

# Delegate's

## IMPRESSIONS

### CALIFORNIA

**W**HAT impressed me so profoundly was finding so much being done for us AAs with so few facilities and so few people.. just a few small offices containing the Service Secretaries, *The Grapevine* and Works Publishing Inc. Like so many AAs, I was aware that our General Service Headquarters performed certain services for us, but what amazed me was the unbelievable extent of these services. I sincerely hope that every AA in the world will get a first hand report of how far reaching those services are and how vital a part they play in our continued success as a movement.

Another revelation to me was the extent of Bill's activities in guiding AA's affairs and how dependent we all have been in getting the right direction at those sometimes crucial moments.

I know how frightening it is to all of us to think of Bill ever leaving; I know also he can never be replaced. But Bill believes and I gather that Dr. Bob also believed, that he and Bill can be replaced by a principle, that being the Collective Conscience of AA speaking through the delegates of the General Service Conference. I am convinced, now that the first Conference has ended, that this will come to pass; given time the Col-

lective Conscience of AA has a vehicle with which to guide AA affairs in the years to come.

Another revelation, and this struck deep, was the immeasurable contribution of the non-alcoholic Trustees. This alcoholic, like most, does AA work by reason of grim necessity — he'd rather live than die. But our "nons" on the Board of Trustees have given years of talented, selfless service without compensation, or recognition ...just working quietly and anonymously giving of themselves, that we might live. No other motive than love and devotion... truly a labor of love. My admiration, respect and gratitude to them is boundless.

This writer believes he is expressing the unanimous feeling of all the conferees in saying, "God bless all of you there in New York and thank you for the grand way you treated us and the great and vital work you are doing."

— C.W., *California*

### FLORIDA

**W**HAT impressed me most at the Conference was the manner in which the problems confronting AA as a whole were presented, and the staggering amount of work undertaken by the General Headquarters staff in preparing this ma-

terial for easy assimilation by the delegates. This wonderful presentation makes the delegate's task of interpreting these problems to the Committeemen of his area and their groups much easier.

We, in South Florida are getting plans under way to disseminate the information we learned at the Conference and turn words into action.

We have all known for a long time of Dr. Bob's and Bill's devotion for us, but it was a great privilege to learn of the wonderful work done by the trustees behind the scenes on our behalf. I was greatly moved to learn of the great love and affection of these incredibly unselfish men to whom every AA will forever be indebted.

I shall always deem it the greatest privilege to serve this movement which gave me a "second chance." — C.H.G., *Florida*

### MASSACHUSETTS

**T**HE first General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in April in New York will live long in the memories of this correspondent, the conferees, and all other participants — of that I feel quite certain.

By the very nature of the work performed, that Conference will, in time, prove itself to be of an historic nature. The smoothness of the machinery in action was remarkable. My hat is off to the conferees

from the States and Provinces represented in Panel I; and all our hats are lifted in general salute to the staff members there in New York who, by their prodigious efforts, prepared the way for this eventful meeting. The efficiency and wholehearted cooperation of the entire General Service Staff has been demonstrated, and I'd say to all AAs - fret not, our General Headquarters are in capable hands.

The informal caucus of Thursday night was a gem of an idea. A myriad of regional problems were thrown into the pot, sorted overnight, and returned to us in orderly fashion for discussion at subsequent formal sessions. Also, our work was made considerably easier through the presentation of a suggested agenda in prepared form. Thanks, Bill W.

I was further impressed by the conduct of the sessions under the able leadership of the President of the Board of Trustees. His understanding of our many problems, his knowledge of procedure, and his logic are to be admired. Thank you, Mr. B.B.S. The conduct of the General Conference body is to be greatly admired, also.

I was deeply influenced by the excellent presentation of the details of the work involved in all our services. The individuals responsible for their respective parts in these services enlightened us to a great extent relative to their

tasks. I think now that we understand better the meaning of AA services. I have the conviction, though, that the general membership does not appreciate what is being done to guard our AA Tradition, and to carry on world services. It's up to us, the State Committees. Let's all get to work.

— Bob G., Massachusetts

## MICHIGAN

**B**EING an alcoholic, I am emotional, and while AA has, in a measure, taught me to think with my head, I still feel with those old emotions. During the Conference, my feelings ran the gamut of:

*Amazement* at the scope and efficiency of the Services of AA Services conceived and fostered for us in AA by our beloved Founders.

*Shame* for my own selfish acceptance of those Services without having troubled myself to think of them properly or to support them fairly.

*Resolution* to explain these Services to other members so that they may know that herein we have a fine, necessary and precious means of helping the fellow alcoholic who doesn't yet know.

*Humility* because here were thirty-seven temperamental alcoholics who sat down together for three days and discussed ways and means of preserving and protecting these Services that have, in some fashion, meant so much to

each of us in AA. Thirty-seven who did this without a word or gesture that implied government or selfish ends. Thirty-seven whose sole thought was to help in whatever way possible to discharge our collective obligation to a Provident God by "Carrying this message to other alcoholics."

*Gratitude* that God has seen fit to grant me the beautiful gift of life itself through the message of AA that came to me when I was one of the million yet to come.

— F.McI., Muskegon, Michigan

## TEXAS

**A** LONG time ago after about a year's sobriety in AA, I would hear occasionally about making some sort of a payment or contribution to the New York Office.

My reaction in those days was one of resentment — such thoughts as these would absorb me — I have my *Big Book* (which was given to me) I have my 12 Steps, which certainly can't be taken from me. Why should I contribute to a Yankee Group way up East? What can they do for me? What can they do for my Group? Why can't they maintain themselves?

As the year grew to the 2nd and 3rd years of orderly sobriety, the responsibility of just being an AA also grew. It began to register slowly that if AA has spread to Canada and to Texas and to foreign

countries I started hearing about, then surely, somebody, someplace, was doing a swell job.

Shortly after my 5th year, I was selected as a delegate to attend, with 36 other area delegates, the first General Service Conference in New York.

There, all my doubts and indifference faded away. There I found neat, compact offices, staffed by brilliant, understanding people, over half of whom contributed their services. There I found the Yankees who had carried our message to millions — I found some of the departments in the *red*, because of our negligence and indifference. I found in those offices (yours and mine) the heart of AA, beating calmly and wisely, uncomplaining. May God guide us to keep it so.

— O.L., Dallas, Texas

## CANADA

**T**HANKS, New York, for such, grand hospitality.

What greatly impressed me at the first assembly of General Service Conference was the unanimity among all delegates.

Unanimous in gratitude to God for having given us Bill and Lois, Dr. Bob and Anne Smith, all of whom sacrificed so much in nursing this wonderful fellowship through its childhood.

Unanimous in enthusiastically accepting the responsibility of 'taking over', but only as links

between General Headquarters and AAs everywhere, and with the general understanding that the conference is not a government.

Unanimous in thanks to the *Grapevine* staff and the resolve to increase subscriptions to make this priceless publication self-supporting.

Unanimous in gratitude to the Foundation Trustees and to those assiduous girls at General Headquarters who have guided AA around the shoals in a sometimes perilous sea.

Finally, unanimous in approval of asking for \$2.00 per member per year to adequately support General Headquarters office, and to rebuild the almost exhausted reserves to a prudent level.

And after all, is it not asking "so very little from so many" in such contrast to the "so much from so few" that was given in the earlier years that we might have AA?

— A. C., Ontario, Canada

## NEW YORK

**B**Y chief impressions of the Conference are my first ones - the ones that struck me very shortly after I walked in late on Thursday night to what was listed on the Agenda as an "Informal Reception" but which had quickly turned itself into an informal discussion meeting with Bill presiding. These



were that the delegates were "grass roots" realists in touch with their groups who recognized that they were here for a serious purpose — who knew that inrepresenting their areas they were doing so as servants rather than as superiors — and who felt that their function was to listen and learn rather than to talk and adopt resolutions.

These impressions were heightened with every succeeding session of the Conference, and my amazement grew when I failed to discover among the 37 a single one who seemed intent on *making an impression* — or for that matter, even a *speech*. I kept saying "But this can't be — there's something wrong here — they're alcoholics even if they are selected — and in 37 of them surely there must be a few 'Big Wheels' or 'Spotlight Seekers' or 'Front Runners' who will want the centre of the floor." But I failed to find such a one up to the time the Lord's Prayer marked the end of the Conference on Sunday afternoon. Anyone who has sat through AA business meetings — whether group clubhouse, or in-

tergroup — will agree, I think, that that is most unusual.

Coupled with the above, I was struck with the *maturity* of the ideas contributed by the delegates in the deliberations. When they spoke it was generally right on the point — and short! Not that they spoke a lot, because the reverse was true. In fact, I would guess that close to half of them hardly spoke at all during the entire three days — And it was obvious that this was not because they had nothing to say but rather because they had the *humility* to let the other fellow speak first; and if he covered the point they had in mind that was enough without their speaking "for the record."

I am sure I express the thoughts of all the "non-delegate" members of the Conference when I say to the areas in Panel No. I that you showed great wisdom in your choice of delegates. They were great and we look forward to greeting them again next year — along with the fresh crop from Panel No. 2.

— J.A.D., *Conference Member*,  
(not a delegate) New York, N.Y.

★★★★

There are many reasons why we should love AA, but the principal one is because it stands for every splendid attribute that tends toward the building of good, broadminded, square acting men.

### Presented Key to City

On Friday, April 20, 1951 the delegates of the First Panel of the General Service Conference of AA arrived in New York City. Over seven and one half million people lined the streets to give a record Manhattan welcome... complete with ticker-tape, bands, Armed Forces, Police and Firemen escorts ... normal business and traffic was at a standstill for hours while the natives shouted themselves hoarse. Another famous visitor in the city that day was General Douglas MacArthur.

