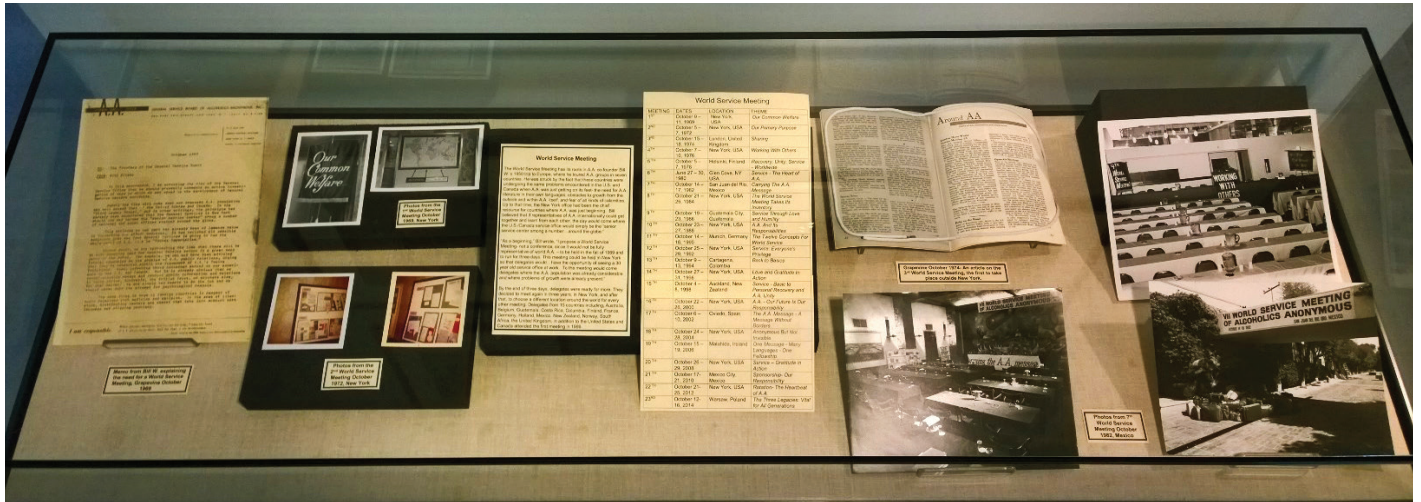


Bill W. Proposes the World Service Meeting



World Service Meetings Exhibit on display in G.S.O.'s Archives.

“The 1969 Project”

In October of 2014, 61 delegates representing 41 countries and language zones gathered in Warsaw, Poland, for the 23rd World Service Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. They came from Australia, Finland, South Africa, Japan, Canada and the U.S., just to name a few countries. The Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iran and Romania were represented for the first time. Simultaneous interpretation was available in English, Spanish, Polish, Japanese and Russian. There were presentations on topics ranging from how to use new communication technologies more effectively to how to get young people and older alcoholics involved in service. The theme of the four-day meeting was how alcoholics the world over can continue to put into practice A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

Exactly 45 years earlier, in October of 1969, the very first World Service Meeting took place in the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, where 27 delegates gathered from around the world. Bulletin boards displayed pamphlets in more than 17 languages, and the theme was the First Tradition: “Our Common Welfare Should Come First; Personal Recovery Depends Upon A.A. Unity.”

Although the particulars of the World Service Meetings have necessarily varied over the years—2014 highlighted a technology not yet invented, and some of the countries that did not yet exist. In 1969 they shared a common vision traceable back to an extraordinary position paper Bill W. presented to the General Service Board in January of 1968. In the course of five, single-spaced, typewritten pages, Bill set in motion the evolution of a

meeting that has had a profound effect on the service structure of A.A. worldwide.

Alcoholics Anonymous had been growing ever since 1939, with the publication of the Big Book; the program saw explosive growth after the famous *Saturday Evening Post* article was published in 1941 (which, as Bill put it, “landed our little service office [the General Service Headquarters in New York] with 6,000 frantic pleas.”) A.A. naturally reached across the border into both French- and English-speaking Canada, while overseas, the Internationalists—the first of whom was the peripatetic seaman Captain Jack—gradually spread the word. By 1950, when Bill and Lois toured Europe, Bill was able to visit A.A. groups in seven countries, and more were coming into the fold all the time. In 1955, at the St. Louis Convention, Bill announced that A.A. “had established beachheads in 70 foreign lands.”

While welcoming this growth, Bill understood how urgent it was that the message of A.A. not be garbled as it was transmitted in different countries and different languages. He also understood that overseeing the services A.A. must provide to its members would be a nearly impossible task for the small General Service Office in New York.

In his 1968 paper Bill explained how what he termed “local services” had grown up almost organically in A.A.—by which he meant the functions that most A.A. groups within a given community provide as they carry the message to fellow alcoholics through work in sponsorship, in hospitals, or via Intergroups. This activity, he explained, was “designed to meet strictly local needs and area problems.” On the other hand, “general or world

services” were needed to provide the loosely knit A.A. structure with guidance on a national and global basis.

But, he explained, the General Service Office in New York simply could not “forever provide complete General Services to all the A.A. countries...of the world,” as it had in essence been doing. The task was too overwhelming. Bill also understood that he did not want New York to become what he termed “the world capital of A.A.,” which might lead to a series of unfortunate trends—depriving alcoholics overseas of the opportunity and “healthy responsibility” of running their own over-all services, as well as forestalling “the creation of effective world leadership overseas.” On a practical level, as the A.A. population in other countries continued to grow, and possibly outstrip the North American population in terms of numbers, would overseas A.A.s want to finance the activities of G.S.O. in New York? And how, in any event, could a New York office manage (let alone fully comprehend) the public relations and other issues in New Zealand or Africa?

The answers to these questions, as Bill suggested in the 1968 paper, lay in the decentralization of the A.A. service structure worldwide, passing on leadership and the responsibility of financing activities in other countries beyond North America to the countries themselves. (There was precedent for this, he pointed out, in the *Third Legacy Manual of Service* and the General Service Conference Charter, which made it clear that North America comprised “only a part of the eventual world service setup.”)

In his typically forthright fashion, Bill asked and answered two potential objections to this decentralization. Did this mean that New York would “withdraw entirely from overseas service?” And did it also mean that “every country should maintain an expensive General Service Office?”

No, and no. G.S.O. in New York would continue to make the benefit of its experience available to overseas offices, while shifting some of the heavy administrative load to the countries themselves (who in any event would be best equipped to handle local matters). And Bill certainly did not expect countries with “relatively small A.A. populations” to have the entire panoply of general services provided by New York. Several countries, he suggested, might pool their resources into one G.S.O.

In fact, Bill wrote, many countries might not need anything more than a “General Service Committee, rotating in character, to be named by representatives of groups on the occasion of national annual Conventions.” The happy outcome of such a method would be to establish in countries a “rotating national leadership” that would “set the foundation for an orderly service evolution.”

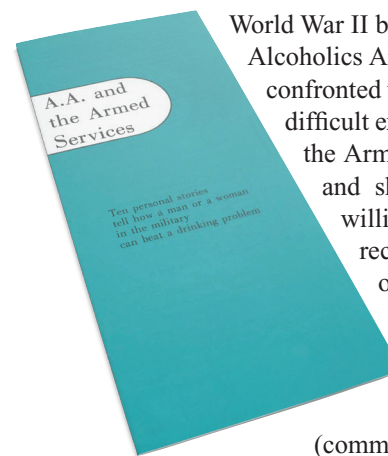
At the end of the paper, in what he termed “The 1969 Project,” Bill proposed that the first World Service Meeting take place in New York in the fall of 1969 to consider “in every aspect” the future development of world service. (In fact, with the approval of the board, Bill had already written A.A. representatives in 13 countries or zones, including Great Britain, New Zealand, France, Belgium, Central America, and South Africa, suggesting that each country send two delegates to such a conference.) Assent was enthusiastically received, and the first World Service Meeting took place at New York City. The delegates recommended the formation of four committees to conduct WSM

business—Policy; Finance; Agenda/Admissions; and Literature/Publishing. (Now, Agenda/Admissions/Finance comprises one committee, while a committee on Working with Others has been added.) Naturally, Bill W. was present. In a Statement of Purpose, he explained that the primary purpose of the World Service Meeting was “to assure that the A.A. message of recovery is carried to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world he may be and whatever the language he speaks.”

The second World Service Meeting was held three years later, in 1972, once again at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York. By this time, Bill had died, but his vision for the WSM would live on. Delegates at the second meeting agreed that the WSM should be held every two years; that delegates serve a four-year term; and that future meetings be rotated between sites. And, in fact, the meetings, like A.A., have “encircled the globe.” World Service Meetings have taken place in London, England; Helsinki, Finland; San Juan del Rio, Mexico; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Munich, Germany; Cartagena, Columbia; Auckland, New Zealand; Oviedo, Spain; Malahide, Ireland and Mexico City, Mexico.

A.A. is now present in 170 countries, with an overseas membership of more than 700,000. And there are currently 62 autonomous A.A. service offices worldwide. The 2014 World Service Meeting held in Warsaw closed with delegates reciting the Serenity Prayer in 28 of the languages spoken by the participating countries. It was a moving and powerful demonstration of Bill W.’s vision—the creation of “one world of A.A.” to ensure that help will be available to alcoholics no matter what country they inhabit or what language they speak.

A.A. In The Military



World War II broke out early in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, and members were confronted with staying sober through that difficult experience. Since then, A.A.s in the Armed Services have experienced and shared powerful stories. Their willingness to go to any length directly contributed to the growth of A.A. worldwide as they sought to help other alcoholics and maintain their own sobriety. Their efforts with the professional community (commanders, chaplains, doctors)

and the public (newspapers, fellow service members) serve as a powerful example of the spirit of A.A.s under extremely trying circumstances.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the most widespread war in history. Bill W. and other early members (an estimated 300 in all) sought to return to uniformed service during the course of the conflict. A.A. requested and was granted special permission for additional gas rations in order to perform Twelfth Step work.

One of the goals of A.A. Grapevine as it first began was the idea of sharing news from home with the boys overseas. The

first issue, in June 1944, contained a feature entitled “Mail Call for All A.A.s in the Armed Forces,” which ran through the end of the war, after which the title was changed to “Mail Call for A.A.s at Home and Abroad.”

The first A.A. group on a military base was begun in March of 1945 with the Jefferson Barracks Group at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks in Missouri. Soon similar groups started on Governor’s Island, N.Y., and at U.S. Army Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. A.A. developed in West Germany after the war as a direct result of the efforts of serviceman abroad. By 1948, there were groups in Bremen, Frankfurt, and Munich; the first European Roundup was held in Wiesbaden in 1952.

A.A. growth in the Pacific was also fostered by a U.S. military presence. By 1953 there were servicemen’s groups registered in Japan, Korea, Okinawa and Hawaii. To serve transient members, the Tokyo Group began a newsletter; by 1967, the Tokyo Group had nine meetings a week and held the first known Roundup in the Far East, featuring speakers in both English and Japanese.

The war in Korea saw A.A. members again seeking other alcoholics. As early as 1950, servicemen stationed in South Korea wrote to Grapevine, grateful for any contact by mail. By 1952, Ann M., Foreign Group Secretary at the General Service Office, had connected 15 A.A.s on the Korean Peninsula. As A.A.s rotated home or were deployed to Korea, they found each other because Ann M. knew something about the country that the generals didn’t—the location of other A.A.s.

The first Grapevine article from Vietnam appeared in 1966, featuring the story of “perpetual private” T.C.F., who had been reduced in rank several times because of his drinking, but who was four years sober at the time of his writing. Grapevine continued to capture military Loner stories, like that of the sailor who celebrated his 5th A.A. birthday in Newport, R.I., after spending his first four anniversaries at sea. In 1966, a Loner shared about using a military “hot line” to reach members around the world.

With so many members in the Armed Forces, publication of the 1974 pamphlet “A.A. and the Armed Services,” containing ten personal stories, was inevitable. The form it took was shaped by the 1971 General Service Conference Literature Committee, which recommended that the pamphlet be written so as to ensure that it reached every rank of soldier who might have a drinking problem. The pamphlet was revised in 1981 and again in 2003 and 2012.

Many A.A.s were among those deployed to the Persian Gulf during Desert Storm in 1990-91; these were sustained by cards and letters sent by members around the country. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, A.A. members answered the call to military service and stayed sober in Iraq and

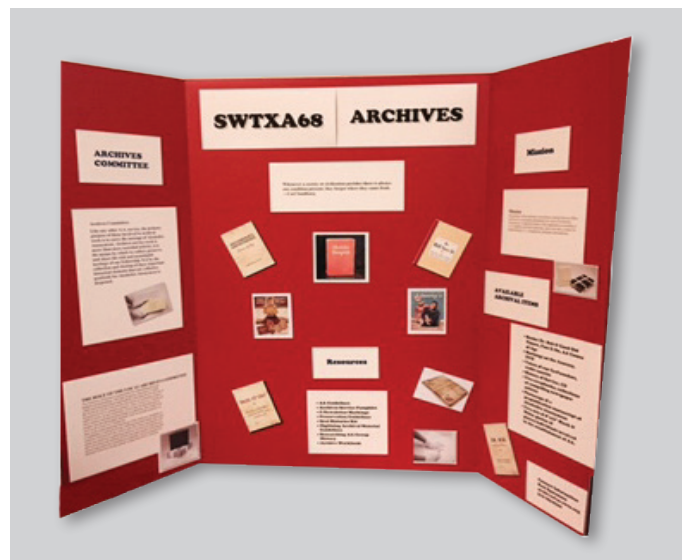
Afghanistan. Soldiers abroad could now take advantage of new technology that included Skype, online meetings, and stable voice communication, all powerful tools for helping themselves and their fellow alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous continues to honor its members in the military. At the 2010 International Convention in San Antonio, a panel meeting called “A.A. in the Military” included three members who had stayed sober while in uniform. Even more (including family members and USO volunteers) were in the audience and shared their experience, strength and hope. And in 2014 the International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA) hosted a program focusing on “being of service while serving your country.”

Throughout A.A. history, members have served honorably in the military while staying sober and helping to spread the message of sobriety around the world.

Roger W.

Archives Workshop at SW Regional Service Assembly



A lot is happening on all levels within the Archives arm of service to A.A. At our 2014 Southwest Alcoholics Anonymous Regional Service Assembly (SWAARSA) we had an Archives workshop, led by Cheri J. of Area 39, Western Missouri, at which she and several others shared information about the best ways to preserve, store, record accurately and display Archives. We discussed how to do group, district and area histories and create guidelines for them. We also began to network with other archivists in our area to share resources and pass on to others archival material that historically originated from another district. Kind of like an Archives-swap meet!

At the SWAARSA registration table, a quilt was displayed that one of the committee members had assembled from the bags we had made to share about this Regional event; many who were present, including trustees, delegates, various committee chairs and other A.A.s, signed the quilt for posterity. It is now housed in our Southwest Texas Area Archives, a gift from our SWAARSA chairs.

Please note...

Your Archives eNewsletter, *Markings*, is only available electronically. To sign up for digital delivery, please register on the G.S.O.’s A.A. website, www.aa.org. *Markings* is also available in French and Spanish.

On the district level, Norma A., District Archives Chair, and Rosi S., Area Archives Chair, worked together to produce a timeline of the history of A.A. in Austin. Using information gathered from G.S.O. files, newspaper articles from an Austin history museum, and other material from District archives, Rosi pieced together a timeline of how A.A. began in Austin, moving roughly from 1945 to 1953. She put it on wooden frames, with photos, pictures, flyers and other artifacts, and displayed it for the district and at local A.A. events. Rosi presented it at a local A.A. conference in slideshow format, while Norma A. presented a slideshow on the history of the Big Book, in honor of its 75th anniversary. We plan to present both at an Area level Archives workshop soon.

One of our Area officers, Tony R., who also has an interest in A.A. history, made a DVD of Warden Clinton Duffy from the

1972 Hospital and Institution Conference in Las Vegas, and our area delegate presented it to G.S.O. archivist Michelle Mirza (nonalcoholic). She sent Tony R. a thank you letter, which I am sure is now in our Archives as well.

A member in one of our local groups, the Service Manual Study meeting (in which we study the Twelve Concepts), also presented a history of the General Service Office in conjunction with one of the chapter readings. It included pictures of G.S.O. Archives as well as material that included all the different editions of the Big Book, awards A.A. has received over the years, and the first “Ask-it-Basket.”

So, from groups to district to area to region, Archives is alive and well and helping A.A. remember our history everywhere we can!

Norma A.



75th Anniversary of A.A. in Philadelphia

“It seems a great movement towards Philadelphia is welling up here amongst the brethren. At least one automobile load will put in an appearance, and perhaps two. It never rains — it pours!”

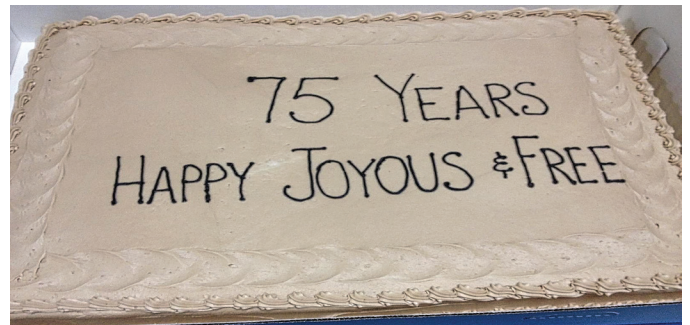
Bill W. in a March 4, 1940 letter to Jimmy B.

Alcoholics Anonymous began in Philadelphia on March 6, 1940, started by traveling salesman Jimmy B. (whose Big Book story is “The Vicious Circle” and who had been instrumental in convincing Bill W. to tone down the “God” references in the Big Book). In mid-February of that year, Jimmy B. had gone to Philadelphia to take a new job. Once there, he contacted Charlie B., whom he had known in New York, and together they hooked in two Oxford Group alcoholics whom Charlie knew, Bayard B. and Edmund P. Next came George S., who had written to the New York office seeking help (George S. had sobered himself up after reading the September 1939 article in *Liberty* magazine entitled “Alcoholics and God”).

All of these men needed, as Jimmy B. put it, “a few fellow alcoholics around...to stay sober. [And] thus I found myself in the middle of a brand-new group.” The first open meeting of the Philadelphia Group of Alcoholics Anonymous was held March 6, 1940, in George S.’s house. Bill and Lois W. were present (among an automobile load of alcoholics who had come down from New York) and coffee and donuts were served.

The newly formed A.A. group attracted the attention of two Philadelphia physicians, Dr. C. Dudley Saul and Dr. A. Weise Hammer. Saul, who had lost two sons to alcoholism, was chief of staff at St. Luke’s hospital, and began allowing the Philadelphia A.A.s to hold their meetings there. Even more importantly, Saul and Hammer were friends of Judge Curtis Bok, the owner of Curtis Publications, which was the parent company for *The Saturday Evening Post*. Bok was impressed with A.A. and by December of 1940 he was writing a letter of support to the Philadelphia Group that read in part: “My interest in A.A. is very sincere and you can count on me for as many good words and good deeds in connection with it as I can give.”

True to his word, Judge Bok called in a reporter named Jack Alexander and asked him to investigate this new program for an article for the *Post*. To aid Alexander, Drs. Saul and Hammer



A.A. in Philadelphia celebrated 75 Years, March 7, 2015.

wrote a list of the first names and last initials of 28 alcoholics who had stayed sober through the program. When the *Post* article appeared on March 1, 1941, A.A. in Philadelphia exploded, as it did in New York and the Midwest. A bigger clubhouse was needed and the Philadelphia Group contacted Ruth Hock, Bill’s secretary, at the Central Office in New York to order 10,000 reprints of Alexander’s piece (at a cost of \$175.00).

Only a year had passed since Jimmy B.’s arrival in the City of Brotherly Love, but already A.A. had firmly taken hold.

Mike G.

Recent Acquisitions to G.S.O. Archives

- Former Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Joan Jackson donated a collection of books, journals, photographs, and magazines relating to her work in the field of alcoholism and to her work as trustee of the General Service Board.
- An audio recording of Warden Clinton Duffy speaking at the 1972 Nevada State Assembly, from former Class A trustee and past chair of the General Service Board, Jim Estelle. In it Duffy recalls the difficulty he faced in trying to bring A.A. to San Quentin Prison.