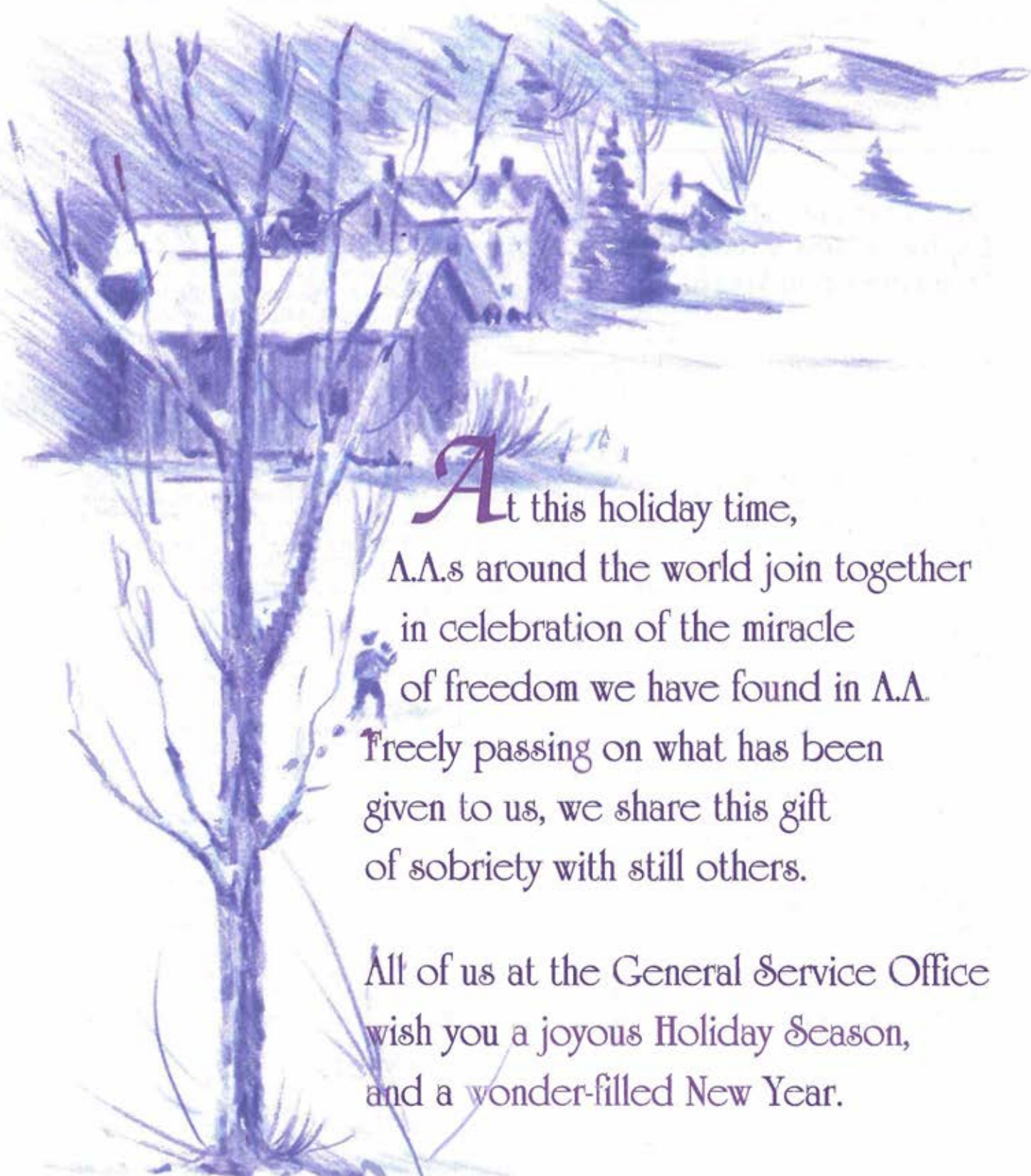


BOX 4|5|9

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

VOL. 46, No. 6/ HOLIDAY ISSUE 2000



*A*t this holiday time,
A.A.s around the world join together
in celebration of the miracle
of freedom we have found in A.A.
Freely passing on what has been
given to us, we share this gift
of sobriety with still others.

All of us at the General Service Office
wish you a joyous Holiday Season,
and a wonder-filled New Year.

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., 2000

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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.

World Service Meeting Explores New Challenges Of a Changing World

The theme of the 16th World Service Meeting (WSM) was "A.A.—Our Future Is Our Responsibility." Like the themes of all the meetings that had gone before, this one was inextricably tied to A.A. unity. Said Dieter H. of German-speaking Europe: "Our co-founder Bill W. stressed in a letter he wrote back in 1949, 'Though many of us have had to struggle for sobriety, never yet has this Fellowship had to struggle for lost unity. Consequently, we sometimes take this one great gift for granted. We forget that, should we lose our unity, the millions of alcoholics who still "do not know" might never get their chance.' " (*As Bill Sees It*, p. 297)

Held at New York City's Crowne Plaza Hotel from October 22-26, the WSM attracted 39 delegates representing 29 countries. The productive four-day meeting was filled with presentations and workshops in which the delegates shared problems and solutions, renewed old friendships and made new ones. Many of the presenters stressed the need for countries, like individuals, to share their experience, strength and hope one-on-one, at meetings and through A.A. literature. "The message has never changed—only the messenger has," commented U.S. trustee-at-large Dean R. "Wherever we are in the world today, the same message of recovery delivered to A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob by Bill W. is available to all suffering alcoholics. The message is the same because we have preserved the integrity of the A.A. literature that contains it."

Speaking on "Sponsorship: Country-to-Country," Tomás H. G. of Mexico spoke of his country's efforts to carry the message into Cuba. In 1992, he related, "two A.A.s, Ciro V. and Juan A., offered the Cuban authorities a proposal to provide information about A.A.—'a

program without nationality, a political agenda or hope for financial gain.' The doors of Cuban institutions at once were opened to the Fellowship, and the Sueño Group was established. Three years later, more than 40 groups had sprung up; and in 1999 the fledgling board of trustees agreed that Mexico would 'sponsor' Cuba. Today Cuba has a General Service Conference. Their General Service Office has started distributing literature donated by several countries and also has begun organizing efforts to carry the A.A. message to the interior of the island. All told, there are approximately 130 groups today striving to bring light into the darkness where alcoholics are suffering."

Sharing on the same subject, Steve P. of New Zealand reported that "members are taking A.A. into Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, a vast, multicultural region. As we did earlier in sponsoring other countries, we have produced pamphlets in several Polynesian Island languages. Though these were greeted warmly, the demand unfortunately wasn't great because most of our neighboring countries believe that family and church will and should fix any problems—a belief that just doesn't seem to work with alcoholism." Recounting an experience he had with a Samoan family, Steve said that "one evening when returning from an A.A. meeting with a gentleman we had recently Twelfth Stepped, we found his family waiting for him. They promptly set about beating him up because he had gone outside the family and church for help. Hence the job is still there to be done; the seed is still there to be planted."

Feliks D. of Poland suggested that country-to-country sponsorship might be furthered by holding two or more countries' service meetings jointly in the interest of sharing experience and problem-solving. "In Poland next fall," he noted, "we will hold an international meeting of former Communist countries in which A.A. groups were founded, and we have invited several neighboring West European countries to participate. Why? Because we well remember the difficulties we might have avoided if such meetings with our West European friends, with their ampler experience, had been available to us."

"How Can We Better Carry the Message in a Changing World?" Addressing the challenge, Brazilian delegate Júlio T. pointed out that "our intergroups, central offices, area committees, G.S.O. and general service board need to count on sufficient human and financial resources if we are to be successful in carrying the A.A. message. I believe that sponsorship among countries, as Mexico and Colombia are doing, should be encouraged—and should be a constant theme of the WSM. . . . We also need to work on leadership in A.A. No matter how well-structured we are, if we do not have good leadership at all levels, the A.A. message

may arrive at its destination without the necessary clarity—or may not arrive at all. We need to work with our fellow members, and chiefly with the newest of them, in transmitting our experience and our Legacies of Service and Recovery.”

After offering her country’s experience in “Using Electronic Media Effectively,” Gudrun M., the delegate from Great Britain, suggested, “Let us look at the A.A. Web sites and examine whether it would be worthwhile to add a Service page where Conference Reports, Annual Reports and others containing information for all members could be published. Would this make service reading more attractive to some of our members, especially the younger generation? Could it help us to cut down on expenses such as printing and postage?” Anticipating questions about possible anonymity breaches, Gudrun said, “Using passwords and protected links to control access to these pages is a method that could ensure an authorized readership only. I feel this could be an excellent system of providing up-to-date information, and it would only be a matter of notifying members, through the usual channels, of how they might dial into the specific pages.”

Juan Manuel V. of Spain, whose presentation focused on “Attracting the Next Generation,” reported that “the results of a recent study released by the Universidad de Deusto de Bilbao for A.A. in Spain, and reported in our book *Informe Memoria*, reveal much about the younger generation: Only 11 percent of young people acknowledge having problems with alcohol, and more than half of them have not remained in A.A. for a year. These figures are unchanged from the last survey, indicating that for the past 10 years our efforts to bring recovery through A.A. to the younger generation have been at a virtual standstill.” Thus, he emphasized, “our primary objective is to carry the A.A. message to young alcoholics. We all know that groups which attract no new members are groups that tend to disappear. The essential secret is this: Carry the message. The same applies at the personal level, and if we fail to do it, one disillusionment will resound in the next, and the chain will be broken irreparably.”

Junji Y. of Japan pinpointed problems still hindering the growth of A.A. there. “While we now have about 350 groups,” he noted, “the concept of alcoholism as a disease is still completely unfamiliar to Japanese people, including professionals in the treatment field. Alcoholism is considered an indication of weak willpower, shyness, a cause of shame for the family or possession by the devil, especially in rural areas. Consequently, people really have to hit rock bottom before they will reach out for help.” However, Junji added, “I feel sure that there’s no barrier when alcoholics finally surrender and urgently need help. If they can find just one fellow alcoholic who has been recov-

ering through A.A., others will come to believe that it works and that they too can stay sober.”

The next World Service Meeting will take place in Spain, Oct. 6-10, 2002. Held biennially, the WSM seeks ways to carry the message to alcoholics anywhere in the world. WSM delegates represent countries where a service structure exists, a national office or, in many cases, a literature distribution center.

Lois F. Retires From G.S.O. After 23 Years of Service

One of the first things you notice about Lois F. is her voice—musical, smooth, calming. But don’t be fooled: Lois is a dynamo who, in her 23 years as a member of the General Service Office staff, has quietly performed wonders, from serving as coordinator of the 1990 International Convention in Seattle, Washington, to sharing her experience with the A.A. way of life candidly, clearly (and anonymously) on national TV. In September she retired from leaving A.A.s everywhere feeling richer for her presence at G.S.O.

“Retiring is hard,” Lois says, “because for so long I’ve been incredibly privileged to be part of G.S.O.’s close-knit family. But during the past several years, I’ve seen a big turnover in staff; wonderful oldtimers have gone, only to be replaced by people who are just as dedicated, just as enthusiastic about the work of A.A. World Services and with youthful energy to spare. Now it’s my turn to go from my A.A. job—though never from A.A. service. Like others before me, I identify closely with the thought our co-founder Bill W. expressed when he stepped down from active service. ‘Like every A.A. member,’ he wrote in the Nov. 1961 Grapevine, ‘I have a definite responsibility to become a citizen of the world around me . . . and [am] exploring certain areas of outside activity in which I may be able to make a helpful . . . contribution.’” (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 327)

The resourcefulness and flexibility needed during her years at G.S.O. were acquired by Lois early in life. Born in Delta, Colorado—“38 miles from Grand Junction,” she explains with a smile—she was “one of two sisters born to the life of Army brats.” Looking back she remembers being uprooted from homes “in Italy, Japan, all over the United States. We moved constantly, and alcoholism in the family was one of the few constants. I started drinking as a child, little sips of wine and beer here and there, and had my first black-out at 15 while in high school in Columbus, Georgia.”

But it was in college, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, that her drinking “really escalated,” Lois relates. Nonetheless she earned her B.A. degree and went on to get an M.A. in Education at California State University, San Francisco. “I then taught for 19 years in South San Francisco, Lake Tahoe, Reno and Germany,” she notes. “I also became involved in school administration. Although I didn’t realize it at the time, the experience gained would help me years later in my work at G.S.O.”

Lois has been sober since October 18, 1972. Active in service almost from the beginning, she served stints as secretary of both the San Francisco Young People’s Group and the Friendly Circle Group. Additionally she took turns as a General Service Representative and a District Committee Member, and chaired the California Northern Coastal Area Assembly.

Her sobriety assumed added meaning in September 1977, when she joined the G.S.O. staff. “There have been so many high spots,” Lois says. “It still warms me that I was able to attend Russia’s Third General Service Conference in Volgograd in 1992. I loved participating, back in the late ’70s, in the production of the Fellowship’s first film for the public, *Alcoholics Anonymous—An Inside View*, which shows A.A.s attending meetings (anonymously—no faces are shown) and going about their daily lives. And I’ve relished the chance to be involved in preparing a Fourth Edition draft of the Big Book, which the trustees’ Literature Committee expects to submit to the General Service Conference Literature Committee next spring.”

Contemplating changes that have occurred at G.S.O. since she joined the staff in September 1977, Lois recalls, “We did all our correspondence on the typewriter back then. Computerization was just coming in, and the Fellowship was worried about depersonalization. Actually, technology has speeded up the mechanical process, giving us the time to be more personal than ever.” Another change: “We used to get more snail mail at G.S.O.; these days online communication, faxes and phone calls are the norm. For sure, however we do it, I’ve loved being able to chat and share one-on-one with A.A.s all over.”

At the International Convention in Minneapolis last summer, Lois says, she was “overwhelmed by the many A.A.s there whom I’ve come to know and call friends as a result of my work at G.S.O.” As for any winds of change blowing through A.A. today, she feels “they are mainly wonderful—especially when you look at the growth of A.A. in other countries and the wealth of translated literature we’ve been able to publish. Our delegates are better informed than ever, and to me the whole service structure seems sturdier with each passing year. Thanks to the vigilance of our groups in supporting the intent and spirit of A.A.’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts, we are indeed blessed.”

Fourth Edition Big Book— Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why do we need a Fourth Edition?

A. Bill W. wrote about the new stories in the Second Edition of the Big Book, “The main purpose of the revision is to bring the stories 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.”

Q. What happens to the stories currently in the Third Edition, that will be dropped from the Fourth Edition?

A. The 1997 General Service Conference voted that there be a publication of stories drawn from the First, Second and Third Editions of the Big Book. This new book would be published sometime after the approval and publication of the Fourth Edition.

Q. Will we ever know who wrote the stories in the Fourth Edition of the Big Book?

A. Based on our Twelfth Tradition, placing “principles before personalities,” the authors of the stories in the Fourth Edition will be anonymous.

Q. How many copies of the Big Book have been sold?

A. At the 2000 International Convention held in Minneapolis, a commemorative copy of the 20 millionth Big Book was presented to the chairman of the board of Al-Anon Family Groups at the Sunday morning meeting on July 2nd.

Q. How many different *Alcoholics Anonymous* book jackets have there been?

A. Three. There has been a different book jacket for each of the three editions.

Q. If the Fourth Edition of the Big Book is accepted by the General Service Conference in April 2001, when will it be available?

A. It is difficult to say at this time as much will depend on the number of changes that might be requested and on various aspects of the production process.

Q. What about the first 164 pages of A.A.’s basic text?

A. An Advisory Action of the 1995 General Service Conference states that if a Fourth Edition Big Book is published, “The first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the preface, the forewords, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion,’ ‘Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,’ and the Appendices remain the same.”

Joy in Living Sober Disperses Holiday Blues For Grateful A.A.s

For many A.A.s, especially those closest in time to their last drink, the holidays, with their emphasis on gift giving and togetherness, can be a lonely, impoverished time. But A.A.s from the North Pole, Alaska, to Garland, Texas, have found that it is better to reach out, even in pain, than not at all, and it is often crucial to staying sober.

Some years ago one A.A. sent the General Service Office an anonymous greeting, typed on orange paper and adorned with two Christmas seals depicting a tree and a star. "Whether we light a fir tree, a menorah or just a candle," he wrote, "the act is one of turning from darkness. In A.A., acceptance, humility and love offer a capacity for peace and joy. For me that's what Christmas, Hanukkah and the joy of living are about—a celebration of being alive."

The holiday greetings that arrive at the General Service Office are small, large, gilt-edged and plain. Decorated with everything from madonnas to bits of mistletoe and shining stars, they send season's greetings in many tongues. "God Jul, Goth Nyth Ar," reads one from Sweden. "Gelukkig Nieuwjaar," writes a member from Belgium, while an A.A. in Japan, where Christmas is not celebrated, sends New Year's greetings: "Shinen Akei-Mashi-Te Omede-Toh." And from members of the Illinois Tribes: "May Christmas bring friends to your fireside, peace to your pathway and good health in the New Year."

What makes the holidays so special is that people everywhere communicate briefly in the language of the heart—something A.A.s do all year long. You don't have to know Hawaiian to translate *Mele Kalikimaka*, or speak French to understand what *Joyeux Noël* is about. And when one A.A. tells another, "Thank you for my sobriety," the meaning is clear as a crystal bell. Following are some examples of how group members in U.S./Canada towns and cities with holiday-sounding names feel about the season, and how they keep what they feel is their greatest gift of all—sobriety—by giving it away freely to the alcoholic who still suffers.

North Pole, Alaska. "Our North Star Group usually has holiday get-togethers at the Alano Club in Fairbanks, about 14 miles away," says Shawn M., sober in A.A. for 11 years and a Wisconsin native who has lived in Alaska since 1980. He and his wife have six children, three still living at home, and Shawn is busy not only in A.A. but at work and going to school to become a microcomputer support specialist. "Christmas is such an incredible time here," he says. "I was driving home tonight thinking how different my

life is. I have goals and peace in my daily living. I wish I could paint a picture of where I live, about 212 miles south of the actual North Pole. Here in the interior of Alaska, there's no wind. In winter, nature flocks the trees—spruce, alder, poplar and birch—with an icing of snow two inches high that doesn't melt, and frames them against the white mountains. The Northern Lights sparkle, and it is a dazzling scene. "So what was the big fight?" I ask myself, thinking of how I railed against life in my drinking days. Why the fight, indeed, when it's clear that God has a beautiful plan for us."

Excelsior, Minnesota. Mike N., the treasurer or "counting guy," as he calls himself, of the Wednesday Nite Group, says that "while we don't really do anything special for the holidays, we make sure there's a meeting going on for anyone, especially a newcomer, who comes by . . . I see those alcoholics still out there and think, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' I've been to meetings at Christmas with maybe one or two others, but that's okay." As A.A. co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob found early on, he adds, "you need only two to have a meeting." For Mike, sober 14 years, his journey in A.A. has been what he terms "a spiritual progression." A.A. saved my life. I am grateful for every moment and today am into giving back what has been given to me."

Hollywood, California. "At Christmas I used to be in trouble," remembers Hugo D. of the Spanish-speaking Grupo Akron, which meets seven days a week. "But now I'm sober in A.A. since July 1998 and the holidays are a happy time." Hugo says his group holds regular meetings at Christmas and New Year's, but "afterward we often go to somebody's house for a party." He adds that Grupo Akron's approximately 35 members "wish everybody in A.A. *¡Feliz Navidad! y ¡Próspero año nuevo!*"

Holiday, Florida. "In November, at the church where our Kiss Group meets, we have an A.A. Gratitude Month dinner, complete with a speaker meeting and lots of delicious potluck food donations," says general service representative Linda S., who notes that the Kiss Group celebrated its 38th anniversary in October. "At Christmas we've usually held an alkathon meeting at the Central Service Office, but the office is in the process of moving so I'm not sure about this year. Yet if our members know that some A.A. s who will be by themselves or are in early recovery, they'll invite them to dinner in their homes. It's true of A.A. that once here, we never have to be alone again." Linda, who moved to Holiday, on Florida's west coast, a year-

and-a-half ago from Ludlow, Massachusetts, recalls "what a sick puppy I was in my first year of recovery in the Ludlow Group and the Easthampton Monday Night Group—I couldn't tie my own shoelaces without my sponsor holding my hand." On a happy note, she relates that her husband, Paul, a fellow A.A., "was my mailman while I was still drinking. We've been married seven years, and I've been sober in Alcoholics Anonymous for six."

Chrisman, Illinois. Says past delegate (1997-98) Larry H., sober 20 years: "We may sound like Christmas but are named after a fellow named Chrisman who settled this town. Still, for the holidays we do have a big star perched atop our tall grain elevator." To Larry's way of thinking, a lot of holiday good gets lost in all the commercialism. "Why be nice just one time of the year? Why send cards to people at Christmas and then not talk to them the rest of the year?" he asks rhetorically. "Every day is Christmas for me. As Dr. Bob admonished, Let's 'keep it simple.' Like my Paris Tuesday Night Group: We don't have a big Christmas party, but we make sure to meet, holiday or not. We're there to help the alcoholic who needs us and to stay sober ourselves."

Carrollton, Virginia. Walt S. of the 30-year-old Smithfield Group reports that "the members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon together celebrate with an 'eating meeting' on December 17. The two groups provide country ham, fried chicken and biscuits, and individual members bring the rest. The eating meeting attracts about 100 A.A.s, Al-Anons and their families. We have both A.A. and Al-Anon speakers, and everyone enjoys a wonderful time." Walt, who celebrates his 11th A.A. anniversary on December 26, remembers spending his first sober New Year's Eve in rehab. "So much good has happened to me since," he says. "I'm a very grateful recovering alcoholic."

Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Area chairperson Jerry M. reports that as many as 120 A.A.s and their family and friends—including Santa Claus—show up at the District 15 Christmas party held at the Veterans Administration hospital. "One year," he remembers, "we performed a parody of Ebenezer Scrooge's encounter with Christmases past [in Dickens's tale *A Christmas Carol*—showing what it was like when we were drinking, what happened when we joined A.A., and how it is now." Otherwise, he says, "Christmas is just another great day of sobriety."

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Don B., who is just rotating out as G.S.R. of the Bethlehem Group, observes that "we are fortunate in having a lot of oldtimers in our group, which itself is more than 50 years old." Don, who celebrates his 21st anniversary on January 19, says that the annual New Year's Eve party is a tradition

with his group, which has an active membership of more than 130 A.A.s. "We have a speaker meeting followed by dinner, dancing and a lot of camaraderie," he says, and the event draws more than 150 people. Don met his wife, Karen, in A.A.: "I was seven years sober and she was six when we married." During the 14 years of their marriage, he avows, "we've never had a fight. Just a few negligible discussions now and then that she happened to win."

Red Deer, Alberta. Dan W. of the Friday Night Group says that "in our area we have endeavored most years to hold a marathon meeting over a period of three days—Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day—expressly for those people who are having a tough time. Especially newcomers, who get very fearful when they first link up with A.A.—like with a new relationship." For Dan, "A.A. has been a wonderful journey. I stay involved in the groups—they're a positive force. Thanks to the Fellowship, today I have a passion for life."

Garland, Texas. For members of the Clean Air Group in this Dallas suburb, "just being together is enough," observes George N. "Sometimes members bring in cake and cookies but otherwise we simply put extra focus on members who may be having a hard time." Says another group member, Vic P.: "You know, for me there's little that's different about Christmas. I always had a great time, even when I was drinking, or at least that's how I remember things. But my group is vital to me. It's family. And we all wish everyone in A.A. a very happy and sober Holiday."

Keep Adding to The Basket and Others Will Too

"I believe the only way we can get our fellow members to accept their responsibility for supporting A.A. services is to lead by example," says Canadian Mel H. "For it to happen, somebody has to start the wheels turning, and it might as well be me."

Mel, who served as a (Panel 34) delegate from Western Ontario in 1984-85, describes an epiphany he had about A.A.'s Seventh Tradition of self-support. "Very early on a spring morning in May 1985," he relates, "I was driving the 150-mile trip home to Owen Sound after presenting the delegate's report at an assembly the evening before in Niagara Falls. It was a beautiful time of day. The sun was rising, birds were singing, the grass looked very green and the air smelled fresh and clean. I realized how lucky I'd been to

become an active member of the Fellowship. I had a good job, and after 25 years of sobriety my debts were paid. I enjoyed warm family ties, good health and an excellent relationship with my Higher Power."

Mel relates, "I remembered Concept XII and its six Warranties that form the spiritual foundation of A.A. World Services. I thought of Warranty Two, which points out that while giving time for Twelfth-Step work isn't a problem for most of us, giving money is a different matter. As the Warranty states clearly, 'when it comes to the actual spending of cash, particularly for A.A. service overhead, many of us are apt to turn a bit reluctant. We think of the loss of all that earning power in our drinking years . . . We find, too, that when we drop money in the meeting hat, there is no such bang as when we talk for paying to a newcomer. There is not much romance in paying the landlord.'" (*Twelve Concepts for World Service*, p. 65)

Then and there, says Mel, who celebrated his 50th A.A. birthday on December 2, "I decided to give 1 percent of my gross income each year to my Scenic City home group. At the time that meant about \$10 a week. I'd make sure that if I missed one week, it would be made up for the next. My giving on a regular basis seemed to have a ripple effect within the group. This worked wonders, enabling us to send as much as \$1,000 a year to the General Service Office in New York. The money has helped in a small way to pay for A.A. work worldwide. And for sure, contributing to it has become a vital part of my spiritual recovery."

G.S.O. Archives Celebrates 25 Years

For A.A. members who tour the General Service Office, the high point is almost always the A.A. Archives. Thousands of sober drunks have come to learn and lingered to savor the treasures of our history, first in the modest suite set aside for the original Archives in the office on New York City's Park Avenue South, and today in the more spacious quarters designed to showcase the archival collection at the current G.S.O. on Riverside Drive. Researchers as well, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, find in the wide-ranging collection an invaluable source of accurate information on the Fellowship.

Although the official opening took place at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in 1975, the idea for the Archives had been around since sometime in the 1950s, when co-founder Bill W. asked his nonalcoholic assistant, Nell Wing, to help organize valuable records of the growing Fellowship. Nell had already taken some

courses in library science, and later studied Archives management at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Throughout the years she served as Bill's assistant, Nell was a strong force for preserving important A.A. records, sometimes battling a lack of awareness or an excess of misplaced zeal among G.S.O. employees who were in a hurry to throw out old files. Bill himself always had a profound sense of history, and believed that A.A. Archives were absolutely necessary ". . . to keep the record straight so that myth does not predominate over fact as to the history of the Fellowship." Unhappily, as his widow Lois recalled at the opening ceremony, much of the early correspondence and records were simply not saved because "we were just too busy trying to help alcoholics and their families." Bill always appreciated the theoretical importance of records, Lois added, "but he wasn't very good at doing anything about it." Along the same lines, trustee Tom S. recalled visiting Bill in his office one day when Bill was trying to locate something in his files, and thinking, "It was a mess."

In the early 1970s, a fire in the building where G.S.O. was then housed brought forcibly to the attention of the board of trustees the dangers of losing vital historical records and artifacts. A trustees' Archives Committee was formed in 1973, at the urging of Tom S. and fellow trustee George G. George served as its first chair, and other committee members were two Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees with special expertise, the Rev. Lee A. Belford of New York University, and Milton Maxwell, Ph.D., along with G.S.O. staff member Fidge M. as secretary. Nell Wing became the Fellowship's first archivist.

Along with overseeing the steps needed to bring the Archives into being, one of the committee's first tasks (still ongoing) was to add to the collection of tape-recorded experiences of early members, a project started by Bill W. in the 1950s. In a 1954 letter Bill asked: "... I would like to have you make a tape recording about your recollections of the old days. . . . You can get a good running start at the history by retelling your own personal story. . . . I hope you can dwell at length on the difficulties, as well as the humor of those days, relating as many anecdotes as possible. . . . It isn't hard to prepare a fact sheet and so forth. The hard thing to lay hold of is the atmosphere of the whole proceedings, and anecdotal material that will make the early experience live."

Group histories were also eagerly sought. In the 1950s, Nell wrote to the groups, asking for information on how and by whom the groups were started, "how they grew, people who were especially helpful, dates, anecdotes about people and events, community cooperation, group problems - just anything at all you might have stored away in your memory." Currently, the Archives receives copies of area minutes

and histories as well as information on all the General Service Conferences and overseas conferences as well. Most recently, electronic records, files stored on floppy discs, and CD-ROMs have been added to the collection. All this material enables the Archives staff to respond accurately to approximately 100 requests (phone and mail) per week for information on old-timers and group, district, or area histories. This strong interest in our own history, which has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years, has also resulted in the organization of Archives by many service areas, districts, and central offices, as well as the publication of local area histories.

George G. commented recently on the paradox of collecting personal stories and recollections from members of an anonymous Fellowship, in which personal experience is paramount yet personalities are never the focus. The anonymity Traditions have always guided the work of the Archives, and members who contribute their taped stories or any other confidential information can be sure their anonymity will be preserved.

Judit Santon, G.S.O.'s nonalcoholic archivist since 1997, wrote in the Grapevine (Jan. 2000): "From an archivist's standpoint, the issues of privacy and confidentiality have become increasingly more difficult to manage in our age of modern technology. . . . All researchers. . . sign an agreement of maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the archival records with the understanding that access to them does not guarantee publication rights."

Judit, who has a degree in library science, is supported by a staff of three: Erin Lange, assistant archivist; Noela Jordan, research assistant; and Michelle Ramlogan, a part-time researcher (all nonalcoholics).

Judit enjoys showing visitors the exhibit room, where they find such treasures as first editions of every piece of A.A. literature (including all editions and printings of the Big Book), copies of translations of literature into 40 languages, photographs of early A.A. sites, and pictures of the founders and the early nonalcoholic friends of the Fellowship. Scrapbooks of newspaper articles about A.A., photographs and information about all the International Conventions, and such artifacts as the Lasker Award given to A.A. in 1951 visibly trace A.A.'s development from a few sober drunks in Akron and New York to the two million or more members around the world in the year 2000.

At times, visitors are moved to tears when they discover pieces of their own personal history. Now that the Fellowship is more than 60 years old, there are second- and even third-generation A.A.s, and it is not unusual for people to come across records of parents and grandparents who were helped by the founding members. Visitors from other lands find poignant reminders of their own countries' early days, such as

the Russian teapot used in very early meetings in that country and a handmade plate sent by Polish members when A.A. there was in its infancy.

Much of the archival material is very old and in danger of being lost unless careful steps are taken to preserve it. The storage areas of the Archives provide an acid-free, climate controlled environment to preserve old paper, most of which has a very high acid content and thus disintegrates over time. A great number of early records have been scanned for computer access, with the aim of making a larger body of material available, avoiding physical damage to fragile documents, and allowing the Archives staff to respond more rapidly to requests for information.

The physical preservation of records is absolutely necessary – yet far beyond that task is the immense spiritual significance of the Archives. Former archivist Frank M. wrote in the January 2000 Grapevine: "So many of us. . . believe that a careful study of our history is essential – to deepen appreciation for our gifts and to foster a renewed effort to remember and carry forward our original message. Archives then are about keeping our collective history and its struggles before us, stimulating a feeling of humility and trust in God's guidance, taking the abstract wording of our Traditions and transforming them into vital tools for survival. Keeping clear this window to our past can provide the best light for our future."

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 throughout the world 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.

Please send employment and A.A. service resumes, by February 28, 2001, to: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163.

Deadline for Directory Information—March 1, 2001

A reminder for area delegates: If you haven't already returned your group information printouts, please remember that the *final* deadline for inclusion in the directories is March 1, 2001.

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.

C.P.C.

'Adopt-a-Doctor' Program Builds On A.A. Experience

Aware that in its thickly populated area there are thousands of doctors and other health-care professionals—frequently the first to administer to the sick alcoholic—the Southeast New York (SENY) Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community kept seeking an effective way to present the A.A. message to them. Initial help came in the form of an article in *Bar* 4-5-9 (Holiday Issue, 1998) about how members of the C.P.C. committee in Broward County, Florida, were helping doctors to help their alcoholic patients with heartening results. The SENY A.A.s took heed and “did a little research,” only to find similar programs around the U.S. and Canada that were also successful.

“After much study,” the committee reports, “we came up with our own program. Called ‘Adopt-a-Doctor,’ its thrust is simply to inform our own physicians and healers about A.A. and invite them to an open meeting so they can hear first-hand accounts of those who are recovering from alcoholism.” Since doctors are exceptionally busy, however, and rarely attend the conventions or professional workshops at which we in C.P.C. might give a presentation, we developed a simple packet containing two pamphlets—‘If You Are a Professional’ and the single-page flyer ‘Information on Alcoholics Anonymous’—together with a letter addressed to ‘Dear Health-Care Provider’ that explains the goal of our program and our desire to cooperate (but not affiliate) with professionals. Wrapped around the packet is a cover letter to A.A.

members headed, ‘Does Your Doctor Know?’ It suggests presenting the packet to their own doctor during the course of a personal visit.”

Almost immediately, reports Dave Q. of the SENY C.P.C. committee, two questions arose: 1) ‘Does this program violate our Eleventh Tradition by promoting A.A. instead of relying on the power of attraction?’; and 2) ‘Are we urging our members to forfeit their own anonymity in discussing A.A. with a nonalcoholic?’ On the first question, Dave says, “we quickly agreed that we were not trying to promote the program; rather, we were explaining, one-on-one, a recovery program that has worked for us.”

The packet itself can be sent to the doctor anonymously, with no return address, or left with a receptionist. The first sentence of the packet letter addressed to the physician reads, “You have been given this information by one of your patients—a patient who is a member of A.A., who is in recovery from alcoholism and would like you to have the opportunity to learn about A.A.”

The second question, Dave acknowledges, “was more difficult. We heard about one A.A. who had told his physician about his alcoholism, information that was then entered on his chart. Subsequently his HMO sent notice that he must accept higher rates or else would be dropped from coverage. We learned that any information about a patient that becomes part of a doctor’s chart is available to the insurance company paying the bills. We are not encouraging A.A.s not to tell their doctors about their alcoholism—that it is an individual decision.

Earlier this year, Dave notes, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, New York, surveyed doctors across the United States and found that 9 out of 10 physicians didn’t diagnose alcohol abuse when presented with its early symptoms. When asked to compare results of treatment, 86 percent of the doctors surveyed felt treatment for high blood pressure is very effective, 69 percent felt the same about diabetes treatment; and only 4 percent said they believed treatment to be effective for alcoholism. We in A.A. believe we have found an effective solution for alcoholism, and we in South East New York hope our Adopt-a-Doctor program can in a small way help doctors understand that there is hope for the alcoholic.

Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

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



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



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



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



4 *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



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



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



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



8 *Go to church. Any church.*



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



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



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



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

BOX 4|5|9 BULLETIN BOARD

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

HOLIDAY ISSUE 2000

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.

December

- 1-3—*Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.* Ninth Sandlapper Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 14634, Surfside Beach, SC 29587
- 1-3—*Uvalde, Texas.* Frio River Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2076, Uvalde, TX 78802
- 8-10—*Panama City Beach, Florida.* Fourth Annual Celebration by the Sea. Write: Ch., Box 761, Panama City, FL 32402
- 24-26—*Copperas Cove, Texas.* Fourth Alcahthon. Write: Ch., Box 1068, Copperas Cove, TX 76522-1068
- 24-26—*Placerville, California.* Christmas Alcahthon. Write: Ch., 5850 MotherLode Dr., Placerville, CA 95667
- 24-Jan.2—*Isla Mujeres, Mexico.* International Conv. Write: Ch., 4464 Old Shell Rd., Mobile, AL 36608
- 29-31—*San Francisco, California.* WACYCAA Conf. Write Ch., Box 472053, San Francisco, CA 94147-2053.
- 30-Jan.1—*New Haven, Connecticut.* NECYPAA XI. Write: Ch., 12 Hidden Brook Dr., Brookfield, CT 06804.
- 31-Jan.2—*Placerville, California.* New Year's Alcahthon. Write: Ch., 5850 MotherLode Dr., Placerville, CA 95667

January

- 5-6—*Mesa, Arizona.* Mesa Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 814, Mesa, AZ 85201
- 5-7—*Garden City, Kansas.* 31st Annual SW Kansas Conf. Write: Secy., 410 N. Main, Scott City, KS 67871
- 5-7—*Lakeview, Texas.* Yellow Rose Conf. Write: Ch., 2915 Kingfisher Dr., Humble, TX 77396
- 6-7—*Spokane and Yakima, Washington.* Special Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 12-14—*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.* Mid-Winter Conf. Write Ch., Box 7734, Edmond, OK 73083
- 12-14—*Tyler, Texas.* 54th Tyler Anniversary. Write: Ch., Box 8373, Tyler, TX 75711
- 19-21—*Antiguo Cuscatlán, El Salvador.* 32nd Annual Conf. Write Ch., 29 Calle Poniente #517, Edif. Santa Cruz, San Salvador, El Salvador

- 19-21—*Corpus Christi, Texas.* 47th Annual Coastal Bend Jamboree. Write: Ch., 5433 S. Staples St., Ste. F, Corpus Christi, TX 78411
- 19-21—*Auckland, New Zealand.* 38th National Conv. Write: Ch., Box 35 128, Browns Bay, NZ
- 19-21—*Laughlin, Nevada.* 11th River Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 20326, Bullhead City, AZ 86439-0326
- 19-21—*Midland, Texas.* 31st Mid-Winter Conf. Write Ch., Box 2785, Midland, TX 79702
- 25-28—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida.* 11th Annual Emerald Coast Jamboree, Inc. Write Ch., Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-0875
- 25-28—*Raleigh, North Carolina.* 34th Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619
- 26-28—*Margarita, Venezuela.* 10th Congreso Zonal. Write Ch., Calle Principal 22A, QTA Anna, Pedregales, Isla de Margarita, Edo. Nueva Esparta, Venezuela
- 27-28—*Fort Dodge, Iowa.* Winter Rally. Write Ch., Ft. Dodge Winter Rally, Box 206, Ft. Dodge, IA 50501

February

- 2-4—*South Padre, Texas.* Dist. 27 Jamboree. Write: Ch., CL Box 4-26, So. Padre Island, TX 78597.
- 8-11—*Honolulu, Hawaii.* 37th Int'l. Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Pearl City, HI 96782
- 9-11—*Liverpool, New York.* Salt City Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 3588, Syracuse, NY 13220-3588
- 16-18—*North Little Rock, Arkansas.* Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Trsr., Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72221

Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

December (page 51): It works at work (If you work it)

January (page 51): Question your complicity

- 16-18—*Limerick, Ireland.* Limerick Conv. Write: Ch., Cratloe Cross, Cratloe, Co. Clare, Ireland
- 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

March

- 2-4—*Jekyll Island, Georgia.* 14th Unity Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 214911, S. Daytona, FL 32121
- 23-25—*Wichita, Kansas.* 26th Annual Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1814, Wichita, KS 67201-1814
- 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

Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on February, March and April events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by December 10, the calendar deadline for the February-March 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): _____

John Susan U. Linda Warren
Lump Bob
William Keith
Carl A. Johnson
Randy M.

Ivy Angel
Somie Ramona C. Lou
Catherine
Noela
Constance
Pamela
Frankie
Tom
v. 2.

Patricia
Greg M.
E. E. Davis
Dorice
Coreene
Joan John
Elizabeth
Frank L. Smith
Michelle

Bill A.
Alonso
Rwilda
Dora
Andrea
Susan D.
Joe
Amber

ADRIENNE
Beth
Lorraine
Maudie
Doris B.
Wilma
Shawn
Maggie
Dulene
Audrey
Judith
Ellie
Fannie
Frank W.