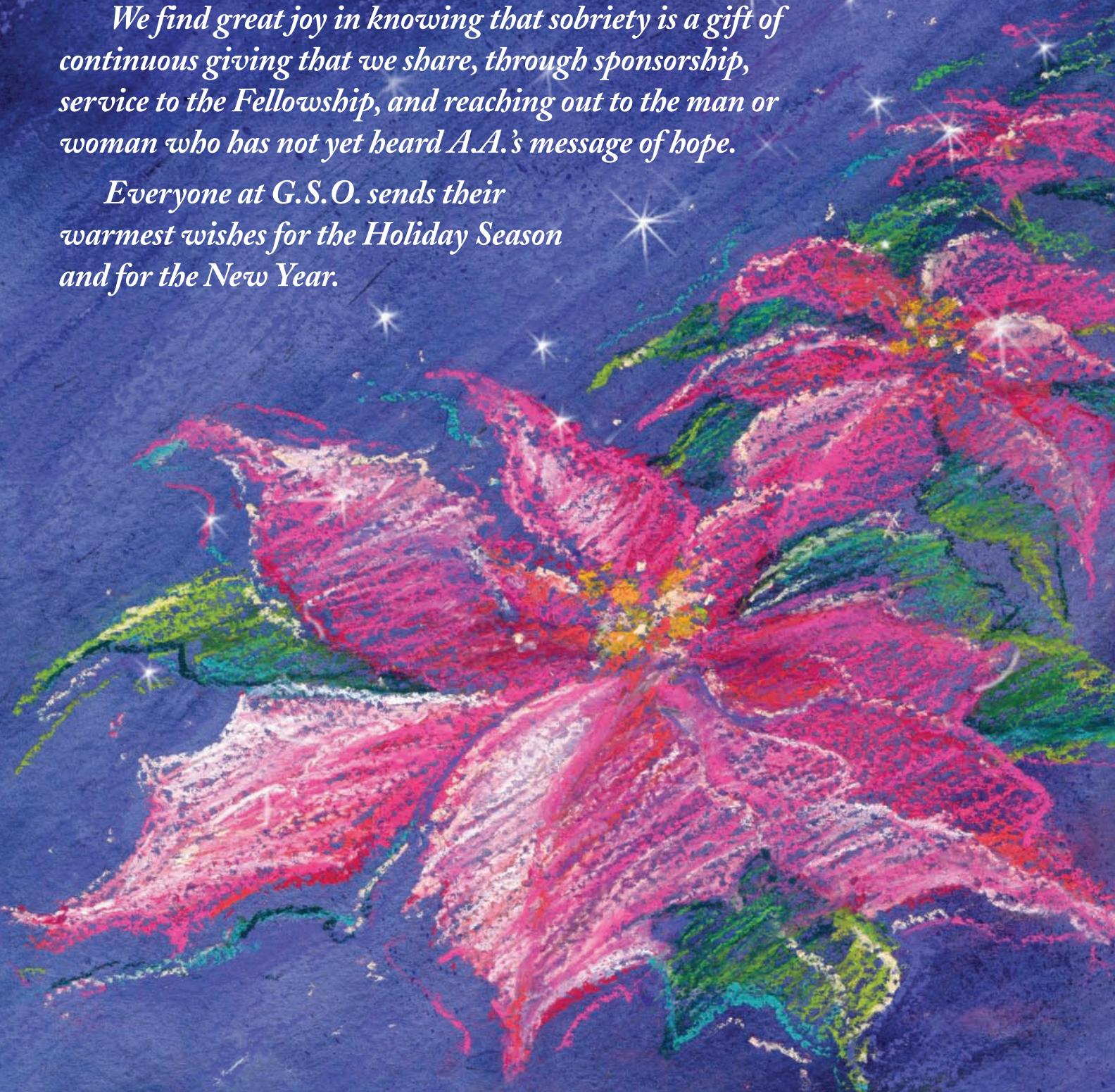


During this Holiday Season, as we reflect on a year of change and challenges, we are filled with gratitude for what we know is our greatest gift—sobriety.

We find great joy in knowing that sobriety is a gift of continuous giving that we share, through sponsorship, service to the Fellowship, and reaching out to the man or woman who has not yet heard A.A.'s message of hope.

Everyone at G.S.O. sends their warmest wishes for the Holiday Season and for the New Year.



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■ Reminder: Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2010

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees—from the Pacific and Eastern Canada regions—will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2010. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2010, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new Pacific regional trustee will succeed Madeleine P., of Meridian, Idaho; the new Eastern Canada trustee will fill the vacancy left by the death of Denis V.

Please submit your candidate's résumé to the Secretary, trustees' Nominating Committee, General Service Office.

■ P.I. Appointed Committee Member

The trustees' Committee on Public Information has an opening for an appointed committee member. We are searching for an appropriate individual to fill this position and would appreciate any recommendations.

Some of the qualities most desirable for this appointed committee member opening are:

- Activity in A.A. service, especially strong experience in carrying the message through Public Information.
- Experience/skill in helping to develop public information videos.
- Availability for meetings of this trustees' committee held during General Service Board weekends (usually the last weekend in January, July and October), as well as one meeting during the General Service Conference in April.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to work within the committee structure.
- Past General Service Conference delegates are not eligible to apply for the opening until one year after their last Conference.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

To obtain a résumé form for this opening please call the P.I. desk at G.S.O. (212) 870-3119, or e-mail publicinfo@aa.org. Deadline for applications is Dec. 30, 2009.

■ 2010 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by providing an opportunity for A.A. group and area representatives, as well as any interested individual A.A.s in a particular region, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum will be sent to G.S.R.s, area committee members, delegates, and central offices and intergroups approximately four months ahead of time. Online registration is also available.

The final Forum in 2009 is in the East Central region, November 13-15, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Kalamazoo, Michigan. In 2010 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Western Canada*—May 14-16, Travelodge Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- *Pacific*—August 27-29, Marriott Torrance Hotel, Torrance, California
- *Eastern Canada*—September 17-19, Delta-Rivieres, Trois-Rivières, Quebec
- *West Central (Additional)*—November 12-14, Best Western Ramkota City Hotel, Rapid City, South Dakota
- *Southeast*—December 10-12, Springmaid Beach Resort & Conference Center, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Local Forums are designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas and are for A.A. members who do not have access to Regional Forums. G.S.O. does not coordinate or fund Local Forums, but is available to share experience in planning them.

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

■ San Antonio Host Committee Prepares for A.A.'s 75th Birthday

There's a countdown in the Lone Star State for a giant birthday party, and as each passing month brings the big day closer, as many as 5,000 A.A. volunteer hosts will be preparing to welcome tens of thousands of A.A. visitors from over 90 countries to San Antonio, Texas, for A.A.'s 13th International Convention, July 1-4, 2010. San Antonio's Host Committee is working nonstop to roll out the welcome mat, throw open the city gates, and say "howdy!" to a multitude of A.A.s and their guests.

In harmony with the theme of the 2010 International Convention, "A Vision for You," the Host Committee aims "to reinforce the joy of sobriety at the 2010 International



Convention.... by extending the hand of A.A. to all International Convention guests." Host Committee chairperson Jim B. says, "We are very excited about it here in San Antonio. There has been a lot of interest in this Convention, not only from our Mexican neighbors, but from South America, too. It's going to be a good time."

The Host Committee countdown began last year with the creation of the "core group," headed by Jim B. as chairperson. Jim, a former Panel 42 delegate, is no stranger to service work. When asked about past service positions, he chuckles and says, "You name it, I've done it." In addition to Jim, the Host Committee core group includes Bill T. and Yoli F. as co-chairs. This group oversees the functioning of twenty subcommittees, each having an important and specific role in welcoming A.A.s and their guests to the International Convention. The volunteers within these subcommittees will be assisting attendees with transportation, hotel lodgings, and directions around town. They will greet visitors in all Big Meetings, help set up

chairs in meeting locations, chair marathon meetings, provide information for physically challenged guests and for those visitors for whom English is not a native language. They will be answering such questions as: "Where can I eat cheaply?" or "Where is the nearest restroom?" If A.A.s feel a welcome familiarity in the greetings of these volunteers, it is because they are exceptionally qualified—they have opened the doors of A.A. meetings, greeted newcomers, and guided fellow A.A.s to the coffee shop. Everything normally done at the home group will be done at the Convention—but on a much larger scale. And, of course, volunteers aim to communicate the joy of sobriety to all who attend A.A.'s 75th birthday celebration. In this, no doubt, they will have a great many like-minded friends.

Finding volunteers to help meet, greet, and guide this many guests is quite a project, and Jim aims to enlist help from the states surrounding Texas. In addition, a volunteer kickoff event is set to take place in San Antonio during January 2010. The event plans to generate excitement, provide information, and enlist volunteers from the immediate area. "We'll also be distributing flyers, and approaching people and just asking them," says Jim. For more information on volunteering, visit the Host Committee's Web site at www.aa75.org.

At past Conventions, hats, ribbons, and name badges have identified hosts. How will conventioneers spot the Host Committee volunteers in San Antonio? "The sun is pretty hot in San Antonio," says Jim, "and while most Convention attendees will be inside, volunteers will be everywhere outside, helping to steer people in the right direction, so we're leaning pretty hard toward cowboy hats. We haven't come to a final decision yet, but don't worry, you'll be able to spot us."



A.A.s will find an exciting variety of activities to choose from at the 2010 International Convention: Thursday night will spark the celebration with a “Party in the Park” outside the Convention Center in HemisFair Park. When you’ve had your fill of the park, drop by the Grand Hyatt San Antonio for some dancing fun. Friday night will bring everyone together in the Alamodome Stadium for the awe-inspiring Flag Ceremony and Opening A.A. Meeting. Saturday night brings the ever-popular Oldtimers A.A. Meeting. There will be more dancing and fellowship opportunities after the Friday and Saturday night A.A. meetings. The Convention will conclude on Sunday morning with the Closing A.A. Meeting. In between, of course, there will be all sorts of meetings, workshops, and panels, including those in other languages, such as Spanish, French, Japanese, and ASL (American Sign Language). When not in meetings or workshops, A.A.s and their Al-Anon guests will want to sample a little of what San Antonio has to offer — and whether it’s simply sipping coffee on the River Walk alongside the San Antonio River, or visiting the famed Alamo, you’ll find a cheerful member of San Antonio’s Host Committee to guide you in the right direction.

Last August, registration forms were mailed by the General Service Office to A.A.s worldwide. If you wish to be at San Antonio 2010 but have not yet registered, please write to International Convention Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. You may also register online or download a registration form from G.S.O.’s A.A. Web site: www.aa.org.

■ Convention Housing in San Antonio

We are thrilled with the response of the Fellowship to the 2010 International Convention. Registration and requests for hotel rooms have come faster than we anticipated from years of history with other A.A. International Conventions. While we blocked more hotel rooms downtown for Convention attendees than in past Convention cities, these rooms have sold out. Please note that there is no waiting list for downtown hotels that have already filled up.

Rooms are still available! We continue to expand the selection of rooms in outlying areas. Information on available rooms is provided to registered Convention attendees.

As at previous International Convention, shuttle bus service will be provided at no charge to all of the outlying properties booked through the Convention Housing Bureau. Shuttle service will begin on Thursday around noon, and will run until the conclusion of the closing Big Meeting on Sunday. The shuttle schedule will be provided onsite at the Convention.

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio!

■ A.A. Comes of Age ‘The Story Never Grows Old’

First introduced over half a century ago, one of A.A.’s most venerated books is soon to become available in a new soft-cover edition. *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill W.’s “brief history of A.A.,” which has sold over 700,000 copies since 1957 and informed generations of A.A. members about the myriad struggles of the Fellowship’s early years, is being published in a new format that will expand its accessibility throughout the Fellowship.

Set against the backdrop of the 20th Anniversary Convention in St. Louis in 1955, when A.A. declared itself come to the age of full responsibility, the book tells the story of A.A.’s early years and how the principles of Recovery, Unity and Service came to form the central core upon which the Fellowship is built. An absorbing and informative account, the book catalogs A.A.’s improbable history, providing a bird’s eye perspective to the many streams of influence and the broad span of events that helped to formulate and maintain A.A.’s program of recovery.

Written primarily for A.A. members — to provide a clear picture, as Bill put it, “of just what sort of society they belong to and how our fellowship got that way” — it was hoped that the book would provide a focal point of unity throughout the Fellowship, highlighting A.A.’s new era of responsibility for itself. With membership in the Fellowship rising steadily, Bill wanted to tell A.A.’s story once and for all, putting the key historic developments into context and avoiding later misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the facts. As Bill stated in a letter to a member named Tom B. from North Carolina in 1957, “If this can help our unity and functioning, even a little, and the main historical garble is avoided, then perhaps this volume will have served its purpose.”

Said Tom regarding the book, “I cannot help but feel that *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* has been a real contribution to the Fellowship — now if we can just get them there alkies to read it...”

Tom continued with an observation about A.A.’s growth and how the book could help generations to come. “Persons coming into the society now find a meeting place already set up with a proven program for recovery and a set of Traditions to guide them — plus all the help from General Service Headquarters, and they are apt to just accept all this without knowing what went on before,” he said, adding that A.A.’s “blood, sweat and tears,” could be seen in the new book.

It wasn’t just A.A.s who appreciated the book, however. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Minister Emeritus of the Riverside Church, and a longtime friend of A.A., wrote to Bill following the book’s publication to note, “As you say, it is primarily addressed to those who have been inside the movement rather than to the general public, but I should suspect that a good many people who have not been members of A.A. themselves will be interested to

read this detailed and very informing history of the enterprise which has come to such a fabulous fulfillment."

Putting the book together, however, was no simple process, and Bill worked on the project for a number of years prior to publication, gathering valuable criticism and input from early members and friends of the Fellowship.

With the sprawling expansion of A.A. and the awkward, almost inexplicable person-to-person way in which it developed, tracking A.A.'s roots was an exhaustive prospect. Multiple "first meetings" abounded and in some cases, people on one side of a particular town had no idea there was a separate group of people doing the same thing on the other, with each of them convinced they were the area's founding members. Trying to sort through some of these situations took a great deal of tact and a firm recognition that a full history of A.A., properly documented and annotated, would take several volumes.

"Personally, I approached the task with a good deal of reluctance," said Bill in a letter to some Florida A.A.s, "not feeling specially well-qualified to do an historical job."

Nevertheless, in advance of the book, Bill interviewed early members from Akron, Cleveland, Texas and Washington, D.C., among others, capturing their recollections of historical aspects, people, places and major events documenting A.A.'s evolution. From these interviews, Bill fleshed out his own recollections and ultimately put together a draft of the book at the end of 1956 which he sent out to friends, early members, professionals and others to critique, with the following instructions:

"Herewith you will find a manuscript titled *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. It describes the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and is directly based upon talks given and material revealed at the twentieth anniversary Convention of A.A. held at St. Louis in July, 1955.

"We would deeply appreciate having your general impressions, plus such corrections, suggestions or criticisms as you are able to make.

"As you will see, the plan of this book is not a straight-line historical sketch. For A.A. purposes it has seemed wiser to tell the A.A. stories of Recovery, Unity and Service in much the same way they were told at St. Louis. By this means we can lay heavy emphasis on each of the Legacies. The historical material I have chosen mostly concerns early A.A. Of course, nothing like a full-length history is possible in this single volume...."

"When you have read the volume, I shall be most glad to receive a letter from you indicating what your general feeling about the book and its usefulness is – what your general criticisms are; what you see to be incorrect or omitted. In this latter connection, please remember, however, that this is only a brief historical sketch using only the primary material that directly bears on the formation of the Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service...."

Many of those who received mimeographed copies of the prepublication draft took Bill up on this request, providing a stream of feedback from which were culled any number of corrections and additions that ultimately

were incorporated into the final manuscript.

"I don't know when I, personally, have ever been so absorbed by a book – A.A. or otherwise," wrote Dave B., a Canadian who received one of the prepublication review copies. "I remember many of the incidents and occasions of which you speak, and others I have heard you and various of the ancients describe – that makes it personal to me, I suppose, and that is why it interests me so much. I think perhaps it adds to that personal sense of the miraculous a knowledge of the over-all picture, which you once described as 'A Wholesale Miracle.'"

Said Eleanor R., an A.A. from Beverly Hills, California, "The story never grows old, the wonder of the miracle that is A.A. never loses its freshness."

If you've never read *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, now may be the time to immerse yourself in the incredible story of A.A.'s birth, its evolution and growth, and to introduce yourself to some of those early members and friends who helped to spread A.A.'s message around the world. If you've already read the book, perhaps now would be a good time to get hold of an extra copy and, as Bill suggested regarding A.A.'s message of recovery and hope, just pass it on.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, in paperback for the first time and with a new cover, will be the souvenir of the 2010 International Convention. It may be purchased by checking the appropriate box on your registration form. Your copy will be waiting for you when you check in at the Registration Hall in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio. You may also purchase extra copies for friends and sponsees at the Convention Center, \$7.00 U.S.

■ Stories for Proposed Special Needs Pamphlet

In response to a 2009 General Service Conference Advisory Action we are soliciting stories for a recovery pamphlet for A.A. members with special needs—such as deaf or hearing impaired, blind, wheelchair bound, learning disabilities, etc.

Your stories might include barriers you may have had to overcome in order to hear the A.A. message. Also, any literature, other tools, or efforts by A.A. members that you found helpful.

Manuscripts should be 500-800 words, double spaced. Attach your name and address on a separate piece of paper.

The anonymity of all authors will be observed, whether or not their story is selected for publication.

Please send your sharing to: Special Needs Coordinator, General Service Office, Box 459, General Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

■ Carrying the Message: The Art of Twelfth Stepping

Twelfth stepping is an art that never goes out of style. While some of the methods may have changed over the years (think cell phones, e-mails, and Web sites versus telephone booths, typewriters, and newspaper announcements), carrying the message to the still-suffering remains at the heart of Alcoholics Anonymous.

As outlined in the Big Book, in the chapter “Working With Others,” “Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.... To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss.... Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”

The basic building block in Alcoholics Anonymous has always been the lifesaving communication between one alcoholic and another. As Bill W. described it, “From the beginning, communication in A.A. has been no ordinary transmission of helpful ideas and attitudes. It has been unusual and sometimes unique. Because of our kinship in suffering, and because our common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves only when constantly carried to others, our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart.”

From an historical perspective, this transmission of hope passing from one alcoholic to another, often described in early A.A. literature as a “chain reaction,” got its start when Bill W., who had recently been in and out of treatment with Dr. Silkworth for his own alcoholism, received a visit from Ebby T., an old friend and former drinking buddy. Ebby had found a way to get sober with the help of the Oxford Groups and arrived on Bill’s doorstep one day with a message of hope he wished to impart. Currently hungover and floundering in the throes of his own illness, for some reason Bill was ready to hear what Ebby had to say.

“In November of 1934, I was visited by Ebby. He was an old friend, an alcoholic, and my sponsor-to-be. Why was it that he could communicate with me in areas that not even Dr. Silkworth could touch?

“Well, first of all, I already knew that he himself was a hopeless case—just like me. Earlier that year I had heard that he too was a candidate for the lockup. Yet here he was, sober and free. And his powers of communication now were such that he could convince me in minutes that he really felt he had been released from his drinking compulsion. He represented something very different from a mere jittery ride on the water wagon. And so he brought me a kind of communication and evidence that even Dr. Silkworth could not give. Here was *one drunk talking to another*. Here was hope indeed.”

Ebby proceeded to tell Bill his story, carefully detailing

his drinking experiences of recent years, establishing a powerful bond of identification. He then outlined the steps he had taken in gaining the sobriety he currently enjoyed.

“None of Ebby’s ideas were really new. I’d heard them all before. But coming over his powerful transmission line they were not at all what in other circumstances I would have regarded as conventional clichés for good church behavior. They appeared to me as living truths which might liberate me as they had liberated him. He could reach me at depth.”

Ebby’s visit, powerful as it had been, did not provide the impetus or the ability for Bill to quit drinking, however, and ultimately he found himself under the care of Dr. Silkworth once again. It was during this final stay that Bill underwent the transformative spiritual experience that allowed him, finally, to achieve sobriety.

As Bill noted, “With this illumination came the vision of a possible chain reaction, one alcoholic working with the next. I was convinced that I could give to fellow sufferers that which Ebby had given to me.”

For months afterwards Bill tried to carry the message. But nobody sobered up, and a wonderful lesson came out of the experience: Bill was painfully learning how *not* to communicate.

“No matter how truthful the words of my message, there could be no deep communication if what I said and did was colored by pride, arrogance, intolerance, resentment, imprudence, or desire for personal acclaim—even though I was largely unconscious of these attitudes.

“Without realizing it I had fallen pretty heavily into these errors. My spiritual experience had been so sudden, brilliant, and powerful that I had begun to be sure I was destined to fix just about all the drunks in the world. Here was pride. I kept harping on my mystical awakening, and the customers were uniformly repelled. Here was imprudence. I began to insist that every drunk should have a ‘bright-light uplift’ just about like mine. I ignored the fact that God comes to man in many ways. I had begun in effect to say to my clients, ‘You must be as I am, believe as I believe, do as I do.’ Here was the sort of unconscious arrogance that no drunk can stand!”

Eventually, Bill altered his approach to include the medical facts about alcoholism he had learned from Dr. Silkworth, about the allergy an alcoholic has to alcohol and the compulsion that compels him to continue drinking.

Soon thereafter, Bill found himself in a telephone booth in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel in Akron, Ohio. “I was tempted to take a drink for the first time since my hospital experience. That was when I first realized that I would need other alcoholics to preserve myself and maintain that original gift of sobriety. It was not just a case of trying to help alcoholics. If my own sobriety were to be maintained, I had to find another alcoholic to work with. So when Dr. Bob and I sat down for the first time face-to-face, it was a very different act. I said, ‘Bob, I am speaking because I need you as much as you could possibly need me. I am in danger of slipping back down the drain.’”

From that meeting, the spiritual chain reaction that grew from Ebby and Bill, to Dr. Bob in Akron has stretched to countless alcoholics around the world. Said Bill of the vital communication, “One of the first insights Dr. Bob and I shared was that all true communication must be founded on mutual need. Never could we talk down to anyone, certainly not to a brother alcoholic. We saw that each sponsor would have to humbly admit his own needs as clearly as those of his prospect. Here was the foundation for A.A.’s Twelfth Step to recovery, the Step in which we carry the message.”

Not long ago, in an effort to increase local Twelfth Step efforts, the St. Paul, Minnesota, Intergroup newsletter carried an article titled “Tips on Making Twelfth Step Calls,” stating, “When a Twelfth Step call is received, we begin with the assumption that another human being’s life is at stake, literally. This means that, without delay, this call is to be answered at once.” Some other suggestions were also offered: When making a Twelfth Step call, arrange for another A.A. member to accompany you. Maintain anonymity. Congratulate the prospect on wanting to do something about his or her drinking problem. Provide some A.A. literature. Tell what you used to be like, what happened, and what you are like now.

Whether the communication with a new prospect takes place in person, over a cell phone or on the Internet, the art of twelfth stepping remains the same. As stated in A.A.’s Tradition Five, “The unique ability of each A.A. to identify himself with, and bring recovery to, the newcomer in no way depends upon his learning, his eloquence, or any special individual skills. The only thing that matters is that he is an alcoholic who has found a key to sobriety.”

■ New G.S.O. Staff Assignments

Change is something alcoholics often have a difficult time with, yet those of us in A.A. have a special opportunity to get acquainted with change, as recovery brings what appears to be a never-ending stream of it. And it’s no different at G.S.O., especially when it comes to announcing the new staff rotation, as we did in last month’s issue.

Well, it has changed! Time stands still for no one, as the age-old adage extols, and almost as soon as the staff rotation was announced, it was already out of date. So, here are the most current changes, effective October 2009, starting with the two newest G.S.O. staff members who began work early in the Fall.

Jim M., of New York, will be handling the Corrections assignment and Mary C., of Ohio, will be taking over the Cooperation With the Professional Community assignment. Professionally, Jim and Mary both have teaching backgrounds. Jim’s past A.A. service includes serving as P.I. chair for Area 48, New York, Hudson/Mohawk/

Berkshire, and Mary is a past delegate, Panel 56 from Area 56, Southwest Ohio. There will be more about Jim and Mary in a future *Box 4-5-9* article.

In other changes, Valerie O’N. has moved out of the staff rotation to become Publications Director. Warren S. has stepped into the International assignment in Valerie’s stead and Mary Clare L. has moved over to the Public Information desk.

■ LIM Around The Kitchen Table

Wherever A.A.s meet—in a community center, church basement, or hospital—they share past trials with alcohol and the freedom they have since found in A.A.’s program of recovery. The purpose of A.A. group meetings, as our Preamble states, is for A.A.s to “share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.” Indeed, like Bill W. sitting across from Ebby in the kitchen at Clinton Street, some drunks also find that one-on-one sharing with other alcoholics from across their own kitchen tables is as powerful and helpful as what they hear during their regular A.A. meeting.

Ever since A.A.’s early days, however, some isolated alcoholics have not had the benefit of face-to-face meetings, nor could they enjoy, on meeting nights, the conviviality, handshakes, and warm embraces of fellow A.A.s. Instead, these men and women relied upon the fellowship and understanding of A.A.s present in spirit, not in flesh, and who arrived at the meeting in an envelope, not an automobile. Alcoholics of this description—Loners, Homers, and Internationalists—have been members of A.A. since its pioneering days. These A.A.s receive the *Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM)*, a confidential bimonthly bulletin sent to participants. Some A.A. members participate in *LIM* for only a short time, others for longer, but the idea behind participation is exactly the same as it was when the first *LIM* bulletin, originally printed sixty years ago as the *Internationalists Round Robin*, was mailed to a small band of Internationalists (seagoing A.A.s) determined to stay sober no matter how isolated they were. *LIM* began through the efforts of Captain Jack S., a sailor who found sobriety in A.A. and understood that to maintain sobriety he needed to reach out to other members through correspondence. He had few contacts ashore, and wrote that he had “to rely on the Book and the guy upstairs.” At the suggestion of a G.S.O. staff member, plans began to take shape to start an Internationalist meeting-by-mail. Sixty years later, A.A.s in isolated places continue to participate and to hear the message of Alcoholics Anonymous through *LIM*. A.A. members participating in *LIM* share experience, strength, and hope via correspondence. Most *LIM* members com-

municate with each other via regular mail, although a few do utilize e-mail.

Irene R., one of the many A.A. members who benefitted from *LIM*, related how, in 1969, she had had enough of drinking and showed up at a meeting in California. At the time, she remembers, the men there gave newcomers “willingness tests.” They decided that she was too young and told her to go away—she had no chance of staying sober. Besides, she was female. She stuck around anyway, but they wouldn’t let her share for a year. She relates, “I stayed because I did not want to drink anymore, and I kept coming back because I heard they had these ‘steps’ and I really wanted to go through those ‘steps,’ whatever they were.” She succeeded in staying dry, and began to work the A.A. program of recovery in earnest. After about fifteen years of sobriety, Irene’s work as a cultural anthropologist took her to Alaska. She lived “out in the brush, isolated from all contact with the outside world.” She remembers: “The people I was working with had a narrow vocabulary, so there were no words to describe many of the A.A. concepts. The best I could do was share that ‘I do not drink anymore.’” Irene learned about *LIM* and became a member, eventually writing to several A.A.s. She would wait until the mail plane had dropped letters from each of her correspondents, and then arrange the letters around her kitchen table. One at a time, she would open each letter and read, letting all the members “share” at the meeting around her kitchen table. Staying sober wasn’t easy in those circumstances, Irene acknowledges, but communication between other *LIM* members played an essential part in keeping her connected to Alcoholics Anonymous.

As Bill W. noted, “From the beginning, communication in A.A. has been no ordinary transmission of helpful ideas and attitudes. Because of our kinship in suffering, and because our common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves only when constantly carried to others, our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart.” (*A.A. Today*, p. 8) Despite the many ways alcoholics have found to meet and carry A.A.’s message—in person, online, or by hand-written letter—communication remains at the root of A.A. However, as Irene R. can attest, a little imagination and inventiveness can certainly help communication along—even when there is only one alcoholic sitting at the kitchen table.

■ Anonymity and Social Networking Sites

In today’s fast-paced, high-tech world, A.A. members are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers and in ways that couldn’t have been imagined even ten years ago. Chatting online with members halfway around the globe has become more and more commonplace, and a tremendous amount of information about alcoholism and A.A. is often just a click of the mouse away. However,

with the breadth and scope of the Internet have come challenges, and protecting A.A.’s Traditions online is an important subject to many in the Fellowship.

As with many topics of concern throughout A.A., G.S.O. has developed a set of A.A. Guidelines on the Internet (MG-18) based on the shared experience of A.A. members, groups and committees, covering many of the questions this new technology gives rise to. One such area of concern is the question of anonymity online, particularly as it relates to social networking Web sites, a question which has prompted a more careful look at A.A.’s existing literature and how A.A.’s Traditions can best apply to this popular medium.

“What is the purpose of anonymity in Alcoholics Anonymous?” and “Why is it often referred to as the greatest single protection the Fellowship has to assure its continued existence and growth?”

These questions from the A.A. General Service Conference-approved pamphlet, “Understanding Anonymity,” lie at the heart of any discussion about A.A.’s Tradition of Anonymity, whether the discussion centers on a newspaper article or an Internet Web site featuring full names or full-face pictures of A.A. members.

“If we look at the history of A.A., from its beginning in 1935 until now,” the pamphlet continues, “it is clear that anonymity serves two different yet equally vital functions:

“At the personal level, anonymity provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers.

“At the level of press, radio, TV, films and new media technologies such as the Internet, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain.”

Regarding the specific question, “What about anonymity online?” the A.A. Guidelines on the Internet state: “An A.A. Web site is a public medium, which has the potential for reaching the broadest possible audience and, therefore, requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio, and film.”

Nevertheless, G.S.O. has received numerous communications from concerned A.A. members regarding anonymity breaks online, inappropriate use of the A.A. name, and copyrighted/trademarked materials being improperly used on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and others. These Web sites offer individuals the chance to post a great deal of personal information about themselves (and others), and these Web sites often allow users to create social networking “groups” and “events” for like-minded individuals.

Some members do not post anything that is reflective of A.A. in their personal profiles or “status updates,” while others feel it is alright to do so, so long as A.A. is not specifically mentioned.

Says one A.A. member, however, “I typed ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ in one of the social networking sites and a group came up with over 6,600 members. It assured ‘a safe place to discuss’ so I thought it was okay. Then I clicked to see who the members were and the page opened to show me first and last names, many with photos.”

From there, depending on people’s privacy settings, one could easily see personal information about these people, their families and friends. “I was taught the importance of our Traditions,” the concerned A.A. member relates, “and about keeping this Fellowship the way we found it.... This page is not what A.A. is about, in my opinion.”

Some A.A. members feel that social networking sites are a private venue; other members strongly disagree and view them as a public setting. G.S.O.’s A.A. Guidelines on the Internet, state that social networking Web sites “are public in nature.”

After being alerted to an anonymity break G.S.O. normally forwards the matter to the delegate in the area where the member resides, for the delegate to handle as he or she sees fit. (The area delegate usually sends a loving reminder to the member about the importance of our Eleventh Tradition.)

Regarding the Internet, the current method of handling anonymity breaks at the public level doesn’t apply well on social networking Web sites. Given the popularity achieved by the Internet and the vast numbers of people involved, the question of anonymity has become more and more relevant, and as shared experience within the Fellowship accrues on this rapidly evolving medium of communication, greater focus is being brought to what Bill W. described as “the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.”

As with most matters in A.A., regardless of how the Internet and new technology have opened up the kinds of connections one A.A. member and another can share, there is great benefit to be found in careful thought and prudent evaluation of a situation that causes concern for so many. Speaking to A.A. sponsors and friends about how to apply A.A.’s Traditions online hopefully will provide individual members who are utilizing this technology with a greater understanding of how we present ourselves as A.A. members to anyone—be they A.A. member or non-A.A. member—who may “walk” unannounced into the rooms of the Internet’s many social networking sites.

As presented in the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity,” regarding anonymity online, the collective conscience of the A.A. Fellowship, as expressed through its Conference-approved literature, suggest that “Publicly accessible aspects of the Internet such as Web sites featuring text, graphics, audio and video ought to be considered another form of ‘public media.’ Thus, they need to be treated in the same manner as press, radio, TV and films. This means that full names and faces should not be used. However, the level of anonymity in e-mail, online meetings and chat rooms would be a personal decision.”

■ ‘Bridging the Gap’ Reaches Out on the Internet

Just like Bridging the Gap (BTG) committees throughout the U.S. and Canada, the Bridging the Gap Web site, www.BTGWW.org, describes its mission as providing a means for alcoholic clients in a treatment or hospital facility or inmates in a correctional facility to find a local A.A. contact near their place of release to help them make the transition from the facility to regular A.A. meetings.

The process is simple but effective. The Web site has a dropdown box which lists the U.S. states and Canadian provinces where temporary A.A. contacts are available. This list is constantly being updated.

An information form can then be accessed on the Web site and filled out for or by the persons being released. These are then matched with Transition Contacts in the desired area. Special care is taken to protect the anonymity of all persons in this matching process. Once the match is made, the Transition Contacts take responsibility for getting the released persons to meetings and helping them get settled into the A.A. community.

For many years now, BTG committees have been extending the hand of A.A. to alcoholics leaving treatment or jail. Why is this special service needed? The move from a treatment facility or prison to an outside A.A. group is sometimes confusing. The “slippery” places in the journey to sobriety are between the door of the facility and the nearest meeting. Even making the A.A. contact can seem threatening to the person who does not know whom to call. Former prison inmates, for example, must move from a controlled and structured environment to one that requires making choices and avoiding the pitfalls that may lead to drinking. One former prison inmate with 51 years’ sobriety recalls that his first action on leaving the institution was to contact A.A. to continue the successful program he’d found in prison. For this long-time member, people who contact A.A. immediately upon release from prison are more likely to stay sober. The same might be said for alcoholics leaving treatment facilities.

For more information contact the BTG Web site or your local BTG committee.

■ New From G.S.O.

- *Alcoholics Anonymous*, abridged edition in CD format. English, M-81A and 2nd edition Spanish, SM-81A, \$18.00 each.
- Young People Posters. French, FM-7; Spanish, SM-7, \$1.00 each.

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.

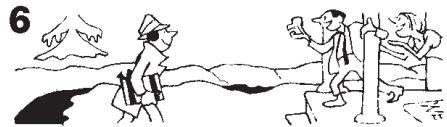


4 *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

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.



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.

box 459 BULLETIN BOARD

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s—Via G.S.O.

Winter 2009

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

- 11-12—*Baton Rouge, Louisiana*. Area 27 Corrections Conf. Write: Ch., 202 Wylie Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808; area27cc@gmail.com
- 31-3—*Eugene, Oregon*. WACYPAA 13. Write: Ch., PM Box 506, Willamette St., Eugene, OR 97401; www.wacypaa13.org

January

- 7-10—*Laughlin, Nevada*. 20th River Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 20326, Bullhead City, AZ 86439-0326
- 8-10—*Dodge City, Kansas*. 40th SW Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 705 W. 8th St., Scott City, KS 67871
- 8-10—*Manitowoc, Wisconsin*. Big Book Study Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 308, Wayzata, MN 55391; www.Into-Action.com
- 14-17—*Raleigh, North Carolina*. 43rd Tar Heel Mid-winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619-8412; ncconference@nc.rr.com
- 15-17—*Mahnomen, Minnesota*. Wild Rice Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomen, MN 56557; www.wildriceroundup.com
- 22-24—*Corpus Christi, Texas*. Coastal Bend Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 61000, Corpus Christi, TX 78466-1000
- 22-24—*Midland, Texas*. 40th Mid-winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2504, Midland, TX 79702; midwinterconf@yahoo.com
- 22-24—*Trujillo, Peru*. 1er Encuentro Nacional de Veteranos. Inf: Pres., 627 Palermo, Trujillo; grupoelcamino@hotmail.com
- 29-31—*Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*. Hilton Head Mid-winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com

February

- 4-7—*Cocoa Beach, Florida*. Space Coast Round-up. Write: Ch., 720 E. New Haven Ave., #3, Melbourne, FL 32901; www.aaspacecoast.org
- 5-7—*Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada*. Mid-winter Round-up. Write: Ch., 929 Route 590, Waterville, Carleton County, NB E7P 1C5
- 11-14—*San Diego, California*. ACYPA. Write: Ch., Box 1823, Carlsbad, CA 92018; www.acypaa2010.org
- 12-14—*North Little Rock, Arkansas*. 28th Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Ch., Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72221-6135
- 12-14—*Syracuse, New York*. Salt City Mid-Winter Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 367, Syracuse, NY 13209; www.saltcityroundup.com

12-14—*Ligonier, Pennsylvania*. Ligonier Midwinter Spiritual Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 25, Blairsville, PA 15717; l.m.s.r@hughes.net

12-14—*Virginia Beach, Virginia*. 34th Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 66173, Virginia Beach, VA 23466-6173

12-14—*Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada*. Heritage Conv. Write: Ch., 172A Ottawa Ave., Elliot Lake, ON P5A 2N7

13-14—*Trivandrum, Kerala, India*. Fifth International Conv. Write: Ch., TC No 50/733, Karamana P.O., Kalady, Trivandrum-696 002, Kerala, India; atrivandrum@yahoo.com

26-28—*Gulf Shores, Alabama*. 26th Jubilee Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536; jubilee@gulfcoastaa.org

26-28—*Niagara Falls, New York*. NERAASA. Write: Ch., Box 2035, Niagara Falls, NY 14301; www.neraasa.org

March

5-7—*Los Angeles, California*. PRAASA. Write: Ch., Box 2126, Upland, CA 91785; www.praasa.org

5-7—*Indianapolis, Indiana*. 57th Indiana State Conv. Write: Ch., 35 Palimino Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077; indianastateconvention@yahoo.com

11-14—*Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*. 63rd SC State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 7393, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572

12-14—*Albany, Georgia*. Flint River Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 7461, Bainbridge, GA 39818; www.flintriverroundup.org

12-14—*Nagoya, Japan*. 35th Celebration. Write: 4-17-10-4F Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo, 171-0014 Japan; gsoj-int@ric.hi.ho.ne.jp

26-28—*Brawley, California*. 20th Imperial Valley Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92244; www.area8aa.org

26-28—*Fruitland Park, Florida*. Beyond Sobriety Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 493244, Leesburg, FL 34749

26-28—*Cherry Hill, New Jersey*. 46th Southern NJ Area 45 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 292, Sicklerville, NJ 08081; www.snjaaconvention.org

26-28—*Tarrytown, New York*. 43rd SENY Area 49 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 610093, Flushing, NY 11361; www.aaseny.org

26-28—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. Area 60 Getaway Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 353, Warren, PA 16365; www.wpaarea60.org

26-28—*Caguas, Puerto Rico*. Conv. de Area 77. Inf: Com. Org., Box 35, Caguas, PR 00726-0035; despertar@aa-pr.org

April

17-18—*Shawinigan, Quebec, Canada*. 41^e Congrès, District 89-02. Ecrire: Prés., 3192 Place Garnier, Apt. 2, Shawinigan, QC G9N 6R5.

23-25—*Concan, Texas*. 9th Spiritual Unity on the Frio Conf. Write: Ch., Box 528, Utopia, TX 78884

30-2—*Longueuil, Québec, Canada*. 28th Congrès Longueuil Rive-Sud. Ecrire: Prés., CP 21061 Stn Jacques-Cartier R-S, Longueuil, QC J4J 5J4

May

14-16—*Port Angeles, Washington*. Olympic Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 1081, Port Angeles, WA 98362-0204; www.olympicroundup.com

14-16—*Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Western Canada Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, NY, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

21-23—*Rehoboth Beach, Delaware*. 50th DE State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 830, Clayton, DE 19938; www.delawareaa.org

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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J. C. Ich H. Tara Bang Garrett
J. M. Sophia S. Michelle Min
Eva G. S. G. * Noela
A. Rivera Robert Shattock Jennifer
J. Alleyne Dalee Di Suria Doug R.
J. Storybook I. Randolph Alford Sor
W. Kickit's Joe Dennan Jim
Nigdalia Ingista May Lee Jim
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