

Around AA

Items of AA information and experience

Theme of 23rd Conference: 'Responsibility—Our Expression of Gratitude'

Meeting April 24-29 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, the 131 voting members of the 1973 AA General Service Conference kept that theme in mind throughout. In addition to the 90 Delegates, the Conference members included: GS Board Trustees; directors of AA World Services, Inc., and the AA Grapevine, Inc.; staff members of the GV and the General Service Office.

The Delegates' average length of sobriety was 11.8 years, and the member who gave the keynote talk stressed the Conference theme by crediting his sobriety to "continuous attendance at meetings, nightly conferences with God as I understand Him, and willingness to accept responsibility as an expression of my gratitude."

In an opening-day talk on "Why We Have a General Service Conference," a Trustee (also chairman of the GV Corporate Board) interpreted the theme as an aspect of selflessness: "Selfless giving is the cornerstone of our Fellowship." He recalled how our co-founders suggested the Conference as a means of turning over responsibility for AA to all its members. "In other words," he said, "Bill and Dr. Bob had to be *selfless* enough to devise a plan which would replace themselves."

Conference members were not always in bland agreement, whether they met en masse in a large hall or divided into groups for workshops and committee meetings in smaller rooms. After all, the keynoter had asked them to "speak out loud and clear." And the very purpose of the Conference is to let all viewpoints be heard. A California Delegate remark-

ed, "Some of the problems we have may prove to be the lifeblood of AA. If nothing changed, if problems didn't develop and everything remained static, we'd die."

Out of all these discussions, the 1973 Conference finally arrived at a consensus on many important points. There are a few of its advisory actions, decisions, and recommendations:

Bill W. Memorial Fund — recommended this money (about \$40,000) be placed in the General Fund.

Grapevine—see page 46 for the advice of the Conference on subscriptions.

Institutions—recommended that local institutions committees send to GSO lists of hospitals and prisons where there are no AA groups.

New Quebec Delegate — voted that this province be allowed a fourth delegate.

Penny-a-Day — recommended that the suggested yardstick of a \$3.00 contribution to GSO per member per year be changed to \$3.65, emphasizing the "Penny-a-Day for Sobriety" idea.

World Directory — approved guidelines (based on Delegates' survey) restricting distribution for AA purposes only (with Delegate's approval required for any use by a non-AA in his or her area). Delegates granted permission for their own names to be given to nonalcoholics for purposes of referring alcoholics to AA.

In a separate action, Conference members agreed to a *Directory* moratorium recommended by a special study committee. To allow time for a new, better production system to be set up, the 1973 *World Directory Part II* (overseas) and 1974 *World Directory Part I* (U.S. and Canada) will not be published at all. (It's a temporary inconvenience caused by a very happy "problem" — steady AA growth!)

New AA Booklet

In two ways, *Came to Believe* is a brand-new addition to the AA literature list. Subtitled "The Spiritual Adventure of AA as Experienced by Individual Members," it offers the thinking of 75 AAs — a representative choice from all the contributions during five years of preparation. Voices from many parts of the AA world are heard, from California to Ontario, Finland to Pakistan.



Came to Believe is also a new type of AA publication — neither a pamphlet nor a hard-cover book, but a 128-page booklet with a stiff, glossy-finish cover. It may be ordered from GSO for \$1.25.

The symbolic photo on the cover (pictured here) may look familiar to faithful Grapevine readers. Yes, it's from the same set as the center spread in the January 1973 issue.

New GSO Filmstrip

"Welcome to GSO," a new filmstrip, takes you on a 40-minute tour of GSO and the Grapevine office. The color photos are accompanied by the recorded voices of staff members and editors, ex-

plaining varied AA services performed in these offices.

Copies of "Welcome to GSO" may now be ordered from — naturally enough — GSO, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017. The price: \$6.00 each with the sound track on a record; or \$11.00 each with the sound track in tape-cassette form.

Book Review

'Recovery'

The title of this unfinished novel about an alcoholic ward has a sadly ironic ring. For its writer, distinguished poet John Berryman, recovery was a goal longed for, but never reached; he died in 1972, after one more relapse than he could take.

In a brief foreword, he makes it clear that the novel is fact-based and that he speaks in its pages, not as an AA member, but as an author. Though the protagonist is named Alan Severance and is a scientist, he obviously reflects Berryman's own guilt and shame as he circles in the intellectual's whirlpool of "Why? Why?"

Steadfast throughout is Severance-Berryman's deep respect and love for AA principles and people. But the setting too accurately mirrors a confusion that now gives pause to many AAs in real life. The alcoholism unit in the novel is AA-oriented, but also uses transactional analysis and encounter groups. The violently emotional "confrontation" that is encouraged might be taken as standard AA practice by a reader unfamiliar with the Fellowship. Still, such a reader is likely to give up early in the book, baffled by unexplained AA terminology.

The style is rough-edged and almost chaotic, probably because time ran out before revisions could be made. But it suits the story, giving it the impact of an AA talk and involving the knowledgeable reader in the struggles of these alcoholics.

— J. G.
Published in the U.S. by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 19 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003 — price, \$6.95; in Canada, by Doubleday Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ont.