

■ They're Back in Prison—But This Time It's Voluntary

"I feel like I've lived three lives: I lived the life before I drank, I existed while I drank, and now I'm living the spiritual way of life that I had no idea even existed," says Alan D., an ex-offender who was first introduced to A.A. in Colorado State Prison in 1985.

"Some guy was speaking on the message of hope. My thinking at the time was 'this sounds great, if I should ever need it.' I was just starting an eight-year sentence, which was committed during a blackout, but my pride was still so huge I didn't want to admit I was an alcoholic. But what happened, what took place, is that a seed was planted."

Alan didn't get sober until fifteen years later, "fifteen more years of miserable drinking, more run-ins with the law." But, when he did, he didn't forget what it was like to be incarcerated and without hope, the only dream the dream of the next drink. "I was in prison the first time for three and a half years straight, for 42 months, and you know, I had the obsession to drink the whole time. My goal when I got out was not to get next to a woman, get next to my family, get next to a good meal—it was to get a drink. That was it. And I succeeded in my goal: I was drunk as a skunk three hours into the bus ride home."

Ultimately, on the outside, Alan got sober. It wasn't long, though, before he had an urge to go back into prison, this time as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"A.A. provided me with that opportunity and you can't imagine, I mean, there's just no words to describe the feeling that overcomes you when you're sober and you're back in the place where you were just one of those guys walking down the hallway so hopeless.

"I had that same experience when I went back to the county jail up in Fort Collins. I've been going there about a year now, but that was the same feeling—same walls, same cells, same noises as when I was locked up in there. A.A. saved my life and I'll do anything I can to get the message to that guy who's sitting in the back, his arms crossed with contempt, just like I was."

Alan also takes the message into a local detox where he spent time "going to pieces" prior to getting sober. "I think it's important that we tell people to go into all kinds of facilities. It's frustrating work, it's not glamorous, but it's possible that the guy or gal you're going to talk to this one time will know where to go to find help in a couple of years. It gets me every time I think about it."

Patty K. is another ex-offender who was introduced to A.A. in prison. In the beginning, she says, she went to the meetings because she thought the people who came in to carry the A.A. message were "nice." "While they were there, I realized they had something I wanted. They had a light in their eyes and they were not handcuffed to their disease.

"I looked forward to those meetings, because when the A.A.s got there, they brought with them a sense of real life, laughter and respect. One day, a woman I had known from the 'bad-old-days' came. I knew she was just like me." Patty took her aside and asked her what substance she was on, knowing there had to be some kind of an angle. "She just laughed and said she wasn't on anything. She told me to read the last two pages of 'Keys to the Kingdom' in the Big Book and that she would come back the next week."

For someone whose family used to keep track of her by reading through the obituaries to see if she was dead or alive, Patty found a flicker of hope in A.A. "One day when I was so angry at God for letting me wake up again, I shouted out, 'Yo, Dude! If you are up there, you have to help me because I can't do this anymore on my own!'" Patty passed out and when she woke up, she had the light of hope burning deep inside of her. The loneliness had begun to disappear.

Patty got involved in the Fellowship right away. "I found a home group the day I got out. I didn't know where I would sleep that night, but I knew it didn't matter. My recovery had to come first." And service soon followed. "They gave me a job! I was the coffee maker the next day."

After attending her first area assembly, Patty got hooked on service. "I wanted to go back into the prisons, and even with my record they let me. I became the outside G.S.R. for the Mountaineers prison A.A. group and after that I made myself available for the district corrections chair."

In a twist of fate nobody could have predicted, Patty recalls with humor standing before a judge at the end of her drinking. The judge, exasperated with her less than stellar record, said "Mrs. K—, you'll still be going to treatment, jail, or prison when you're an old lady." And, you know what, Patty says, "He was right. I turned 60 last year and I still go to treatment facilities twice a month, and I still go to jails and prisons three times a month for Alcoholics Anonymous. With God and the Fellowship and

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being of service, anything is possible,” says Patty.

It's a sentiment shared by Tim V. of Colorado, even though his motives for going to A.A. in the beginning were less than forthright. “When you're in prison, you want to get out,” says Tim. “It's probably the most predominant thought on your mind,” he explains, indicating that he went to A.A. meetings at the start to get “credit” that might help him look good when his parole hearings came around. “I knew they were keeping track of how many meetings I went to and I figured it would help me, you know, to get out. On some level I believed I was working the Steps and being real about my A.A. participation, but the truth is I really wasn't, not initially.”

Tim also went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings in prison. “I'm definitely someone who had problems with other substances besides alcohol. I thought I was more of a drug addict, but I would stop taking drugs and drank more, and my life was still unmanageable. So, I kind of figured out that it had to be all or nothing.

“And so I did a transition from going for the credit to really taking a look at what I was doing and saying. I needed to take this thing seriously or I was just going to continue cycling in and out of prison. So, the program was a life-changing proposition and it definitely changed mine.”

Once out of prison, the path of recovery led to service. “I go to a Twelve Concepts study meeting once a week, and one on the Traditions, and I'm the G.S.R. for my home group. I recently completed my term of parole,” says Tim, “and I've got a good start—a good start on my recovery, a good start on my new life.

“When I was in prison six years ago, I couldn't have imagined what my life would be like or the things that I would have, that I now have. I was in a treatment center in prison and they asked me to come back and talk to the inmates. And I'm going to go in there and say I'm a member, an active member of A.A.”

Carrying the message of A.A. into correctional facilities isn't for everybody, but if you're one of those A.A. members like Patty, Alan and Tim who've been bitten by the bug for this kind of service work, it's hard to keep you out. And you never know just whom you're going to reach. “I know that the miracle can happen,” says Alan about carrying the A.A. message inside. “You can't predict when or with whom, but I know it happens.”

■ New from G.S.O.

The following videos and cassette tapes have been converted to DVDs and CDs (in English only).

Now in DVD format: *Young People and A.A.* (DV-03, \$10); *Carrying the Message Behind These Walls* (DV-06, \$10); *Your G.S.O., the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure* (DV-07, \$10); *It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell* (DV-08, \$10); *Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous* (DV-09, \$10); *A.A. in Correctional Facilities* (DV-02, \$8). All are closed captioned.

The following DVDs are *confidential, for A.A. members only*: *Bill's Own Story* (DV-04, \$10); *Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions* (DV-05, \$10); *Markings on the Journey* (DV-01, \$16).

Now in CD format: *Three Legacies*, by Bill (M-87, \$6); *Voices of Our Co-Founders* (M-88, \$6); *Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions* (M-89, \$6); *Pioneers of A.A.* (M-90, \$10); *A Brief Guide to A.A.* (M-91, \$3); *History of Service* (M-72, \$10).

Also, just off the press, 2008-2009 International A.A. Directory Outside U.S.A. and Canada (MD-1, \$1.80) *confidential, for A.A. members only*.

■ Central Office/Intergroup Seminar

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada will be the site of the 23rd Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, September 26-28, 2008. Hosted by the Edmonton Central Office, the event will be held at the Ramada Conference Centre in Edmonton. This year's theme is “Our Three Legacies & How Are We Doing?” This annual Seminar provides a forum, through workshops, discussions, and the exchange of ideas and shared experience, for those who are on A.A.'s front line.

Attendees are Intergroup/Central Office managers, Intergroup representatives and representatives from the G.S.O. staff, and the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards.

Please make your hotel reservations, at special seminar rate, by August 25, by calling 1-888-747-4414, or directly to the hotel (780) 453-7308.

Registration fee is \$25.00. To obtain a Seminar registration/questionnaire, and for other information, contact Jan D., Edmonton office manager: (780) 424-5900, or e-mail edmontonaa@hotmail.com.

■ Captain Jack: The Seagoing Loner Who Started a Movement

In January 1946, *The Reader's Digest* published an article titled "My Return from the Half-World of Alcoholism," a first-person account of A.A. recovery condensed from the A.A. Grapevine. It was timed perfectly to reach a middle-aged merchant ship officer named Jack S., who was virtually sinking in a sea of alcohol after years of struggle. Impressed by the article, he wrote to A.A.'s General Service Office (G.S.O.) in New York for information, attended A.A. meetings in Boston, and started on a personal journey that would eventually benefit thousands of alcoholics around the world.

Captain Jack, as he came to be known in A.A. circles, would become a key person in launching what is now known as the *Loners-Internationalist Meetings (LIM)*, a confidential correspondence service which reaches out globally to members who cannot attend regular A.A. meetings. This bimonthly six-page newsletter is now coordinated by a G.S.O. staff member.

Loners are A.A. members who live or work in isolated areas where there are no A.A. meetings within a reasonable distance. Seagoing A.A.s are known as Internationalist, who also might organize groups aboard their ships. A.A.s who are homebound due to illness or physical handicap, are called Homers.

LIM members share with each others—by snail mail or e-mail, and often lasting friendships are formed.

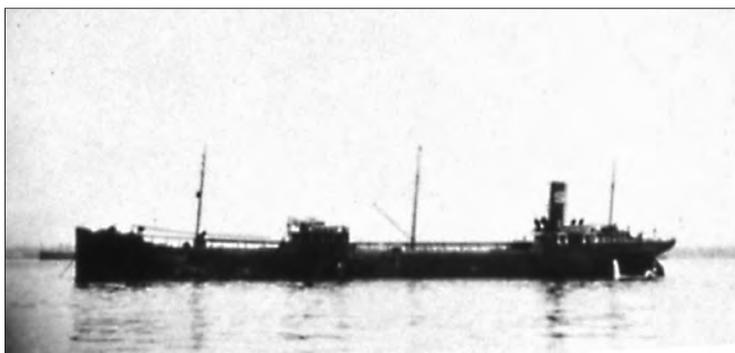
A.A., even in its earliest years, sought to extend help to such isolated persons who lacked the benefit of frequent contact with other A.A.s. Bill W. and the small staff at G.S.O. in New York tried to confront this issue by corresponding with Loners, just as they did with individuals who were starting groups in their communities. The thrust of this correspondence was that men and women can stay sober even without regular A.A. personal contacts. And if they can't meet their fellow members face-to-face, they can correspond with them and also with G.S.O. It worked, and the A.A. Archives contain numerous letters from Loners who stayed sober under the most trying conditions.

Captain Jack, who passed away nearly 20 years ago with 42 years of sobriety, was skipper of tankers for a major oil company. He sailed to many of the world's ports and carried the A.A. message with him to remote places that only a few ever visit. He is fondly remembered today

for his role in laying the groundwork for LIM.

Captain Jack resided in Sharon, Mass., during many of his sailing years. He first wrote to G.S.O. (then called The Alcoholic Foundation)—at a time when A.A. was still small but growing rapidly. This was the beginning of steady correspondence between him and his new friends at G.S.O., whom he would soon meet in person. Bill W. appeared to be particularly impressed by the recovery of this sailor whose drinking career extended to "the five continents and the seven seas."

Jack would often visit the service office when he was in New York and the staff members came to love and admire him. Charlotte L., a secretary at G.S.O., was the first to respond to his early letter. She sent him a list of



Captain Jack stayed sober aboard this tanker for 14 months by corresponding with G.S.O. and Twelfth Stepping other seamen.

A.A. members and groups in ports he was likely to visit and, as an alcoholic herself, also assured him that she understood what it was like to be a loner in the program. "When I started out I was alone, and letters were invaluable," she wrote, adding that there had been periods when she had been away from the groups and correspondence with another A.A. meant a lot to

her. "So please keep writing to us if you feel the same way," she wrote. "Even without the groups, you may find that you'll be able to help someone else."

Jack was a World War I Naval officer and later went to sea as a merchant marine officer. The country was going through hard economic times, however, so he had to start as a seaman even though he had a master's (captain's) license. After the U.S. entered World War II, he was aboard an oil tanker in the North Atlantic. He finished the war in the South Pacific, and was on a ship there when he read the article that would change his life.

In October 1947, he visited G.S.O. and met Bill W. "I was told that if I had A.A., I could go anywhere in the world and stay sober," he recalled. "Bill helped me pack literature in my sea bag that day." Jack had also won three Big Books in a raffle and would soon leave one in Shanghai, a second with a doctor in Singapore, and the third with an agent in Abadan, Iran.

He also made trips to Palembang, on Sumatra Island, which is now part of Indonesia but was previously in the Dutch East Indies. In Palembang, he contacted an A.A. loner named Frank F., whose name had been given to him by G.S.O. "I always remember Frank because he

was what I needed and I was what he needed,” Jack would recall later. “From then on, I peddled literature all the way from Shanghai to Cape Town, Borneo, Singapore, Madras.”

As he continued to carry the A.A. message to distant ports, Jack began to acquire a reputation for his A.A. work. The port engineer in one location even told him one day that he was getting to be “quite an internationalist.” Jack consulted his dictionary and learned that an internationalist is a person who has something in common with two or more different countries in the world. He wrote to G.S.O. and suggested that the worldwide group of loners be called the “Internationalists.” G.S.O. began forwarding letters to him. In the meantime, he was sailing between Bombay, India, and the Persian Gulf, as well as other oil-port cities in Australia, South Africa, and Asia. But his times in port were sometimes limited to stays of from eight to 18 hours, so much of his contact with A.A.s was by mail.

Most of his letters dealt with the way A.A. was working for him and even aiding him in his work as a ship’s master. As he visited various ports, he would recall the unhappy experiences he’d had on previous visits when he was still drinking. By late 1948, Captain Jack’s recovery was featured in a three-part series in the A.A. Grapevine, beginning with the September issue, titled “A ‘Loner’ at Sea.” From 1946 to 1948 he wrote many of the letters at sea, while others came from distant ports: Sydney, Australia; Hong Kong; Madras, India. Finally, writing during a trip from Calcutta to Palembang, Sumatra Island, on July 15, 1948, he could say, “By the Grace of God I am sober two years yesterday.” During this time he had always had an unopened bottle of Scotch in his stateroom, but it had remained unopened through storms and other difficulties. The label read, “My request is that this whisky will be used solely in sobering up drunks who plan to make this drunk the last one. If the customs want it, they are welcome to it. I don’t want it.”

In the meantime, as Jack visited ports throughout the world, he and the G.S.O. staff acquired a growing list of Loner/Internationalist contacts. They cooperated in developing *The Internationalist Round Robin*, printed in 1949 and mailed to a list of internationalists. This became the first LIM bulletin, and it carried letters from Jack and others on the list, usually explaining where they were geographically and also how the A.A. program was working for them. Though first prepared for internationalists—mainly seagoing A.A. members—it was expanded in 1976 to include other loners and in 1980 was enlarged to six pages and printed on the familiar yellow paper-stock it uses today. This service to Loners, Internationalists, and Homers has become so essential that a special confidential directory, for LIM members only, is produced by G.S.O.

Jack continued to sail on oil tankers until 1961, when he reached his company’s mandatory retirement age. A

loner no more, Captain Jack retired, settling in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, with his wife.

Not surprisingly, Captain Jack became the grand old man of A.A. groups in Portland and acquired a host of new friends. Jack traveled to the International Convention in Montreal in 1985 and also to an “Old-Timers Meeting” hosted by Lois W. at Steppingstones.

On December 28, 1988, Captain Jack passed away at 91. To the very end of his life, he corresponded with A.A. friends.

■ Archivist Amy Filiatreau Leaves G.S.O. for University Post

Amy Filiatreau (nonalcoholic), who joined G.S.O. as archivist in February 2006, has resigned to become director for content management at the Xavier University library in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her resignation became effective July 3.

While in the position slightly more than two years, Amy quickly became a highly regarded member of the G.S.O. team for her professional competence, friendly personality, cooperative spirit, and devotion to A.A. history and values. Though not an A.A. member, she had considerable background in the Fellowship as a result of attending meetings in her hometown, Louisville, Kentucky, with relatives who were A.A. members.

“Leaving G.S.O. was a very difficult decision to make,” Amy explained. “I made it for family reasons. My parents, who live in Louisville, need some assistance these days. In Cincinnati, I will be close enough to visit them every weekend and help care for their needs.”

As A.A.’s archivist, Amy has also endeared herself to A.A. History Lovers, an informal Internet body of A.A. members who devote considerable time and attention to researching and sharing A.A. history. Glenn C., an A.A. historian and archivist living in South Bend, Indiana, has high praise for the way she has worked with this group. “A lot of us in A.A. history and archives are going to sorely miss Amy,” he says. “The first time I met her, she had traveled all the way to Lebanon, Pennsylvania, to sit in on an A.A. history and archives gathering and let us know of her interest and support. That was an important part of her spirit, that willingness to go the extra mile and carry out that extra piece of helpfulness. And she is such a talented researcher. She has jumped in to find things buried in odd places in our New York archives, for example, such as letters from Bill W. and Bobbie B. that have solved A.A. historical questions that have been puzzling us for years.”

Jim D., a Lansing, Michigan, A.A. member who serves as Area 32 archivist, feels that Amy has brought the A.A. Archives into the 21st Century. “She’s been good for us,” he says, noting that she’s using new computer technology to store and retrieve materials. This was, in fact, one of Amy’s goals when she joined G.S.O. in early 2006. Since then, Amy

and the Archives staff have completed the following:

- Revised the Archives service pieces.
- Updated policies to provide better access to archival documents sound recordings.
- Established a digital listening station in the G.S.O. lobby.
- Created and continuously updated Archives exhibits.
- Developed a new traveling exhibit.
- Created a digital time line, which will be launched on A.A.'s Web site later this year.
- Launched digitization of materials, enabling easy word-searches of A.A.'s archives.
- Given at least thirty talks at A.A. conferences and events.

Xavier University, where Amy will also be library co-director, is a private, coeducational Jesuit institution that is consistently ranked high among the nation's colleges and universities. Amy's own educational background includes a B.A. in anthropology and archaeology from the University of Chicago and a Masters in library and information science (M.L.I.S.) from the University of Texas at Austin. She is also certified by the Academy of Certified Archivists, with additional accreditation in materials preservation and conservation.

Glenn C., himself a retired university professor, notes that in Amy the people at Xavier University will find they have been given a rare treasure. "I know that God will bless her in her new career," he adds.

Amy hopes to maintain ties with A.A. and the Archives even after leaving G.S.O. "My time here has made me appreciate so much more what A.A. does for the suffering alcoholic," she says. "I've heard so many stories that make me value how lucky we are that A.A. exists."

■ Two New Class B Trustees Join the Board

Following A.A.'s principle of rotation and its Third Legacy Procedure for election, two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees, Vic P. from the Western Canada region and Ken B. from the West Central (U.S.) region, were selected to serve as trustees on A.A.'s General Service Board. Drawn from the hat at the 58th General Service Conference, both will serve four-year terms starting in August. While no trustee can be said to "represent" a geographical section—all trustees represent the board and the Fellowship as a whole—these newly-selected trusted servants will doubtless bring to the board's deliberations a regional perspective that will be invaluable.

Both new trustees have long been involved in general service in their areas and regions and each has served as a General Service Conference delegate. Seasoned, thoughtful, and filled with enthusiasm, both are ready to take on the challenge of serving the entire Fellowship in this new capacity.

"I'm very excited," says Vic P., "to be actively serving

Alcoholics Anonymous again." A Panel 54 delegate for Area 78, Vic has been alternate delegate, area chair, area treasurer and P.I. committee chair, as well as being a D.C.M and a G.S.R. for his home group, the Sundre Town and Country Group in Sundre, Alberta. In his professional life, with an M.B.A in Finance and a B.S. in Economics, Vic has worked in the financial sector, consulting with and contracting financial services to users of commodity futures.

One of Vic's most engaging service commitments has been his work with remote communities, which began with a trip he put together to carry the message to the native community in the Northwest Territories. "That effort has really paid off," says Vic, citing a surge of participation and service activity throughout the area. With continuing enthusiasm, the area put some funding in place to help remote G.S.R.s and D.C.M.s get to area assemblies and that has provided a boost in service opportunities. "I believe the essence of healthy A.A. is simply a connection with the greater whole, and I think Area 78 has been making solid strides toward that being the case."

Sober since 1990, Vic is well grounded in the basics of sobriety and while making coffee, attending meetings, sponsoring and working with his own sponsor are at the core of his recovery, Vic has plans to return to Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. "Going back as a trustee," he notes, "is an added bonus."

Ken B., of Omaha, Nebraska, is similarly excited to be joining the General Service Board. A retired high school English teacher, Ken got sober in 1982 and has been involved in general service at the area, district, group and Intergroup level. Upon hearing the news of his selection as trustee, his reactions went from awe to excitement "almost instantaneously."

As a Panel 48 delegate, Ken served on the Correctional Facilities Committee and was part of the very first Conference Archives Committee in 1999. Schooled in fundamental A.A. principles by a sponsor whose answers quite often were "no more than two or three words," Ken likes to look for the principle supporting any particular thought or action rather than focusing on "the alluring short term goals." "It seems to me that the principle underlying most things is simple," says Ken. Once articulated, it is the principle that can provide the kind of guidance that will help maintain "the health and integrity of A.A." in the long run.

Like Vic, Ken has been involved with remote communities in his area, helping to establish a Spanish linguistic district and working to get A.A. literature translated into Nuer for the area's Sudanese population. From the start, the translation effort seemed to be guided by a Higher Power, as Ken discovered. After an extensive search he discovered that the translator he needed "had an office on the opposite side of the wall from where I was teaching."

Ken's real passion has been in correctional facilities work. "That's where I started my service," he explains. "At six months sober, my sponsor said, 'You're going to prison,' and as recently as Wednesday night I was in the

county jail.” Writing letters has also been important in Ken’s correctional facilities service and one particular inmate he was corresponding with as part of G.S.O.’s Corrections Correspondence Service, “now attends the Saturday morning meeting I attend.”

As both of these incoming trustees have discovered, A.A. can be a small world, closing great geographical distances and differences in language and culture, pulling together diverse populations and individuals from every walk of life.

Service on the General Service Board can be a small world, too, as Ken B. recently discovered. Anticipating his upcoming duties, Ken found himself at a local store shopping for a new suit. In the course of trying it on, he got a call on his cell phone. The caller? It was another regional trustee, welcoming him to the board!

■ New Class A Trustee Lauds A.A.’s ‘Constancy of Purpose’

Terrance M. Bedient, of Albany, New York, is A.A.’s newest Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee. First introduced to A.A. in 1975 when he was in charge of an Employee Assistance Program (E.A.P.). Terrance attended his first



open A.A. meeting over 30 years ago. There he became very good friends with “a couple of guys in recovery who swore by A.A.” and began the long association that brought him to A.A.’s General Service Board, an association, he believes, that has benefited him in many ways.

“The spirituality of A.A. is so rich, and I am fulfilled in my own spirit by contact with those who have suffered things much more serious than I, and who have grasped the Steps and Traditions, made a life for themselves, and are now spreading that throughout their groups, their areas, and their regions. That’s humbling.”

Terry brings to the board many years of experience in the medical field. “My entire career has been working in medical administration,” he says, “working around people with acute and chronic illnesses. It’s refreshing to see those in A.A. embrace practices and principles to be healthy.”

Terry’s career in medical administration began as an Army officer. After discharge, he completed graduate school and was appointed Assistant Administrator and Risk Manager at Beekman Downtown Hospital in Manhattan, moving later to a position as Vice President for Professional Services at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in

Pontiac, Michigan. From 1984–1996, Terry served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Myers Community Hospital near Rochester, New York, honing his skills as a communicator administrator.

Currently, Terry is Vice President of the Medical Society of New York and Director of the Committee for Physician Health, an organization dedicated to providing confidential assistance to physicians suffering from substance use or other psychiatric disorders. Married for over 34 years, with two grown children and three grandchildren, Terry lives with his wife just north of Albany. His only regret is that the grandkids don’t live as close geographically as he’d like. But maybe that explains his pet rabbit, Rusty, who naps on the sofa—an enticement no grandchild could resist.

Terry, who succeeds Vincent E. Keefe as Class A trustee and treasurer of the A.A. General Service Board, is familiar with the workings of A.A., having served as a consultant to the trustee’s Finance and Budgetary Committee.”

Asked what Terry thinks he can bring to the board, he says thoughtfully, “Strategic planning. The whole idea of strategic planning is to figure out what your mission is and how you can go about accomplishing it without getting sidetracked in our role as trusted servants.” Most impressed with A.A.’s Responsibility Declaration, Terry cites the sentiments expressed therein as “the core” of what keeps him coming back and why he wants to be involved in this kind of service. “Anytime, anywhere—If we’re not making it available to people who need help, then what’s all this stuff for?”

“One of the things I am most impressed with about A.A. is that there is a harkening back to what we’re intended to do. It almost reminds me of a Constitutional lawyer trying to determine ‘what did the founders, the framers really intend?’ That’s so helpful, because many organizations don’t have that built in institutional memory or occasionally discard it when contemplating change. So, that kind of consistency, constancy of purpose, direction, and way of thinking which permeates A.A. is incredibly helpful.”

Chosen for service in A.A. because they often have professional or business backgrounds and experience that are useful for A.A. as it carries out its business, communicates with the Fellowship, and carries the message of recovery to the suffering alcoholic, the seven Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees on the General Service Board have always provided the Fellowship with critical service. Importantly, they can do certain things the 14 Class B (alcoholic) trustees cannot do, such as facing the camera head-on or using their last names without violating the Traditions and principles of anonymity that are designed to keep A.A. members out of the public eye.

The part played by such nonalcoholic trustees is, according to Bill W., “quite beyond reckoning.” In January 1966, here’s what Bill had to say about these friends of the Fellowship in an article for A.A.’s monthly magazine, the A.A. Grapevine: “In the days when A.A. was unknown, it was the nonalcoholic trustees who held up our hands before the general public. They supplied us with ideas that

are now a part of the working structures of our Headquarters. They voluntarily spent hours on end, working side by side with us and among the grubbiest of details. They gave freely of their professional and financial wisdom. Now and then they helpfully mediated our difficulties.

“In the early years especially, their very presence on our board was quite able to command full confidence and the respect of many faraway groups. Meanwhile, they assured the world around us of A.A.’s worth. These are the unusual services which indeed they still render.”

■ Remembering a Friend

Sadly we report the death of Denny D., a freelance writer who wrote for the General Service Office for over 30 years.

Chances are many of you reading this have spoken with Denny over the years – been interviewed and queried for a *Box 4-5-9* article, or *About A.A.*, and a number of other projects.

Denny, who died just short of her 40th A.A. Anniversary, was a gifted journalist and editor who at one time worked at the *New York Times*. A person of enormous energy, she worked until five days before her death – for two major magazines, as well as for G.S.O.

She will be missed and lovingly remembered by her husband, Kenneth, their four children, nine grandchildren, many colleagues, and a legion of friends.

■ International Convention, 2010

In a little less than two years, the International Convention will celebrate A.A.’s 75th Anniversary, July 1-4, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas. With a theme of “A Vision for You,” A.A.s from around the world will converge on San Antonio to celebrate sobriety, and share experience, strength and hope in meetings, panels and workshops at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, the Alamodome, and at other locations throughout that beautiful city. Members of the Fellowship, as always, are now gearing up for this wonderful event and the General Service Office is beginning to receive inquiries. So here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding the Convention.

Registration

Q When will registration forms be available?

A Registration forms and housing information will be mailed in August of 2009 to all G.S.R.s, Central Offices and Intergroups and international G.S.O.s.

Q What about on-site registration?

A On-site registration will be set up in the Convention Center. Registration will open on Wednesday morning, June 30, 2010.



Steeple of Mission San Francisco de la Espada, which was relocated to San Antonio in 1731. It is the Southernmost of the chain of missions on the San Antonio River.

Q Will I be able to register over the Internet?

A Yes. There will be links to forms for registration and to sign up for housing on the A.A. G.S.O. Web site.

Q How much will registration cost?

A Registration fees will be established in 2009.

Q Must everyone register? I thought I didn’t have to pay to go to an A.A. event.

A Yes. Everyone must register. Attendance at this special celebration is voluntary and, as responsible A.A. members, “we pay our own way.” The International Convention is paid for by those A.A.s who participated in it.

Q Can travel agents register groups or individuals?

A Payments from travel agencies to register groups will not be accepted. Individuals must register themselves.

Housing

Q When can I register for my hotel room?

A Once you have registered, you will be able to sign up for housing.

Q What are the main hotels?

A The headquarter hotels will be within walking distance of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center and the Alamodome and are yet to be determined.

Q Can members contact hotels directly?

A No. To make the process as fair as possible, all housing requests will be processed through the official Housing Bureau.

Q Can travel agents make room reservations?

A Room reservations can only be made in individual people’s names. Rooms available through the Housing Bureau, at specially negotiated Convention rates, are not commissionable to travel agents.

Q Can we request a room in the same hotel with friends?

A Yes, if you submit your registration and housing forms together, in the same envelope, with the same

hotel choices and deposits, every effort will be made to house you together.

Q If 50 of us are coming together from the same area, can we be in the same hotel?

A We do make an effort to accommodate group housing requests. There is a separate procedure for this to ensure fairness while trying to meet your needs. Contact the G.S.O. International Convention Coordinator, when we are closer to registration.

Transportation

Q Will local transportation be available?

A Of the 13,000 rooms A.A. has blocked, nearly 8,000 rooms are in downtown San Antonio, so many members will be within walking distance or a short ride on public transportation from their accommodations. All housing blocked for this event is less than a 45-minute ride from the Convention Center and Stadium.

Q What about special airline rates?

A As at other International Conventions, there will be special fares available. That information will be available with the August 2009 registration information mailing.

Q Where can I find information about crossing the border into the U.S. for this event?

A For specific information about visas and travel to the U.S., visit the United States Department of State Web site www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html.

If you are coming from abroad you may need a visa. Most Canadian citizens and many citizens of countries in the United States Visa Waiver Program (VWP) do not need a visa. However, you will need a machine readable passport valid for at least 90 days past your date of departure. The VWP countries are: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

If you do not come from a VWP country you must obtain a nonimmigrant visa. Plan ahead; *it may take 6 months to receive a nonimmigrant visa*, depending on the demand in your country.

Q Where do I obtain more information about the 2010 International Convention?

A More information will be available throughout 2009 and 2010 in *Box 4-5-9* and on G.S.O.'s Web site, www.aa.org. All necessary information will be included in the registration packet, which will be available August 2009. This packet will also list special telephone numbers to call for answers to specific questions about housing, the meeting program, tours, etc. A.A.'s Web site will be updated as more information becomes available.

We hope to see you in San Antonio to celebrate the 75th birthday of Alcoholics Anonymous!

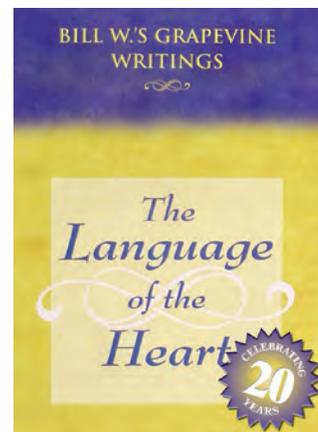
■ *The Language of the Heart* Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The publication of *The Language of the Heart* in 1988 brought together for the first time virtually every article written for the A.A. Grapevine by A.A. co-founder Bill W.

Bill was the Grapevine's most prolific contributor, writing more than 150 articles, from his first in June 1944 to his last in December 1970. *The Language of the Heart* contains all of Bill's articles, including his first thoughts about the Traditions, his battles with chronic depression and spiritual pride, memories of an all-night drinking spree with Ebby, and a vivid description of how he came to organize the Steps (there were six in the first draft).

In these articles, written over a span of 26 years, Bill documented the painstaking process of trial and error that resulted in A.A.'s spiritual principles of Recovery, Unity and Service and articulated his vision of what the Fellowship could become.

Bill W.'s insights are timeless reminders of what it used to be like and illuminate the present with the wisdom of A.A.'s experience in its early years.



■ How A.A. Reached Iceland

It's 2600 miles from New York City to Iceland, an island nation of 316,000 located in the North Atlantic between Greenland and England. Today, A.A. is well-established in Iceland with over 300 groups throughout the country and the availability of about 20 meetings daily in Reykjavik, the capital city. But it took a few false starts and a lucky break before the first real A.A. group was formed in Iceland on April 16, 1954.

The A.A. General Service Office in New York reports contacts from Icelandic alcoholics as far back as 1947. It seemed promising in 1948 when Gudrun C., an Icelandic woman married to an American, got sober and returned to Reykjavik to speak to the mayor and other top officials. Gudrun failed to get a real group started in Iceland, but—largely as a result of her talk—the city government sent eight alcoholics to New York's Knickerbocker Hospital for treatment under Dr. William D. Silkworth. Silkworth, who authored "The Doctor's Opinion" in the A.A. Big Book, had practiced at Knickerbocker since 1945 and would recommend A.A. along with his medical treatments. The Icelanders returned home with some knowledge

of Alcoholics Anonymous. A few would stay sober and were among 14 persons who met in Reykjavik in 1954 to found “a society, whose objective is to help alcoholics, to stop drinking alcoholic drinks.” Three members credited with starting the group were Jonas G., Gudni A., and Gudmunder J.

While the group continued meeting, growth was slow until the 1970s, when there was another surge in membership as the government began flying alcoholics to the U.S. for treatment, reportedly in Freeport, Long Island. (Dr. Silkworth had passed away in 1951.) Icelandic members also undertook projects essential to their own culture. Though many Icelanders speak English, they have their own language developed during the thousand years since hardy Vikings from Norway began settling on the island.

They now have Icelandic translations of the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *A.A. Comes of Age*, *As Bill Sees It*, and *Daily Reflections*. And if you want to see their central office building in Reykjavik, visit their Web site at www.aa.is which has lots of information about A.A. in Iceland. It’s in Icelandic but has an English translation.

■ Online A.A. Meetings for Spanish-speaking Members

AAamigosAA is an online A.A. group exclusively for alcoholics, conducted entirely in Spanish. The group gathers members from Spain, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, Japan, Egypt, Australia, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Chile—to name just a few.

The group functions according to the A.A. Traditions. There are no dues or fees for membership and the group’s expenses are minimal, essentially just the cost of the list server service the group utilizes to keep track of its members and to stay connected with each other. Group contributions can be made through the group’s treasurer; the

group’s rotating board of officers meets regularly via e-mail to discuss the group’s business and fulfill the responsibilities that were delegated to them by the group conscience.

The group does not seek to replace regular A.A. meetings or home groups, but seeks rather to augment the sobriety of Spanish-speaking A.A. members and to offer a recovering community of alcoholics that stretches literally around the world. With over 200 members, *AAamigosAA* is likely the first Spanish-speaking group in the vast frontier of cyberspace.

And it all started with one alcoholic, who was feeling tired and hopeless, trying to establish contact with another alcoholic through the Internet. It was in the fall of 1996 and Martín S., a dropout psychology student from Catalonia, Spain, who had tried unsuccessfully to take his life and was attending A.A. meetings in his hometown, decided to send several messages to different Web sites in the hope of finding someone who could provide information that would enable him to find another alcoholic he could talk to. (Think Bill W. in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, phoning through a list of clergymen, searching for a contact that could lead him to another alcoholic.)

One of the groups Martín contacted informed him that they had a wide membership, but that their meetings were only in English. He accepted their invitation to join, but felt very disappointed when he realized that his level of English was not good enough to be able to share in the various topic discussions that took place in the online group.

One day, Martín got an e-mail in Spanish from Jack R., a member of the group who had been living in Spain for many years, in the city of Zaragoza, where he was serving at the American military base. Soon after, a Mexican doctor and A.A. member named Eduardo V., also got in touch with Martín and the three of them began sharing regularly. Another A.A. member, named Bastiaan S., heard about the communication between them and happily joined in from his home in Cairo. Thus began what later became the *AAamigosAA* online group.



Literature Display Container

This easel-designed cardboard container (M-46) comes with 100 flyers of “A.A. at a Glance,” but can be used for other A.A. pamphlets. A valuable tool for C.P.C. and P.I. committees to display at Health Fairs and may also be placed in doctor’s offices, health facilities, school nurse and guidance counselor offices and at many other sites. \$3.30 each.

After choosing a name they went out “hunting” for Spanish-speaking A.A. members online. “When I ran into a name that sounded like it might be of Spanish origin, I would immediately send an e-mail inviting this person to join the new Spanish-speaking group,” says Bastiaan. It was a little unorthodox, but it worked. “After about a month, we had twelve regular members participating actively in *AAamigosAA*.”

Twelve years old now, and having passed through many of the trials and tribulations that most A.A. groups go through, whether in cyberspace or right here on terra firma, *AAamigosAA* continues to serve the online A.A. population, offering experience, strength and hope—a way station of understanding and identification for Spanish-speaking A.A. members around the world.

For a list of online A.A. meetings (Service Piece, SMF-124), contact the General Service Office.

■ Signing Your Name In an Anonymous Program

People showing up at A.A. meetings with slips to be signed to verify their attendance sometimes raises concerns among group members. Some may fear that someone there unwillingly is likely to violate the anonymity of group members. Those in a small group may fear being inundated by court-ordered individuals.

A.A. has been cooperating with the court system for decades, helping judges, probation officers, and others become aware of A.A. as a resource. One result has been court-mandated attendance at meetings by those charged with alcohol-related offenses, typically driving while intoxicated (DWI). There are also persons showing up with other types of slips to be signed, such as those who reside in halfway houses that require residents be alcohol-free.

Some A.A. groups, based on their experience and by their group conscience, do not sign attendance slips of any kind. Usually, groups leave it up to chair people to sign or not, depending on how comfortable they are about putting their names and sometimes phone numbers on the slips. The position of these groups is that those who sign do so in the spirit of cooperation. In signing slips of any kind in A.A., neither the group nor the members are bound in any way. Those mandated by courts are usually required to go to meetings for a period of time.

“Signing cards doesn’t bother me one bit,” says Jerry W., an A.A. in Kalamazoo, Michigan. “But I do tell those whose cards I’m signing, ‘this is not going to get you sober.’”

Jerry, who is six years sober, was himself getting slips signed when he first came to A.A. “I’ve saved those slips. I like to look back and see the meetings I attended, and I’ve got a bunch of phone numbers on mine,” he says.

“When I came into A.A. I was facing a court date to

answer a DWI, and it wasn’t my first, which means they can take your license away. My job, which required that I drive, was on the line.”

Jerry had a psychotherapist who pushed him to go to A.A. and had him bring back slips signed to prove his attendance. “I didn’t want to go but my lawyer said that proof of A.A. attendance would help with my court appearance. So I went, and I started to get sober.”

“Funny thing is that when I got to court I was resigned to whatever was going to happen. I didn’t feel like trying to hustle anyone or manipulate the system—which was a first for me. As it turns out the judge said: “So you’re going to A.A. Well, let’s see what happens.”

At his group in Kalamazoo, he says, those with slips to be signed drop them in the basket at the break, to be picked up at the end of the meeting. “You are self-conscious taking that slip out of that basket, I’ll tell you. I was impatient for the day when I could come to meetings and not have to get those slips signed,” says Jerry.

A big issue for some members, though, is the problem they have sharing honestly and openly in rooms where there may be those who don’t want to be there. “Their thinking is ‘we don’t want to be in meetings—laying our stuff out on the table, our personal stuff; speaking honestly and openly—with those who don’t want to be there and who might be endangering our anonymity.’”

That aspect of the issue has been a point of contention in Otsego, where A.A. member Kelly D. lives. “In my experience more energy has been expended on this issue than on any other,” says Kelly, who has been sober for 13 years. “I’ve signed about a 1,000 of these slips over the years.” He has seen the number of newcomers with court slips rising since the mid-1990s. “I filled in as chair for one of the evening meetings and 18 of the 20 people there had court slips. Let me tell you, you can get writer’s cramp signing 18 slips. Seriously, I don’t like it. There’s not the trust and confidentiality that you need in an A.A. meeting. There’s very little real sharing, and some of those there are openly hostile,” says Kelly.

Steve L. of Biwabik, Minnesota, sober in A.A. for 27 years, agrees it can be a problem. “Some who come with slips to be signed you can tell can’t wait to get out. These are the ones who make others uncomfortable and make people question whether signing cards is a good idea,” says Steve. “The issue of signing slips comes up every five or so years as a new crop of service people come in. They ask: ‘should we be doing this? Is this affiliation?’ The answer is that we can do it in the spirit of cooperation,” says Steve.

“I tell those coming in with court slips that, ‘you haven’t been sentenced here,’ which is true; they are given a choice of going to jail or to a facility or to A.A.” As to whether these mandated attendees remain sober, Steve says: “My experience is that it is about the same attrition rate for people coming in new, whether they are getting slips signed or not. You don’t know—it’s like trying to pick out from among a group of newcomers who is going to stay.”

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.

August

- 1-3—Savannah, Georgia. 13th SE Regional Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 5195, Ocala, FL 34478-5195; www.sewomantowoman.org
- 1-3—Boise, Idaho. '08 Gem State Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 44176, Boise, ID 83711-0176; www.gemstateroundup.org
- 1-3—Vancouver, Washington. Southwest Washington Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 2728, Vancouver, WA 98668; www.swwjamboree.org
- 8-10—Scottsdale, Arizona. 19th Salt River Intergroup Round-up. Write: Ch., 4602 N. 7th St., Phoenix, AZ 85014; www.aaphoenix.org
- 8-10—Midland, Michigan. 56th MI State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 67, Adrian, MI 49221; www.cmia32.org
- 8-10—Hillsboro, Ohio. Friends of Bill W. Campout. Write: Ch., 7510 Tricounty Hwy, Sardinia, OH 45171-9361.
- 8-10—Leusden, The Netherlands. Internat'l Conv. of the Intergroup The Netherlands. Info: www.aa-netherlands.org
- 13-17—Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 52nd FL State Conv. Write: Ch., 6110 NW 31st Terr., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309-2251; www.52flstateconvention.com
- 15-17—Oakhurst, California. 23rd Summer In The Sierras. Write: Ch., Box 1116; Oakhurst, CA 93644
- 15-17—Taunton, Massachusetts. The Incredible Tapestry. Write: Ch., 306 Winthrop St., #240, Taunton, MA 02780; www.theincredibletapestry.org
- 15-17—Elko, Nevada. 12th Serenity In The Rubies Campout. Write: Ch., Box 6148, Elko, NV 89803; serenityintherubies@yahoo.com
- 15-17—York, Pennsylvania. Sunlight of the Spirit Conf. Write: Ch., 334 Arsenal Rd., Box 3538, York, PA 17402; www.sosyorkpa.org
- 15-17—Green Lake, British Columbia, Canada. Green Lake Campout. Write: Ch., Box 224, Lac La Hache, BC V0K 1T0
- 15-17—Smithers, British Columbia, Canada. Smithers Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 2366, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0; smithersroundup07@hotmail.com

- 15-17—Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. Lakeshore Dist. Conf. Write: Ch., 36 Chipperfield Cres, Whitby, ON L1R 1N9; www.aashawa.org
- 15-17—Mont-Laurier, Québec, Canada. Congrès du Dist. 90-20. Écrire: Prés., 222 Belcourt, Mont-Laurier, QC J9L 2P7
- 15-17—Tijuana, Baja California, México. XXIV Congreso de Area BC. Inf: Com. Org., Distrito #6, Blvd. Diaz Ordaz, #1482 Local 4, Fracc. Villa Floresta, Tijuana.
- 21-24—Vienna, Virginia. '08 Southeastern Conf. Write: Ch., Box 273, Lovettsville, VA 20180; www.aavirginia.org
- 22-24—Dallas, Texas. North Texas Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 38574, Dallas, TX 75238-0574; www.northtexasroundup.org
- 22-24—Kerrville, Texas. 33rd Hill Country Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 293993, Kerrville, TX 78028-3993; hcroundup@gmail.com
- 22-24—Houston, Texas. Houston Conf. of YPAA. Write: Ch., Box 541488, Houston, TX 77254-1488; www.hcypaa.org
- 22-24—Writing on Stone Provincial Park, Alberta, Canada. Corn Roast. Write: Ch., 719 Birch Ave., Shelby, MT 59474
- 22-24—Teton Canyon, Wyoming. Teton Canyon Campout. Write: Ch., Box 153, Driggs, ID 83422
- 22-24—Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. Red Deer Round-up. Write: Ch., 4315 Michener Dr., Red Deer, AB T4N 2A9; www.oso-aa.org/red_deer_roundup
- 28-31—Nashville, Tennessee. SERCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 218523, Nashville, TN 37221; www.sercypaa2008.org
- 29-1—Tampa, Florida. 22nd Tampa Bay Fall Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 262545, Tampa, FL 33685-2545; www.tampabayfallroundup.com

- 29-31—Rochester, Minnesota. 20th Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903; hiawathaland@gmail.com
- 29-31—Kansas City, Missouri. 1st Kansas City Classic Conv. Write: Ch., Box 410972, Kansas City, MO 64141; www.kcclassic.org
- 29-31—Austin, Texas. 36th Nacional Conv. Hispana. Inf: Com. Org., Box 142661, Austin, TX 78714-2661; convencion36@yahoo.com
- 29-31—Spokane, Washington. Pacific Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 29-31—Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. 57th Eastern Ontario Area Conf. Write: Ch., 1405-2625 Regina St., Ottawa, ON K2B 5W8; www.ottawaaa.org
- 29-31—Chicoutimi, Québec, Canada. Congrès du Saguenay. Écrire: Prés., 477 Maria-Chapdelaine, Chicoutimi, QC G7H 6J9
- 29-1—Slave Lake, Alberta, Canada. Slave Lake Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 124, Widewater, AB T0G 2M0
- 29-1—Powell River, British Columbia, Canada. Labor Day Rally. Write: Ch., 3410 Joyce Ave., Powell River, BC V8A 2X9

September

- 5-7—Cromwell, Connecticut. 50th Area 11 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 879, Killingworth, CT 06419
- 5-7—Chicago, Illinois. 35th IL State Conf. Write: Ch., Box 111, Chicago, IL 60690-0111; ilstateconference2008@gmail.com

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

