

## Speakers plead: Don't let success make AA complacent

Two major thoughts stood out in the remarks of the many speakers, alcoholic and nonalcoholic, at AA's July Toronto Convention. The first was admiration and gratitude for AA's startling success in sobering up hundreds of thousands of lost-cause drunks. The other was concern that the success which has come to AA over the thirty years since its start in Akron, Ohio in 1935 would not lead us to any complacency about the size of the job still to be done.

The theme of the Convention was: Responsibility. "I am responsible... when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

AA's co-founder, Bill, in his talk to over 10,000 attending the major sessions of the Convention, stressed the need for cooperation with all who work on the problem of alcoholism, the more than 100 agencies in the United States and Canada alone now engaged in research, alcohol education and rehabilitation.

"Too often, we have deprecated and even derided these projects of our friends just because we do not always see eye to eye with them," Bill said. "We should very seriously ask ourselves how many alcoholics have gone on drinking simply because we have failed to cooperate in good spirit with these many agencies. No alcoholic should go mad or die merely because he did not come straight to AA in the beginning."

"The first concern of AA members should be with problem drinkers because they are not hurt enough, others because they are hurt too much," he declared. "Many sufferers have mental and emotional complications that seem to foreclose their chances. Yet it

would be conservative to estimate that at any particular time there are four million alcoholics in the world who are able, ready and willing to get well if only they knew how. When we remember that in the 30 years of AA's existence we have reached less than ten per cent of those who might have been willing to approach us, we begin to get an idea of the immensity of our task and of the responsibilities with which we will always be confronted."

The Convention heard from two dozen internationally-known nonalcoholic authorities on alcoholism, many of whom urged AA as a whole, and AA members individually, to do more in the future than in the past to help alert communities in the cost of alcoholism in lives, labor and happiness, as well as to the possibility of treatment and recovery. J. P. Miller, author of the extremely successful TV drama and film, "Days of Wine and Roses," said it succinctly: "Do you AAs have to be so aggressively non-aggressive? How long are big drinkers going to have to keep depending on luck to learn about alcoholism?"

Lauded for their share in the AA story of between 350,000 and 400,000 alcoholics at present restored to normal life,

the Convention attendees heard over and over again a plea to find ways to get the story to ever larger numbers—and get it to them before the bitter end in loss and degradation.

### Compliments to the Toronto AA Hosts

At the close of the Convention in Toronto, AA's General Service Board voted formal and congratulatory thanks for the Fellowship to the Host Committee made up of Toronto AAs, who laid the groundwork for the massive invasion of AAs and families for the July 4th weekend Convention, and labored throughout it to see that things went smoothly. Praise for the excellence of all arrangements and the hospitality of Toronto AA and indeed of all of Toronto's hotels, restaurants and other services was universal among the departing Conventioneers.

### Melody lingers on...

Everyone of the over 10,000 in Toronto for the AA Convention must have taken away unique memories, just as we say that our "stories are our own." One man's comment: "Can't keep up with it. Exhausted. No sleep. Too much coffee. Must be terrible place for a newcomer. Don't get overtired, we tell him!

## Bill and Lois in Toronto

Unquestionably the best known, to all of us, of AA's anonymous thousands is Bill, the surviving co-founder. And unquestionably the best known of Al-Anon's thousands is his wife, Lois. In Toronto, Bill and Lois spoke to over 10,000 people at the two big evening meetings, visited numerous other meetings and panels at the hotels, held receptions, and presided over an early breakfast on Sunday for over 2,000 Conventioneers!

The special gratitude and love AAs and Al-Anons feel toward Bill and Lois were only partially expressed by the hand-clap thunder during standing ovations for them at the big meetings; beneath the applause was a deep, shared emotion which made their appearances the most memorable experiences of the entire Convention.

But the AA talk is great. Ideas from speakers, from AAs met by chance, make it all worthwhile. Must tell them at home."

Another AA wrote impressions for the GSO AA Exchange Bulletin, August-September, 1965, issue, which went out to all group Secretaries early in August:

"... Those patient coffee shop hostesses at the Royal York ... The overwhelming thrill of the gigantic crowds in the Garden ... The whoops you gave old friends from other conventions or from your own home group first time you saw them ... Archie Roosevelt's introducing the priest in Latin, yet... The big autographing rectangles when you found you'd signed your own copy of AA 30 again ... The choke in your throat when Bill and Lois

walked on the Garden stage... The stirring way Canadians sang all the words of their national anthem . . . The marvelous yoks Walter O'K. and the others of that star-spangled Variety Show gave us, from the "Drinking Song" overture on ... Nonalcoholic Trustee Trice's story of asking for a beer in the Royal York bar and being sternly told by the bartender, "No slips in here, brother!"

### The who and where of AA after 30 years

AA's General Service Board released figures on the current size and geography of AA at the Toronto Convention:

There are 11,752 registered AA groups in the world (a 6.7 per cent increase over 1964). Estimated total membership is "more than" 350,000

and about 70,000 of these are women. About 80 per cent of the membership is in the U.S. and Canada but there are now more than 1,850 groups in 90 other countries. (Canadian membership is almost 16,000.)

Growth is especially rapid in some countries, for example: in Latin America, estimated membership in El Salvador has risen from 780 to 4,300 since 1960, in Colombia from 125 to 2,650 in the same period.

In 1964 alone, more than 1,500,000 copies of AA books, pamphlets, or tapes went out to groups, institutions or individuals.

## Convention was the fourth in a series

The July, 1965 Convention of AAs and families was the fourth such international gathering since AA began thirty years ago. The first convention was held in 1950 in Cleveland, Ohio. At this Convention the Twelve Traditions were accepted.

This year, in Toronto, the emphasis of the Convention was on AA's responsibility for the work of "carrying the message." In addition, Convention attendees heard Bill stress the need for responsible and enlightened leadership for AA's

future. He previewed the plan for a change in the ratio of alcoholic to non-alcoholic members of the General Service Board which was presented to the 1965 General Service Conference by Dr. John L. Norris, Chairman of the Board, and which will be acted on by the 1966 Conference. Texts by Dr. Norris and by Bill on this move to put alcoholics in the majority on the Board will appear in the Grapevine in issues early in 1966.

## Toronto sessions on tape for \$150

If your Group would like to hear the Convention speakers, both AAs and nonalcoholic experts, the panels, alkathons and big formal meetings, you may order tapes from BFC, Inc., 900 Tri-State Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202. Best way to go about it is to first send for the complete order blank, which lists the coverage. Included are the two long addresses made by Bill at the evening meetings in Maple Leaf Gardens.

You may order just certain taped sessions you are interested in, at \$7.00 each, or buy all of the twenty-seven English-language tapes of AA sessions, for your Group to listen to over an extended period of time, for \$150 (postage extra outside U.S.).

## New AA, Al-Anon, publications introduced at the Convention

New publications by AA World Services, the AA Grapevine, and Al-Anon were first presented to Convention attendees, are now available by mail order.

AA 30, hard cover, many pictures, stories of AA, cartoons, pages for autographs: \$2.00 from AA World Services, Inc., P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N. Y. 10017

New, hard cover, pocket size edition (4 by 6 1/4 inches) of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: \$2.75 from AA World Services, Inc., P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Sta-

tion, New York, N. Y. 10017

*Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, a 285 page hard cover book summarizing Al-Anon experience to date: \$4.50 from Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 125 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y. 10010

"Best of Bill," five articles from the Grapevine by Bill, AA's co-founder, in a pocket packet: 1-25, 50 cents each; 24-100, 40 cents each from AA Grapevine, Inc., P. O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, N. Y. 10017