

# Around AA

*Items of AA information and experience*

## 19th General Service Conference Meets

NEW YORK, April 26—Delegates representing the group conscience of AA members throughout the United States and Canada acted to provide new and improved services to members in virtually all areas of AA activity when they assembled here for the 19th General Service Conference during the week of April 21-26.

Working through a five-and-one-half-day series of almost continuous meetings at the Roosevelt Hotel, Delegates sought better ways of carrying the AA message to alcoholics who still suffer throughout the world.

The General Service Conference is the guardian of world services and of the Twelve Traditions of AA. It is a service body only; it does not govern.

Ninety Delegates, elected by groups from every state and province, together with alcoholic and nonalcoholic General Service Board Trustees, GSO and Grapevine Directors and Staff Members form the 128-member Conference. They act on behalf of the Fellowship to provide guidance to the Board, GSO and Grapevine. Some Conference highlights:

**Public Information** — Reviewed new color-TV public-service announcement being made available to groups.

**Al-Anon** — Recognized special relationship with Al-Anon Family Groups and acknowledged debt of gratitude for assist-

ance to families of alcoholics.

**Grapevine** — Recommended that AA World Services and the AA Grapevine extend to each other the fullest cooperation in making the Fellowship aware of AA tools.

**1970 Convention** — Approved progress being made on 35th Anniversary Convention, Miami Beach, July 3-5, 1970.

**World Service Meeting** — Elected Warren S., Southern Coastal, Calif., and Charles D., Central Mich., as North American Delegates to first AA World Service Meeting in October.

**GS Board** — Elected Bill C., Northeastern, and John R., Western Canada, as Regional Trustee nominees.

**Institutions** — Recommended that AA membership be restricted to admitted alcoholics, but that groups in institutions welcome narcotics addicts and others to inside *open* meetings, provided that they do not speak or otherwise participate.

**Literature** — Approved final draft of the AA Service Manual and recommended that Institutions Directories be distributed every two years with yearly supplements.

**Policy** — Approved resolution to avoid participation on radio or TV programs unless given adequate time for preparation, or unless it serves an AA objective, or the primary discussion is appropriate to AA, and anonymity is guaranteed.

—adapted from *Box 4-5-9*

## NEW AA SIZE

*Spring 1969*

	Groups	Members
United States . . . . .	8,595	148,424
Lone Members . . . . .	...	150
Canada . . . . .	1,556	21,629
Lone Members . . . . .	...	47
In Hospitals . . . . .	648	18,548
In Prisons . . . . .	891	33,775
Internationalists . . . . .	...	344
	11,690	222,917
Overseas* . . . . .	3,057	60,412
Totals.	14,747	283,329

\* Estimated only, until Part II of the World Directory is published in August 1969.

(Including nonreported members, actual membership is estimated at more than 425,000 worldwide.)

## Young AAs and the Traditions

"Dear GSO: Two months ago we held our first meeting of young people here, with many unstable feelings, apprehensions, and a great need. We had only two members and a fellow alcoholic from jail.

"We have seven alcoholics now, six under 40. We made a Twelfth Step call on a girl just before she was committed to a mental institution. We corresponded with her faithfully, and she contacted us when she returned. We've given our literature away freely.

"We attend other groups two or three times a week. We follow the Twelve Steps suggested for recovery, and use the Twelve Traditions, as the mainstay of our group."

—Joyce L.  
*Box 4-5-9*

## AA's Twelve Traditions Are a Lively Issue Today

Mail currently reaching the Grapevine indicates a growing interest in AA's Twelve Traditions. The new groups constantly springing up everywhere rely on

the Traditions to insure group effectiveness and survival, just as the individual AA relies on the Twelve Steps. And the great influx of young people often calls for a closer look at the Traditions, to see how these principles apply to the different problems of rapidly changing times.

The following recollections of early AA experience are reminiscent of the risky process of trial and error out of which the Traditions were born.

In 1940, we *organized* AA in California (not knowing any better). We had a president, a vice-president, a membership committee, membership rules. We also incorporated AA for the whole of the state. We were going to give out charters for starting groups. We even put in Roberts' Rules of Order for a while (talks limited to three minutes, etc.). Well, all hell broke loose. Mort, the president, couldn't be at a meeting, so he asked someone other than the VP to run the meeting. This made the VP mad, and he got drunk (haven't seen him since). The secretary's husband got drunk because *he* wasn't given a title (he rejoined five years later). The membership committee got mad because the people they screened out came anyway (we wanted only "pure alkie").

We had a "goon squad" for the slippers. When someone slipped, the goon squad would find him, take him home, and get him sober (whether he wanted to get sober or not). One night, Mort got a call from two members who had slipped. He sent two of the goon squad to save them. An hour later, he got a call from one of the squad. They were drunk also. He sent four more goons. Another call. Now there were eight drunks, and so on. It damn near wiped out the group!

Finally, we took stock and figured out we were all chiefs and no Indians. So we threw out all the titles and committees. For a membership committee, we figured we had the best in the world: John Barleycorn and Mama Fate. They worked 24 hours a day, double time on weekends, and triple time on holidays. Given enough days, they would send us all the drunks we needed. As for titles,

we figured the "big man" had no place in AA.

As for the proper use of money and where its misuse began, we found that out in 1941, the hard way. When the local pastors began to help us, we became affluent; the mother group had four or five hundred members, and we accumulated about \$500 in the bank. Mort announced this to the group and asked them what to do with it. All hell broke loose again! Every member had an opinion and fought to get his way. For three Friday nights in a row, all a newcomer heard about was what to do with \$500. Then our treasurer (wiser than his AA years) drew the money out of the bank and sent it to AA headquarters in New York. The next Friday night, when the fight started, he got up and said we had no money, therefore no problem.

—C. W., Whittier, Calif.

### The 18th Floor Group—Just Alcoholics

A special meeting of the 18th Floor Group was held Monday morning, at which three regional Trustees and Mary Ellen U., latest AA addition to the GSO staff, told their AA stories.

Committee meetings at GSO tend to be very serious, as all present try to fulfill their responsibility of keeping an eye on every aspect of AA for the rest of us. But the AA meeting, like any other meeting of any AA group, was warmly human—both informative and inspiring.

—Box 4-5-9

*That's the GV group, too! We Grapeviners cross to the GSO side of the 18th floor and join our fellow alcoholics in the regular AA closed meeting.*

—The Editors

### Those 'Purple' Words

After spending 17 years in the Marine Corps, I don't suspect anyone would refer to me as an "English purist." I've heard and used some of the saltiest profanities ever uttered—but in their place—i.e., in barracks, in barrooms, on forced marches, and the like. However, these profanities were used in the company of other men, and even marines had enough feeling for the amenities to

hold their swearing vocabularies behind their teeth when in mixed company.

I feel that the use of four-letter words at an AA meeting cannot be justified by the wildest type of rationalization. If individuals are in such a mental state that they feel compelled to use this type of language, I think they are in dire need of some kind of treatment that AA simply does not have to offer.

—Anonymous

### New Pamphlet With a 'Now' Look

Yes, that cover belongs to a regular GSO pamphlet. It's a completely new edition inside, too, leading off with a "True or False?" lineup of familiar rationalizations ("But I'm too young to be an alcoholic!") and the AA answers.

Ten members, whose ages upon joining AA range from 26 down to 16, tell their own stories in this pamphlet. Almost any young newcomer should find points of identification somewhere in the widely varied experiences that take the reader from college campus to urban ghetto. For the old-timer or middle-timer who may sometimes be baffled by the newest generation of AAs, here's a guide toward, better understanding.

