

*To all who have come before,
To all who are here, and to those yet to come:
Know that we are here to serve the Fellowship.
May this holiday season wrap you in its loving embrace,
And may your Higher Power guide and light
your way into the future.*

Happy Holidays

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■ Update for 2009-2010 A.A. Directories

To be included in the 2009-2010 editions of A.A.'s confidential Directories (U.S./Canada), updates and changes to group records must be input into Fellowship New Vision database no later than May 8, 2009.

Hard copy changes must also be received by G.S.O.'s Records department, or postmarked, by May 8 2009.

■ A.A. Videos for Young People Project

The trustees' Public Information Committee recently requested that G.S.O. continue to accept videos for young people for the foreseeable future. This means that there is still plenty of time for young A.A. members (and those who got sober young, but may not be so young anymore) to film anonymity-protected videos which could be used when bringing the A.A. message to young people.

Project guidelines can be found at www.aa.org (click on "The Young People's Video Project"). Questions can be directed to the Public Information coordinator, General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10115, or e-mail publicinfo@aa.org.

■ Archives Renovation Postponed

We announced in the Oct./Nov. issue of *Box 4-5-9* that G.S.O.'s Archives would be closed for three months, due to renovations.

This project has been deferred as it was not deemed financially prudent at this uncertain economic time.

■ Using the Grapevine As a Twelfth Step Tool

"Our jails are bursting at the seams," say the Honorable Rogelio Flores, a Superior Court Judge in Santa Barbara County, California, and one of A.A.'s nonalcoholic Class A trustees. "It's silly, I think. What's better—helping individuals find and maintain their sobriety or incarcerating them?"

Judge Flores has been on A.A.'s board of trustees for over a year, though he has been using A.A. in his work as a jurist far longer than that. "I've been involved in recovery efforts in all the 22 years that I've been on the bench," he says. "Our criminal justice system can do more than just incarcerate people. We can do a lot more in helping people get sober and maintain their sobriety."

Millions need help, says the judge, and there is no better way to help alcoholics in the court system than pushing them toward A.A. "If there's alcoholism involved, who do we call? We always call A.A.; we always rely on the hand of A.A. to help the still-suffering alcoholic."

For the last eight years, Judge Flores has been working as a drug court judge and has seen literally thousands of people suffering from addiction come before him, looking for help. A big fan of the A.A. Grapevine and *La Viña*, the judge has developed an unusual and effective way of reaching many of the alcoholics he is charged with helping: he hands them a copy of the Grapevine or *La Viña* with the request that they read the issue, select a story they have related to, and write a three-page essay on why they identified with the article.

"I keep extra copies of the Grapevine in my chambers and in my courtroom. I give them a copy of whatever one comes to hand, whatever one happens to be closest, and I say 'I want you to take this Grapevine home and I want you to read it. And I want you to write me an essay about the one story in there that really touched your heart.'"

Noting that the Grapevine has had a profound impact on everyone who has read it, Judge Flores laments that the magazine (and its Spanish-language counterpart, *La Viña*) doesn't reach a wider group of people in the alcoholism field. "It's a shame that everyone in recovery doesn't read the Grapevine. It would be a great asset. Not only for people in recovery, but people who work in recovery: staff workers and case workers and judges, probation officers, D.A.s..."

Judge Flores recalls one case in particular of an alcoholic woman who came before him after violating the rules of her probation. She was working in Santa Maria as a domestic and came across a bottle of vodka stashed away by her employers. She drank it, and ended up in front of the judge for sentencing. "Instead of putting you in jail," he said, "I want you to read this Grapevine."

“Our jails are full, our jails are packed,” says Judge Flores, “and in Southern California we’re looking for other options.” So, the woman took a Grapevine home and returned with her essay. “It was very cathartic,” says the judge. “It helped her to reflect and to see that she was not alone. Ultimately, she didn’t go to jail, she read the Grapevine, she’s still sober, and she’s doing much better now.”

The judge keeps a collection of the many essays he’s been given, and goes over them every so often. “It’s almost like reading another Grapevine,” he says.

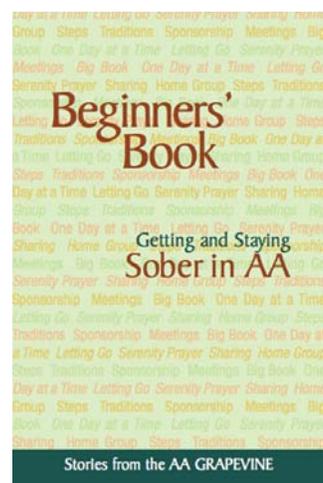
Once the assignments have been completed, the judge tries to collect the Grapevines that he has passed out. “But they don’t want to give them back. So I ask them just to pass the copies along. One copy can be read by 5, 6, or ten people.” As part of the program’s after-care, Judge Flores is trying to get a system established whereby graduates of the program can get an ongoing subscription. “One of the concerns all drug court judges and all people working in the recovery community have relates to aftercare and relapse and what tools we can use. With the Grapevine, I have something right there in my hand.

“The courts can be a change agent out there for the good, making things better, and the judges ought to be more proactive,” says Flores, who, by his own estimate, has sent over 20,000 alcoholics on to A.A. “I can’t think of a better way to help than through A.A. If any percentage of those people got sober, it was well worth the effort.

“I feel like Johnny Appleseed, spreading the message of recovery wherever I go.”

■ New from the Grapevine

Beginners’ Book—Getting and Staying Sober (GV-20) is a recently released collection of over forty stories where A.A. members share what helped them to stay sober when they were newcomers.



These members’ experiences in their early days of sobriety provide insights and solutions to problems common to the newly sober. Plus the experience, strength and hope of A.A. members in going forward to find a life full of vitality and joy.

To read a sample selection, or to order go to www.aagrapevine.org; you may also call 1-800-640-8781. \$8.95 each; 5 or more copies \$8.50 each.

■ 20th World Service Meeting: ‘Service—Gratitude in Action’

“When simmered down to their last,” said A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob in 1950, “Our Twelve Steps resolve themselves into the words *love* and *service*. We understand what love is and we understand what service is. So let’s bear those two things in mind.”

These were among Dr. Bob’s last words to the Fellowship, delivered at the First International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio. As he delivered these brief remarks, it’s unlikely that he could have foreseen the establishment of the World Service Meeting, nearly two decades later, yet his words captured the essence of A.A., an essence reflected in the World Service Meeting’s own Statement of Purpose, adopted at the Third WSM in 1974, held in London: “The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activity—to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world he may be, whatever the language he speaks...” Echoing Dr. Bob’s distillation of A.A. principles, this statement reflects those same simple words: love and service.

Established in 1969 to help foster Twelfth Step work in every corner of the globe, the WSM is held every other year, with the site alternating between New York City and a country outside the U.S./Canada structure. From its very beginning, the WSM has served as a forum for the sharing of experience and ideas on ways to carry the A.A. message, and the twentieth meeting was no exception, meeting at the Crowne Plaza Times Square, New York City, October 26-30, 2008.

Participating throughout the 20th WSM were delegates representing Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad/Tobago, Uruguay, the United States and Canada, Venezuela, Belarus, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Denmark, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Spain, French-speaking Europe, Flemish-speaking Europe, German-speaking Europe, Central America (Northern Zone), and Central America (Southern Zone).

Welcoming delegates to the meeting on Sunday afternoon, Leonard Blumenthal, nonalcoholic Class A trustee and chairperson of the U.S./Canada General Service Board, host of the meeting, noted that “All of us have witnessed that the seed of A.A., when planted and carefully tended, results in a flourishing movement embodying hope, recovery, and general well being. This it achieves, in spite of language, culture, politics, and geography.”

The theme of the 20th WSM was “Service—Gratitude in Action,” and the keynote address was delivered by Gonzalo P., delegate from Venezuela. With simultaneous translation available in Spanish and English, the audience listened intently as Gonzalo shared about his journey into service. “I clearly remember the day I made my decision to

participate actively in A.A. general services.... With great fear and apprehension, I proceeded not knowing for sure what I was doing, but moved by a great desire to serve the Fellowship that not only had saved my life but had given me, for the first time, a sense of responsibility and freedom as a human being.”

Emphasizing the meeting’s theme, Gonzalo concluded, “For me, one of the most important experiences when I came to A.A. was the discovery, day by day, of what A.A. really was. Not only was I surprised by the service work that was daily done by the members of my group, but the gradual discovery of all that general services comprised: working with others, the printing and distribution of literature, cooperation with professionals of many different fields, and so many other things, most of them carried out by members acting as volunteers and showing in a general way what human beings are capable of when they realize who they are. Of course, behind all this is gratitude expressed in great love.”

What followed over the next four days was a whirlwind of presentations and discussions, reports of interim zonal meetings, workshops, service highlights and meetings of the four standing committees of the WSM (Agenda, Literature/Publishing, Policy/Admissions/Finance, and Working with Others) where delegates met to share their countries’ experience and agree on matters related to the functioning and running of the World Service Meeting.

In addition to the committee work and the reports they generated, the meeting offered a series of presentations that provided a glimpse into the many topics concerning A.A.s in service around the globe: how to handle growth and change; ways of encouraging more young people into the Fellowship; the importance of sharing A.A. literature; service sponsorship; and how to use the Internet for public information and as a Twelfth Step tool.

In the years between World Service Meetings, zonal meetings are held to maintain service continuity around the world and to extend the network of connectedness through which countries share their progress and ideas with each other. Reports from the 14th European Service Meeting, the XV Meeting of the Americas, the Third Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting, the 7th Asia-Oceania Service Meeting, and the First West Central Africa Service Meeting were presented, keeping all delegates informed of their progress in carrying the A.A. message worldwide. Summing up the essence of working with other countries, Ireland’s Michael O’R. noted in his report on the European Service Meeting, “A.A.’s reason for being is to pass our message on to the still-suffering alcoholic. Our purpose is to improve our communications with other countries, learn from them and apply the suggestions where feasible.”

Appropriately, the 20th WSM closed with a recitation of the Serenity Prayer in all the languages represented by the delegates. Following the meeting, Deena M., the delegate from South Africa, shared an anecdote that aptly

summed up the World Service Meeting experience for many of the delegates and others involved. Deena, whose Spanish was limited to a weak “Buenos Dias,” often found himself in the mornings preceding the start of each day’s meetings in the company of a group of Spanish-speaking delegates who spoke little English. Yet, in spite of their language differences, they spent their time together deep in conversation, Deena in English and the others in Spanish, discussing the joys of sobriety. “Bill W. was right,” said Deena, “in the assertion that we in A.A. speak the language of the heart—there is no need for words to feel what your fellow A.A. is saying.”

Based on the recommendation of the site selection committee and approved unanimously by the delegates, the 21st World Service Meeting will be held in Mexico City, on October 17-21, 2010. Its theme will be “Sponsorship: Our Responsibility.”

■ With an Eye to the Future: G.S.O. Staff Positions

We are beginning to update our file of applications from A.A. members who are interested in being considered for possible future openings for the position of G.S.O. staff member. The basic criteria include a minimum of six years continuous sobriety; a background in service at the group and possibly district and area levels; business or professional experience; and excellent communications skills. Another consideration is a willingness to relocate to New York, if necessary.

G.S.O. staff people are A.A.s who carry out rotating assignments and correspond with A.A.s throughout the world on all aspects of recovery and service. Additionally, they represent G.S.O. at A.A. functions throughout the U.S. and Canada and provide the primary staff support for the General Service Board. Currently there are 11 staff members who cover a variety of assignments such as: Public Information, Literature, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, International and the General Service Conference.

If you are interested or would like more information, please write to: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or e-mail staffcoord@aa.org.



Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

■ ‘Participation Is Key,’ Emphasizes New G.S.O. General Manager

With excitement rising in her voice, past trustee Phyllis H. spoke recently about the challenge she is about to undertake as the newly appointed G.S.O. general manager, the first woman to hold this position in the Fellowship’s long history.

“I am extremely excited about the challenge—about service to the Fellowship, about working in the General Service Office,” said Phyllis. “When I sobered up, I said to my Higher Power I will do anything—anything—for A.A., but just keep me sober today.” Well, anything, it now seems for Phyllis, includes a move to New York from her home in Olympia, Washington, and a leadership position at the Fellowship’s service office for the U.S. and Canada.

Stepping into the position filled by Greg M. since 1999, Phyllis is no stranger to G.S.O. operations, having served for four years as Pacific Regional trustee and for two years before that as a delegate to the General Service Conference from the Western Washington Area.

Professionally, Phyllis brings to the position considerable management experience and a long record of dedicated service in the field of human resources. In her most recent position, as lead administrator for the State of Washington’s Gambling Commission, the second oldest gambling regulatory agency in the nation, Phyllis served on the agency leadership team, with responsibilities for operations, policy setting, organizational and strategic planning. As acting chief administrator for four agency divisions, her responsibilities also included leadership in information technology, communications, and legal affairs, in addition to her role as human resources administrator.

Phyllis has also worked, in the same capacity, at the Washington State School for the Deaf and State School for the Blind. This experience, Phyllis says, “Helped me to gain insight into the culture and challenges of individuals with Special Needs.

Phyllis has built her career on the principles of respect and integrity and her leadership principles are, in large part, a reflection of A.A.’s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service. “I am a very participatory manager,” says Phyllis, “and I work with others to reach consensus. I believe in mutual respect, having an open mind, being tolerant, and listening.

“I was taught the Three Legacies in my first year, and the more I found out the more I wanted to learn, and the more I learned the more I wanted to be involved. And it just opened up the doors of A.A. to me.”

One of the goals, in fact, that Phyllis has in terms of her new position is to help the Fellowship renew its commitment to our Three Legacies, Recovery, Unity and Service. “These are foundational to our Fellowship” Phyllis says, “and without all three we are only able to visit a part of A.A.”

With a daughter in the Fellowship and several sponsees Phyllis looks at A.A. with confidence. “The future of our Fellowship is right here in front of us,” she says, and the challenge is to help those who are new to A.A. to become more informed, more involved. “Somehow, if we can deliver the message of who we are to those alcoholics who are coming to the doors and to those alcoholics who are staying around the tables now, we will be increasing the opportunities for people to participate fully in all three Legacies.

“I think that once people participate, the rest follows—the contributions follow, the involvement in service follows, everything just seems to fall into place once people know about the literature, once people are sponsored and have a group and connect with A.A. We have to facilitate that connection—make it solid, make it strong.”

Sober since 1980, Phyllis was aware when she walked through the doors of A.A. that this was her last chance at sobriety. Like many others who arrive in the same way, she knew she was out of options. Sharing a story from her drinking, she described a situation in which she ended up in the back of a police car. The police wanted to take her to a local detox, but Phyllis didn’t want to go, particularly since she still owed some money due to a prior visit. “I was pretty strong when I was drinking,” she says, describing how she proceeded to rip apart the back seat and the shield of the police car in protest. “But, I drank until I wasn’t strong anymore,” she said, summing up the story as a metaphor for her alcoholism.

Over the years in sobriety, Phyllis has taken many opportunities to inform those around her about alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous, sometimes even with a humorous twist. Some years back, as a new trustee, she had to let her employer know that she had been selected for a board that would be meeting frequently, necessitating a fair amount of travel and significant time away. During her tenure at the company she had maintained her anonymity, and when her boss asked what organization it was and she told him that it was Alcoholics Anonymous, he didn’t quite get it. “Well, so, if you’re on the board,” he asked, “do you just drink occasionally?” After chuckling a bit to herself, it gave her a wonderful opportunity to tell him about A.A., what it is and what it does, to educate him and to give him some literature.

“Thinking about the great challenges that lie ahead,” says Phyllis, “I’m so filled with gratitude—in my mind and my heart and my spirit. I love the A.A. program of recovery and the A.A. Fellowship.”

And as far as being the first female general manager?

“There are many women leaders today, so it’s not uncommon. But, with A.A. it’s certainly something new. And so I feel a greater responsibility to be the best role

model that I can be, just doing my job well so people can look at me with the assurance that yes, this works. I've been a leader in many ways throughout my life—in my business and in the Fellowship—and never really attributed that in particular to being a woman. As in sponsorship, we all want to be good role models, good leaders.

“If we just remember that it's all based on sharing and love and respect for one another—how we treat each other, how we share—we will keep the spirit of A.A. alive and well.”

A woman of many interests, at one time in her life Phyllis raised Arabian horses. Having grown up on a farm as a child, she was always a horse lover and during her drinking married a man who had the money to support a horse farm. “I didn't want trips to exotic lands, or diamond rings... I just wanted a horse. So, I got my first one, and then a few more. It was a small breeding establishment that was very successful for a few years, until it got to the point with my drinking where I was getting hurt just trying to clean out the stables. So, eventually the horses had to go—along with my husband. It was a package deal with the divorce. Those horses were the love of my life. It was heartbreaking when I had to leave them, and I haven't had a horse since.”

The thought of getting another horse will have to wait, however, as Phyllis takes on the new challenge of leading the General Service Office. Maybe when she retires there will be a time and place for horses in her life again, Phyllis muses, but for now and the foreseeable future she is focused on carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous and is excited about the prospect of serving the Fellowship she so dearly loves.

■ ‘Extravagant Promises? We Think Not’

The collection of promises outlined on pages 83-84 of the Big Book has come, for some in recovery, quite nearly to represent an alcoholic's “Bill of Rights,” a set of expectations or rewards for sobriety. And what alcoholic wouldn't want such a sterling collection of rewards, from knowing “a new freedom and a new happiness” to realizing that “God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves”?

Some would even go so far as to number these promises and elevate them to the same status as the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. Yet, powerful and practical as they are, there is not much evidence to support the notion that they were ever intended as a “stand-alone” set of expectations. In fact, embedded as they are in the text of Step Nine, they seem particularly related to a specific set of actions rather than standing as a general set of promises for sobriety itself. In fact, these promises are introduced with the statement (*italics*

added), “If we are painstaking about *this* phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through,” referring to Step Nine, the phase of recovery in which we make amends.

The question of the promises and their status in A.A. (are they “official” or not?) has intrigued members and groups for some time and earlier this year the General Service Office received an inquiry from a group in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, about that very question. After doing a little research and talking with G.S.O.'s Archivist, a staff member responded to the group's question in this way: “Alcoholics Anonymous has never attempted to codify promises or create an ‘official’ list of promises. Spanning many decades since Bill W. wrote the Big Book, several A.A.s have found many promises throughout the Big Book (in addition to the ones Bill wrote about on pages 83-84)... We have no record or knowledge to substantiate that Bill's intention was to present ‘twelve promises’ as the Steps and Traditions were outlined. We are aware that some groups and members make reference to ‘twelve promises’—however, that did not originate from the collective group conscience of A.A. as a whole.”

Additionally, in response to a similar question posed by an A.A. member, G.S.O.'s assistant archivist suggested, “It could have been initiated by some local group during A.A.'s formative years and since then a number of groups have developed various versions of the promises; we simply do not have any information in our files documenting this facet of our history.”

Further, she wrote, “We can share with you that many times when certain sections of the Big Book are quoted separately the full meaning of the section is not always clear. Our Big Book describes how our program evolved and the words preceding the promises are equally important as the words following the promises.”

And, about that suggestion that there are a lot of other promises in the Big Book beyond the ones Bill wrote about on pages 83-84? One enthusiastic A.A. member sent in a list to G.S.O. in which he had compiled 238!

Not found on that list, however, was one of A.A.'s fundamental promises—one heard in meetings around the world: “If you don't pick up the first drink, you won't get drunk.”

■ *Box 4-5-9* via e-mail

Have *Box 4-5-9* delivered directly to your e-mail inbox by registering on the A.A. Digital Subscription Service at G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, www.aa.org. Other A.A. newsletters are also being made available via e-mail. You will also be able to receive them in Spanish and French.

■ What's a Prudent Reserve?

Prudent isn't a word frequently associated with active alcoholics. But get a group of sober alcoholics together and the word takes on new meaning. Well aware of the many things that can go wrong in life, A.A. members are often the very definition of prudent when it comes to organizing, supporting and maintaining an A.A. group.

Recognizing how important each group is to the continued sobriety of its individual members, most A.A.s are willing to put aside any personal differences and to focus on the long-term survival of the group. Gone are the reckless self-destruction and irresponsibility that so often characterize active alcoholism. In their place are born a desire for stability and a willingness to sacrifice for the common good.

In terms of the common good, when it comes to a group's long-term survival, one of the most prudent things group members can do is to establish a financial reserve—a proverbial “rainy day fund”—to see the group through any difficult times. In this way, should contributions fluctuate or unexpected expenses arise, the group will be fortified financially and able to keep its doors open.

Each group has a set of fixed expenses that must be met on a regular basis in order to keep the group afloat—such things as rent, literature, refreshments, and, in some cases, insurance. These costs are met through the regular contributions of group members. Yet most groups also try to put aside some additional funds as a bulwark against uncertainty, aiming to create a prudent reserve equal to anywhere from one to three months of their regular operating expenses. Such funds contribute to a group's continued survival and help to ensure the group's primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Money has never been a requirement for A.A. membership, yet it has always been an essential ingredient of Twelfth Step work. As noted in the pamphlet, “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” (F-3), “Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous—carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. Without it, the Fellowship would wither and die. Yet, even at its simplest level this vital contact between one alcoholic and another involves an investment of time and money.”

This is true at all levels throughout the A.A. service structure: districts, areas, local intergroup or central offices, even A.A.'s General Service Office, all need money to operate and to carry out their responsibilities to the Fellowship.

“A solid, prudent Reserve Fund and good business management skills are both spiritual and practical,” notes Class A nonalcoholic trustee emeritus and former treasurer of the General Service Board, Gary Glynn. As a Fellowship, we seek neither to build up huge sums of money nor do we run so close to the edge that we are unable to fulfill our obligations and pay our bills. “It is neither practical nor spiritual to accumulate more or spend more than we need to. It is also neither practical

nor spiritual to run out of money,” says Gary. “As usual, Bill W. had a good phrase for what we need. He called it fiscal common sense.”

Like many groups across the U.S. and Canada, and, in fact, around the world, A.A.'s General Service Board also has a prudent reserve fund established to provide emergency financial resources for the Fellowship, should such resources ever become necessary. The General Service Board Reserve Fund was established in 1954 to ensure the essential services of the General Service Office and the Grapevine in the event of an unexpected and substantial reduction in the normal revenues of the organization, whether that situation be caused by severe economic recession, a disruption within the Fellowship, or a change in the manner of publication and distribution of A.A. literature, or any other cause.

Money has always been an issue in the Fellowship. In the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, great amounts of money were dreamed of and sought after, so that the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous could be spread as quickly as possible. It took time and wisdom for those early A.A.s to see that the Fellowship had to be self-supporting or the entire movement could be lost forever. As A.A. grew in numbers and maturity, it became apparent that one of the surest ways to maintain the Fellowship's existence was to ensure that it remain self-supporting and refuse outside gifts, no matter how compelling the need or how loving the offer.

In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, a passage in the chapter on Tradition Seven describes a debate at a meeting in 1948 of the Alcoholic Foundation, the forerunner of A.A.'s General Service Board. At issue was a bequest to Alcoholics Anonymous in the sum of ten thousand dollars. Should A.A. take the gift?

“What a debate we had on that one!” the text relates. “The Foundation was really hard up just then; the groups weren't sending in enough for the support of the office; we had been tossing in all the book income and even that hadn't been enough. The reserve was melting like snow in springtime. We needed that ten thousand dollars....”

“Then came the opposition. They pointed out that the Foundation board already knew of a total of half a million dollars set aside for A.A. in the wills of people still alive. Heaven only knew how much there was we hadn't heard about. If outside donations weren't declined, absolutely cut off, then the Foundation would one day become rich....”

“Then our trustees wrote a bright page of A.A. history,” the text continues. “They declared for the principle that A.A. must always stay poor. Bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve would henceforth be the Foundation's financial policy. Difficult as it was, they officially declined that ten thousand dollars, and adopted a formal, airtight resolution that all such future gifts would be similarly declined. At that moment, we believe, the principle of corporate poverty was firmly and finally embedded in A.A. tradition.”

Corporate poverty is more “a state of mind than the

size of our bank account,” notes Gary Glynn. “We all know people and organizations that extravagantly spend money they don’t have, living beyond their means either by ignoring the facts of their finances or by assuming a rosy tomorrow. So you can in fact be poor and not practice corporate poverty.... The opposite is also possible, that we can maintain a prudent reserve without falling into the temptation of spending it just because it’s there.”

Currently, the General Service Board’s Reserve Fund is limited by Conference action to no more than one year’s combined operating expenses of A.A. World Services, Inc., The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and the General Fund of the General Service Board of A.A., Inc. In practice, the General Service Office, as well as the trustees’ Finance Committee, continuously monitors the Reserve Fund balance in an attempt to allow for orderly management of the Fellowship’s financial affairs, keeping in mind the primary goal of carrying the message.

With the authorization of the board of trustees, the Reserve Fund may also be used for other expenses. For example, it has been used to cover the costs of moving, related construction, and refurbishing of the G.S.O. and Grapevine offices, and to fund the costs of major technological upgrades. Its use has also been authorized for a limited period of time to underwrite the development of the Spanish-language Grapevine magazine, *La Viña*.

Whether it be for a group, an area, an intergroup/central office, or for A.A.’s General Service Board, establishing a prudent reserve is a key element in A.A.’s approach to self-support, one which can have profound implications, the most important of which is the assurance it provides that A.A.’s critical services will remain available for those who have come to count on them to sustain their sobriety, and, indeed, their very lives.

Corrections

■ ‘I Have This Peace About Me...’

It isn’t always easy taking the Fifth Step—especially if you’re in prison. That’s what some members of the Freedom Behind the Fence Group in Tucson, Arizona, discovered not too long ago. The group met in the Echo Yard at the Arizona State Prison Complex and had a regular Step meeting every Thursday night where they read each Step and discussed it for a couple of weeks. As the group went through the Steps a number of times, some members expressed an interest in doing the Fifth Step, though they realized their opportunities for doing so behind bars were extremely limited.

But, some of the outside A.A. volunteers who brought meetings into the facility heard their interest and decided to do something about it. Together, the group organized a Fifth Step workshop based on the idea that A.A. members

on the outside would come in and hear Fifth Steps from A.A. members on the inside. The outside A.A. members would be recruited from local groups rather than using the regular A.A. volunteers, as it was determined that the regular volunteers would be obligated to share with prison authorities anything they were told that might be illegal or might compromise security in the prison. The one-time visitors, however, coming for the four-hour workshop only, would have no such obligation, allowing a certain freedom for those taking the Fifth Step and for those receiving them.

Once a date for the workshop was set, the group reviewed the first three Steps on consecutive Thursday nights in preparation, and then spent four weeks straight working on the Fourth Step, right up to the Thursday night before the Saturday workshop.

Amazingly, exactly a dozen outside A.A. members showed up that Saturday to hear Fifth Steps—and exactly a dozen group members showed up to give them.

“I was asked if I would participate in this,” said Dan F., one of the outside volunteers, “and it sounded like they were doing a good thing. It was my first time in a prison, though, and I had a little fear.”

As an icebreaker, the workshop started off with everybody going around the room and sharing a bit about themselves.

“From my perspective, when I first came to A.A., one of the hardest things was to see the commonalities,” said Dan. “I always gravitated toward the differences. But this gave me an opportunity to see our similarities. And even though I had never spent any time in prison, I could still find something to identify with.”

With the initial formalities out of the way, the meeting morphed into the main event—the Fifth Step—with inmates and outside A.A.s who had been randomly assigned to each other spreading out in pairs across the huge meeting room.

“There’s something about talking to someone you don’t know when you’re in that setting that’s kind of liberating,” said Jeff H., the inmate Fifth Stepper assigned to work with Dan. “For me, I didn’t have to worry that all my secrets were going to get thrown around. You know, in prison you don’t want to cry. But that Fifth Step allowed me to cry. You don’t want to be vulnerable, but it allowed me to be vulnerable. It let me put my guard down and get real for a while, which is really hard to do in prison, it really is.

“I carried a lot of resentments. I had a really hard childhood and I was never able to shut the door on that. The guy that took my Fifth Step was really incredible. We shared a similar habit, so I could relate to him right away, which helped, and I just had a willingness to continue doing what I had to do to change. Taking that Fifth Step not only moved me forward in my sobriety, but in my whole life. I mean, everything’s connected, for sure, but without that Fifth Step I wouldn’t be where I am today. It made me look at things differently.

“Instead of praying for myself and praying for peace, I actually left there praying for the people who had harmed me.

“It was hard, that night, for me to go and pray for them. It wasn’t sincere at first, but I did it because I told Dan I would. But once I started praying for other people that have done me wrong, my resentments were gone.

“I’ll never forget Dan. I’ll always be indebted to him, the way he listened to me.”

Some of the pairs finished in an hour; others took the entire four hours that were allotted. There was a meeting going on in another room, and as each pair finished they joined the meeting and shared about their experience.

“After we had talked for a while, I knew it was destiny,” said Dan. “Jeff and I had some similar history and I had some experiences to share back. He got a lot out of it, and I’ve stayed in contact with him—he’s since been released. We became pen pals there for a while until he got out and I talk to him on the phone somewhat regularly. He’s maintained his sobriety,” said Dan, acknowledging the most important element of all.

“When I walked out of there that day, I had that feeling that we get after doing service work, after working with others.”

Unfortunately, the Echo Yard closed down for renovations about six months after the workshop and many of the inside members of the group were moved to other yards. While many miss the fellowship of the Freedom Behind the Fence Group and their old Step meeting, they have brought the experience, strength, and hope they gained there each week to the new yards and the new groups they now attend.

For Jeff, the benefits of the Fifth Step workshop have lasted long after his incarceration. At forty-one years old and finally living his life, he is chairing outside meetings and doing whatever he can to keep moving in the right direction.

“My recovery is not as strong as I’d like it to be, but it’s strong. If it wasn’t for A.A., I’d probably be back in prison, or I would certainly not have communication with my family and the things that I enjoy in life right now. I have this peace about me that I’ve never had, ever. I just know that God’s going to look out for me, and I just have to keep doing the right thing.”

P.I.

■ Public Service Announcements Carry the A.A. Message

Since A.A.’s Eleventh Tradition calls for “attraction rather than promotion,” how should we look upon the Public Service Announcements (P.S.A.s), recommended by the General Service Conference and made available to local public information committees at nominal cost?

These P.S.A.s are informative, not promotional. They

are not advertisements or even publicity releases as used in the commercial world. They are prepared for the express purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This includes letting the general public know what A.A. is and how it can be contacted. In the 42 years since A.A. began issuing P.S.A.s, it’s likely that thousands of men and women have found A.A. from broadcast information dispensed via P.S.A.s.

What are A.A.’s P.S.A.s? Most of them are 30- or 60-second messages for radio or TV featuring some aspect of alcoholism and concluding with a suggestion that A.A. can help, as well as information about how to contact the Fellowship locally. Ideally, members of public information committees can make special efforts to offer P.S.A.s to broadcast outlets in their areas. Since some stations run such announcements as a public service, the only cost may be to the committee for the purchase of the spots from G.S.O. A list of P.S.A.s is available at www.aa.org.

Bill W. fully understood the need for good P.S.A.s. Regarding public information work, he said: “We are trying our best to reach more of those 25 million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary that understanding of A.A. and public good will towards A.A. go on growing everywhere.”

Bill went on to say that publicity outlets—local, national, and international—should be opened wider and wider, always forgoing, however, high pressure promotion tactics. He was always mindful of the need to let our light shine without boasting or making excessive promises that exceed our capabilities. He might have added, “How can we help anybody if they don’t know about us or how we can be contacted?”

There are hundreds of A.A. Public Information committees in North America, and G.S.O. has a Public Information Kit (M-27) to assist them. The enclosed workbook provides shared experience on how to form a P.I. committee, what its goals should be, and what pitfalls to avoid. There is special emphasis on the need to maintain anonymity in releasing public information materials. It’s recommended that members should contact broadcast outlets *personally* in placing P.S.A.s. The A.A. contact person is not violating anonymity by doing so or by disclosing his/her A.A. membership privately to the media person, while emphasizing that one’s name should never be disclosed in the broadcast.

The P.I. committees can also make it known to the A.A. members in their community that they are using P.S.A.s solely to carry the message. While we do not promote A.A., Bill W. did note that our public information efforts are necessary and take many forms: local phone directories, distribution of A.A. literature, and even the simple sign outside a building that says “A.A. meeting tonight.” Whatever the form, he explained, it comes down to “one drunk carrying the message to another drunk,” whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media.

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



2 Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3 Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



4 Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



5 Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



6 If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.



7 Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8 Worship in your own way.



9 Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



10 Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."



11 Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



12 "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

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.

December

- 5-7—Mandeville, Louisiana. Area 27 Corrections Conf. Write: Ch., 45484 Sciara Ln, #14, Hammond, LA 70401
- 5-7—Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Sandlapper Round-up XVI. Write: Ch., Box 15897, Surfside Beach, SC 29587

January

- 2-4—Waterbury, Connecticut. NECYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 787, Danbury, CT 06813; www.ctnecypaa.org
- 2-4—Reno, Nevada. WACYPA. Write: Ch., Box 11911, Reno, NV 89510; www.wacypaaxii.org
- 2-4—Brighton, East Sussex, United Kingdom. Brighton Conv. Info: www.brightonaaconvention.org.uk
- 9-11—Dodge City, Kansas. SW Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 705 W. 8th St., Scott City, KS 67871
- 9-11—Houston, Texas. 47th SETA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1824, Spring, TX 77383-1824; convention_chair@aa-seta.org
- 9-11—Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. 22 Congreso de la Region Centro Poniente. Inf: Mexicaltzingo #1238, Apartado Postal 1-76, Sector Juarez, 44150 Guadalajara, Jal, Mexico; areajalisco@hotmail.com
- 15-18—Raleigh, North Carolina. 42nd Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619-8412; nconference@nc.rr.com
- 16-18—Cocoa Beach, Florida. Big Book Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 951903, Lake Mary, FL 32795; www.bigbookweekend.com
- 23-25—Springfield, Illinois. The Journey Continues “Big Book Study” Conf. Write: Ch., Box 10244, Springfield, IL 62791; www.aaspringfield.org
- 23-25—Mahnomon, Minnesota. Wild Rice Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomon, MN 56557
- 23-25—Potosi, Missouri. 3rd MICYPAA Mini Conf. Write: Ch., Box 391, Chesterfield, MO 63006; www.smicypaa.org
- 23-25—Columbus, Ohio. New Year of Acceptance Conf. Write: Ch., Box 588, Brice, OH 43109; www.newyearofacceptance.com
- 23-25—Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico. Sobriety Under The Sun 7th English Conv. Info: www.aapvconvention.com

- 30-1—Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Redstick Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 46113, Baton Rouge, LA 70895
- 30-1—Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com
- 30-1—Corpus Christi, Texas. 55th Coastal Bend Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 61000, Corpus Christi, TX 78466-1000; www.coastalbendjamboree.org

February

- 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 International Women’s Conf. Write: Ch., Box 9519, Salt Lake City, UT 84109; www.internationalwomensconference.org
- 13-15—Little Rock, Arkansas. 27th Dist. 9 Conv. 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

- 20-21—Kalispell, Montana. Into Action Wknd. Write: Ch., 4355 U.S. Hwy 2 W, Kila, MT 59920-9702
- 20-22—Louisville, Kentucky. 58th KY State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 37137, Louisville, KY 40233-7173; 58kystateconvention@gmail.com

March

- 6-8—Oakland, California. 42nd PRAASA 09. Write: Ch., Box 70373, Oakland, CA 94612-0373; www.praasa.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
- 19-22—Ruston, Louisiana. LA Upstate Conv. Write: Ch., Box 505, Ruston, LA 71273-0505; www.rustonaa.org
- 20-22—Dearborn, Michigan. March Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 185, Roseville, MI 48066; www.aa-semi.org
- 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—Arecibo, Puerto Rico. 53ra 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

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

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Cruz M. M. 2nd Shawn Buckley Linda April
M Singh Martin H. ~~6600~~ Pamela April
Ivy Elly Mary D. Pamela
J. J. Maglieri Sara Bang Costancy Anke Wyrh
Eva S. G. S. R. Warren A. Juelle Foster-Daniel
Noëla Denise Adrienne B.
A. Rivera Robert Stotteloh Jennifer Anuboy Johanna Acosta
V. Alleyne Valerie D. Susan Song B. Andrea B. Lomio
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