-2002 A.A. Directories: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., and Canadian. These confidential directories list groups and contacts; delegates and trustees; central offices/intergroups/answering services; and special international contacts for A.A. travelers.

New Delegates Bring 'Love and Service' to the General Service Conference

For most new delegates down through the years—ever since the first General Service Conference in April 1951—becoming a part of A.A.'s "annual business meeting" is an awesome experience. Recalled past delegate (Panel 43) Burke D. of Seattle at the end of his two-year term: "Oh, m'God, I thought at first, 'How could they ask me to do this?' Then I realized it was *we*—all 130-odd Conference members, not just me—who were being asked not only to ponder this problem or that but to act for the whole Fellowship. Calm replaced anxiety as I saw with certainty that we could do together what I could never do alone."

Who are the new delegates, these men and women who will come together at the 51st Conference the week of April 29-May 5 from small towns and large in the U.S. and Canada? What experience do they bring to the task at hand? A sampling shows that without exception they have already served long days and nights in group and area offices, and often as alternate delegates. Their lives in recovery personify the theme to be etched on a blue banner hanging aloft at the 2001 Conference—"Love and Service." Herewith, an introduction to a few of them:

Joe D., Eastern Ontario. "I experienced a good deal of nervous anticipation about standing for delegate," Joe admits. "Being an alternate for two years does not make election an automatic shoo-in. I just tried to do the best job I could, then left it up to the area assembly." Joe noted that Eastern Ontario "is a very active area, with three districts in New York State."

In Ontario the buddy system is alive and well, says Joe, who celebrated his 13th A.A. anniversary in September. "For one thing, there are four delegate areas. The delegates meet once a year, along with the alternate delegates and the Eastern Ontario regional trustee, to share experience, strength and hope in service. Because of rotation, there's always someone new coming in, someone seasoned going out, and this sharing smoothes the transitions. Additionally, our past delegates tend to remain active and have been especially generous in sharing their service experience with me."

Joe has been particularly active in Treatment Facilities work in Kingston. "In Eastern Ontario we have more than 600 groups, with about 15,000 members, in 28 districts," he observes, "and I just want to serve them the best I can." In his work he is fortunate, he adds with a grin, "to have a boss who is generous about giving me time off for A.A. service. He told me, 'We get a lot more work out of you now than when you were drinking.'"

Marty S., Eastern Pennsylvania. As Marty prepares for his first Conference by wading through the ubiquitous mounds of reading material sent by the General Service Office, he is unharried by the challenges ahead because, he says, "I have all the support I need right here at home." In his area, he explains, it is standard practice for the past delegate—in this instance, Gary C.—to drive the new one from Pennsylvania to the Crowne Plaza Manhattan hotel, where the Conference takes place, drop him, or her, off and go home; a week later he repeats the 95-mile drive back to New York and picks up the new delegate for a return trip home. "As you can guess," Marty observes, "a lot of invaluable sharing goes on during the trip. There's the chance to ask questions, to share." Traditionally, he adds, "all our past delegates are supportive, though as one told me, 'I probably won't tell you anything you don't know.'"

One of his main goals in the coming months will be to "help establish an Area Web page and newsletter and have a Bridge the Gap program up and running that can go on and on without our constantly having to reinvent the wheel." Sober 14 years last August, Marty has no intention of sacrificing personal time for his heavy service schedule. He and his wife, Pat, who is also an A.A. member, already set aside "two weekends a month for A.A. and two for ourselves and our family," which includes four children and four grandchildren.

Mary T., Southern California. Sober 19 years this February, Mary came to A.A. while living in Detroit. "Seven years later," she says, laughing, "I moved to California and got into service." Shortly after she joined the Twelve-Step Study Group in West Los Angeles, Mary relates, "the G.S.R. (general service representative) got to be secretary. I was elected G.S.R.—by acclamation, of course—and fell in love with service." Of the many offices she has held, including area Public Information chair, area treasurer and area secretary, "being an alternate delegate was the hardest of all because you have to guarantee your availability for four years, in the event you go on to become a delegate."

In preparing for her new assignment, Mary has had "wonderful sharing from outgoing delegate Marita H. She's very organized, while I'm organizationally challenged. She gave me all her notes and offered guidance on what to pack and wear at various Conference functions and how to get around Manhattan. She also gave me great orientation on issues that came before the last Conference, such as the proposed Fourth Edition of the Big Book, which will be coming up for review again."

Bob A., B.C./Yukon. "When standing for alternate delegate and delegate, I was nervous for sure—my election was out of the hat for both." [Describing the election of a delegate in "A.A.'s Legacy of Service," co-founder Bill W. explained that in the early days of the Conference it was determined that a delegate "must

receive a two-thirds vote for election. . . . But if he or she didn't, and the election was close . . . the names of the two highest in the running, or the three officers of the committee, or even the whole committee, could be put in a hat. One name would be drawn. The winner of this painless lottery would become delegate."] — *The A.A. Service Manual*, p. S11.

Bob, who celebrates 16 years of sobriety in January, says he has been "studying items on last year's Conference agenda that will be coming up again. I've been lucky to have help from our outgoing delegate Grace E., as well as a couple of other past delegates and trustees." He feels his years in service have given him solid preparation for the job ahead: "I've been area chair, have served on the P.I. committee, C.P.C. committee [Cooperation With the Professional Community], have done a lot of speaking in treatment facilities—it all helps." He says he is confident that the new A.A. assignment will not disrupt family life: "The children are grown up, and my wife, Marsha, is in the Fellowship. She is very understanding and pleased."

Bridget V., Northern Indiana. "I felt some anxiety when I stood for delegate," she remembers, "but the help of many people in the area —immediate past delegate Bob P. and six or seven others—has given me confidence in the areas I was lacking it." As part of the General Service Conference, Bridget, who marked eight years of sobriety on January 5, hopes to "work across the board" for A.A. as a whole. Admitting that "I've never strayed too far from Indiana, she eagerly anticipates her first trip to New York. Has she had any travel tips? "Oh, yes, I was told to write down directions for the taxi drivers."

Mike B., North Dakota. For Mike, who served last year as a Panel 50 delegate, everything old is new again. As the result of an adjustment in the regional makeup, he is serving as a Panel 51 delegate. Now, he kids, when G.S.O. assigns "buddies" to the new delegates, maybe he could become his own best friend and mentor. Service areas in which Mike is interested include correctional facilities work, "and I would very much like to help carry the message to alcoholics in the remote communities." Says Mike, who passed his eighth sobriety milestone last August, "but whatever my committee assignment as delegate, I will be privileged to serve."

Wayne R., Western Missouri. "When I stood for delegate it was scary," Wayne remembers. "And I'm still scared, because I want my area to have the best representation possible at the Conference. But people in A.A., like our outgoing delegate, Shirley R., have been wonderfully supportive, and I'm counting on my experience in service to help." Wayne, who sobered up in May 1984, is married to Marlene, a fellow A.A. member. "We enjoy the people in the program," he says. "And no matter how long the day's work, I'm never too tired to talk about this great Fellowship."

Jon S., Alabama/N.W. Florida. "Early in sobriety," Jon shares, "the late past delegate Bill McK., who was my sponsor's sponsor—told me, 'Ask yourself, Do I have the time and willingness to serve? If you have the willingness, then find the time.'"

"I was 24 when I came to A.A., and Bill used to order, 'Get in the car, boy, get in the car.' I miss him a lot." Jon, who blew out 12 candles on his A.A. cake on January 11, adds that he is grateful for a strong A.A. support system that includes outgoing delegate Janiece R. and other past delegates going back several decades.

"I came to A.A. early," he observes, "and today I am glad to see so many young people around me sober and embracing life." When Jon, who's single, is off doing his delegate thing, the only one likely to be affected, he believes, is his cat Zig, named for Zig Zigler, the sales seminar guru. I got Zig when I joined A.A.," Jon explains. "He's my sobriety cat, and he'll do just fine." After a pause he adds, "I have invested my life in A.A. Everything I have that is decent, clean and good is because of the Fellowship. The dividends I've received far outweigh any effort on my part."

G.S.O. — Welcome to The 21st Century

On November 13, 2000 Lillianna Murphy (nonalcoholic), Information Services manager at your General Service Office, clicked her mouse and ushered G.S.O. into the 21st century with the implementation of our new PC based "network." Now, all employees at G.S.O. are connected to each other via Intranet and to the Internet for external communication. New e-mail addresses by assignments are now available:

Archives	archives@aa.org
Conference	conference@aa.org
Cooperation With the Professional Community	cpc@aa.org
Corrections	corrections@aa.org
International	international@aa.org
Literature	literature@aa.org
Public Information	publicinfo@aa.org
Regional Forums	regionalforums@aa.org
Spanish Services (U.S./Canada only)	spanishservice@aa.org
Staff Coordinator	staffcoord@aa.org
Treatment Facilities	tf@aa.org
Special Needs	specialneeds@aa.org

As A.A.'s Message Comes Clear, Our China Links Grow Stronger

A scroll attractively covered with Chinese calligraphy hangs on a wall of the San Francisco Central Office. It was presented this past summer by four Chinese doctors who participated in A.A.'s International Convention 2000 in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the message, according to a member fluent in Chinese and English, reads: "Good health is most important to raise the quality of life for all people." But the original translation offered by the scroll's creator, non-English-speaking Dr. Qingmei Wang from Quindao, also strikes a chord: "Your work is extremely important for human being's health."

According to *The Point*, a publication of the San Francisco-Marín Intercounty Fellowship of A.A., the visit of these health care professionals from the People's Republic of China was the second step in what some enthusiastic A.A.s call "Twelfth Stepping a country." The first happened in May 1999, when a group of 13 A.A. members (and an Al-Anon) from the Bay Area traveled to China to sightsee and, said Bruce K., who first had the idea of putting the trip together, "to learn more about recovery from alcoholism among the Chinese, about their willingness to receive the message of A.A. or even what kind of reception we might get. Our object was to learn more about these matters and to see if we could spread a few 'mustard seeds' around the landscape [*Box 4-5-9, Oct.-Nov. 2000*]." A few months ago the American A.A.s traveled back to China as "the China 2000 Group" to help nurture whatever seeds had been planted.

In its September 2000 issue, *The Point* published an article, by the China 2000 Group, that described the Chinese physicians' visit to the International, held June 29-July 3. An adaptation follows:

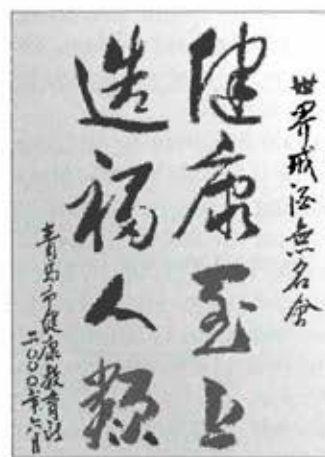
"The Chinese contingent included two young Beijing doctors, Guo Song and Li Bing, who spoke enough English to make their way around. The other two, Guizhen Liu and Qingmei Wang, from Qingdao, required interpreters. The visitors attended several workshops: one on A.A. in Asia/Oceania, another on A.A. and professionals, and a third on treatment facilities, to name a few. They had numerous one-on-one conversations with both A.A. members and professionals. The General Service Office arranged for them to participate in a special luncheon meeting entitled 'Our Non-A.A. Friends,' during which they met members of the General Service Board, including Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee George Valliant, M.D.

"Though it was clear our Chinese friends did not understand all of what they heard, it was also clear that they got some powerful impressions of the Fellowship as

they observed 50,000 A.A.s having a wonderful time in the convention halls and on the streets of Minneapolis—without booze. And they were quick to join in. At the Opening Meeting, the Chinese doctors gradually caught on to what was happening when thousands of people started making the 'wave.' They watched the wave circle the immense stadium a couple of times; then, laughing delightedly, they joined in, standing at the appropriate moment and waving their arms above their heads.

"Our visitors wore special guest badges indentifying them as coming from the People's Republic of China, and they were warmly greeted wherever they went. At every turn their autographs were sought, and several A.A.s asked them to inscribe their Big Books in Chinese.

"One afternoon the A.A. hosts held a special luncheon for the guests in—you guessed it—a Chinese restaurant. The food was satisfying, as was the discussion. The doctors were told, and seemed to recognize themselves, that the real impetus for recovery from alcoholism eventually comes from the alcoholics themselves. But understanding that the birth of A.A. in the United States was aided by many wonderful and concerned nonalcoholics, these doctors said that they wanted to do everything possible to jump-start A.A. in China. Some government-imposed hurdles—such as the prohibition of unapproved assemblies and difficulty accepting the concept of God, a higher power or a super spirit—had to be overcome, they noted. At the same time they were optimistic about being able to meet these challenges in the near future."



This scroll, presented to the San Francisco Central Office by four Chinese doctors who attended A.A.'s International Convention in Minneapolis in June, is the creation of one of them, Dr. Qingmei Wang. Loosely interpreted, the line on the right reads, "Jie Jiu Wu Ming Hui," which translates into "Alcoholics Anonymous." Jie jiu means "Quit alcohol," wu ming means "no name," and hui stands for "meeting." The line of calligraphy on the left records the date the scroll was made.

In Memoriam: John B., Former G.S.O. General Manager

John B., general manager of the General Service Office from August 1984 through March 1989, died on November 10, 2000 at the age of 80. He leaves behind many years of dedicated service to Alcoholics Anonymous and the love and respect of family, friends, and fellow workers.

John is survived by Mary, his wife of 57 years, along with four children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Always devoted to his family, he invariably included in his drinking story that pivotal moment of truth, when, drunk, he looked across a room, saw himself in his son's eyes, and knew that the time for action had come.

As general manager, John brought to the office a unique combination of A.A. service experience and business expertise. After getting sober in 1966, he became involved in group and intergroup service in New York City and the Albany, N.Y. area. He was introduced to general service as a member of the trustees' Public Information Committee, and was subsequently elected a director of A.A. World Services and then a general service trustee in 1981.

Professionally, after graduating with a degree in chemistry from Harvard University and serving a stint in the U.S. Navy, John taught physics at Cornell University, and spent the greater part of his business life at General Electric, Singer, and other firms in upstate New York.

John's many contributions to G.S.O. included what his successor called "the introduction of sound business practices without disturbing the spiritual integrity of the Fellowship." His leadership was a key factor in carrying the A.A. message to the then-Soviet Union. But more importantly to those who worked with and for him, his profound love of A.A. and his pursuit of excellence in everything he did set a powerful example.

When John retired, he returned for a time to his Navy roots, sailing the east coast of the U.S. with his wife Mary on a 38-foot power boat. Moving to the mountains of North Carolina in 1991, he became an active member of the A.A. community, both in his home group in Black Mountain and in the area general service structure. He also returned to his first love, teaching, as an adjunct professor of physics at the University of North Carolina in Asheville.

At a celebration of John's life at Grace Episcopal Church, Asheville, on November 13, family, friends and colleagues shared loving and often humorous recollections. Past G.S.O. staff member Betty L. recalled that he brought out the best in her by demanding – and giving

– excellence. "He made you ask more of yourself. At the same time, he was kind and he was human; a good man and a good friend." G.S.O.'s services director Tom J. commented on that same quality: "John asked me to go a distance I wouldn't have asked myself to go." Others remembered his ability to handle tough situations with intelligence (a friend from John's youth commented, "he was so smart it was scary!"), yet bringing to any problem a gentle humor. Past staff member Sarah P. remembered times when John went out of his way to help her, both personally and professionally, and said that "while I didn't always agree with John, I always trusted him."

And perhaps the most telling comment came from another G.S.O. employee, who remembered that each year, on the last night of the General Service Conference, as many Conference members ventured out to the theater or a baseball game, John would always be seen heading for an A.A. meeting.

Spirited Workshops And Southern Warmth Liven Intergroup Seminar

The 15th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, held Oct. 6-8 at the Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock, Arkansas, more than fulfilled the promise of its program. "Welcome!" the introduction read. "Our theme is 'Into Action,' and we hope the action you find here will go with you when you leave. This seminar will take away your feeling of being unique . . . show you that we have a common bond and that, together, we can do wonderful things. Take advantage of all that is offered, open your mind and your heart, and enjoy our Southern hospitality."

The seminar brought together about 140 intergroup/central office managers, secretaries and trusted servants across the United States and Canada. (Most of the office managers were paid employees, but several representatives of all-volunteer offices also were on hand.) Together with a trustee of the General Service Board and directors and staff of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine, they examined key issues ranging from anonymity online to the distribution of A.A. literature. Reports Sharon M., who heads the Arkansas Central Office: "We loved hosting this seminar and would do it again in a heartbeat. Our A.A. volunteers, who came from Little Rock and beyond, deserve the credit for making everything run smoothly. They never missed a turn, whether working at the registration desk, on the transportation committee or in the popular hospitality room,

where old friends and new enjoyed fellowship, sharing, and the delicious cookies and cakes homebaked by our A.A.s. We do have terrific cooks here."

The seminar's main activities centered around the workshops, 29 in all, that covered a wide variety of matters important to the attendees. One that aroused much interest, Karen observes, dealt with "Web sites, the Internet and Anonymity." It was noted that at the Intergroup Seminar held five years ago, there was just one office with a Web site and only five offices that could handle e-mail; today, while no definitive figures are available, it is clear that online capability is commonplace.

One office manager shared that their site is geared as a Public Information tool, not as a means of communication with groups or members. At some intergroups, Web sites have been put up by volunteer A.A.s who have posted meeting lists and keep them up-to-date. Several offices have Web site committees to oversee their operations in this area and to decide what goes up on the site. It has been found helpful, some managers reported, to take a group conscience when choosing what is to go up on the Web.

Another popular workshop focused on "Fund-Raisers." It became apparent that many intergroups and central offices hold fund-raisers because contributions fail to provide enough money for services the groups want, salaries, hospital benefits and prudent reserves. One office manager spoke of having "a very difficult time mustering a prudent reserve after expenses were paid." Another said, "We don't need fund-raisers. Besides, we feel that events such as dances violate the Traditions of A.A." Still another countered, "There is a difference between providing

services and running a business. A central office is a business, and it needs money to pay the salaries, benefits and other expenses. The reality is, it takes cash to facilitate Twelfth Step work."

A workshop on "The Seventh Tradition—Do We Make Deals with Outside Enterprises?" covered ground discussed in the "Fund-Raisers" session, and more. One manager said his office puts out a "giving" box at group meetings every November, which is Gratitude Month in A.A., in order to raise money for their intergroup. He suggested that "office" money resulting from donations and literature sales not be used to facilitate special fundraising events such as a picnic. "Instead, pass a separate basket or charge a fee and use seed money from previous events to cover initial expenses, since these events are not part of carrying the message."

At a workshop on "Hotlines and Phone Services," a manager shared that her office has a 24-hour hotline, with A.A. groups responsible for providing the coverage; "captains" from each district take on the commitment for two years. Each volunteer attends a one-hour orientation session at the onset, and all policies and procedures are in writing.

Looking back on previous seminars, Sharon observes, "Perhaps the most invaluable thing about these annual get-togethers is that they give us intergroup and central office managers freedom to share candidly. At home meetings we speak up, of course, but we necessarily have to be circumspect about our job problems. Most of the year I'm thinking, 'Why can't I be just another A.A. member?' Well, at the Intergroup Seminars I am."

To obtain a copy of the Final Report of Intergroup Seminar 2000, write: Sharon M., Arkansas Central

BOX 459

Order Form

Individual:

Single one-year subscriptions (\$3.50). Please send _____ individual subscriptions \$ _____

Special Group Rates:

Bulk subscriptions (\$6.00 each unit of ten). Please send _____ individual subscriptions \$ _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Mail to:

Name _____

Address _____ Apt # _____

City _____

State (Prov.) _____ Zip _____

Enclosed check or money order and make payable to:

A.A. World Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10163

Office, 7509 Cantrell Road, Suite 106, Little Rock, AR 72207; or call (501) 664-7303. Please include a \$10 contribution to help cover production and mailing costs.

The 16th Annual Intergroup/Central Office Seminar will be held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, September 6-9, 2001, at the Ramada Inn. For more information, contact Jan D., Manager, A.A. Central Office, 10010 107 A Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB T5H 4H8, Canada; or call (403) 424-5900.

P.I./C.P.C.

Bilingual Display for Professionals

The District 4 - P.I./C.P.C. Committee in St. John, New Brunswick, used to avail itself of the Area 81 Literature display for its forays into schools and health fairs. This was a simple matter in that the area Literature chair was a resident of the district. With increased P.I./C.P.C. activity and the impending rotation of the P.I./C.P.C. Literature chair, the committee designed and created its own display. Frank T., the current district chair, shares that the bilingual (French/English) display was used at the many school invitations, where over the past year more than 75 high school classes have had visits from A.A. volunteers. On these visits the display is placed in a common area where passers-by can see the scope of the A.A. materials available.

The display is an invaluable tool for the committee's expanding work with professionals in the St. John Area. Health fairs and presentations to the local police force have already been enhanced by the presence of the display of a full selection of A.A. material, including the A.A. Grapevine. Frank adds that not only has the district become self-reliant in terms of its P.I. display, but has also been able to help out some surrounding districts in



their activities by lending out their display. The display has also been finding its way to group and district functions, where it sometimes serves as an eye-opener or reminder to our own members of the wealth of experience, strength and hope that is available to share with the still-suffering alcoholic.

Treatment Facilities

The First A.A. Group To Meet in a Hospital

In 1939, the year the Big Book was published, the head of New York's Rockland State Hospital accepted the idea of A.A. for his patients. This is recorded by Bill W. in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (p. 12), as follows:

"The big excitement came with the start of the first mental hospital group. Bob [Bob V., A.A. member in New Jersey] had been talking to Dr. Russell E. Blaisdell, head of New York's Rockland State Hospital, a mental



Plaque at the entrance to hospital grounds.

institution, which stood nearby. Dr. Blaisdell had accepted the A.A. idea on sight for his alcoholic inmates. He gave us the run of their ward and soon let us start a meeting within the walls. The results were so good that a few months later he actually let busloads of committed alcoholics go to the A.A. meetings which by then had been established in South Orange, New Jersey, and in New York City. For an asylum superintendent this was certainly going way out on the limb. But the alcoholics did not let him down. At the same time the A.A. meeting was established on a regular basis in Rockland itself. The grimmest imaginable cases began to get well and



The Russell E. Blaisdell Alcoholism Treatment Center, where meetings were first held, is no longer in use.

stay that way when released. Thus began A.A.'s first working relation with a mental hospital, since duplicated more than 2000 times. Dr. Blaisdell had written a bright page in the annals of alcoholism."

Since that first meeting there have been thousands of A.A. groups meeting in hospitals and treatment facilities. Sixty-two years later A.A. meetings continue at Rockland State Hospital. There are meetings five days a week and Rockland County Institutions Committee also holds their exchange meeting on the premises.

Correctional Facilities

Service Takes A Front Seat at Florida Meeting

It was a first for the New Birth Group at Tomoka Correctional Facility in North Florida: Immediate past delegate Kathy P. had responded affirmatively to the group's invitation last January to come and talk about the General Service Conference before the main prison and work camp units—both of them active in service. Says Cecilia R., outside general service representative for the New Birth Group and immediate past chair of the North Florida Area: "Everyone was very excited, and the pending delegate's visit quickly became a main event."

Representatives from both prison units met for a day to hear Kathy explain how the Conference works, and how it fits into the big picture of A.A. Then alternate delegate Tom G. described the International Convention, held every five years, that draws more than 45,000 A.A.s and their friends from around the world to celebrate

their sobriety. He also spoke about Regional Forums and how these weekend sharing sessions strengthen communication and unity within the Fellowship.

A lunch was prepared and served by members of the main prison unit. Afterward, according to the Delegate's Report written by the men who attended the Conference report meeting, "several outside trusted servants, as well as inside trusted servants, participated in discussions about service at the group, district and area levels." Some comments from New Birth Group members:

"When Kathy and Tom came to Tomoka," observed Leon H., "I was really impressed—I wasn't aware that the concern for me and my sisters and brothers behind the fence was as high as it was. You'd think concern for us would be close to the bottom, but the worse your condition the higher you are, with the General Service Office carrying the weight. But what really impressed me was hearing about the delegates and their duties, which seem to be endless and require so much time, work and travel. Seeing how much someone is doing for me gives me the inspiration to be a servant to my group and work with dedication, because 'it works if you work it and it won't if you don't.'"

"Encountering a delegate inside the walls was a unique experience for me," commented Jesse S. "It is something I would like to see more of for myself and the members of the group."

George W. said that while he'd had some idea of the responsibilities of an A.A. delegate, "having Kathy share with us here at Tomoka has enhanced my knowledge even more. Tom G. was very enlightening too, and the experience was by far the best that I've encountered here. As an alcoholic and a member of this group, I appreciate any trusted servant who comes inside to bring us the A.A. program." George added that "the book *A.A. Comes of Age* is very informative. All the information I can receive is helpful."

New From G.S.O.

The following new translations are now available; 20% sales discount applies.

- *Romanian* — Big Book, (SM-30), \$5.60.
- *Slovene* — Twelve and Twelve, (SLV-2), \$5.00.
- *Mongolian* — Big Book, (SMO-1), \$5.60.
- *Turkish* — "44 Questions," (SQ-7), \$.25; "Do You Think You're Different?," (SQ-9), \$.30; "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship," (SQ-8), \$.15.
- *Ukrainian* — "Do You Think You're Different?," (SUK-5), \$.30; "Is There An Alcoholic In Your Life?," (SUK-6), \$.25; "Young People and A.A.," (SUK-4), \$.30; "This is A.A.," (SUK-8), \$.15.

Frontline Sharing Marks Tenth 'Bridge The Gap' Weekend

When the Tenth Annual Bridge the Gap Workshop Weekend convened at the Ramada Inn Airport in Kansas City, Missouri, Sept. 29-Oct. 1, attendees were there from around the U.S. and Canada—most of them seasoned hands when it comes to carrying the A.A. message into correctional or treatment institutions.

Says Andy M., of Burnsville, Minnesota, who coordinated this year's event: "An endless supply of experience and enthusiasm was provided by individuals who had served as area or district C.F., T.F. and Bridge the Gap committee chairs—not to mention numerous intergroup managers and other interested, involved A.A.s." There were many 10-minute presentations on BTG topics, each followed by a five-minute question/answer period. Workshop sessions focused heavily on the practical aspects of finding temporary contacts for probationers, work-release inmates, outpatients, inpatients, prisoners, detox residents, adolescent patients and others. Some random sharing:

Susie R. of Illinois, age 89 and sober for 38 years, said she has been taking a meeting into the women's prison in Joliet for 23 years. While there is no formal program set up for BTG locally, Susie explained, she calls A.A. women and arranges for them to take "my girls" to meetings upon their release. She personally collects literature from local districts and gives it to the prison staff for distribution.

Ron A., Northern New Jersey (Area 44) T.F. committee chair, reported that his committee holds four workshops a year and invites nonalcoholics to participate in at least three of them. The New Jersey BTG program utilizes an 800 number and postcards to help clients reach the area chair, who then passes on each request for a temporary sponsor to the district member responsible for making the contact. In the first nine months of 2000, Ron said, 180 contacts had been arranged. He suggested that BTG committees worry less about upping the number of members joining in the effort and concentrate more on the fact that they are "part of the solution to a big problem."

Michael S., Southern Minnesota Area (36) T.F. committee chair, noted that the area and the Minneapolis Intergroup cooperate in sharing expenses. Two or three people work three shifts a week; they call A.A. members and follow up to make sure the contacts are made. Importantly they maintain a list of more than 1,000 members who are willing to be contacts for treatment patients, and pertinent information is updated with every call. The committee is working to expand the pro-

gram beyond the 15 centers that presently use it.

Judy L. of Colorado (Area 10) said that thanks to the pink can plan—placing pink collection cans at group meetings to finance literature for alcoholics in correctional and treatment facilities—her area has more than enough literature available to meet the demand. She stressed the importance of working within the guidelines established by an individual facility—"and let us remember always," she added, "that A.A.s carrying the message inside are guests, not the administrators."

Tom M., who chairs the Kentucky Area (29) T.F. committee, commented on the need for consistency. Noting his committee had recently gotten back into a facility that had previously kicked some members out, he said that reestablishing trust with the administrators was difficult. Tom emphasized that the job of A.A.s is "not to just drop people off at rehabs and detoxes but to follow up." When making presentations to personnel at treatment centers, he explained, his committee uses the A.A. films *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous* and *A.A.—An Inside View* with encouraging results.

Hosted by Kansas City Area A.A.s, the BTG weekend offered opportunities for fun and fellowship. And while the sessions each night ended around 10 o'clock, many A.A.s kept the hotel's hospitality suite open past midnight.

A sought-after feature of the workshop that lasts all year long is the Contact Points List, to which 30 new additions and changes have been made. Then there is the BTG Resource Library—a constantly updated storehouse of pamphlets, manuals, history, letters, BTG newsletters, plus a file of the former Treatment Facilities Newsletter published by the General Service Office, and another of *Bar 4-5-9* issues and articles. Also included are skit manuscripts, audio tapes of BTG workshops held at A.A.'s International Conventions, and more. Copies of most everything are available upon request. For these, or for other BTG information, write to BTG coordinator: 2150 East Cliff Road, #216-B, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337; or call 952-890-6467. "Please," says Andy, "do make a contribution to cover copies and postage."

The Eleventh BTG Workshop Weekend will be held Oct. 19-21, 2001, in Denver, Colorado.

French Literature Orders

Just a reminder that the Montreal office remains open to serve A.A. groups in Quebec that have primarily French-speaking members.

Services Mondiaux des Alcoolistes Anonymes Inc.,
230, Boul. Henri-Bourassa Est, Bureau 100, Montréal
(Québec) Canada H3L 1B8, Télécopieur: (514) 381-6328.
E-mail: smaa@qc.aaira.com

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

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2001

Calendar of Events

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

February

- 2-4—*Burbank, California*. 26th Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Conv. Write: Ch., Box 7610, Northridge, CA 91327-7610
- 2-4—*Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada*. Mid-Winter Roundup. Write Ch., 39 Maple Leaf Dr., Lincoln, NB E3B 7J1
- 2-4—*South Padre, Texas*. Dist. 27 Jamboree. Write: Ch., CL Box 4-26, So. Padre Island, TX 78597
- 2-4—*Iloilo City, Iloilo Province, Philippines*. 19th National Conv. Write: Ch., Manila Intergroup, 1692 Baler Cor. Pililla, Santiago Vill. Makati City 1208 Philippines
- 2-4—*Oostende, Belgium*. 12th North Sea Convention. Write: Ch., NSC, Grabenstrabe 1, Meerbusch, Germany, D-40667
- 8-11—*Honolulu, Hawaii*. 37th Int'l. Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Pearl City, HI 96782
- 9-10—*Allegany, New York*. NY-Penn. 29th Annual Day of Sharing. Write: Ch., 102 N. Highland Ave., Wellsville, NY 14895
- 9-11—*Liverpool, New York*. Salt City Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 3588, Syracuse, NY 13220-3588
- 9-11—*Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*. 2001 29th Annual North Shore Roundup. Write Ch., Box 91086, West Vancouver, BC V7V 3N3
- 16-18—*North Little Rock, Arkansas*. Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Convention Treasurer, Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72221
- 16-18—*Limerick, Ireland*. Limerick Conv. Write: Ch., Cratloe Cross, Cratloe, Co. Clare, Ireland
- 16-18—*Virginia Beach, Virginia*. 25th Annual Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 66173, Virginia Beach, VA 23466
- 23-24—*Sikeston, Missouri*. 20th Annual "Five Corners" Conv. Write: Ch., 501 Maple St., Kennett, MO 63857
- 23-25—*Burlington, Iowa*. 11th South East Iowa Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 188, Keosauqua, IA 52565
- 23-25—*Memphis, Tennessee*. TCYPAA. Write Ch., Box 241515, Memphis, TN 38124
- 23-25—*Lexington, Kentucky*. 50th State Conv. Write Ch., Box 23, Lexington, KY 40588-0023

March

- 1-3—*Havana, Cuba*. First Women's Conference in Cuba. Write Ch., William Carey Baptist Church, c. J no. 555 e/ 25 y 27 Vedado, Havana, Cuba

- 2-4—*Jekyll Island, Georgia*. 14th Unity Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 214911, S. Daytona, FL 32121
- 2-4—*Spokane, Washington*. PRAASA. Write: Ch., Box 14195, Spokane, WA 99214
- 9-11—*Fresno, California*. NCCAA 54th Annual Spring Conference. Write: Sec., 1723 Anamor St., Redwood City, CA 94061
- 9-11—*Victorville, California*. 17th Annual High Desert Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1894, Apple Valley, CA 92307
- 9-11—*Troy, Michigan*. 49th State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2326, Garden City, MI 48136
- 9-11—*Columbus, Ohio*. Area 53 Panel 51 Mini Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2131, Columbus, OH 43216
- 16-18—*Omaha, Nebraska*. Luck of the Irish Roundup. Write Ch., Box 241411, Omaha, NE 68124-5411
- 16-18—*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*. Regional Conf. Write Ch., 1052 Pape Ave., Box 60010, Toronto, ON M4K 3W2
- 16-18—*Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Canada*. 33rd Annual Roundup. Write Ch., 2591 - 26th Street, N.E., Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3C8
- 22-25—*Ruston, Louisiana*. 10th Annual Upstate Conv. Write Ch., Box 651, Ruston, LA 71273-0651
- 23-25—*Wichita, Kansas*. 26th Annual Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1814, Wichita, KS 67201-1814
- 23-25—*Bloomington, Illinois*. ISCYPAA 2001. Write Ch., Box 81, Bloomington, IL 60108
- 23-25—*Newport, Rhode Island*. Rhode Island Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1058, Charlestown, RI 02813
- 24-25—*San Francisco, California*. Living Miracles 2001 (hosted by gay and lesbian members). Write: Ch., 530 Divisadero, Box 100, San Francisco, CA 94115
- 30-April 1—*DuBois, Pennsylvania*. 10th Western PA. Getaway Weekend. Write: Ch., 369 Bost Dr., West Mifflin, PA 15122

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

February (page 41): "Spiritual Agony"

March (page 41): The Third Step

- 30-April 1—*Cherry Hill, New Jersey*. 37th Annual Area 45 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 693, Pleasantville, NJ 08232
- 30-April 1—*Monticello, New York*. 36th South-Eastern New York Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1199, Carmel, NY 10512

April

- 6-8—*Fort Wayne, Indiana*. 21st Annual Northeast Indiana Conv. Write: Ch., 3316 Arrowwood Dr., Ft. Wayne, IN 46815
- 12-16—*Bundoora, Melbourne, Australia*. 36th Australian Conv. Write: Sec., Box 368, Geelong, Victoria, Australia 3213
- 13-15—*Ames, Iowa*. Aim For Ames Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010
- 20-22—*Eureka Springs, Arkansas*. Springtime in the Ozarks. Write Ch., Box 2427, Rogers, AR 72757
- 20-22—*Galt, California*. 29th Annual Northern California Hospital & Institution Conf. Write Ch., Box 214, Galt, CA 95632
- 20-22—*St. Louis, Missouri*. International Men's Conf. Write Ch., Box 430025, St. Louis, MO 63143-0025
- 27-29—*Burlington, Vermont*. Area 70 Conv. Write Ch., Box 2001, Wallingford, VT 05773

Planning a Future Event?

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

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

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 19 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

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

27-29—*Canandaigua, New York*. 16th
Annual Conf. of the Lakes. Write Ch., Box
902, Canandaigua, NY 14424

27-29—*Watertown, New York*. 36th
Anniversary Thousand Islands
(International) Dist. 3B Conf. Write Ch.,
Midtown Towers, Apt. 803, Watertown,
NY 13601

May

4-6—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 55th
Laurel Highlands Conf. Write Ch., Box 6,
Bovard, PA 15619

5-6—*Grants Pass, Oregon*. 26th Rogue
Roundup. Write Ch., Box 1741, Grants
Pass, OR 97528

11-13—*Dayton, Ohio*. Women's XXIII
Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 1527, Dayton,
OH 45401-1527

11-13—*Melbourne, Florida*. Spacecoast
Roundup. Write: Ch., 720 E. New Haven
Ave., #3, Melbourne, FL 32901

17-20—*Daytona Beach, Florida*. 11th
Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 214911, S.
Daytona, FL 32121

18-20—*Port Angeles, Washington*. Second
Annual Olympic Roundup. Write: Ch.,
Box 1081, Port Angeles, WA 98362

19-20—*Waco, Texas*. NETA Correctional
Facilities Conv. Write: Trsr, 1810
Winjoyce Rd., Apt. 102, Garland, TX
75043