

■ The 59th General Service Conference— Evolution and Endurance

The 59th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States and Canada will gather in New York City under the theme “Our Commitment to Carry A.A.’s Message—Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action” during April 26—May 2, 2009. Some call this annual gathering A.A.’s “business meeting,” and still others describe the actions and purpose of the Conference with words more likely to evoke the spiritual significance of a yearly gathering of ex-drunks (and some good non-alcoholic friends) who come together as “guardian of world services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.” (*The A.A. Service Manual*, p. S99) But whatever words are used to describe the event, its purpose is clear, and its formation has been puzzled out, debated, and even decried for years before the first General Service Conference debuted in 1951. In fact, the Conference, like many traditions and mainstays of A.A., was not formed overnight; neither did the need for it become apparent until thousands of alcoholics had swelled the ranks of our Fellowship. Indeed, such Conference practices, such as a new theme each year and delegate panel representation, came about gradually, after much deliberation and thought.

In one of the earliest documents existing, a three-part paper called “Our A.A. General Service Center...The Alcoholic Foundation of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” (April 1947), Bill W. spelled out his thoughts and concerns about the future of Alcoholics Anonymous and the necessity of turning the Fellowship over to its members and creating a General Service Conference. At the time, there was no panel of delegates, although there were trustees, General Service staff members, and Grapevine editors.

“Oldsters” as Bill called himself, Dr. Bob, and other early members, “occupy a unique position. They command a wider confidence and still wield more personal influence than anyone else could again, or for that matter, ever should.” But Bill related the concerns some members had: “In the long future, when these oldsters can no longer assure us, who is going to take their place?” He questioned, “Though we know our General Office and our Grapevine fairly well, shouldn’t we somehow draw closer to our Trustees? Shouldn’t we take steps to allay our feeling of remoteness while the older ones are still around, and there is still time to experiment?” (“The Alcoholic

Foundation of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Part III”)

Posing a solution for this problem, Bill continued, “Perhaps the best suggestion for closing the gap between our Alcoholic Foundation and the A.A. Groups is the idea of creating what we might call The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.” The Conference, he continued, “like the present Headquarters, would be no body of authority. It could recommend or suggest, it might approve or disapprove. But it would never command or direct.... The creation of a yearly Conference would...always be sure to engage the complete confidence and support of A.A. everywhere. It would bring our Trustees into friendly contact with a representative cross section of A.A.; it would enable them to feel the pulse of the movement for themselves; it would securely link them to those they serve and it would permanently close that gap of remoteness in which Dr. Bob, I, and others are still standing.” (“The Alcoholic Foundation of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Part III”)

In 1951, the “gap of remoteness” was closed as a selection of Conference panels arrived in New York City to represent their areas at the first General Service Conference.



Bill W., seated at right, at the Third General Service Conference, 1953, Roosevelt Hotel, New York City.

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That first year (1951—an odd year), 37 delegates participated at the Conference. The following year (1952—an even year), 38 delegates were added. Today, odd and even designations for election years are still followed throughout the Fellowship: “In any one year, about half of the A.A. groups are busy electing G.S.R.’s and half of all area assemblies are electing qualified delegates to the annual Conference meeting, depending on whether the area is an “odd” or “even” panel.” (*The A.A. Service Manual*, p. S105) Since the first Conference, “there have been additional areas added to states and provinces—total count, 93—with about half elected in an odd year and half in an even year.” (*ibid* p. S103) The term of each delegate is two years, and during any Conference, two panels serve. For example, at this year’s Conference, all delegates will either be Panel 58 (serving their second and final year) or Panel 59 (serving their first year).

Although some A.A. members, at first, find the system of two panels and odd/even election years somewhat complicated, a 1947 document by Bill W. called “The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous (North American Section)... Purpose, Structure, Scope and Principles,” reveals that A.A.’s co-founder first suggested *four* panels, serving *four* years each. He proposed that the “General Service Conference should be basically formed upon a plan of “Panels of Twelve,” each panel serving *four* years. Thus, in the first year of the Conference, 12 Group representatives would attend, the second year 24, the third year 36, and the fourth year 48.”

Another Conference mainstay—a yearly theme—also came about gradually. The Conference theme, such as this year’s “Our Commitment to Carry A.A.’s Message—Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action,” lends focus to many agenda items and often infuses the spirit of the Conference, encouraging many Conference members to examine the depths of a subject or principle they are already familiar with—and coming up with a new understanding and appreciation. Between 1951 and 1962, however, the Conference did not have directly expressed themes, although it did have thematic subject matter. By

1962, definite themes were introduced at the Conference and were based on relevant issues in A.A. that would change each year. Minutes of an October 1967 G.S.O. meeting, in a section regarding Conference themes, relates that many A.A. conventions, conferences or gatherings of considerable size “carry on the message of the previous Conference theme. So it becomes increasingly important to choose a theme with much care and thought.”

For early Conference members, “action” (among other factors) was an important element of their A.A. membership. In fact, the thematic subject matter for the first Conference in 1951 was “Beginning of Action—Genuine Faith in the Future of A.A.” Later that same year, in a June 1951 Grapevine article, Bill W. wrote about the vital relation of action to all facets of A.A.—individual, group, and A.A. as a whole—thoughts that remain timeless and pertinent to a society of alcoholics in action: “Let’s look for a moment at a single A.A. member. Faith alone does not save him. He has to act, do something. He must *carry* his message to others, *practice* A.A. principles in all his affairs. Else he slips, he withers, and he dies. Look now at an A.A. group. Can pure faith, mere belief in right principle and sound tradition, make the group a going concern? Not in the least. Each A.A. group, as such, must also function, do something. It must service its appointed purpose or it, too, withers and falls apart.

“Now our Conference delegates were able to apply this principle to A.A. as a whole. The delegates could see far beyond the single A.A. and his particular group. In a flash, they took in the stark fact that A.A. *as a whole* must continue to function or else it might well suffer that common penalty of faith without works. Which is: disintegration.” (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 129)

But disintegration—dissolution—is hardly likely when a society of alcoholics in action seek ways and means to carry the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers. Therefore, a better theme could scarcely be found for this year’s General Service Conference but “Our Commitment to Carry A.A.’s Message—Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action.” And although current General Service Conference mainstays and traditions may have evolved, many other basic premises, like the importance of action to an A.A., are enduring—they remain timeless, constant, and current.

■ Beginners Meetings: Helping Newcomers Gain Sobriety

“I was at a beginners meeting a couple of years ago,” says Bob V., of New York City’s West End Group, “and the leader actually reached into his knapsack and pulled out a telephone. He put it on the podium in front of him and began explaining the benefits of telephone therapy for newcomers. Then, he reached into the knapsack again

and pulled out a Big Book and a Twelve and Twelve, which he stacked up next to the telephone as he described how important it was for beginners to familiarize themselves with A.A.'s literature. Finally, he reached down again and took out a small GI Joe doll. Without saying anything, he set it up next to the telephone and the books. 'This,' he said after a moment, 'is my sponsor.'

"It was a bit over the top, I remember thinking at the time, but it sure did work. I don't think I've been to a beginners meeting since where I didn't think about that presentation. And I even found my own 'sponsor'—a plastic figurine dressed up like a knight with a shield and a sword that one of my kids must have abandoned years ago. He doesn't say much, but he's awfully powerful," says Bob with a chuckle.

While that beginners meeting may have been a bit more theatrical than most, it illuminates a critical element in what makes a beginners meeting effective: keeping it simple. It's often easy for A.A. members, sober a while and caught up in the exhilarating struggle of daily life, to forget what it's like for newcomers to A.A., alcoholics who may, for the most part, have no prior experience or success in staying sober and no context in which to frame the information they are suddenly hearing. Everybody in A.A. has been there themselves, sober only a few days, perhaps, and uncertain of just what to expect in this thing called recovery. Sometimes, after staying sober a while, A.A.s may forget this, and the particular trials and tribulations of newcomers may get swallowed up in what can seem to be the more pressing matters of individual sobriety and talk of relationships, job woes, and what some might consider "psychobabble."

To focus on A.A.'s primary purpose, and to combat a shift away from the specific concerns of newcomers, many groups hold beginners meetings or beginners workshops, in a variety of formats, aimed at providing newcomers with a safe, informative, and nurturing context for their newfound sobriety.

Bob's group, for example, recognized after a group inventory that more and more newcomers were attending their meetings than in previous years, many "getting lost in the shuffle," and decided in order to better integrate these members into the group and to provide them with the basics necessary to ongoing sobriety, they would set up a beginners workshop in addition to the once-a-week beginners meeting the group had been holding for many years. The workshop was established in line with the Beginners Meeting Kit available from the General Service Office (M-1, \$2.75) and was structured to be as inclusive for newcomers as possible, recognizing, as noted in the brochure "Suggestions for Leading Beginners Meetings," which is included in the kit along with 12 Conference-approved pamphlets, "groups have found that newcomers' chances of recovery are higher if they can actively take part in A.A. discussions as soon as possible—and that they also need someone with A.A. experience to tell them

the essential facts about alcoholism and our program of recovery."

The group decided on a rotating format that included three A.A. members with varying experience in sobriety—one to have under a year, one to have over a year, and one to have over five years—in order to present a balanced approach. Each person would select a different topic each week, most often drawn from the suggested topics provided in the kit, and would speak on it for five minutes or so. The rest of the meeting, then, would be devoted to the specific concerns and experiences of those newcomers in attendance with under six months of sobriety, utilizing a discussion format that eliminates the potential anxiety of newcomers having to raise their hands to be recognized. The format also allowed for a brief segment in the meeting, following a break in which A.A.'s Seventh Tradition was briefly explained, for any questions from newcomers, constructed on the premise that has been proven time and again in A.A. that "there are no stupid questions." And, to ensure that the focus stayed on newcomers, an announcement was made before the sharing suggesting that the group would have "no objections" if those in attendance with over six months of sobriety were to pass as the sharing came around to them—a suggestion in the same sense that the Twelve Steps are "suggested only."

This format has served the group well and is still working at the standing-room-only weekly Beginners Workshop. "It's one of the best meetings around," says Bob. "Keeping the focus on newcomers keeps it green for us all."

Of course, there are many different formats for keeping the focus on newcomers, and A.A. groups have utilized numerous approaches to beginners meetings ranging from small, informal discussions with newcomers doing most of the talking to large sessions with prearranged speakers and participation from experienced A.A.s. Many groups make up newcomer packets of their own that include basic recovery pamphlets and a local meeting list. Some groups also provide temporary sponsorship for newcomers or include pocket phone books, some blank and others listing the numbers of group members with sobriety who welcome calls from newcomers.

As the old Chinese proverb extols, "There are many paths to the mountaintop, but the view is always the same." And the view, in this case, as articulated in the kit from G.S.O., is clear and unobstructed: "By receiving and giving A.A. help, every one of us becomes a link in a chain around the world. All of us cling to the chain to save our lives, and yet each of us is part of it—depending on all the others to help keep the chain unbroken."

Effective beginners meetings all have one thing in common—they keep it simple by sticking to the basics, explaining what A.A. is and is not, and offering the invaluable support and hard-won experience of countless A.A. members in how to keep away from one drink, one day at a time.

■ The Grapevine: 'A.A. As It Happens'

In Latin, *vox populi* means “voice of the people,” and throughout its long history, the A.A. Grapevine, with its multitude of first-person stories, has long been a forum for A.A. members around the world to share their experience, strength and hope. Built on individual accounts of A.A.’s program of recovery, the Grapevine gives voice to A.A.’s diverse population and offers members an opportunity to communicate with the many far-flung corners of the Fellowship.

As the Grapevine’s Editorial Policy states, “The heart of the Grapevine is the shared experience of individual A.A. members working the A.A. program and applying the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps.” Bill W., the Grapevine’s earliest and most prolific contributor, referred to the Grapevine as “a monthly vision of the worldwide thought, feeling, and activity of our whole Fellowship. It is our great means of intercommunication; a magic carpet on which each of you can ride to the more distant reaches and watch new brothers and sisters emerge from darkness into light.”

For a magazine with the Grapevine’s longevity—65 years and going strong—and its incredible reach—over 100,000 readers in more than 99 different countries—the fact that each month’s issue is written on an entirely volunteer basis by A.A. members and friends of the Fellowship is an amazing accomplishment, a triumph of the fundamental A.A. experience of one alcoholic sharing with another.

Unlike other A.A. materials, the Grapevine itself is not General Service Conference-approved and represents not a Fellowship-wide consensus of A.A. thought and action, but rather the voice of the individual A.A. member. Since the Grapevine comes out twelve times a year, and the Conference meets only once a year, the magazine would never be published if it had to go through the Conference review process. Thus, no individual issue of the Grapevine is considered “Conference-approved.”

At the same time, however, the Conference has always supported the concept of the Grapevine and encouraged its distribution at meetings and other A.A. gatherings and, in 1986, a Conference Advisory Action specifically addressed the issue of Conference approval of the Grapevine directly with the following statement: “Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through the Conference-approval process, the Conference recognizes the Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

For writers and readers alike, the Grapevine offers a snapshot of the Fellowship’s development at any given point in time, a feature that makes it unique within the larger A.A. structure. “Most of our basic A.A. literature is historical in nature,” says David E. of Hawaii, a former chairperson of the Grapevine Conference Committee and

past general service trustee serving on the Grapevine Board. “The Grapevine, though, is a living, breathing, current reflection of A.A. as it happens, with articles about every aspect of living sober in today’s world.”

Guided by the Twelve Traditions, and reflecting the principles of the A.A. Fellowship it serves, the Grapevine does very few things that “normal” magazines do on a regular, every-day basis. The Grapevine has no advertising—a minor miracle for a publication that has remained a going concern for these many years; it has no paid writers, no celebrity columns; it can neither endorse nor oppose any particular issue or express a distinctive editorial opinion on matters swirling around us in the outside world. Yet, in its simplest form the Grapevine represents a spiritual principle, an openness fundamental to A.A.’s program of recovery.

This freedom of speech that the Grapevine preserves on behalf of the Fellowship comes with some challenges, however. There are issues of “finances, editorial considerations, office management, Conference discussions, and votes,” notes Greg T., a past member of the Grapevine’s Editorial Advisory Board and a past general service trustee on the Grapevine Board. “Not the least among these,” Greg notes, “is how best to ‘market’ this unique vehicle that so many A.A.s treasure and yet others have no idea even exists!” As David puts it, “The most challenging issue facing the Grapevine has been perennial: how to keep the flow of sharing from A.A. members available to the whole Fellowship, while being fiscally prudent.”

In contrast to G.S.O., which receives group contributions to support group services, the Grapevine does not accept contributions from individuals or groups, and accepts donations only for a fund set up to provide subscriptions for inmates or other A.A.s who cannot afford the cost. Its financial support comes entirely from sales of the magazine and related materials, such as *The Language of the Heart*—the collected Grapevine writings of Bill W.

In addition to management of the Grapevine’s finances, another challenging area of focus is the magazine itself, its editorial content and overall approach. While the Grapevine staff is charged with putting together the magazine each month, and the right of the Grapevine editor to select or reject material for publication is guaranteed by the Conference Charter, a volunteer Editorial Advisory Board functions as a helpful resource for editorial decision-making. Comprised of volunteers who are members of A.A. with expertise in publishing, communications, and the graphic arts, the board is advisory in nature and meets six times a year to discuss a wide range of practical issues facing the magazine, such as editorial content, magazine format, and the development of the Web site and Grapevine items.

“The Editorial Advisory Board offers a unique venue for service for someone like me who is both personally and professionally interested in writing, editing, and publishing,” says Greg in reflection of his time on the advisory

board. “As an alcoholic and a Grapevine reader myself, I simply shared my opinions and experiences. It was a great laboratory for me to be a part of something tangible that influenced, to some degree, A.A. as a whole. This group has a real role to play in the Grapevine’s Twelfth Step purpose.”

In the hopes of making A.A.’s recovery message even more accessible, the Grapevine will be undergoing a major redesign, scheduled to unveil with the March 2009 issue.

“It’s pretty exciting,” says Robin B., Grapevine executive editor. “We started over a year ago and the new design will be connected to the magazine’s roots—a classic design that is clean and contemporary at the same time.” One important upgrade will be the addition of full color throughout, something the Grapevine has wanted to do for many years and now, through advances in technology, will be able to offer its readers —“especially a new generation of A.A.s,” says Robin, “who don’t even know what black and white TV was like.”

Additionally, the magazine will be printed and bound without staples—a development designed to enhance Twelfth Step opportunities and allow greater distribution into prisons and correctional facilities, many of which have a proscription against publications with staples. The Grapevine has been publishing a July issue without staples for the past few years, an issue designed for specific use within the prison system, but now with the new format the magazine will be accessible year-round to those A.A.s behind the walls.

“The key elements of the new design are the updated format and reader-friendly layout,” says Al Z., a current member of the Editorial Advisory board with a background in newspaper publishing, “making the departments or sections of the magazine easier to find and the pages more welcoming to read. The addition of color, art and photography brings the pages to life and gives the magazine a modern look.”

“We hope to let everyone—that means our loyal readers and our new subscribers alike—see what an incredible Twelfth Step tool our magazine can be,” says Madeleine P., Pacific region trustee and current chairperson of the Grapevine Board. “Most of us have not stayed stagnant in our own lives, and we don’t believe our readership has either. We hope the new design will keep the Grapevine



fresh and relevant. We want to show we reflect the voice of the A.A. Fellowship today.”

As often appears in the Grapevine world, even the redesign has a story of its own. The graphic designer who helped with the new look is an A.A. member with 27 years of sobriety, and his father was an A.A. pioneer. “The dad got sober in New York with Bill W. and the other early members in the forties,” says Robin, “and then moved to Texas and helped start meetings there.” About the graphic designer, Robin relates, “He tells the story that he literally wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for A.A., because his parents had been split up for a while.” But then his father got sober and the parents got back together, “which is when he was conceived.”

Writing for the Grapevine has always been a labor of love, and day after day, week after week, manuscripts stream into the Grapevine office unsolicited. They come from A.A. members who have something to say—something about their sobriety, about working a particular Step or Tradition, about getting or losing a sponsor, or about the feelings of isolation and loneliness that can follow any alcoholic into the new life that A.A. offers. And so, while the Grapevine Board, staff, and the Fellowship-wide network of Grapevine and La Viña (its Spanish-language counterpart) representatives, who carry the message of the Grapevine throughout the A.A. service structure all do their part in making the Grapevine a success, in the end it is the Fellowship itself—the individual A.A. members who sit down to write out their stories and share their experience, strength and hope with others—who make the Grapevine what it is today, and what it has always been: the voice of A.A.

■ A.A.’s ‘Transmission of Hope’: A Chain Reaction

At its core, Alcoholics Anonymous has always been based on the lifesaving communication between one alcoholic and another. In late 1930s America, the era into which Alcoholics Anonymous was born, the idea of one alcoholic talking with another, resulting in the betterment of both, was big news, changing alcoholism treatment forever. Traditionally a vertical relationship—with the communication going up and down between doctor and patient—A.A. brought a horizontal approach to alcoholism treatment that revolutionized the way people thought about alcoholics.

Often described in early A.A. literature as a “chain reaction,” the active ingredient, the agent of change in this reaction, was the particular identification between alcoholics, the recognition that another had gone through similar trials and had found a way to stay away from a drink. This transmission of hope, passing from one person

to another, opened the way for a new kind of spirituality, a spirituality wherein fellow sufferers found that by reaching out to each other, and relying on a Higher Power, they could accomplish what neither had been able to do alone: stay sober.

Codified in its literature from the start, A.A. has always been careful not to present itself in religious terms and, while highlighting the healing benefits of an individual alcoholic's relationship with a Higher Power, A.A.'s pioneers went to great lengths to keep the doors of A.A. as wide open as possible by not defining just what God they were talking about. With early membership claiming a number of agnostics and atheists, it was important to the early members to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. They understood that religion was an element that could easily divide—and thus defeat—the fledgling fellowship.

"A.A. had been supremely wise, I think," said the Rev. Samuel Shoemaker, one of the nonalcoholic friends who was instrumental in shaping the Fellowship in the very beginning, "in emphasizing the reality of the experience, and acknowledging that it came from a higher Power than human, and leaving the interpretation part pretty much at that.... If A.A.s had said more, some people would have wanted them to say a great deal more and define God in a way acceptable and congenial to themselves. It would have taken only two or three groups like this, dissenting from one another, to wreck the whole business.... So they stuck to the inescapable experiences and told people to turn their wills and their lives over to the care of God *as they understood Him*. That left the theory and the theology...to the churches to which people belong. If they belonged to no church and could hold no consistent theory, then they had to give themselves to the God that they saw in other people. That's not a bad way to set in motion the beginnings of a spiritual experience." (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pp. 263-264)

The spiritual chain reaction that grew from A.A.'s beginnings in Akron has stretched to countless alcoholics in cultures as diverse as imaginable. A.A. today has an estimated 2,000,000 members, consisting of more than 113,000 groups worldwide. A.A.'s literature has been translated into languages such as Afrikaans, Arabic, Hindi, Nepali, Persian, Swahili, and Vietnamese, among many others, and its twelve-step approach has been adapted widely by fellowships of people recovering from various addictions, compulsive behaviors, and mental health problems.

Nevertheless, one of the most common misconceptions about Alcoholics Anonymous is that it is a religious organization. New members especially, confronted with A.A.'s emphasis on recovery by spiritual means, often translate "spiritual" as "religious" and shy away from meetings, avoiding what they perceive as a new and frightening set of beliefs. By the time they walk into their first meeting, many alcoholics have lost what faith they might once have possessed; others have tried religion to stop drinking and

failed; still others simply want nothing to do with it at all. Yet, with rare exceptions, once A.A. members achieve any length of sobriety, they have found a new sense of strength outside—a Power greater than themselves, by whatever name.

The basic principles of Alcoholics Anonymous were worked out in the late 1930s and early 1940s, during what Bill W. often referred to as the Fellowship's period of "trial and error." The founding members had been using six steps borrowed from the Oxford Group, where many of them started out. In the course of writing A.A.'s basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill expanded them to twelve. But he was dealing with a group of newly sober drunks, and not surprisingly his new version met with spirited opposition. Even though the founding members were, in many ways, a homogeneous bunch, they represented the full spectrum of opinion and belief and "...the hot debate about the Twelve Steps and the book's content was doubled and redoubled. There were conservative, liberal, and radical viewpoints," said Bill (*ibid.*, p. 162). Some thought the book ought to be Christian; others could accept the word "God" but were opposed to any other theological proposition. And the atheists and agnostics wanted to delete all references to God and take a psychological approach.

Bill concluded, "...we finally began to talk about the possibility of compromise.... In Step Two we decided to describe God as a 'Power greater than ourselves.' In Steps Three and Eleven we inserted the words '*God as we understood him*.' From Step Seven we deleted the expression 'on our knees.' And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: 'Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a Program of Recovery.' A.A.'s Twelve Steps were to be *suggestions* only." (*ibid.*, p. 167)

As noted by a sober priest in the late 1970s in the A.A. Grapevine, "One of the great liberating and reassuring elements of the whole Twelve Step experience is the realization that I am making this journey of recovery hand in hand with the God *of my understanding*. I need not explain nor justify this relationship to anyone. In A.A., each member's belief has always been private, individual, sacred. The founding fathers of the program were at great pains to make this abundantly clear.... If, then, there is the slightest insinuation in the Twelve Steps that this God of our understanding can be discovered, loved, and served only within the confines of a particular church or denomination, such an insinuation completely escapes me."

Turning drunkenness and despair into freedom and hope is the basis of Alcoholics Anonymous and at its core is identification between one sufferer and another. This link, this depth of, connection while based on religious principles, has always been considered spiritual in nature, and, while much of its early membership was drawn from the ranks of America's predominantly white, middle-class, church-going population of the time, the program these alcoholics developed was clear in its separation between religion and spirituality.

Over the years, A.A. has had many friends in the world of religion, as it has in the worlds of medicine, psychiatry, and business. Among such friends was Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of New York City's Riverside Church, a man whose face graced the cover of *Time* magazine in October of 1930. In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (p. 324), Dr. Fosdick said of A.A., "The meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous are the only place, so far as I know, where Roman Catholics, Jews, all kinds of Protestants, and even agnostics get together harmoniously.... They do not talk theology. Many of them would say that they know nothing about it. What they do know is that in their utter helplessness they were introduced to a Power, greater than themselves, in contact with whom they found a strong resource which made possible a victory that seemed incredible. I have listened to many learned arguments about God, but for honest-to-goodness experiential evidence of God, His power personally appropriated and His reality indubitably assured, give me a good meeting of A.A.!"

Bill himself never expressed A.A.'s position more simply than when he said, "We are only operating a spiritual kindergarten in which people are enabled to get over drinking and find the grace to go on living to better effect. Each man's theology has to be his own quest, his own affair," making it possible for alcoholics of all faiths, or no faith at all, to embrace the A.A. program of recovery and find lasting sobriety.

■ Why Do We Have a Declaration of Unity?

In July, 1970, eleven thousand members of Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Miami Beach, Florida, made the following pledge in eleven different languages:

A Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives;
And the lives of those to come.

The acceptance of this declaration at the 1970 International Convention of A.A. put a final seal of approval on a decades-long campaign by co-founder Bill W. to establish the preservation of unity as a priority to assure A.A.'s future. Twenty years earlier, at the first International Convention, in Cleveland, several thousand members had voted to accept the Twelve Traditions, which Bill had written and advanced for the express purpose of assuring that A.A. would survive as a society. The formal Declaration of Unity at the Miami Convention gave this added force.

Why was such a statement necessary? Almost from the

very beginning of A.A., Bill had focused on the importance of maintaining Unity in the Fellowship. By working together, we could achieve and maintain sobriety that had eluded us when we were alone. Even when A.A. had less than a hundred members, most of them concentrated in New York and Akron, Bill and Dr. Bob had a vision of a unified fellowship that could reach out to alcoholics throughout North America and even the world. In Bill's own talks and writings, he always emphasized the need to preserve unity in order to maintain sobriety for ourselves and preserve A.A. for "the million who still do not know."

In introducing the Traditions, Bill had written, "So long as the ties which bind us together prove far stronger than those forces which would divide us if they could, all will be well.... We shall be secure as a movement; our essential unity will remain a certainty."

What were the forces that could divide A.A.? Bill often mentioned such issues as the struggle for property, power and prestige. He felt it absolutely necessary that A.A. as a society should avoid controversies over politics and religion. He believed anonymity was also a factor in maintaining unity, and that A.A.'s assistance should be available to everybody without favor or prejudice.

Bill had first described the Twelve Traditions as "Twelve points to assure our future." He viewed these as being essential for the preservation of the society, just as the Twelve Steps are essential for the recovery of the individual member. A.A.'s most challenging concern, he had written, "was to preserve among A.A.'s such a powerful unity that neither weakness of persons nor the strife and strain of these troubled times can harm our common cause. We know that Alcoholics Anonymous must continue to live. Else, save few exceptions, we and our brother alcoholics throughout the world will surely resume the hopeless journey to oblivion."

Bill was ailing and had less than a year to live when the formal Declaration of Unity was adopted. Though attending the Convention in a wheelchair and appearing briefly on the platform, he was unable to make a major address as he had at past Conventions. But it surely must have given him a surge of pride to have this declaration endorsed by the Convention, just as the 1965 International Convention in Toronto had formally issued the Declaration of Responsibility.

According to information in the A.A. Archives, the declaration was probably authored by Al S., the same A.A. member and consultant who had composed the Responsibility Declaration. It also reflects the efforts of the committee that worked on the 1970 International Convention (which was A.A.'s 35th Anniversary). The theme for the Convention was, appropriately, "Unity Within Our Fellowship."

At the Convention's Saturday night ceremony, Bob H. (who was G.S.O. general manager at the time) summoned several ex-delegates and overseas members to be on stage to participate in adopting the declaration. "A.A. unity is the special quality that makes our Fellowship

unique,” Bob said. “It is the cement that holds our society together, the platform which makes A.A. ‘Service’ possible. It is more than an agreement on basic principles, more than freedom from destructive strife. It is a bond fashioned of shared experience, such as this one we share tonight. Unity is our most precious possession, our best guarantee of A.A.’s future. May we all value and preserve it, today and all the tomorrows to come.”

Bob H. then asked all participants on stage to recite the Unity Declaration, which was led by Dr. Jack Norris, the nonalcoholic trustee and chairman of the General Service Board.

Bill’s deteriorating health kept him from attending the Saturday night meeting, but he made it to the stage the next morning for a four-minute talk that brought a standing ovation. This, in Bill’s final months, was poignantly reminiscent of Dr. Bob’s brief talk at the 1950 Cleveland Convention, when he urged us to remember that the Twelve Steps resolve themselves into love and service, his last message before he died that fall.

■ A Lasting Introduction to A.A.’s Program of Recovery

While Bill W. and Dr. Bob have always been A.A.’s acknowledged founders, the Fellowship had many early supporters, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, who were instrumental in its development and growth. One such nonalcoholic friend was Dr. William D. Silkworth, “the little doctor who loved drunks,” as Bill W. lovingly referred to him. One of the first medical professionals to recognize the effectiveness of A.A., Dr. Silkworth’s seminal support was vital in the early years and his impact continues today in the form of a foreword in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.’s basic text.

As Bill W. describes it (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 283), “Dr. Silkworth had defined alcoholism as a sickness of the emotions, coupled with a sickness of the body, which he loosely described as an allergy. These words of his are to be seen in the foreword of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, entitled, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion,’ and over the intervening years they have been incorporated into the consensus that is A.A.”

Providing an introduction to the experience of the first one hundred members, Dr. Silkworth’s thoughts on alcoholism lent medical credibility and professional expertise to the volume which, unbeknownst at the time, would go on to reach millions of alcoholics around the world.

In the book’s first edition, “The Doctor’s Opinion” originally appeared on page one, although the book’s pagination was subsequently changed to incorporate the material specifically as introductory material noted with roman numerals rather than standard numbering. While

there is little background documentation regarding the decision to move “The Doctor’s Opinion” from the main section to the introductory section along with the Forewords (where it continues to appear), G.S.O.’s senior archivist notes, “The original purpose of the Big Book was to describe the recovery of the first one hundred members, including their personal recovery stories in the back of the book. Technically, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion’ is not one of the recovery stories, nor was he a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. We think that Bill must have decided with these reasons to rearrange the original order of the book.”

By the time the second edition was published in 1955, with Bill’s active editorial involvement, the change had become permanent. Says the senior archivist, “Certainly, Bill rearranged the order of the book in three parts, the first headed by Dr. Bob and containing stories demonstrating how A.A. sobriety could last permanently. The second and third parts included stories from high-bottom and low-bottom A.A.s. Bill indeed discussed these changes when he first presented the second edition to the Conference in 1955.”

Since that time, there have been a number of Conference Advisory Actions regarding the book’s contents and pagination, most notably a 1995 Action affirming that “The first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forewords, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion,’ ‘Doctor Bob’s Nightmare’ and the Appendices remain as is.” Additionally, in 1999, relative to the book’s Fourth Edition, another Conference Advisory Action laid specific responsibility for pagination of the Big Book, among other sensible editorial functions, with G.S.O.’s Publications Department.

Regardless of where “The Doctor’s Opinion” falls within the book, it will always remain a critical building block of A.A.’s program of recovery from alcoholism and a continuing recognition of the incalculable contributions of A.A.’s nonalcoholic friends. As Bill noted in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, “As our only medical friend at the time, the good doctor, boldly wrote the introduction to our book, where it remains to this day and where we intend to keep it always.” (p. 14)

News from Around the World

■ Central American A.A. Focuses on Women Members

Membership figures reported by Central American delegates at the World Service Meeting (October 2008) underscore a situation recognized by the service structures:

Namely, that women in the region comprise a strikingly small percentage of A.A. members.

In Honduras, for instance, there are 14,200 A.A. members, of which only 158 are women. In El Salvador, women account for 659 of the total 22,783 A.A. members estimated by the country's General Service Office. In Costa Rica, women number just 130 out of a total 9,000 members. The ratios of men to women are similar in the other three countries of Central America: Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama.

In El Salvador, according to the delegate for Central America/Northern Zone, "In odd-numbered years a Meeting of Women and Young People is held with the intention of letting both groups know how important they are in our A.A. groups."

In March 2008, at the 33rd A.A. Convention of Central America, which is held every two years and during which representatives from the general service boards of the region meet to discuss matters of common interest, the question of women in Alcoholics Anonymous was discussed.

The effort by the countries in Central America to pinpoint why women remain only a small percentage of their fellowships is based in part on surveys of women A.A. members in the region. Those at the Convention discussed the idea of a pamphlet directed at the groups, one intended to suggest ways that A.A. groups can pave the way for women to remain in the program once they have come to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Because of the scarcity of women A.A. members, female newcomers may not find other women with whom to connect, or to ask as sponsors. One suggestion that most seemed to agree on is for A.A. groups to create phone networks for women, and another is that groups start sponsorship committees for them.

The discussion is currently underway at the boards and Conferences of the respective countries in Central America.

■ Latvia and Belarus

For the first time, Latvia and Belarus sent representatives to the World Service Meeting.

Uldis D., the delegate from Latvia, mentioned in his report that A.A. in his country celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2008. There are 45 A.A. groups among 45 cities, with an estimated 800 members, according to the records at the Latvian General Service Office. The population of Latvia is 2.3 million, and the G.S.O. is located in Riga, the capital.

"More and more A.A. groups now understand the effectiveness of service structures and support them in spirit, as well as financially," said Uldis in his report to the WSM. "Literature sales cover one-third of our administra-

tive expenses, with group donations covering the remaining two-thirds."

Twice a year, in the spring and the autumn, Latvia holds a service conference, which is attended by G.S.R.s from around the country. They now have translations of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Living Sober*, *Daily Reflections*, and six new pamphlets in Latvian.

Belarus, according to its delegate, Vladimir K., held its first service conference in 2003 in Minsk. Conferences have been held annually since then. "The service structure was created following the simplest model, the one that could work," said Vladimir. "Our office is now functioning three hours a day on weekdays. We have three paid workers and five volunteers." A main focus of the general service office has been to gain legal status in the country.

"Whereas seven or eight years ago we could rent a big hall for holding our A.A. events without any problem, by 2005 it had become impossible to do it without being a registered organization," said Vladimir. "We decided to take this step because we did not have another option."

Having failed in its first attempt in 2006 to register itself, the G.S.O. was granted legal status in its subsequent request the following year. Being incorporated as a legal entity enables the service office to function more effectively in other ways, including the printing and selling of literature.

"Currently, we are supported by the contributions of A.A. groups and the income from literature sales (40% and 60%, respectively)," said Vladimir. "A.A. group contributions are used for operational expenses, rent of the office, and salaries to the paid workers. The money from literature sales is spent on the development of the A.A. service structure."

Corrections

■ Help Wanted: Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

I've not only had the honor of working with these men—discussing our Big Book, taking the Twelve Steps, and watching them get sober—but also of seeing more than a few walk out of those gates never to return, becoming sober, happy and free members of society. I do not believe one can put a price on that. It recalls to mind what I once heard a woman at a meeting say: 'Every time I put a quarter into the meter of sobriety, I get back ten dollars.' Truer words have never been said.

—An "outside" CCS A.A. member

Right now, an inmate may be waiting for your experience, strength and hope. To participate in the CCS, you do not need to have been incarcerated. All that is needed for this special form of service is the experience of staying sober through A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

You may sign up by using the CCS form on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, in the Corrections 'bucket,' or e-mail the information to corrections@aa.org. You will then be linked with an inmate serving time in a prison or jail located at least two regions away (e.g., an A.A. living in the NE region would be linked with an inmate from the SW or Pacific regions). When matches for a two region separation cannot be achieved, outsiders are matched with inmates residing at least two states away.

The outside A.A. member makes the initial contact. The name and location of an inmate is mailed by G.S.O.'s Corrections desk to the outside A.A., who then sends a letter to begin the relationship. In this way, an outsider can choose the address he or she would prefer the inmate to use when responding.

A few methods have been used with no reported problems. Inmates may be asked to respond to: 1) a personal P.O. Box; 2) with permission, a group, district, or area P.O. Box; 3) with permission a central/intergroup office P.O. Box; or 4) the A.A. member's home address. Correctional institutions require that a person use his or her full name when corresponding with an inmate. Outside A.A.s should not use first names only or last initials. Please note that G.S.O. does not forward correspondence between outsiders and inmates.

There is always more need for male volunteers than for females. This is simply because there are more males in prison than females and fewer female inmates request the service.

Please circulate this information or have it posted on your group's bulletin board or on your area Web site.

■ New Workbook for Special Needs/Accessibilities Committees

While there are no special A.A. members there are many members who have special needs. This would include those who may be hearing, visually, or speech-impaired, those who are homebound, chronically ill, and those who are developmentally disabled or who suffer from stroke, etc.

This new workbook, now available from G.S.O. (M-48I), covers: How to form a Special Needs/Accessibilities Committee; experiences of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter; a guide for Special Needs Literature and other material, and much more.

The Special Needs Committee of Northern Illinois has created this portable display from a used walker, with material attached by velcro. "It can be folded up and put in the trunk of my car," said Jeanne F. Titled "Color Me Special Needs" the committee has assigned a color to the different activities of the Special Needs Committee. It is displayed at local meetings, area assemblies and district meetings, health fairs and just about anyplace where an opportunity presents itself. Small crayons are handed out and A.A. members are encouraged to choose a color of the activity they wish to participate in. It is proving to be a positive factor in getting more and more people involved.



Order Form

Individual:

Single one-year subscriptions (\$3.50). Please send _____ individual subscriptions \$ _____

Special Group Rates:

Bulk subscriptions (\$6.00 each unit of ten). Please send _____ individual subscriptions \$ _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Name _____
 Address _____ Apt # _____
 City _____
 State (Prov.) _____ Zip _____
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Enclosed check or money order and make payable to:
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P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10163

Box 459 can now be sent by: Regular Mail **or** E-Mail. Please check one box.

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.

February

- 6-8—Fort Walton Beach, Florida. 38th Gulf Coast Round-up. Write: Ch., 399 S. 12th St., DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435; www.gulfcoastroundup.com
- 6-8—Gardner, Massachusetts. Joy Of Living. Write: Ch., Box 4123, Shrewsbury, MA 01545
- 6-8—Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Fun In Sobriety Mid-Winter Round-up. Write: Ch., 23 Young St., Fredericton, NB E3A 3Y3
- 7-8—Calexico, California. 10th Congreso Valle Imperial. Inf: Ch., 107 South 5th St., Ste. 225, El Centro, CA 92243
- 12-15—Salt Lake City, Utah. 45th Internat'l Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 9519, Salt Lake City, UT 84109; www.internationalwomensconference.org
- 13-15—Little Rock, Arkansas. 27th Dist. 9 Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Ch., Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72221; winterholiday09@gmail.com
- 13-15—Imperial Valley, California. Imperial Valley Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92243
- 13-15—Virginia Beach, Virginia. 33rd Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 66173, Virginia Beach, VA 23466-6173
- 13-15—Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada. Heritage Wknd. Write: Ch., 6 Frame Cr., Elliot Lake, ON P5A 2S5
- 13-16—Mansfield, Massachusetts. SE MA Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 120542, Boston, MA 02112; www.semru.org
- 20-21—Sikeston, Missouri. 28th Five Corners Conv. Write: Ch., Box 158, Sikeston, MO 63801
- 20-21—Kalispell, Montana. Into Action Wknd. Write: Ch., 4355 U.S. Hwy 2 W, Kila, MT 59920-9702
- 20-22—Kansas City, Kansas. 27th Sunflower Round-up. Write: Ch., 12924 Reeder St., Overland Park, KS 66213
- 20-22—Louisville, Kentucky. 58th KY State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 37137, Louisville, KY 40233-7173; 58kystateconvention@gmail.com
- 20-22—Kingsville, Texas. SW TX Area 68 CFC Conf. Write: Ch., Box 248, Kingsville, TX 78364; cfc@aa-swta.org

20-22—Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada. 31st Mid-Winter Round-up. Write: Ch., 305-1407 St. Margaret's Bay Rd., Lakeside, NS B3T 1K2; www.area82.org

27-1—Casper, Wyoming. 2009 West Central Svc. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 51933, Casper, WY 82605

March 2009

- 6-8—Oakland, California. 42nd PRAASA. Write: Ch., Box 70373, Oakland, CA 94612-0373; www.praasa.org
- 6-8—Portland, Maine. NE Fellowship of the Spirit Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1591, North Conway, NH 03860; www.nefots.org
- 6-8—Rochester, New York. Flower City Fellowship Conv. Write: Ch., 10 Manhattan Square Dr., Ste. D, Rochester, NY 14607; www.rochester-ny-aa.org
- 12-15—Irvine, California. ACYPAA. Write: Ch., 427 E. 17th St., #460, Costa Mesa, CA 92627; www.acypaa2009.org
- 13-15—Gulfport, Mississippi. MS Gulf Coast Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 2874, Gulfport, MS 39505
- 13-15—Ronkonkoma, New York. Eastern Area Conv. of Young People. Write: Ch., Box 452, West Islip, NY 11795; www.eacypaa.org
- 19-22—Ruston, Louisiana. LA Upstate Conv. Write: Ch., Box 505, Ruston, LA 71273-0505; www.rustonaa.org
- 20-22—Marietta, Georgia. 19th Marietta Spring Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 669711, Marietta, GA 30339; www.marietaroundup.org
- 20-22—Dearborn, Michigan. March Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 185, Roseville, MI 48066; www.aa-semi.org

20-22—Rapid City, South Dakota. 25th Rushmore Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 8472, Rapid City, SD 57709; www.rushmoreroundup.org

20-22—Martinsburg, West Virginia. Area 73 Spring Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 1172, Falling Waters, WV 25419

20-22—Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Ontario Regional Conf. Write: Ch., Box 506, 31 Adelaide St. E, Toronto, ON M5C 2J6; www.aatoronto.org

20-22—Québec, Québec, Canada. Congrès de Québec. Écrire: Prés., 14 rue Soumande, local 0-17, Québec, QC G1L 0A4; congresadeQuebec2009@hotmail.com

27-29—Ames, Iowa. Aim for Ames. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010; www.aimforames.org

27-29—Niagara Falls, New York. 1st Cataract City Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2006, Niagara Falls, NY 14301; www.niagaraintergroup.com

27-29—Tarrytown, New York. 42nd SENY Conv. Write: Ch., Box 293, Babylon, NY 11702-0293; convention@aaseny.org

27-29—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 17th Get Away Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 353, Warren, PA 16365; www.wpaarea60.org

27-29—Arecibo, Puerto Rico. 53^{ra} Conv. de Area 77. Inf: Com. Org., Box 50491, Toa Baja, PR 00950-0491

27-29—Williamsburg, Virginia. Serenity Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 832, Midlothian, VA 23113; www.serenityweekend.net

28-29—Shawinigan, Québec, Canada. 40^e Congres. Dist. 89-02. Écrire: Prés., 154 rue 270^e, Lac-La-Tortue, QC G0X 1L0

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 Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20____

Name of event: _____

Location: _____ CITY STATE OR PROVINCE

Address to list: _____ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET)

CITY STATE OR PROVINCE ZIP CODE

Web site or E-mail: _____ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

Contact person: _____ NAME PHONE # AND E-MAIL

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

April

- 2-5—*Lafayette, Louisiana*. Fellowship of the Spirit South. Write: Ch., Box 53312, Lafayette, LA 70505; www.fotssouth.com
- 3-5—*Loveland, Colorado*. 22nd Area 10 Corrections Conf. Write: Ch., Box 7111, Loveland, CO 80537; www.coloradooda.org
- 3-5—*Hooksett, New Hampshire*. NH State Conv. Write: Ch., 1330 Hooksett Rd., Hooksett, NH 03106; www.nhaa.net
- 3-5—*Columbia, South Carolina*. 62nd SC State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 50002, Columbia, SC 29250
- 3-5—*San Antonio, Texas*. Wknd in S.A. Write: Ch., 16607 Blanco Rd., San Antonio, TX 78232; www.aainsa.org
- 9-12—*San Diego, California*. San Diego Spring Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 4357, Carlsbad, CA 92018-4357; www.sandiegospringroundup.com
- 9-13—*Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia*. Nat'l Conv. Gold Coast. Write: Ch., Box 1179, Milton, Queensland, 4064 Australia; www.2009conventiongoldcoast.com
- 16-19—*Eureka Springs, Arkansas*. 33rd Springtime In The Ozarks. Write: Ch., Box 1686, Rogers, AR 72757; www.nwarkaa.org
- 17-19—*San Jose, California*. Sober and Free Conf. Write: Ch., Box 4707, San Jose, CA 95150-4707; www.soberandfree.org
- 17-19—*Lake Charles, Louisiana*. Lake Area Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 52, Lake Charles, LA 70602
- 17-19—*Erie, Pennsylvania*. 34th Swing Into Spring Erie Area Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Erie, PA 16512-1357; www.erierecovery.com
- 17-19—*Concan, Texas*. 8th Spiritual Unity on Frio. Write: Ch., Box 528, Utopia, TX 78884
- 17-19—*Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada*. Dauphin Round-up. Write: Ch., 21 - 4th Ave NW, Dauphin, MB R7N 1H9
- 23-26—*Kailua Kona, Hawaii*. Big Island Bash. Write: Ch., Box 390727, Kailua Kona, HI 96740; www.bigislandbash.com
- 24-26—*Chipley, Florida*. Chipley Country Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 677, Chipley, FL 32428; Chipley_countryroundup@hotmail.com
- 24-26—*Missoula, Montana*. Area 40 Spring Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 3466, Missoula, MT 59806; www.downtownmissoula.org
- 24-26—*Quiedersbach, Germany*. 31st Rheinland Pfalz English Speaking Round-up. Write: Ch., CMR 402, Box 1547, APO, AE 09180
- 24-26—*Salthill, Galway, Ireland*. 52nd All Ireland Conv. Write: Ch., Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swards, Dublin 9, Ireland; gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
- 30-3—*Cocoa Beach, Florida*. 19th Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 951903, Lake Mary, FL 32795; www.woodstockofaa.com
- 30-3—*Split, Croatia*. Ninth Internat'l English-Speaking Conv. Write: Ch., Vrbnicka 28, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia; aacroatia.split@yahoo.com

May

- 1-3—*Albuquerque, New Mexico*. Red Road Conv. Write: Ch., Box 20292, Albuquerque, NM 87153
- 1-3—*Waco, Texas*. 25th Heart of Texas Conf. Write: Ch., 1133 Taylor Ave., Waco, TX 76704; www.hot2009.synthasite.com
- 1-3—*Longueuil, Québec, Canada*. 27^e Congrès Longueuil Rive-Sud. Écrire: Prés., B.P. 21061 Stn Jacques-Cartier R-S, Longueuil, QC J4J 5J4
- 1-3—*Victoriaville, Québec, Canada*. 25^{ieme} Congres du Dist. 88-03. Écrire: Prés., 59 Monfette, Local 235, Victoriaville, QC, Canada G6P 6S8 ; www.aa.Quebec.org
- 8-9—*Des Moines, Iowa*. Capital City Conf. Write: Ch., Box 30135, Des Moines, IA 50310; www.capitalcityconference.org
- 8-10—*Sioux Falls, South Dakota*. Area 63 Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1872, Sioux Falls, SD 57101
- 15-17—*Skokie, Illinois*. Second City Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 111, Chicago, IL 60690
- 15-17—*Middlebury, Vermont*. 46th Area 70 Conv. Write: Ch., 2467 Lakeview Dr., North Hero, VT 05475; www.aavt.org
- 15-17—*Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada*. 62nd Kamloops Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 353, Kamloops, BC V2C 5K9; kamloopsroundup@yahoo.com
- 21-24—*Atlanta, Georgia*. 51st ICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 950002, Atlanta, GA 30377; www.icypaahost.org
- 21-24—*Ermioni, Peloponnese, Greece*. 15th Internat'l Conv. - Greece. Write: Ch., 4A Zinonos St., Athens, Greece
- 22-24—*Minneapolis, Minnesota*. Gopher State Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 65295, St. Paul, MN 55165-0295; www.gophewrstateroundup.org
- 22-24—*Saint Louis, Missouri*. Spring Fling Conv. Write: Ch., Box 22454, St. Louis, MO 63126; www.springflingstl.com