

Let Your Group Know About A.A.'s Best-Kept Secret – *Box 4-5-9*

Where will you find tried-and-true solutions for group problems, along with creative suggestions for enhancing group life? What new Conference-approved books and pamphlets are available? What happened at this year's General Service Conference? Where and when are A.A. conferences and conventions scheduled in your area?

You hold all the answers in your hand – literally. They can be found in G.S.O.'s newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*, and the questions above only touch lightly on the ways *Box 4-5-9* can be useful in your group, district, and area. Here's another question: Is the newsletter regularly posted on your group's bulletin board? If not, a friendly reminder to your general service representative (G.S.R.) might be in order.

Box 4-5-9 has been around almost as long as the General Service Office has existed. The first issue was mailed on November 11, 1940, typed in letter format on an 8½" x 11" sheet of mimeograph paper with the heading *A.A. Bulletin*. It was created to fill the rapidly growing need for communication from what was then called the Headquarters office to the approximately 150 known groups, and its stated purpose clearly reflected conditions in A.A. at the time: "This bulletin is an effort to develop a mutual idea exchange sheet to establish a closer feeling of friendship between A.A. groups from the east coast to the west, and we hope it will prevent the secession from the A.A. ranks of our San Francisco group, who threatened to call themselves 'Dipsomaniacs Incognito' unless they heard from us more frequently. A bulletin has been contemplated for some time but delayed due to lack of sufficient personnel and office facilities. We now have at least the equipment and hope to be able to make this bulletin a periodic spree (not alcoholic)."

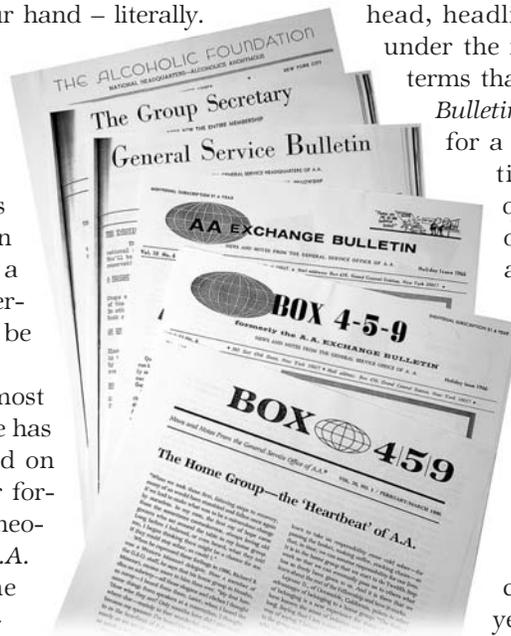
The bulletin was signed by Bill W.'s nonalcoholic assistant, Ruth Hock, and ended with a postscript: "Since it is not possible at the present time for us to furnish enough copies for distribution to every A.A. mem-

ber, perhaps you will feel it advisable to read this copy aloud at a meeting."

Over the years, *Box 4-5-9* would undergo a series of changes and facelifts. In May 1956, its title became the *A.A. Exchange Bulletin*, and the format was expanded into a four-page newsletter complete with masthead, headlines, and articles. The first issue under the new title described its purpose in terms that still apply today: "*The Exchange Bulletin* was created to fill many requests for a concise, movement-wide publication that would combine Headquarters' news, basic information on A.A. as a whole, and brief accounts indicating how particular problems are being met by groups throughout the world." G.S.R.s and group secretaries were urged to "let Headquarters know how the Bulletin can be increasingly useful in group affairs," and cautioned that "Due to obvious space limitations, only subjects of broad general interest can be covered." News of that year's General Service Conference included the fact that there were now

6,249 reported groups in the U.S. and Canada, with a total of 135,905 members. And on page two, a boxed item titled "Zig Zag" gave some insight into one way of carrying the message: "An A.A. member in Puerto Rico reports that he has sent literature to a man in Madrid at the request of a sponsor who was originally asked to cooperate by a member in Ireland who was acquainted with the sponsor through a woman member in Boston, Massachusetts. . . . Well, anyway, it got there!"

Beth K., a longtime G.S.O. staff member who retired in 1983, remembered doing paste-ups for the Bulletin in the early 1960s. "Getting it out was a hit-or-miss, last-minute thing," she said. "Everything was done in the office except the printing. We were all so busy, and there never seemed to be time enough to do the job properly." Another longtime G.S.O. employee, retired nonalcoholic archivist Nell Wing, recalled: "The office was in a somewhat dingy building at 415 Lexington



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., 2002

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.

Avenue. . . and we were all paid more in love than money. In 1966, I screwed up enough courage to ask for a raise. I won it alright – all \$5.00 of it – and I also won responsibility for putting out the Bulletin. That raise cost me a lot of headaches!”

With the 1966 Holiday issue, thanks to the suggestion of a member, the newsletter was renamed for G.S.O.'s postal box number, which was then, and still is, 459. Now an illustrated, occasionally two-color, 12-page publication with a clean, modern look, it is mailed to more than 52,000 groups the world over, and to thousands of individuals as well, and is also available in Spanish and French editions. The days of hit-or-miss, hurried paste-ups are long gone. Today, the job is handled by G.S.O.'s publications department: the managing editor plots out the placement of articles and illustrations, and the final layout is produced on state-of-the-art desktop publishing equipment. Printing and mailing of the approximately 60,000 copies are done by an outside contractor.

Since its beginning, *Box 4-5-9* has mirrored the state of the Fellowship, and as A.A. has expanded, so has the content of the newsletter. Regular features currently include news of what's happening in A.A. service, especially in the areas of corrections, treatment, public information, and cooperation with the professional community. Articles share members' experience in the basics – sponsorship, working the Steps and Traditions, home group problems and solutions – and expand our experience with news of the Fellowship in the U.S. and Canada as well as informative articles on what's happening in the rest of the A.A. world. There are reports of district and area programs and projects that help carry the message to the suffering alcoholic, and information on the service structure for members who are just getting started in service (and of course, for old service hands as well). Readers meet incoming nonalcoholic trustees of the General Service Board and are introduced to new G.S.O. staff members. The annual Holiday issue begins with a letter of gratitude from everyone at G.S.O., and features tips for keeping the holiday season serene and sober. A Calendar of Events

keeps members up to date on conferences and conventions, and *Box 4-5-9* is the primary source of advance information on the International Convention that occurs every five years.

In other words, the next time you want to know anything at all about Alcoholics Anonymous, try the pages of *Box 4-5-9*. And if you don't find your answer right away, drop a line to G.S.O. – your question just might be the inspiration for a future article.

***Box 4-5-9* Facts and Ideas**

Box 4-5-9 is mailed to group general service representatives every two months.

It is designed to be posted on the group bulletin board. Make sure that your G.S.R. is aware of this, and brings a copy to the group as soon as he or she receives it.

The Calendar of Events on pages 11 and 12 lists A.A. conferences and conventions over a two-month period. Page 12 is printed upside-down, so that it can be lifted up and read without detaching it from the bulletin board.

Copies should be available on every group literature table. Group subscriptions (for ten copies every two months) are available for \$6.00 per year.

Individuals can also subscribe, at a cost of \$3.50 per year.

Box 4-5-9 is a great gift for sponsees or A.A. friends who are celebrating an anniversary.

Literature Catalog

The new Fall-Winter A.A. Literature Catalog and Order Form are enclosed with this issue. A new feature in this printing: Titles that are also available in Spanish are noted, in italics, under the English title. A complete catalog of Spanish literature (FS-10) is available from G.S.O.

Opening for G.S.O. Staff Member

Applicants are now being sought for a G.S.O. staff member to commence work mid-2003. Interested A.A.s with at least six years of sobriety may contact the Staff Coordinator for an application form. Deadline for receiving applications is December 1, 2002.

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

In A.A. November is Gratitude Month

For many decades now, we in the Fellowship have formally carved out from the calendar the month of November as a time to express our collective gratitude for our individual sobriety. Interestingly, no one is exactly sure why that month was originally chosen, though its connection with Thanksgiving seems obvious. A.A. co-founder, Bill W., thought for a while that his sobriety had begun in November, but later calculations established the date of his new beginnings as December 11.

Misty origins notwithstanding, Gratitude Month has, since the 1940s, been November and our shared thankfulness over the years has taken many forms and will continue to do so as our membership widens.

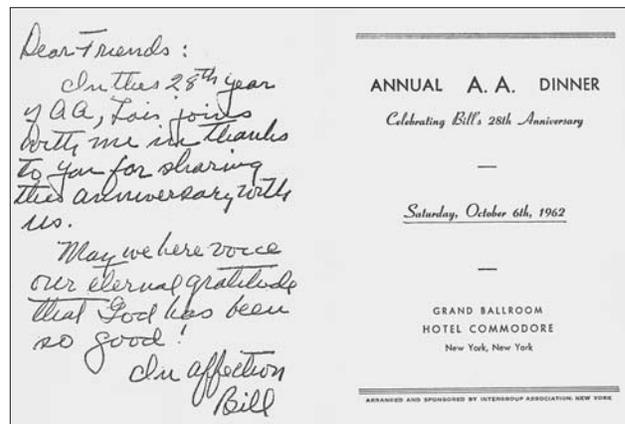
The General Service Board began giving small gratitude dinners in the 1940s. These were precursors to the much larger Gratitude Luncheons that were orchestrated during the 1960s as a Public Information effort of G.S.O.

A.A. Traditions were the undeniable anchor of our new sober life, Bill W. thought when he wrote, "What then could be more appropriate than to set aside Thanksgiving week for discussion of the practical and spiritual values to be discovered in our Traditions?" The Traditions, he wrote in November 1949, "are a distillate of our experience of living and working together. They apply the spirit of the Twelve recovery Steps to our group life and security." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 96)

The first sealed and approved, *official* recognition of an A.A. "Gratitude Week," to be specifically designated to coincide with Thanksgiving week, dates back to 1956. That year, at the Sixth General Service Conference, delegates approved a motion to that effect, stipulating that "this action be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help support A.A.'s worldwide services."

Carrying the message, expressing gratitude, as well as wanting to make a gesture of appreciation for the numerous published articles, books, and radio and TV interviews relating to A.A. that year, were what motivated a number of Gratitude Luncheons. These were held, always in November, during the 1960s at New York City's Roosevelt Hotel—where, incidentally, members of the media who might care to have a drink, were assured, in the invitation by General Service Board chairman (nonalcoholic) Dr. John L. Norris, that "cocktails will be served at 12:15 in the Library, and the luncheon will end promptly at 2:00 p.m."

Well-attended functions, these luncheons drew a sizeable, wide-ranging representation from the media, and



G.S.O. Archives

served a double purpose: to thank the writers and commentators who attended for their contributions to A.A. in the preceding year and to, in the words of a G.S.O. memo written at the time, "advance A.A.'s public relations by bringing editors, publishers, writers and broadcasters in personal contact with sources of reliable information on the movement." A typical list of invitees to the 1965 luncheon, who had published articles and books on the Fellowship were from *The New York Times*, *Medical World News*, *McCall's Magazine*, Macmillan Publishing Company, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and many other news and publishing organizations.

Bill W. always addressed the gatherings, as did Dr. Norris, and, in addition to a question and answer period at the end of the proceedings, there was always plenty of A.A. literature available for the guests to take along. In 1965, Bill sent an autographed copy of the newly-released *A.A. Comes of Age* to each guest.

Although those who came to the luncheons found them helpful and informative, the board thought they were too expensive a way to say thank you, when a letter from Bill, after an article or TV production was completed, would have been enough. Others voiced the opinion that more cooperation offered on articles or radio and TV spots might have been more helpful. In any event, the luncheons were discontinued in 1968.

Gratitude. We all know it serves us best when it's kept alive, in our individual lives and in our group conscience. Realizing this, countless A.A. groups over the years have used the month of November (for Canadian groups, it's October), to open the door of gratitude even wider. It's a sure way of insuring a continued healthy sobriety, group unity, and to avoid complacency and stagnation. Many groups observe Gratitude Month by holding Traditions meetings and taking up special contributions to the General Service Office for A.A. services worldwide.

This is an opportunity for all A.A.s to think of new and expanding ways to express and share their gratitude. For example, groups could hold topic meetings

during the month on the power and different faces of gratitude: "How Grateful Are We?"; "Gratitude is not Passive"; "Giving it Away."

How about trying something new, something your group has never done before, which will make the members' gratitude more tangible and real?

Traditions meetings, of course, always bring home to us all over again the richness of our A.A. heritage, strengthening not only our gratitude but the sobriety of A.A.s, old and new.

In deepening our appreciation of A.A.'s Traditions during Thanksgiving week, Bill wrote, "We could thus reinforce our faith in the future by these prudent works; we could show that we deserve to go on receiving that priceless gift of oneness which God in his wisdom has so freely given to us of Alcoholics Anonymous in the precious years of our infancy." (*ibid.*)

So how about it? Let's give Gratitude a real send-off this year!

Reprinted from *Box 4-5-9*, Oct./Nov. 1994.

Spanish Correspondence at G.S.O.

With few exceptions, Spanish correspondence from the U.S. and Canada lands on Eva S.'s desk, G.S.O. staff member on the Group Services assignment. First, the Group Services desk sees that Spanish correspondence (whether fax, e-mail or letter) is translated into English, for our repository of A.A. experience, and responded to in Spanish. This way, anyone in the office can benefit from the collective experience reflected in these letters from our Spanish-speaking membership. If Spanish correspondence pertains to a specific assignment, such as Public Information, C.P.C., or Treatment Facilities, it may be forwarded to that particular desk for reply.

Bill A., on the International assignment, is responsible for communication with all Spanish-speaking structures, groups and members *outside* the United States/Canada. In order to accomplish this, the staff member is assisted by a bilingual (English-Spanish) assistant and the services of our G.S.O. Spanish translators.

The Group Services staff facilitates providing services to the Spanish-speaking community that are as equal as possible to the services provided to English-speaking A.A. groups and committees. There are approximately 1,600 Spanish-speaking groups in the U.S. and Canada that are listed with G.S.O. and about 46 Spanish-speaking districts are serving in their Area General Service structure. As of July 2002, 30 of the 93 Areas of the U.S./Canada have at least one Spanish-speaking district.

International Convention Information

2005 International Convention Theme

"I Am Responsible" was selected as the theme for our international celebration of A.A.'s 70th Anniversary, June 30-July 3, 2005, in Toronto, Canada.

Thank you for responding to the call; we received 297 suggestions from A.A. members worldwide. The trustees' International Convention Committee considered each suggestion carefully and the General Service Board approved their selection at their August meeting. Thanks again for your very much appreciated input.

Other Convention Information

G.S.O. is beginning to receive requests for information on registration and housing for A.A.'s 70th Birthday party. Please do not write or call G.S.O., as this information will not be available for some time.

Registration/housing forms will be sent to all A.A. groups on our mailing list, as well as to intergroup/central offices, in September 2004. Notification of these procedures will appear in *Box 4-5-9* several times prior to September 2004, as well as information on other plans for this big celebration.

Admission Into Canada

The Canadian government is strongly recommending that U.S. citizens have a passport, as photo IDs will no longer be sufficient identification to cross into Canada. It takes from six to eight weeks to secure a passport and there is a fee involved.

Three helpful Canadian sites regarding border crossing, are:

1. Traveling to Canada - Before Going:
<http://www.travelcanada.ca/travelcanada/eng/beforetypes.cfm?Cld=1&Lld=2&CTId>
2. Canada - Consular Information Sheet:
<http://travel.state.gov/canada.html>
3. Application for Approval of Rehabilitation:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/coming/erehabil.html>

If there are any questions regarding the forms in #3, please contact a Canadian Consulate; some aspects of the current application may change due to a new law.

A new Canadian law will be implemented soon that will help some longtimers (10 years or more) who may have DUIs or certain kinds of felonies in their past. Under the current law, an individual who wants entry to Canada, but has certain past felonies or DUIs, would

have to go through a “rehabilitation” process and provide the paper work going all the way back in their past. With the new law, anyone whose past convictions/fines/sentences ended 10 years ago or more, would be admissible to Canada and would not have to go through a rehabilitation process. Anyone who has minor convictions (shop lifting, etc.), that are two years or older, would not have to go through the process, so long as all fines and sentences ended two years or more ago. We will have to wait and see how this law is written.

The G.S.O. will provide all new information as it becomes available and get it out to the Fellowship as promptly as we can. At that time, we will set up some preliminary information regarding the Convention on our Web site.

‘How Are We Doing As a Group?’ Let an Inventory Point the Way

One of the greatest gifts A.A. gives us is the means to be honest with ourselves and others—something that must happen before we can arrive at the group conscience so essential to A.A. unity and survival. But what exactly is the group conscience? How does it differ from a group opinion or a majority vote? And what is the best way to “get” there?

Not always understood, group conscience is a basic and powerful concept that makes it possible for people of diverse backgrounds and temperament to rise above personal ambition and to unite in one common purpose: to stay sober and help the still-suffering alcoholic to achieve sobriety. As a way to achieve it, the idea of a “searching and fearless moral inventory” threads throughout the A.A. program of recovery. First we are guided to take personal stock in Step Four, and to continue the process on a daily basis in Step Ten. On a collective level we repeat the process in Tradition Two, which states, “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. . . .” In essence, just as periodic inventory is essential to personal growth, so too is group inventory vital to maximum group harmony and effectiveness in carrying the A.A. message.

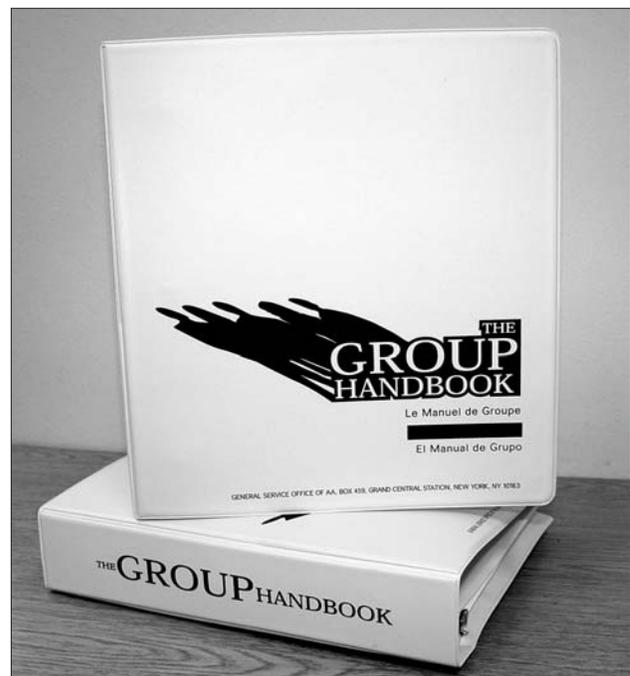
Says California’s Linda S., whose Sierra Step Sisters Group in El Dorado recently did a painstaking inventory based on the collective experience of other groups, much of it obtained from the General Service Office: “This was my first time being involved in an inventory; it was stressful but so rewarding.” When the idea was first proposed, she relates, “members expressed reluc-

tance ‘to stir the pot,’ as one put it, but as the women compiled a list of questions to be inventoried, in the order in which they wished to address them, you could feel their interest grow.”

Linda emphasizes that the key to the success of the group’s first inventory meeting, held last April, was in having an A.A. member from another group, former Northern Interior California delegate Inez Y., to keep the focus objective. During the session, which lasted about an hour and a half, each member had two-to-three minutes to question and comment—with no cross-talk allowed—as we went around the room.” Most of that inventory meeting was devoted to the question “Do we take time to talk to newcomers?” reports Linda, who says the ideas that emerged were then aired at the group’s next business meeting.

“Having arrived at a consensus, we voted to prepare introductory packets for newcomers and have greeters at the door to welcome and make them feel at home,” she says with a smile. “Now the newcomers are being bombarded with attention whether they want it or not.” So successful was the group’s first inventory meeting, Linda reports, that now it is being held regularly, alternating bimonthly with the business meeting.

Participants in another inventory conducted in June at the Northeast Regional Forum in Rochester, New



The “old” Group Handbook, which has been around for quite a while, has a “new” cover design. The loose-leave, vinyl binder contains key pamphlets and other information for group use. Particularly valuable for G.S.R.s and other group officers. (M-36), \$11.00.

York, found that there are many ways of moderating an inventory for a group, district or area, just as there are many ways for individuals to use our personal-inventory Steps. Commented one A.A. who attended the Forum: “The best suggestion I can give is to just *do* it. It can always be done again. Regular inventoring is good for unity and good for love and service.

No matter how thorny the problems, an inventory can provide answers. Experience shows it has the same strengthening, freeing effect on the group that taking Step Four has on the individual member. Many groups that regularly take a look at themselves use the questions suggested in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” (reprinted in this issue on page 10). And as Step Ten points out, “inventory-taking is not always done in red ink. It’s a poor day indeed when we haven’t done *something* right. . . .”

Numerous inventories are taken in the context of a sharing session, where, *The A.A. Service Manual* (page S36) explains, “. . . everyone has a chance to use their experience, strength and hope to contribute ideas and opinions about the welfare of A.A. . . . Each person offers an opinion and never needs to defend it.” Some members experienced in doing an inventory suggest that participants who share about a group problem be encouraged to offer a possible solution as well.

On sensitive issues it is suggested that the group work slowly, discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges from the inventory process—and always placing principles before personalities. The result rests on more than arithmetic—a “yes” or “no” count—because all members are encouraged to be heard. Their ultimate decision is the spiritual expression of the group conscience.

Note: Some A.A. groups find it helpful to review the “Twelve Traditions Checklist” at the time of a group inventory. A copy of the Checklist is enclosed with this issue, courtesy of the A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

Regional Trustees, U.S./Canada

Who and what are our regional trustees? What is their role, and what makes a good trustee? These are some questions posed to six past regional trustees who kindly offered their perspective on what regional trustees do, and in some cases what they do not do. The contributing past trustees represent various geographic areas in the United States and Canada, and several different eras of the General Service Board.

There are 21 trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Currently the board includes seven Class A (nonalcoholic) and fourteen Class B (alcoholic) made up of eight regional trustees, four general service trustees and two trustees-at-large, one each from the U.S. and Canada.

Today the General Service Conference has identified six geographical regions in the United States and two regions in Canada. The General Service Board has one Class B regional trustee from each region. Their job is to provide a two-way exchange of information between their region and the General Service Board. They are one of the primary channels through which the board communicates its actions and thinking to the membership, to the groups.

The eight regional trustees on the board today evolved from a single trustee in 1939 representing “outlying regions,” areas other than New York. Until 1966 the nonalcoholic trustees were in the majority on the General Service Board.

Regionals are elected for a single four-year term and the adage of “servants, not senators” certainly applies here. Co-founder Bill W. recognized the need to improve communication between the New York “headquarters” and groups at the grass roots level. He also knew that to be effective these communicators with the “outlying regions” had to be from the regions and nominated by those regions. On the other hand he was concerned that elected trustees would feel obligated to their region rather than serving the needs of our entire Fellowship. He feared that trustees obligated to a political process would lessen the spiritual strength of general service. The possible answer was having candidates for regional trustee nominated locally and elected at the General Service Conference by delegates and trustees serving on the Nominating and Trustees Committees. The Conference uses the Third Legacy election process, utilizing the “out of the hat” selection when a clear majority has not been established.

The distinguishing characteristic of the regional trustee is the ability to provide the General Service Board with an awareness of the interests and needs of his or her region. In 1976, regionals began serving on the A.A.W.S. Board, and, later, on the Grapevine Board, to assure their sensitivity to grass roots needs among the groups. Some years ago a past trustee remarked that regional trustees are the “windowpanes through which the board views our Fellowship.”

When questioned about the duties of regional trustees, past trustees, without exception, emphasized the importance of serving the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a General Service Board member, rather than as the representative of a local constituency. They also indicated that as communicators in

the field, their job was to communicate board actions and thinking, while actively listening to—rather than influencing—local decision-making. Most past trustees indicated that attending regional general service functions as an invited guest consumed most of their weekends and there was little time for other functions.

On the New York scene regionals and the other trustees have duties not so visible to the membership. All trustees are members of several trustees' committees. While the delegates in their Conference Committees carry the conscience of the Fellowship into the General Service Conference, the production work comes out of the trustees' committees and General Service Office staff – literature, audio-visuals, workbooks, and conference planning to name a few. Trustees are also asked to serve as committee chairpersons. In the intervening year between General Service Conferences these people spend many hours with their sleeves rolled up, helping us to better carry the message.

The qualifications of a regional trustee vary little from other alcoholic board members. At the top of the list though is a need for a person with both feet firmly planted in the Fellowship, particularly in general service. As the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* states, "...love and tolerance is our code...." Regionals also need to have an understanding of the concerns, problems and strengths of the region at the group level, and a trust of the process. Communication skills are essential, but maturity, patience, courtesy, and respect are far more important than advanced degrees. While the ability to work effectively in a committee and boardroom is important, a past trustee commented that from his first board meeting the environment was far more spiritual than he had envisioned. Another was impressed by the attention given the minority voice, and the need for open-mindedness.

Having sufficient time to devote to the work is essential, but the commitment is not intended to be a full-time job. Over the years the board has been made up of both working and retired members. In addition to a minimum of three quarterly board weekends and the General Service Conference, all in New York, most regional trustees find at least one half of their remaining weekends devoted to service functions throughout their region. While expenses are reimbursed, all trustees serve without compensation.

The four-year term is demanding, but it is also immensely rewarding. Most past regional trustees will describe their tour as a privilege with which they have been graced. And when further questioned, they will likely share that it provided many opportunities for personal growth. This opportunity to serve provides a perspective of Alcoholics Anonymous that is difficult to duplicate; it is a living lesson in love and service.

Correctional Facilities

The Power of Sharing Transforms the Lives of A.A.s Behind Walls

A young man named Steve sits in his prison cell. From his shirt pocket he carefully pulls a worn copy of the pamphlet "Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic" and reads the recovery stories of alcoholics like him that he knows almost by heart. Steve carries the pamphlet with him everywhere, like a good-luck talisman. He thinks it is A.A.'s Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Not everyone in A.A. has the access to its abundance of literature and information that so many members enjoy—something particularly true of thousands of alcoholics in correctional facilities across the U.S./Canada. One service of the General Service Office is to even this playing field, by providing shared experience to Correctional Facilities committees that carry the A.A. message, and our books and pamphlets, into jails and prisons. For some A.A.s inside this may be their main link with the Fellowship.

Literature alone is usually not enough: Many inmates are looking to turn their lives around and crave outside support from experienced A.A.s who will share their experience, strength and hope. This is especially true of the many people who are on a waiting list to attend A.A. meetings inside, or who are in protective custody or solitary confinement and cannot get to meetings. An insider named Jason explains, "As I got into sobriety, I needed the personal sharing that makes recovery from alcoholism stick." To encourage this kind of in-depth sharing, G.S.O. coordinates a Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.), which is one of the most positive Twelfth Step ways for outside members to carry the message to inmates on a one-to-one basis.

C.C.S. is simple to join: Just write to the Correctional Facilities Desk, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. How it works: G.S.O. sends the name and address of the inmate who asks to correspond with an outside A.A., who then initiates the first contact. Some members prefer to use their home group's address or post office box number, rather than their home address, for receiving mail. From the accumulated experience of A.A.s participating in C.C.S., guidelines for both inmates and outside A.A.s have been developed by G.S.O. that are available for the asking. Among other things, the service piece suggests

that in their opening letters, correspondents identify briefly as recovering alcoholics. The emphasis should be on sharing sobriety only; and it has been found best for all concerned to steer clear of emotional or romantic involvements. Most importantly, in the spirit of A.A.'s Twelfth Tradition, anonymity should be respected at all times.

Another effective Twelfth Step tool is the newsletter *Sharing from Behind the Walls*. It contains excerpts of the many letters sent to G.S.O. from A.A.s within and is of particular interest to members both inside and out, including local C.F. committee members who carry the message behind the walls on a daily basis. Most of the letters reveal the writers' gratitude for their sobriety and speak volumes for the power of A.A.'s language of the heart. A sampling:

Tom Z. — "I have been writing men who are incarcerated since my own release in 1992. I used the Correspondence Service myself, so I have first-hand experience on just what a difference an outsider can make in an insider's recovery. My wish is that I can give someone the hope that was given to me when I needed it most."

Karen G. — "I am currently in a county jail. Tonight was my second A.A. meeting. I received a pamphlet, 'It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell.' I am thankful for the sober time this awful place has given me—I didn't think I would survive a day without a drink. I felt my skin would fall to the ground and my bones would keep on truckin'! So far I'm 12 days sober, and I love it. I feel so alive and well."

Brian P. — "I'd never known A.A., but today I thirst for more sobriety. . . . It took a life sentence to get my attention, but now I share in the hope that this cunning, baffling disease doesn't do the same to another. I give A.A. one hour a day and it gives me back 23! Serenity is a beautiful gift. I keep coming to meetings to see, feel and live this gift A.A. has given me. My gratitude is continuous."

Amanda M. — "I am a happy and free woman thanks to A.A. I started drinking and using around 12 years old. I know in my heart I will be safe if I live this A.A. program of recovery when I get home. I have lost my house, car and family, but I will always have my family from A.A. Even though I am in prison, I have never been freer."

Frank B. — "I am a 40-year-old citizen of Ireland, serving a five-year prison sentence for a long line of DWI convictions. I have been alcohol- and drug-free since my incarceration began 21 months ago. I was first made aware of A.A. by my mom when I was 20. She was a recovering alcoholic and read her Big Book daily. I thought it outlandish that the book would say the only things in store for an alcoholic who continued to drink were jails, institutions and death. Well, I have done my

tour of mental institutions . . . and I now sit in prison grateful that I survived death this far. I no longer see the Big Book as a fictional account that *might* work, but rather as the only thing that *will* work."

Terry W. — "I guess none of us in sobriety wants to be hurt by our demons of the past. Being in the joint hasn't been easy. The effects are much greater than most realize, and trying to stay free from old habits are worse. You sit in this cell 23 hours a day and feel like making 'hooch.' I just lost my sister on the streets, but she wouldn't want me to go out like a sucker, so I'm winging the passive thoughts of medicating emotions and feelings. After staying around A.A. a few 24 hours, I realized it isn't just a hang-out spot—it's home. The people are my extended family, and they care more about me than I ever cared for myself. Today I am still sober."

Walter B. — "From the moment I walked into my first meeting, I've met the greatest people. A.A. is awesome. It isn't just the meeting and greeting of such great people, but the fact that I can help someone today. I never have to hurt anyone again, and better than that—I never have to hurt either."

C.P.C.

Committees Find Ways To Connect with Our Professional Friends

Around the United States and Canada, committees on Cooperation With the Professional Community are reaching out in every way they can to serve as a resource for the many professionals—doctors, attorneys, court officials, counselors and the clergy among others—who share a common purpose with A.A.: to help the alcoholic stop drinking and lead a healthy, productive life. The C.P.C.s do this in the spirit of "cooperation but not affiliation," as detailed in Tradition Six, and are always willing to walk the extra mile to communicate with our professional friends.

A number of C.P.C. committees report success in their efforts to familiarize health-care professionals with the Fellowship. Central Southeast Ohio C.P.C.s have been sending out information packets to health-care personnel and various clergy and congregations. They report following up the mailings with phone calls that have been well-received. In the Alabama/N.W. Florida Area, C.P.C.s put together "Sponsor Your Doctor" information packets and A.A. meeting schedules for local members to give their physicians. In

Western Missouri the C.P.C.s also have instituted an "Adopt a Doctor" program, working to place literature in physicians' offices. Maine C.P.C.s report that they participated in a meeting at the Family Medical Institute in Augusta, and cooperate with representatives of Narcotics Anonymous, as well. After talks by A.A. and N.A. members, there was a discussion period. "We left pamphlets for the attendees to take as they wished," reports the C.P.C. committee, "and were thanked for being there. That gave us a very good feeling as we left."

In the B.C./Yukon Area, discussion has centered on implementing a number of related projects: an "Adopt a Professional" program similar to the one for doctors but broader in scope; taking medical students to an A.A. meeting or a Public Information/C.P.C. orientation luncheon; working with local alcohol and drug programs, perhaps meeting with counselors and holding a regular on-site meeting; and contacting local mental-health professionals by phone and mail. The C.P.C. chairperson observed, tongue-in-cheek, that "the possibilities are limitless. After all, there must be more professionals out there than alcoholics."

From Oregon comes the report that "presentations about A.A. are given in the nursing schools—and C.P.C. workshops are happening in the districts!" And Montana C.P.C.s have issued "Sponsor Your Professional," which they call "a clear and concise guide to C.P.C. work."

In Kansas there was a strong C.P.C. presence at Wichita State University's 13th annual Kansas School Nurse Summer Conference in July. The C.P.C. committee not only was an exhibitor but reserved a table and furnished literature as well as a supply of subscription registration cards for those wishing to receive *About AA*, the newsletter for professionals published by the General Service Office. At the conference the Kansas C.P.C.s seized every opportunity to carry the A.A. message to nurses and other health-care professionals. "One never knows," the committee reports, "when the seeds planted through such contacts will sprout and help another alcoholic find recovery because an A.A. member cared enough to help keep Alcoholics Anonymous from being a secret in the community."

In Tennessee, reports Ann D., the C.P.C. committee staffs a booth at health fairs. "At most of them," she says, "people will glance at the booth and keep going, or else they'll briefly stop by, saying, 'I don't have a problem [with alcohol], but I have a brother . . . or a friend.' I've found that a great way to reach the professionals is to visit other booths and leave our informational material there for the taking." In the Nashville/Murfreesboro region, the C.P.C.s have been making a special effort to provide literature for the

clergy and so far have placed Big Books and other A.A. literature in close to 150 churches. "One clergyman was so grateful," Ann recalls. "He said that without the literature he wouldn't have known where to send an alcoholic for help. And out there are many more just like him whom we need to reach." Recently the C.P.C. committee created an e-mail address of its own: area64cpc@yahoo.com.

In Alaska some of the most rewarding work is being done with court and treatment-facility personnel. As A.A. co-founder Bill W. said, "It is better to let our friends recommend us" (*The Language of the Heart*, page 91); and certainly C.P.C.s have made a lot of friends—friends who have helped to carry the A.A. message to a lot of alcoholics. In Alaska the C.P.C. committee has written letters and sent information packets to judges, attorneys, clergy and treatment centers. District C.P.C.s have also presented panel discussions for personnel at both treatment centers and the Coast Guard. And Virginia C.P.C.s report that they are responding to a widespread grassroots effort to both welcome and inform court-ordered visitors at A.A. meetings. Eastern Washington C.P.C.s "have responded to the influx of court-ordered clients," the committee notes, "by developing a flyer entitled 'So You've Been Asked to Go to A.A.—You're Not Alone.'"

In the South Florida/Bahamas/Virgin Islands Area, work by district C.P.C. and P.I./C.P.C. committees continues apace in updating open meeting lists at beach resorts, tourist publications and information centers, newspapers, A.A. Web sites and literature racks for public use. "A workshop on learning how to speak at non-A.A. meetings has produced good results for our District 4," reports Mary P., who chairs the area P.I./C.P.C. committee, "and various contacts have been made and strengthened with professionals at the Salvation Army, military bases, boot camps, guidance services, social work programs, health classes at middle and elementary schools and DUI (Driving Under the Influence) schools."

In Oklahoma the C.P.C. and P.I. committees have jointly created attractive display panels, based on the display graphics available for this use from G.S.O., for use at fairs, conventions, trade shows and more. The panels are stored at the state office and may be checked out for use wherever needed. Meanwhile South Dakota reports "much success with annual luncheons organized by district C.P.C. committees. At these functions a variety of professionals sit down over lunch with an A.A. member at each table to facilitate communication and answer questions about the Fellowship." Finally, the Nebraska C.P.C. committee has developed a national e-mail network for discussing issues of importance to C.P.C.s, including General Service Conference Agenda items."

Group Inventory Worksheet

The following questions, compiled from A.A. shared experience, may be useful in arriving at an informed group conscience. Groups will probably wish to add questions of their own:

1. What is the basic purpose of the group?

2. What more can the group do to carry the message?

3. Is the group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community, including those with special needs?

4. Do new members stick with us, or does the turnover seem excessive? If so, why? What can we as a group do?

5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do better?

6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other A.A.s outside the meeting rooms?

Do we also leave the confidences they share at meetings behind?

7. Do we take the time to explain to all members the value to the group of keeping up with the kitchen/housekeeping chores and other essential services that are part-and-parcel of our Twelfth-Step efforts?

8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?

9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?

10. Are we doing all we can to provide an attractive and accessible meeting place?

11. Does the group do its fair share toward participating in the purpose of A.A.—as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service?

12. What has the group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of professionals in the community—the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators, and others who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?

13. How is the group fulfilling its responsibility to the Seventh Tradition?

Calendar of Events

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

October

- 4-5—*St. Paul, Minnesota*. Dist. 26 Fall Workshop and 75th Anniversary Celebration. Write: Ch., Box 75980, St. Paul, MN 55175-0980
- 4-5—*Montreal, Quebec, Canada*. Area 87 Conv. Write: Ch., 1480 Belanger Street, Suite 101, Montreal, QC H2G 1A7
- 4-6—*Troy, Michigan*. Tri-County Conf. Write: Ch., Box 721172, Berkley, MI 48072-0172
- 4-6—*Cincinnati, Ohio*. Midwest Woman-to-Woman Seminar. Write: Ch., 86 Eagle View Lane, Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
- 11-13—*Montgomery, Alabama*. Alabama/Northwest Florida Area 1 Assembly. Write: Ch., 8121 Lillian Hwy #45, Pensacola, FL 32506
- 11-13—*Petit Jean Mt., Arkansas*. ARKYPAA XX. Write: Ch., 97 Aliza, Little Rock, AR 72210
- 11-13—*Council Bluffs, Iowa*. Area 24 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1188, Council Bluffs, IA 51502-1188
- 11-13—*Thief River Falls, Minnesota*. Harvest Festival. Write: Ch., 25359 110th St. NE, Strathcona, MN 56759
- 11-13—*Fort Worth, Texas*. SWRAASA 2002. Write: Ch., Box 2350 Wylie, TX 75098
- 11-13—*Houston, Texas*. 22nd Annual TXS-CYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 924172, Houston, TX 77292-4172
- 11-13—*Bellevue, Washington*. Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 10517, NE 151st Street, Bothell, WA 98011
- 11-13—*Sudbury, Ontario, Canada*. 47th N.E. Area Conf. Write: Ch., Box 911, Stn. "B", Sudbury, ON P3E 4S4
- 11-13—*Monte Carlo, Monaco*. The Monte Carlo Miracle Conv. Write: Ch., Inter-groupe Nice Renouveau, 14 bis, rue Marceau, 06000 Nice
- 18-20—*Mackinac Island, Michigan*. 14th Annual Fall Weekend. Write: Ch., 1500 E. Michigan, Lansing, MI 48912
- 18-20—*Austin, Minnesota*. Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903
- 18-20—*Columbus, Ohio*. Area 53 Correctional Facilities Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1201, Columbus, OH 43216-1201
- 18-20—*Bellingham, Washington*. Mt. Baker Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 28231, Bellingham, WA 98228
- 18-20—*Spruce Grove, Alberta, Canada*. District 10 Unity Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 331, Fallis, AB, T0E 0V0
- 18-20—*Donegaltown, Ireland*. Donegal Area Conv. Write: Ch., 109 South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Ireland
- 18-20—*Balibago, Angeles City, Philippines*. Seventh Fall International Conv. Write: Ch., Box 308, 1099 Manila, Philippines
- 25-27—*San Bernardino, California*. Inland Empire Conv. Write: Ch., Box 12056, San Bernardino, CA 92453

- 25-27—*Lincoln, New Hampshire*. Tri-State 12 Step Festival. Write: Ch., Box 696, Lincoln, NH 03251
- 25-27—*Lake George, New York*. 52nd HMB Area Conv. Write: Ch., Box 4175, Queensbury, NY 12804
- 25-27—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 58th Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6, Boward, PA 15619
- 31-November 3—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida*. 33rd Gulfcoast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 397, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32549
- 31-November 3—*Salou, Costa Dorada, Spain*. English-speaking Conv. Write: Ch., 5 Abeuradors 1B, 17004 Girona, Spain

November

- 1-2—*Duncan, British Columbia, Canada*. Rally in the Valley. Write: Ch., Box 955, Duncan, BC, V9L 3Y2
- 1-3—*Santa Barbara, California*. 18th Annual Conv. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731
- 1-3—*Owensboro, Kentucky*. 42nd Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1562, Owensboro, KY 42304-1562
- 1-3—*St. Cloud, Minnesota*. 20th Annual St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302
- 1-3—*Casper, Wyoming*. Area 76 Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 826, Casper, WY 82602
- 1-3—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*. 58th Annual Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 208-323 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 2C1
- 8-9—*Cornwall, Ontario, Canada*. 55th Anniversary in Cornwall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1984, Cornwall, ON, K6J 6N7
- 8-10—*Homer, Alaska*. Area 02 Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1386, Anchor Point, AK 99556
- 8-10—*Goodyear, Arizona*. 14th Dry Camp. Write: Ch., 9520, W. El Caminito, Peoria, AZ 85345
- 8-10—*Granby, Colorado*. Area 10 Winter Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 1607, Granby, CO 80446

- 8-10—*Fitchburg, Massachusetts*. State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6522, Holyoke, MA 01041-6522
- 8-10—*Moosejaw, Saskatchewan, Canada*. District Roundup. Write: Ch., 1051 Warner Street, Moosejaw, SK, S6H 5S6
- 14-17—*Honolulu, Hawaii*. 41st Annual Hawaii Conv. Write: Ch., Box 23434, Honolulu, HI 96823-3434
- 15-17—*Huntsville, Alabama*. Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 22-24—*Diamondhead, Mississippi*. 13th Annual Gratitude Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7851, Gulfport, MS 39507-7851
- 22-24—*Fontana, Wisconsin*. 13th Annual McHenry's Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 717, McHenry, IL 60051-0057
- 28-29—*Sparta, New Jersey*. Third Annual Thanksgiving Day Alkathon. Write: Ch., 51 Birch Parkway, Lake Mohawk, Sparta, NJ 07871
- 28-December 1—*Las Vegas, Nevada*. 36th Annual Las Vegas Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 43177, Las Vegas, NV 89116
- 29-December 1—*Bloomington, Minnesota*. Founder's Day Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 8027, Minneapolis, MN 55408-9948
- 29-December 1—*Warwick, Bermuda*. Bermuda Conv. Write: Ch., Box 178, Warwick, WKBX, Bermuda

December

- 6-8—*Panama City Beach, Florida*. Celebration by the Sea. Write: Ch., Box 7457, Panama City Beach, FL 32413
- 6-8—*Huntsville, Alabama*. Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
- 24-26—*Copperas Cove, Texas*. Sixth Christmas Alkathon. Write: Ch., Box 1386, Copperas Cove, TX 76522

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the *Box 4-5-9* Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. three months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days. 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

*11-12—Bakersfield, California. Special
Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand
Central Station, New York, NY 10163*
23-26—Fort Walton Beach, Florida.
*Emerald Coast Jamboree, Inc. Write: Ch,
Box 875, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549-
0875*