

■ “I Am Responsible” Over 44,000 A.A.s Celebrate Sobriety

TORONTO, July 1-3, 2005 — July 4, 1965, in Toronto’s Maple Leaf Garden, 10,000 A.A. members, family and friends joined hands with co-founder Bill W. and his wife, Lois, and repeated, for the first time: “I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that, I am responsible.”

Forty years later, over 44,000 A.A.s returned to Toronto to celebrate A.A.’s 70th Anniversary under the theme “I Am Responsible.”

As usually happens at A.A.’s International Conventions, they took over the city, riding the shuttle buses, filling the hotels and dorm spaces, and crowding the coffee shops and restaurants. It was impossible to get lost, for members of the host committee, in their red shirts and white visors, were everywhere to lend assistance.

Over 200 meetings and workshops were held at the Convention Center and at hotels around the city. Meetings on every conceivable subject an A.A. could think of were held in Portuguese, Finnish, German, Polish, Swedish, Farsi, French, Japanese, and Italian. Some meetings were interpreted in American Sign Language. Marathon meetings, in English, French and Spanish, began at midnight, June 30 and ran until 7:00 a.m., July 3. As one Convention goer put it, “It’s like taking a trip around the world, hearing the vari-

ous languages and the exposures to different cultures.”

Other events throughout the week included a Fun Run/Walk along the Lakefront at 7:00 a.m. Saturday. Hospitality Suites in various hotels included, among others: Loners/Internationalists; Native Americans/First Nations; Remote Communities; and Peace Officers in A.A. Thursday night there was a “Party in the Park” and dance. Friday and Saturday, after the big A.A. meetings, there were more dances.

The Convention officially opened Friday evening at the Rogers Centre Stadium. Preceded by bagpipers, 90 A.A.s, representing the countries present, carried their country’s flags. As each flag bearer appeared on stage, the title Alcoholics Anonymous, on the large Big Book model, changed to one of 52 languages.

The Opening Big Meeting followed the flag ceremony. Chaired by Eastern Canada regional trustee Bob P., the speakers were Angie P. of Ohio; Pushan V., India; and Marie O., Ontario.

Saturday evening’s Oldtimers Meeting was chaired by Greg M., general manager of G.S.O. New York. Twelve young people (under 20 years of age) sober from one day to four years, stormed the stage and each drew the name of an oldtimer with over 40 years of sobriety to share his or her story.



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Mail address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
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In 1942, Warden Clinton Duffy of San Quentin prison pioneered the first A.A. group behind prison walls. Twenty-eight inmates were present at that first meeting in September 1942; today there are 2,562 prison groups and over 70,000 inmate A.A. members. Sunday morning, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Allen Ault, in appreciation of Warden Duffy for his contribution to helping alcoholics, presented the 25 millionth copy of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, to Warden Jill Brown of San Quentin, “on behalf of all the correctional facilities and their inmate populations where the A.A. message of hope is welcomed.”

The Sunday morning Closing Big Meeting was chaired by Gary K., Southwest regional trustee. Speakers were Ken S., South Dakota; Jessamy M., New York; and Tom I., North Carolina.



As at any A.A. event—large or small—human interest stories abound. Matt P., doorperson at a large hotel, has three and a half years of sobriety. When asked if he had made any of the meetings, he said, “No. But they say whenever two or more alcoholics are together it is a meeting—and if that is true I had hundreds of them.”

A man who years earlier had lost touch with his twin brother was reunited by a stranger who mistakenly took him for his twin.

Why have we been doing this every five years since the first Convention in 1950 in Cleveland, Ohio? For a rededication to the primary purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous; to witness the success and growth of A.A. around the world; to let anyone who needs our program and support know that A.A. is alive, flourishing and available as a community resource, both locally and internationally.

Everyone who attended A.A.'s 70th Anniversary celebration has their own thoughts and experiences; each life was changed or touched in a different way. To paraphrase one of the oldtimers Saturday night, “It's not so much the speakers, it's the vibes of love.”

On the July 4th weekend in 2010, A.A. will celebrate 75 years in San Antonio, Texas. We hope to see you there.



■ New Board Chair Looks To the Future of A.A.

Canadian Leonard M. Blumenthal, LL.D., for the past five years a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee of A.A., is the new chairman of the General Service Board. “There is a real emergence of A.A. in the rest of the world,” he says. “In many places it is at the stage of development we were in 70 years ago—just one alcoholic helping another to stay sober, and then two alcoholics looking for two more and so on, until there was a worldwide Fellowship of more than 2 million sober alcoholics. We need to help these



Elaine McDowell passes the gavel to Leonard Blumenthal at the board meeting following the Conference.

young groups and service structures, and we do. At the same time, they have a lot to teach us—to remind us of where we were, how far we have come and how important it is to stay with the spiritual principles that have made A.A. strong.”

In the spirit of rotation that distinguishes the role of trusted servant at every level of A.A.’s service structure, Len succeeds Class A trustee Elaine McDowell, Ph.D., of Baltimore, Maryland, a member of the board since 1992 and chair since 2001. Like his predecessor, Len believes in A.A.’s unwavering adherence to its Three Legacies — Recovery, Unity and Service. “In tandem,” he says, “they work for the recovery of the alcoholic.”

Long before he became a Class A trustee, Len knew the workings of A.A. almost inside out. As part of his work he had attended many A.A. meetings, roundups and conventions over a period of 25 years. His wife, Linda, received a plaque, decorated with a ceramic red rose, for “putting up with the A.A. guys” all those years. “What I saw again and again,” Len says, “was that A.A. works and works well. I realized that if I did nothing more than bring alcoholics looking for recovery to this Fellowship, I’d come a long way.”

Len early found a vocation in the alcoholism field. He earned a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta in 1963 and was headed, he thought, for a lifelong career in education, first as an English and physical education teacher, then as a vice principal. But in fall 1966 he took a leave of absence to serve as “a rookie alcoholism counselor” with the government of the Province of Alberta, and his priorities began to spin.

“I was fascinated,” Len recalls, “but basically I looked upon my involvement in alcohol-drug abuse treatment as an experience that would help me chart my future work. When I wavered between education and the alcohol-abuse field, someone said, ‘Maybe it’s time you decided what you want to do when you grow up.’ I did, and never looked back. My decision disappointed my parents, especially my father, who owned a country general store and, I’m sure, thought I would one day work my way into the family business. ‘You mean to say you’d give up a principal’s job in order to work with a bunch of drunkards?’ he said to me once in disbelief. Yet he was the one who often helped the destitute families of alcoholics, providing them with enough groceries to get by, though he knew they’d rarely be paid for.”

For almost 30 years, from 1969 to 1998, Len worked for the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) and served as chief executive officer from 1987 until 1998 when he “retired”—a mischaracterization, because after three days’ rest he was appointed to the board of directors of the Capital Health Authority of Edmonton, which, he relates, “is responsible for the complete health care of more than a million people.” He also has served the Organization of American States, “helping to map out national drug and alcohol plans for countries in the Americas and the Caribbean.”

Len holds an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, presented to him in 2000 by Alberta’s University of Lethbridge in recognition of his work in alcohol and drug addiction. He has acted as a consultant to Grant MacEwan Community College, the Department of the Attorney General and the Government of Northwest Territories, for which he conducted a series of seminars with Native and non-Native Canadians, with special reference to management and control of alcohol and alcohol-related programs. In 1985 he was a speaker at the International Convention celebrating A.A.’s 50th anniversary in Montreal. And in 1993 he was presented with the Eagle Feather, the highest honor of the Nechi Institute on Addictions “for wisdom and bravery

in working with Native Indian addiction problems.”

As a part of A.A.’s General Service Board—consisting of seven Class A trustees who serve six-year terms and 14 Class B (alcoholic) trustees who serve four—Len has been on almost all the trustees’ committees, from Archives and Corrections to Literature and the Grapevine Corporate Board. “What is so incredible,” he says, “is that when the alcoholic and nonalcoholic trustees come together to serve A.A., it’s impossible to tell us apart. We may hail from different places, but we’re moving in the same direction. What it all comes down to is this: Will what we’re doing help the suffering alcoholic?”

Looking to the future of the Fellowship, Len says, “A.A. is saving lives every day, but I think we can do even better. I would like to see more people become aware of A.A. and its potential for hope and healing. There still are many professionals out there—doctors, the clergy, court officials, counselors and more—who are clueless about how A.A. can help them to help the alcoholics they see and treat.”

A.A., he notes, “is a program of ‘attraction rather than promotion’ in keeping with the Eleventh Tradition, which further stresses members’ personal anonymity at the public level—a Tradition that also keeps our egos in check.” Nonetheless, Len stresses, “anonymity does not equate with invisibility; and the fact is, we can’t attract the alcoholic unless we have a presence, which is why carrying the A.A. message every way we can is so important.”

■ New Class A Trustee Brings Broad Expertise in Corrections

New Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Jeanne S. Woodford is director of the California Department of Corrections in Sacramento, California, a position she assumed in February 2004 after serving as warden of San Quentin Prison. “I am very excited about becoming an A.A. trustee,” she says, “and look forward to serving in any way I can.” She adds that “in my work at San Quentin over a period of 25 years, I saw that as many as 80 percent of our prisoners could be classified as alcoholics. In the future I would like to see A.A. gain even greater access to these alcoholics than it already has and hope to be a part of carrying its message.”

On the General Service Board Jeanne succeeds Canada’s Leonard M. Blumenthal,



Jeanne S. Woodford

LL.D., who is now chairman of the board. A native Californian, Jeanne grew up in Sonoma and earned a B.A. degree in criminal justice, with emphasis on psychology and sociology, from Sonoma State University. She joined the San Quentin staff in 1978 and held a series of positions over the years, including correctional officer, correctional counselor and associate warden. Finally, as warden, she headed a facility housing 5,800 inmates, with a work force of 1,500.

Jeanne points out that “we have a critical revolving-door situation in which a high percentage of inmates, many of them alcoholics, are no sooner released than they’re incarcerated again.” The greater the A.A. presence in jails and prisons around the U.S. and Canada, she says, “the more we can hope to reduce the number of people behind bars now and in the years to come.”

As a Class A trustee Jeanne joins a distinguished group of A.A.’s closest friends who over the years have given freely of their time, expertise and concern. On the board are six other Class A trustees serving six-year terms, and 14 Class B (alcoholic) trustees, who serve four years. The chairperson is traditionally a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee—mainly because, unlike A.A. members, who seek to maintain personal anonymity at the public level (Tradition Eleven), they can face the cameras and reporters.

Besides chairman Leonard Blumenthal and Jeanne Woodford, today’s Class A trustees are: Allen L. Ault, Ed.D., dean of the College of Justice and Safety, University of Eastern Kentucky at Richmond; Texan Herbert I. Goodman, CEO of an international corporation involved with petroleum products and energy conservation; Vincent E. Keefe of Orland Park, Illinois, who is the retired CEO of a large packaging corporation; Ward Ewing, D.D., of New York City, dean and president of the General Theological Seminary; and Bill Clark, M.D., of Woolwich, Maine, medical director of an Addiction Resource Center, and attending physician at Mid Coast Hospital in Bath, Maine.

■ Regional and Special A.A. Forums

Alaska will be the site of a Special Forum, August 19-22. To serve as many A.A.s as possible the Forum will take place in four cities: Anchorage, Homer, Fairbanks and Juneau. Registration will take place at each site beginning one hour before the start of each Forum. There is no registration fee.

September 30–October 2 the West Central region will hold a Forum at the Best Western Heritage Inn, Great Falls, Montana.

For more information you may call the Regional/Special Forums coordinator: (212) 870-3120, or e-mail: regionalforums@aa.org.

■ Board Welcomes Five U.S./Canada Trustees

The General Service Board of A.A. has gained five new Class B (alcoholic) trustees: Howard L., Southeast Regional trustee; Robert “Bob” M., East Central Regional trustee; Dorothy W., trustee-at-large/U.S.; and Paul C. and Raymond “Ray” M., general service trustees. All in their own ways emphasize their gratitude to those who have gone before, and their desire to help keep the Fellowship alive and well for the alcoholics to come.

Howard L. reports that since stepping into the shoes filled by Florida’s Dick G., he has heard from many far-flung A.A. friends and acquaintances—“people I never dreamed would call—and I am overwhelmed.” Excited about being elected Southeast Regional trustee (one of eight such trustees representing six regions in the U.S., two in Canada), he affirms, “I am willing to do whatever I can for this wonderful Fellowship.” Howard has been sober 25 years and is pleased to call Columbia, Mississippi’s Back to Basics his home group, noting that he is involved both in group activities and as a sponsor. The owner and manager of a local independent appliance and furniture retail store, he manages to make time for A.A. service at both the group and area level; he served as a delegate (Panel 42) in 1992-93.

Bob M., of Ontonagon, Michigan, follows Dorothy M., of Indianapolis, Indiana, as East Central Regional trustee. He says he is “honored to be elected—and the first trustee to come from Area 74,” which covers Northern Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Sober 16 years, he practically “grew up in service,” he relates. “I have a sponsor and have done a lot of sponsoring myself, with service always at the forefront. My sponsor, Ken G., was a delegate (Panel 49) in 1999-2000, and my sponsee, Torvin T., is a current delegate (Panel 54, 2004-05).” Bob has held a variety of offices at the group and area level and was a delegate (Panel 50) 2000-2001. He is “a member in good standing” at his Gitchee-Gumme Living Sober Group, “available for Twelfth Step calls and brewing coffee,” he says. “There are four of us in the group. We refer to ourselves as ‘three fallen women and Bob.’” A forest-fire program manager, Bob also is a member of the Ontonagon Volunteer Fire Department, and for a number of years was the scoutmaster of a local Boy Scout troop.

Dorothy W., of Indianapolis, Indiana, succeeds Charlie B., of New Orleans, Louisiana, as trustee-at-large/U.S. “I am very excited and nervous at the same time,” she says. “I ask myself, ‘How did a little old drunk from North Dakota get to serve in this capacity?’” Dorothy says she traveled a long and rocky road to sobriety in A.A.—“I was always looking for the differences, not the similarities, between me and ‘those alco-

holics’ ”—and hit bottom in March 1977 “only when nothing would stop the shakes.” Thanks to a service-minded sponsor, Dorothy early became active in her home group and was often exposed to district meetings and area assemblies. She served as North Dakota delegate (Panel 44) in 1994-95. Moving to Indianapolis in late 1995, she became a member of the How It Works Group. The mother of nine, stepmother of seven and grandmother of 19 also has a background in finance, with experience in city-budget management. Additionally, she has worked in a teaching capacity with disadvantaged and exceptional children.

Paul C. of Oceanside, California, rotates out of his position as a nontrustee director of A.A. World Services and into the spot of general service trustee, formerly filled by John K. of New York City. (In all there are four general service trustees, who are chosen from among current or past nontrustee directors of A.A.’s two corporate boards, A.A.W.S. and the A.A. Grapevine.) Paul feels that becoming a general service trustee is a “tremendous honor.” Born in Manchester, Connecticut, he lived in Upstate New York until he was 20, when he moved to California. Sober 31 years, he was active in the 1980s with All California Young People in A.A., serving as chairman of the ACYPAA Round-Up in 1983. A delegate (Panel 42) in 1992-93, he went on to become an appointed member of the trustees’ committees on Cooperation With the Professional Community and Treatment Facilities before joining the A.A.W.S. Board. A licensed clinical social worker and certified employee assistance professional, Paul has worked since 1987 in the behavioral health-care field. His wife, Mary L., is a member of Al-Anon.

Ray M. of Calgary, Alberta, fills the post of general service trustee vacated by Hawaii’s David E. A seasoned service hand, he was a nontrustee director of the A.A. Grapevine Board from 2001-05 and a delegate (Panel 44) in 1994-95. “It’s an honor to serve as a trustee,” says Ray. He notes that serving on two trustees’ committees — Literature, for the past three years, and International Conventions/A.A. Regional Forums the past four—“has been very rewarding.” He also was treasurer of the A.A. Grapevine in 2004. Sober 23 years, Ray says he got into service his first year in A.A., volunteering time at his local intergroup. He belongs to the Northlanders Group in Northwest Calgary and is “active in personal and service sponsorship.” The owner-operator of a painting contract business, Ray chairs the Alberta Painting Contractors Association and is a member of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board. His wife, Marilyn, he points out, “joined Al-Anon 25 years ago—two years before I got sober in A.A.”

■ Survey Profiles Today's A.A.: Sober Longer and Sponsored

Results of the 2004 Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey are in and paint a vibrant picture of our Fellowship as a whole and a sketch of the "average" A.A. member: 48 years old (inching up from 46 in 2001); sober more than eight years; found a sponsor within the first 90 days (70%) and has a sponsor today (78%); belongs to a home group (86%) and attends about two meetings a week. A full 50% of respondents had been sober more than five years (up from 48% in '01); 24%, 1-5 years; and 26%, less than one year. The survey figures are basically consistent with those of the 2001 survey. In most categories, variations span no more than two or three percentage points; these statistically have little or no significance but may confirm a past trend or foreshadow a new one.

Anonymous surveys of the Fellowship have been conducted by the General Service Office every three years since 1968. They offer an overview of current trends in membership characteristics with the main purpose of providing information about Alcoholics Anonymous to the professional community and to the general public as part of A.A.'s purpose to carry our message to those who still suffer from alcoholism.

Findings reveal that professionals play a key role in telling active alcoholics about A.A. and providing support during sobriety: 64% (up from 61% in '01) said that *before* joining the program they had received some type of treatment or counseling—e.g., medical, psychological, spiritual; and, as in '01, 74% of those same members said it had played an important part in guiding them to A.A. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents said they had been referred to A.A. by a health-care professional. Moreover, some 65% said they had received some type of treatment or counseling *after* coming to A.A.; and 84% of those same members said it had a vital role in their recoveries. A total of 77% of members' doctors know they are in A.A., the survey reveals.

Members also noted as factors most responsible for their coming to A.A.: a treatment facility, 31%; an A.A. member, 31%; a member of the clergy, 1%; and family influence, 23%. Other factors: self-motivated, 30% (down from 33% in '01); court order, 11%; counseling agency, 8%; and health-care provider, 8%. Except where indicated, there was no more than a change of a point or two from '01.

Other survey results confirm the staying power of some positive and interesting trends tracked over the past decade: The percentage of women in A.A., which climbed sharply from 22% in 1968 to 35% in '89, then dipped to 33% in '96, has held steady in the mid-30 percentile and presently stands at 35% of the membership. Statistics for the category of Marital Status remain virtually unchanged since the last survey; respondents who said they were married numbered 38%; single, 29%;

divorced, 24%; separated, 5%; and widowed, 4%. The ages of members continue to rise: 61-70, 11.5%; over 70, 4.85%; 51-60, 23.1%; 41-50, 33%; 31-40, 18.2%; 21-30, 7.9%; and under 21, 1.5%.

Members' occupations continue to cover a broad spectrum and reflect statistically insignificant changes from the last survey: retired, 14%; self-employed/other, 11%; manager/administrator, 10%; professional/technical, 10%; skilled trade, 9%; laborer, 6%; health professional, 6%; sales worker, 5%; service worker, educator, clerical worker, student, all 3%; homemaker and transportation workers, each 2%; craft worker, 1%; and disabled (not working) and unemployed, both 6%.

The 2004 questionnaires were distributed last summer to U.S./Canada Conference delegates representing 704 A.A. groups. More than 7,500 members old and young participated in the survey. From the preparation and mailing of the questionnaires to tabulation of the results, all work was handled by G.S.O.'s employees and its Electronic and Data Processing Department.

Key findings of the 2004 Membership Survey are available in an updated version of the leaflet "Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey" (M-13). Also available is a table-top display, 27" high by 39" wide. It has a double easel in the back and can be folded in half for storage. To order, write to the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

■ International News

- Alcoholics Anonymous in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the twin-islands country in the Caribbean, celebrated its 49th anniversary in May with a National Convention. The theme of the one-day event was "Gratitude in Action." There were young peoples meetings and oldtimers meetings, and meetings of Al-Anon and Al-ateen. Non-A.A. friends from the fields of religion and medicine addressed the conference, and members held workshop sessions on the Three Legacies.

- A.A. representatives from Sub-Saharan Africa convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, June 3-5, for the second Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting. In the course of the weekend, reports were delivered by the 10 countries attending: Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia, and South Africa. Delegates discussed subjects that included self-support, literature translations, and anonymity. The first Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting took place in June 2003, when 17 delegates from nine countries gathered to share the process of carrying the A.A. message.

- The General Service Office of the United Kingdom sent a packet containing the pamphlets "A.A. Tradition, How It Developed" and "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated" to all listed groups in the country in commemoration of Annual

Traditions Week. The week, which commenced March 31, is a celebration of A.A. unity in the British Isles. Printed on the inside cover of the plastic packet was the Grapevine's Traditions Checklist.

■ After Months at Sea The Hand of A.A. Is There

When A.A.s talk about service, they generally mean making coffee for the group, acting as general service representative, answering phones at the local central office, or taking meetings to a hospital or prison. But beyond these familiar activities, our members engage in numerous quiet, lesser-known forms of A.A. service to help ensure that the hand of the Fellowship is always there.

John M. is one of those quiet servants. For nearly 20 years he has been listed in the Loners/Internationalists Directory as a Port Contact for seagoing A.A.s who dock at Portland, Oregon. Port Contacts are A.A. members who make themselves available to alcoholics on ships who spend many months at sea, without access to meetings or A.A. companionship, and need an A.A. presence when they reach land.

Portland is a major grain exporting city, where ships from all over the world dock at the grain elevators on the Columbia River, often for weeks at a time. The crews have few opportunities to get off the ships. John reports that in his time as Port Contact, he has rarely received a call. Wanting to be more active, he got in touch with the staff member on the Loners/Internationalists desk at the General Service Office, who suggested that he could write to new Internationalists, as well as occasionally to Loners and homebound A.A.s. He says that he receives few replies, but knows that it's important to carry the message and not focus on the results. "You never know when something will strike a chord.

"Every few months, I stuff an envelope with old Grapevines and other A.A. literature, address it to 'The Master' (the captain), and take it aboard one of the ships docked at the grain elevators here." John says he got the idea when he read somewhere that Captain Jack, who founded the Internationalists, used to go out to the ships and toss a package of literature up on the deck. In today's security-conscious world, it's tougher to get aboard a ship, "but I tell the guard it's reading material for the crew. He probably thinks I'm delivering tracts from a church.

"When I was newly sober, I made a trip on a tug. A previous occupant of my bunk had written all the Steps and Traditions on the bottom of the upper bunk – great reading material before going to sleep. I like to think that my 'deliveries' may reach some foreign seaman and guide him into our wonderful Fellowship before it's too late.

"While I certainly paid my dues (marriage and family wreckage, etc.), I feel I have received more than my share of the benefits of sobriety. Financial recovery came fairly easy; leveling off the highs and lows has taken a lot longer.

I even got married again ('The Great Calming,' my children called it). And when we were laying out our non-negotiables, my wife-to-be told me that if I ever drink again, we'll be through. I'm glad she said that. My alcoholic brain would always be looking for a loophole."

■ Working Within the Seventh Tradition

In keeping with the principle of self-support, A.A.'s General Service Office sometimes finds itself in the awkward position of saying no to money.

In one recent example, a woman representing a charitable fund interested in making a donation to Alcoholics Anonymous spoke with G.S.O.'s controller, Don Meurer (nonalcoholic). Don pointed out that A.A. accepts money only from A.A. members. He said that if the person supplying the money to the fund was an A.A. member, then perhaps something could be worked out. The representative said the donor wanted to remain anonymous. "Well," said Don, "that presents a problem."

She then asked what would happen if the donor was willing to reveal his name and confirm his membership in Alcoholics Anonymous? "Then we are in business," said Don, who, as an afterthought, asked the amount of money the donor had in mind. "Five thousand dollars," said the representative.

Don then informed the representative that the most A.A. can accept in a calendar year is \$2,000. Bequests in wills are acceptable only from A.A. members on a one-time basis, and not in perpetuity. The limit is \$2,000.

"Oh," was the somewhat befuddled response.

G.S.O.'s controller has had similar conversations over the years with lawyers drawing up wills or settling estates. His wish is that A.A. members give their legal representatives the information they will need on the question of donations to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Some confusion is inevitable given A.A.'s particular approach to supporting itself, but the Seventh Tradition, under which A.A. declines "outside contributions," has worked to the Fellowship's advantage in many ways. As it says in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (p. 165), "A.A. presented a strange and refreshing spectacle" to a public unused to an organization refusing money.

Another issue regarding contributions is verifying that checks arriving at G.S.O. are from A.A. members. A personal check written by an A.A. member on behalf of his group, including ideally the group service number, makes it simple.

A few years ago, though, checks produced via online bill-paying operations looked like they might present a problem of verification. There was, for instance, no way the sender could include a note with the check spelling out which group to credit. As it turns out, though, according to Constance Ivey, (nonalcoholic) supervisor

of the Contributions department, these checks are almost always clearly identified with a group's name and its group service number.

Another issue arises when checks arrive at G.S.O. from corporations, which can happen when someone makes contributions via his job's charitable giving operation. If there is any question whether the check is from a member of A.A., G.S.O. will respond to the sender with one of its so-called speed letters. One of these letters is sent out, for instance, if G.S.O. is unable to identify and credit the group making the contribution.

For convenience sake, G.S.O. accepts contributions via credit card. An A.A. member can do this through the mail or by phone. "We've been getting a lot of these lately," says Constance. "They are definitely picking up in popularity."

At yearend 2004, there were 57,523 groups listed at G.S.O., 44% of which contributed. Contributions from groups and individual members came to a little over \$5 million, which covered most of the \$7.6 million spent in 2004 by G.S.O. on behalf of the Fellowship. Profit from literature sales was \$2.1 million.

■ Upcoming Intergroup Seminar

The Annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A.W.S. Seminar will be held Sept. 30–Oct. 2, 2005 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Started 19 years ago the seminar was conceived to provide a forum for an exchange of information between managers, employees and volunteers of intergroup/central offices across the U.S. and Canada.

Joined by trustees of the General Service Board and A.A.W.S. and Grapevine directors and staff, attendees will share problems, solutions and ideas on a variety of subjects, including finances, volunteers and sale of A.A. literature.

For more information you may contact Kathy or Sharon, Metrolina Intergroup in Charlotte: (704) 377-0244.

Corrections

■ A Different Kind of Freedom—Traveling With the Big Book

Some A.A.s in the Central New York Area who carry the message into prisons have also found a way to "carry" some inmates out from behind the walls and make them a unique part of the larger A.A. community. Area delegate Liz C. reports that she has been taking an A.A. meeting to prison for years, and also carries her "guys" outside to all sorts of A.A. events. She asks all the members of her

prison group to sign her copy of the abridged, soft-cover Big Book. Then she takes the book with her to various events, photographs it there, and takes the pictures back to show members in prison—"Where I go, you go," she tells them, and comments that a lot of the guys have traveled more widely than most other people she knows.

"Since 1998, I have written about 200 first names of A.A. members in my copy of the Big Book, from three prison groups: Helping Hands at Cayuga Correctional Facility, Back on Track from Camp Georgetown, and Living for Today from Five Points. We have been to meetings in New York State, Florida, Tennessee, Ireland, and Hawaii." The book has been with her at all the area conferences and conventions as well as the International Convention in Minneapolis and, most recently, the 55th General Service Conference. It has also gone camping in Canada, cruising in the Cayman Islands, and enjoyed a vacation at Disneyland. "One winter we stood on a really cold street to ring the bell for the Salvation Army, which prompted the guys to make a little overcoat for the book to keep it warm."

Tom K. is another member from the same area, who picked up the idea from Liz. He says: "For the last 15 years I've carried the A.A. message into prisons. Almost since it opened nearly five years ago I've been the outside sponsor for the Living for Today Group at Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus, New York. Inmates who want to attend meetings apply in writing to one of the counselors. Attendance is voluntary, and no special consideration is given, nor is any record of attendance added to the inmate's folder to impress the parole board. They come because they want to come.

"One of the traditions of the group, which we borrowed from Liz, is the signing of the group's Big Book by every inmate who attends his first meeting there. They can add a phrase or two of strength or hope if they wish—I tell them it's even okay to write that they hate A.A., if they want to. After about three years that book was filled, not just with signatures, it was filled with members of A.A.

"The other half of the tradition is that when I, who have found true freedom through an ongoing involvement in our program of recovery, take a vacation or just go somewhere, I take the guys with me. Maybe it's a solo motorcycle trip on the Blue Ridge Parkway or a week in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, or to Akron to visit the birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous. Setting the book on the seat of the bike and snapping a picture with a spectacular view in the background conveys to the group members, in a way my words cannot do, the life I am able to live because of sobriety. I bring the book to the meeting so the guys can see that it's a life within their reach as well.

"I said that the book is full of A.A. members. There is strength in numbers. I'm always going to be an alcoholic and will occasionally have the urge to drink. One hot, humid night, alone in a tent in a state park, that thought flooded in—who would know? Next to me was that dog-

eared Big Book. My Higher Power pointed to the book and said, 'They would know.' I didn't drink. Some of those guys are serving life terms, but that night they saved my life.

"The first signed book is now gone. One day I put it on the top of my car when I got out to take a photo, then got back in the car and drove off. Seventy-five miles later my heart sank when I realized what had happened. I drove all the way back looking for the book, but never found it. . . . But I'd almost be willing to bet the farm that in my old age I'll be serenely relaxing at an AA conference, and the featured speaker will begin, 'I was ready to end my life, but I took one last walk down the road and I saw this ragged looking Big Book at my feet, with writing on every page....'"

P.I./C.P.C.

■ The A.A. Message Is All Over North Dakota

In North Dakota, seeing to it that the A.A. message of recovery is available to everyone, from suffering alcoholics and their families to the professionals who try to help them, is integral to the work of the combined committees on Public Information and Cooperation With the Professional Community. Area delegate Mike N. reports, "We attempt to cooperate with at least four inpatient facilities, eight residential locations, 18 day-treatment programs and 35 outpatient programs."

Moreover, adds Mike, "P.I. activities include placing A.A. literature and Grapevine magazines in locations ranging from churches and county courthouses to schools and laundromats. We are grateful to the Fellowship, our professional friends and all at the General Service Office for the work they do in helping to get the message to those alcoholics who have not heard there is a solution in A.A."

Says Traci W., who chairs the area C.P.C./P.I. committee: "Groups around the state have taken on the responsibility of replenishing and maintaining literature racks that were 'orphaned' and had gone unattended for a while, and have placed both racks and literature in several new locations. We've also held a number of orientation coffees and luncheons."

For a coffee in 2003, she relates, "a judge responded to our invitation by making a 100-mile round trip to be with us and learn about A.A. The result? With the judge's help, we were able to place literature racks in three county courthouses that are maintained to this day by local groups." Traci notes that at that same coffee "it was encouraging to hear a speaker, an official at a county jail, share her experience as a professional who had seen first-

hand how much A.A. has helped alcoholic inmates."

The P.I./C.P.C. committee, she observes, "just never holds still. We held our first state assembly in March at Bismarck, our state capital, for instance, and found it so rewarding to share ideas, problems and solutions with about 75 old and new A.A. faces. Also, for the last three years we have maintained a Web page at www.aanorthdakota.org. It contains up-to-date area meeting lists, committee contacts and other information pertinent to our efforts in carrying the message anywhere and everywhere we can."

Recently, Traci says, "our Web page has brought queries from several non-A.A. college students. We have tried to help them understand our singleness of purpose, how we got started and more. In addition to answering their questions, we've referred them to the General Service Office Web site (www.aa.org) for further information about pamphlets and other A.A. literature."



These seven-inch wide display rack extensions, designed to hold books, attach to each side of the full-size pamphlet display rack. Available from G.S.O.: Display rack (M-8), \$20; extensions (M-8A), \$20; set of rack and extensions (M-82), \$35; 20% discount applies.

Treatment Facilities

■ Missouri Hosts Annual 'Bridging the Gap' Weekend

The Fifteenth Annual Bridging the Gap (BTG) Temporary Contact Workshop Weekend will be held September 9-11 at the Ramada Inn, St. Joseph, Missouri. It will bring together A.A.s from across the U.S. and Canada, many of them seasoned hands in helping the alcoholic make the

thorny transition from treatment or incarceration into mainstream A.A.

Says Mark C. of Alexandria, Virginia, coordinator of this year's event: "There will be presentations and discussions on many aspects of BTG activities, including temporary and prerelease contact and various information programs. Many of the participants will be A.A.s involved or interested in Twelfth Step work through various general service and intergroup committees—among them Treatment Facilities, Correctional Facilities, Cooperation With the Professional Community, and others."

Janine B., of St. Joseph, Missouri, was coordinator of the 2002-03 BTG Workshop Weekend and this year is the host site committee chair. "We have invited professionals in the community to join us and hear about what BTG can do to help the alcoholic," she says. "A former prison inmate also will be with us to share what it's like to be on the receiving end of contact sponsorship."

Twenty years ago the idea of offering temporary contacts on a large scale seemed like wishful thinking. Yet today, Janine points out, "there is an established network of BTG committees that work closely with each other, and more are springing up all the time."

BTG service, Janine explains, "means offering a hand to people emerging from treatment or correctional facilities who want help in connecting with A.A. on the outside." They fill out postcards or forms that are then mailed to a P.O. Box or intergroup office, where they are matched by the BTG committee with an A.A. member who has agreed to serve as a temporary contact. Most programs offer guidelines and suggestions to the A.A. volunteer, using the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" and other A.A. literature.

Craig N. is Miami-Dade (District 10) T.F. committee chairman and BTG coordinator for Area 15, which embraces South Florida, the Bahamas, Virgin Islands and Antigua. He points out that planning BTG strategy and making certain there are no slipups is exacting and time-consuming. "But each time," he says, "we know that making a successful connection can literally save the life of an alcoholic, so we try to leave nothing to chance."

One of the most active BTG programs operates as a subcommittee of the California Northern Coastal Area. Chairperson Diane G. reports that in 2004 the committee handled 1,367 requests for contacts, and made 209 presentations at treatment and correctional facilities.

Much is said about the rewards of volunteering as BTG temporary contacts, but what are the feelings of those who have been helped? Lance L., who lives in the California Northern Coastal Area, says that the BTG program "was a blessing to me." During the last months of his three years in prison, he says, "I worked as a firefighter at a camp in Susanville, where an H&I committee member named Joan was bringing in meetings. When I came up for parole, she was able to give me literature with contact information. An A.A. named DJ. picked me up and

proceeded to take me to meetings all over. DJ. had nearly ten years of sobriety, knew a ton of people and introduced me to many of them. They made me feel instantly a part of what was going on in A.A. We have remained friends to this day. DJ. has told me that before we met, he'd slacked off A.A., and that helping me actually helped him get back to meetings and work the program." Today Lance has been sober five years. "I am my intergroup rep and have a literature commitment at a men's stag meeting," he says. "But, for sure, my next commitment is BTG."

The BTG Temporary Contact Workshop Weekend in September will cover a variety of concerns, such as the updating of contact lists; rural, metropolitan and statewide contact programs; and the history of BTG. A sought-after feature is the BTG Resource Library, containing BTG and related items from districts, areas and G.S.O. An extensive storehouse that includes pamphlets, manuals, history, and BTG and G.S.O. newsletters, it will be available for perusing all weekend.

For information write or e-mail: mdogva@msn.com. Even if you cannot attend, Mark notes, cassette tapes and CDs of past BTG annual workshops and other material in the BTG Resource Library are available upon request. Donations toward copying and mailing costs will be appreciated.

■ New from the A.A. Grapevine

• ***I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A.*** – A collection of 38 stories on the theme of the 2005 International Convention. Written by A.A. members and nonalcoholic friends of the Fellowship. (GV-16) \$7.95; 5 or more, \$7.50.

• ***The Home Group: Heartbeat of A.A.*** – A collection of Grapevine articles illuminating the varied experience of belonging to an A.A. group. Updated with eight new articles. (GV-15) \$4.95; 5 or more, \$4.50.

TO ORDER:

By Mail: The AA Grapevine, PO Box 1980, Marion, OH 43306-8080.

Online: www.aagrapevine.org

By Fax: 1-212-870-3301

By Phone: 1-800-631-6025 (English)
1-800-640-8781 (Spanish)
1-212-870-3456 (French)

For a catalogue and order forms, please call the above phone numbers, write to the above address, or go to www.aagrapevine.org

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.

August

- 3-7—*Palm Desert, California.* International Doctors in A.A. Write: Ch., 3311 Brookhill Circle, Lexington, KY 40502
- 5-7—*College Station, Texas.* AAggieland Convention 2005. Write: Ch., 3600 Tabor Rd. Bryan, TX 77808; Website: www.aaggieland.info; E-mail: aaggieland@yahoo.com
- 5-7—*Cowley, Alberta, Canada.* Crowsnest Pass Camp-Out. Write: Ch., Box 402, Blairmore, AB, T0K 0E0, Canada
- 5-7—*Halifax, Nova Scotia.* 17th Annual Courage Roundup. Write: Ch., 6 Campeau Court, Eastern Passage, NS B3G 1J5; E-mail: courage449@yahoo.com
- 5-7—*McLeod, Montana.* 13th Beartooth Mountain Conference. Write: Ch., Box 23406, Billings, MT 59104
- 5-7—*Mountain View, Arkansas.* 65th Old Grandad Arkansas State Convention. Write: Ch., 105 Sonnet, Hot Springs, AR 72560
- 5-7—*Red Deer, Alberta, Canada.* Annual Red Deer Roundup. Write: Ch., #21, 6300 Orr Drive, Red Deer, AB T4P 3T6
- 12-14—*Carrabassett Valley, Maine.* 28th Annual Maine Area Round-Up (with ASL signing). Write: Ch., Box 208, Blue Hill, ME 04614
- 12-14—*Centre-Paul-Régimbal, Granby, Québec.* 27ieme Congrès Granby et Region. Write: Ch., 200 Blvd. Robert, Granby, Québec, Canada J2G 9J6
- 12-14—*Clair, Nouveau Brunswick, Canada.* Agir Et Penser Différemment Congrès Haut Madawaska À Clair. Write: Ch., 15 Parc P'Tiso, Edmundston, Nouveau Brunswick, E3V 3X7, Canada
- 12-14—*Grinnell, Iowa.* 9th Annual Rock Creek Recovery Campout. Write: Ch., 512 N. 15th St., Marshalltown, IA 50158
- 12-14—*Leusden, The Netherlands.* 19th Annual Round-Up. Write: Ch., 9, 2172 JM, Sassenheim, Netherlands
- 12-14—*Oakhurst, California.* Summer Serenity in the Sierras. Write: Ch., Box 116, Oakhurst, CA 93644
- 12-14—*Soldotna, Alaska.* 32nd Annual Wilderness Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 4285, Soldotna, AK 99669
- 13-14—*Salem, Virginia.* Roanoke Valley Conference. Write: Ch., Box 21507, Roanoke, VA 24018

- 18-21—*Omaha, Nebraska.* Cornhusker Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 425, Bellevue, NE 38005; Website: www.aa-cornhusker.org
- 19-21—*Dallas, Texas.* 60th Annual Texas State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 595833, Dallas, TX 75359
- 19-21—*East Liverpool, Ohio.* A.A. Getaway Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 5174, East Liverpool, OH 43920
- 19-21—*Las Vegas, Nevada.* 7ma Convención Hispana de A.A. del Estado de Nevada. Write: Ch., Box 1115, S. Casino Center Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89104 #179
- 19-21—*Oshawa, Ontario, Canada.* 33rd Lakeshore District Conference. Write: Ch., 192 Athol Street E., Oshawa, Ontario L1H 1K1
- 19-21—*Rochester, New Hampshire.* 2nd Annual NHSCYPAA Pig Roast/Campout. Write: Ch., Box 1539, Portsmouth, NH 03801; Website: www.nhscypaa.org
- 19-21—*St. Jérôme, Québec, Canada.* Congrès St. Jérôme. Write: Ch., C.P. 25, St. Jérôme, QC, J7Z 5T7, Canada
- 19-21—*York, Pennsylvania.* 8th Annual Sunlight of the Spirit Conference. Write: Ch., Box 3538, York, PA 17402; Website: www.sosyorkpa.org
- 22-24—*Rimouski, Québec, Canada.* Congrès du Bas St-Laurent District 88-06. Write: Ch., 60 Rue de l'Évêché ouest, Rimouski, Québec, Canada G5L 4H6
- 26-28—*Alberta, Canada.* Corn Roast Roundup. Write: Ch., 719 Birch Avenue, Shelby, MT 59474
- 26-28—*Fortuna, California.* Redwood Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 4702, Arcata, CA 95518

- 26-28—*Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.* 53rd Michigan State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 1308, Adrian, MI 49221; Website: www.cmia32.org
- 26-28—*Papinachois, Québec, Canada.* Congrès autochtone de Betsiamites. Write: Ch., (418) 567-9367
- 26-28—*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.* PENNSCYPAA XVII. Write: Ch., Box 2176, Philadelphia, PA 19103
- 26-28—*San Luis Obispo, California.* 38th Annual 22nd District San Luis Obispo County Convention. Write: Ch., Box 13308, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
- 26-28—*Teton Canyon, Wyoming.* 4th Teton Canyon Campout. Write: Ch., Box 153, Driggs, ID 83422
- 26-28—*Alberta, Canada.* Corn Roast Roundup. Write: Ch., 719 Birch Avenue, Shelby, MT 59474

September

- 2-4—*Chicago, Illinois.* Illinois State Conference. Write: Ch., Box A3901, Chicago, IL 60690-3901
- 2-4—*Chicago, Illinois.* XXXIII Convencion Hispana de A.A. Estados Unidos y Canada. Write: Ch., Box 298, Lyons, IL 60534; Website: convencionhispanadeaeeuuy-canada.org
- 2-4—*Fukuoka, Japan.* Japan 30th Anniversary Celebration. Write: Ch., 1309 Pedro St., San Jose, CA 95126-3841; Website: www.aajapan.org

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 _____, 20 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

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

