



AA EXCHANGE BULLETIN

NEWS AND NOTES ON ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLDWIDE

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TWO FALL 'GRATITUDE WEEKS' PLANNED

British A.A.'s First Convention Is 'Great Success'

The first annual Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain, held at Cheltenham in May, was "a very great success," judging from a number of informal reports received at General Service Headquarters in recent weeks.

The meeting was particularly helpful to representatives of groups located at a distance from London, according to one observer, "for they were able to see A.A. as a whole for the first time. For myself, I found it most moving to be with some 80 people, all of whom I knew instinctively to be trusted friends. We were particularly lucky in our chairman, Bill H., who actually kept us ahead of our time schedule, and our secretary, Padge, who carried the burden of organization."

Another correspondent writes: "I shall never forget our first Convention. There were many inspiring speeches, talks and get-togethers over the weekend."

Also illustrating the growth of A.A. in England is the news from Rae D. (Marple, Chesire) of the formation of a North West of England Intergroup to serve the interest of six local groups.

REPORTS

A limited number of copies of the 1956 Final Report of the General Service Conference are available to groups, through their General Service Representatives, at \$1.00 per copy, by writing to General Service Headquarters.

Headquarters Briefs

EXTRA COPIES AVAILABLE

A number of groups and individuals have asked if they can obtain extra copies of this "Exchange Bulletin." The answer is yes. The monthly "Bulletin" is available at ten cents per copy or \$1.00 for a year's subscription. *All orders must be accompanied by payment*, otherwise bookkeeping costs would make this service totally impractical. Anyone interested in the A.A. program may purchase copies.

MAILING INFORMATION

Occasionally, the Treasurer of a new group will be puzzled about where to send contributions for A.A.'s world services—how checks should be made out—and how much to send. Traditionally, the groups are invited to contribute \$2. per member per year, although it is recognized not all groups can participate. Checks should be made payable to "Group Fund". And the address is General Service Board, P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

Brussels Group Stronger Now

The "quality" of the membership of the Brussels, Belgium, group has improved substantially during the past year although total membership has not increased, Jean L., secretary, points out in a note to G.S.H. "We now have a hard core of members who attend meetings regularly and who are not only enthusiastic about Twelfth Step but who have had a reasonable degree of success with it," Jean reports.

One of the notable developments during the group's first year was the gradual recognition, "after a fair share of false starts and misdirected efforts," that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions do not require change to fit local conditions. "In arriving at this conclusion, we have achieved a strong degree of unity."

4th 'Round-Up' September 1-3

The fourth annual A.A. Round Up at Wiesbaden, Germany is scheduled for the Labor Day weekend (September 1-3), Suzanne S. writes from the Western sector of Berlin.

While it is expected that nearly all who attend will be Americans who are stationed with the armed forces in Germany, a sprinkling of Germans and visitors from other European nations this side of the Iron Curtain may attend.

The 12th Annual Southeastern Regional Conference of A. A. is scheduled for August 23-25 at Biloxi, Mississippi.

The Artic Igloo Group, Juneau, Alaska, still has only four members but John F. reports continued optimism that others who need the program will be attracted to it on a stable basis.

Coincide With U. S. & Canadian Thanksgivings

Groups in Canada will be invited to celebrate "A.A. Gratitude Week" six weeks earlier than their American counterparts when the annual Fall appeal for support of A.A.'s worldwide services is distributed later this year.

The varying dates for the event stem from the fact that Canadians and Americans celebrate Thanksgiving Day at different times, Canadians in early October and Americans the fourth Thursday in November.

The Sixth General Service Conference last April, in its resolution asking Headquarters to develop the "A.A. Gratitude Week" concept, merely specified that the idea be linked to Thanksgiving Week and did not differentiate between the two possible dates.

Thus the basic A.A. Tradition of local autonomy will again be invoked to resolve a friendly difference within the Fellowship. Overseas groups will be asked to observe the November date, unless some compelling local consideration suggests the desirability of choosing another period for "Gratitude Week."

NEW GROUPS

Forty-nine new groups, including eight overseas, were registered at G.S.H. during the period from June 15 to July 12, 1956. During the same period six new lone members on four continents were registered at Headquarters.

INTERFAITH PANEL AGREES ALCOHOLISM IS AN ILLNESS

Recognition that alcoholism is an illness is one of the significant elements in a recent statement issued by clergymen and laymen of eight different religious groups from the three major faiths in the United States.

The statement was issued following the Second North Conway (New Hampshire) Institute which, at a four-day session late in June, considered various aspects of the subject: "What Can the Church Teach Young People About Drinking?" Nearly a dozen panel sessions were held. A typical session in-

cluded as participants a Roman Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, an Episcopal dean and an executive of the Methodist Board of Temperance.

"Through this study we have found that it is possible for all of us to work together very effectively in the many areas in which we agree and because of our agreement to speak to the world with united voices," the statement declares. A.A. is not mentioned in the statement but many who participated in the Institute are known to be familiar with the A.A. recovery program.

Program Gains In N. S. W. Jail

The Glen Inness Prison Group, New South Wales, has grown to 25 members although local authorities to date have not permitted monthly meetings, according to news received at G. S. H. Three monthly visits to members are allowed and members may correspond, up to one page per week, with groups at other prisons and "farms."

Four members have been released thus far, of whom three are known to be on the program "and to have changed their way of living." The group is interested in receiving A.A. publications published by other inmate groups. Groups having such material available for distribution are invited to obtain the address of the N.S.W. group from Headquarters.

B. C. Bulletin Features Sponsorship

"The Lifeline," published monthly by the Central Committee Office of A.A. in Vancouver, British Columbia, recently devoted nearly an entire issue to the crucial subject of sponsorship. The editor's introduction to the subject points out:

"Sponsorship has grown out of an A.A. need. The new man, sick, lonely, unhappy, disillusioned as participants a Roman Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, an Episcopal dean and an executive of the Methodist Board of Temperance.

Judge & Priest Give Key Talks

The Hon. George H. Boldt, U. S. District Judge of Tacoma, Washington, and Father James B. McGoldrick, S. J., of Seattle University, were featured speakers at the eighth anniversary program of the Retriever Group at the U. S. Penitentiary, McNeil Island, Washington, early in June. An innovation was a talk by Kenny P., the first ex-inmate member to be permitted to address the group as a principal speaker.

An attractive 12-page program, featuring historical and inspirational material was prepared for the anniversary. More than 100 persons attended the seven-hour celebration and many more could have been invited if available facilities had been larger, Ted G., secretary, writes.

ioned member, needs the friendship, help and guidance of the older A.A. member: the older needs to work with the new man to contribute to his own contented sobriety.

"Thus each, the new man and the older man, are enjoying an experience that embraces the highest ideals of love and service. For each is giving and each is receiving and each is benefitting from the other."

Feel Depressed? Here's Antidote For Self-Pity

NEW GROUP

Hickory Grove San.
West DePere, Wis.

Is there a member in your group who may be feeling sorry for himself these days? Perhaps he'd like to read the following, received recently from a member in Poplar Bluff, Missouri:

"I enclose a check... Believe it or not, it will cash, though it looks like I was loaded when I wrote it.

"I was in a bit of an accident some 15 months ago, getting both legs broken and the right side of my body paralyzed. But, what the h---, I'm still alive! One day I'll be able to write left-handed, so you can read it. I'm gradually improving.

"Come to think of it, I could never write worth a damn right-handed, either.

"Shore is a purty day. You folks are doing a wonderful if sometimes unappreciated job. Many thanks."

NOT ISOLATED

Despite the relatively isolated location of the State Sanatorium Group at Wallum Lake, Rhode Island, "25 miles from Providence and everything else resembling civilization," the group is getting good speakers every Wednesday night, Ed B., secretary reports.

Speakers come "from all over New England, with an occasional 'foreigner' from New York and other parts of the hinterland," Ed notes.

PRISON GROUP

Formation of the Alpha Group at North Carolina Women's Prison, near Raleigh, has just been announced. The group results from the work undertaken by Mrs. McCubbin, new superintendent at the institution, and by representatives of the N. C. Alcoholic Rehabilitation Program, working with local A.A. members.

100 Help Mark New Hope Unit's 6th Anniversary

NEW GROUPS

T. I. Camels Group
Federal Correct. Inst.
San Pedro, Calif.
Oak Glen Honor Camp
Yucaipa, California
Camp Washington (Men)
Cincinnati Workhouse
Cincinnati, Ohio
Right Way to Life
(Women)
Cincinnati Workhouse
Cincinnati, Ohio
Alpha Group
Women's State Prison
Raleigh, N. C.

More than 100 outside guests from Canada, Seattle, Everett, Mt. Vernon and nearby communities attended the recent sixth anniversary meeting of the New Hope Group at Washington State Prison, Monroe, Washington, according to Elwood P., secretary.

Non-alcoholic inmates provided entertainment and "really did a magnificent job," Elwood notes. "We were afraid that what was said at the meeting might get into the cell house and cause some of the members embarrassment. This of course did not happen. Much to our surprise, two of the entertainers asked to be admitted to the group."

The group is making another effort to publish its own bulletin, paying all costs itself even though the institutional authorities have offered to help. "We feel it is better if we stick as closely as possible to the traditions," one of the members comments.

SOBER 'INJUNS'

Thirty-six American Indians are maintaining their sobriety today because of one man's experience in Arizona State Prison.

That's the dramatic story that reached G.S.H. recently in connection with a request that a number of A.A. wallet cards be sent to a former inmate now living in Mesa, Arizona, who recently organized the Lehi Indian Group.

Round-Up of Group Experience

Typical Queries Noted by GSH

Q. Is Service Headquarters interested in distributing a pamphlet, written by a member, on the general subject of A.A. and Christianity?

A. Headquarters staff people are, of course, interested in seeing all types of material dealing with A.A. However, since the fellowship is completely non-sectarian, non-denominational, and open to all comers, including non-Christians, literature of this type obviously would be inappropriate for Headquarters distribution.

\$1 A WEEK

Q. Our group of six members, augmented by meeting visitors from nearby groups, would like to contribute \$1 a week to support A.A.'s service program. Are any similar-size groups contributing on this basis?

A. There are so many group contributions formulae in use that it is entirely possible your plan may be functioning in other groups of your size.

NO SPOKESMEN

What should local A.A.'s do when a community "crusader against alcoholism" publicly claims support of the groups in a campaign to get legislative action?

The problem arose in Tacoma, Washington, recently, and was handled with tact and firmness by the A.A. State Committeeman for the area. After the local groups had been reported to be behind a local business woman's drive to get state funds for an "alcoholic" hospital, Ed M. wrote to the lady. He pointed out that while many members supported her campaign as individuals, no one could speak for A.A. on such subjects, "not even our co-founder." Ed quoted the Sixth and Tenth Traditions to support A.A.'s position and suggested that a "correcting statement" would be appreciated by Tacoma members.

ANNIVERSARIES

10 YEARS
New Glasgow Group
Nova Scotia
July 22
15 YEARS
Racine, Wisconsin
June 15

Q. Enclosed is our check for \$25 as our group's Spring contribution. Of this, \$18 was collected through individual Birthday Plans and \$7 represents our contribution from the collection at the group's ninth anniversary meeting. Are we the first to come up with a group Birthday Plan?

A. A number of groups have sent in special collections at anniversary meetings but yours seem to be the first reference to this method as a "group Birthday Plan."

SIGNS

Q. Why shouldn't A.A. provide highway signs that could be posted near the approaches to communities in which A.A. is represented, just as service and luncheon clubs do?

A. Since there are not many sizeable communities in the U. S. and Canada where A.A. is not known (or listed in the 'phone book), a venture of this type might well be construed as promotion. Also, any travelling member can obtain information on the location of A.A. groups in the annual Directory, available through his local group.

BULLETINS

Q. I am having trouble with my group. Many members do not want me to read bulletins at meetings; they want them posted on a bulletin board. What should I do?

A. This is certainly a matter to be decided by the group itself. As a suggestion, you might compromise by reading the obviously important messages—and let your members know that you are posting all messages if they care to read them themselves.

CORRECTIONS

AURORA, ILL.—\$20 credited to Aurora Group should have been credited to Wednesday Night Home Group, Aurora.
DURANGO, COL.—\$50 (not \$15) should have been credited.

Variety of Topics Are Highlighted

Does A.A. have a prepared "preamble" for use in opening meetings or discussions at an "outside" gathering?

Although there is no set procedure, the description of A.A. originally developed for use in "The A. A. Grapevine" is used to open many group meetings and might be considered equally useful at "outside" meetings:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A. A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

LITERATURE

Q. Should we charge for A. A. literature made available at group meetings?

A. The general practice seems to be to make pamphlet literature available without charge to newcomers in nearly all cases. Many groups feel the "older" member should pay for literature he uses himself; if he needs material for Twelfth Step calls, the latter may be supplied by the group. Groups help "finance" the cost of the Big Book in many areas, when this may be necessary to help a newcomer.

The Clinical Director at Marcy (N.Y.) State Hospital was "much pleased with the helpfulness" of A.A. in starting Wednesday night meetings at the Hospital recently, the Rev. Luther Ballou, Protestant Chaplain, reports.

Birthday Plan Sponsor Passes; Former Delegate

Individuals and groups who have followed the recent growth of the "A.A. Birthday Plan" idea will be saddened to learn that Ab A. of Tulsa, Oklahoma, generally regarded as the father of the plan, passed away recently, following a serious illness.

Service Headquarters has already received several "memorial" contributions in tribute to the cheerful work of the former Conference Delegate from Oklahoma who made it his personal hobby to devise a practical means of assuring continuance of A.A.'s worldwide services.

From the Oklahoma City Intergroup came this message: "We all feel there could be no nicer way to leave 'footprints in the sands of time' than Ab's in his tireless work on the Birthday Plan, and enclose check for \$110."

From an individual member in Tulsa came a \$10. contribution "in memory of a wonderful A. A."

Another type of "Birthday" contribution was received from Leon H. of Menlo Park, California, marking ten years of sobriety. Making his contribution "retroactive," Leon figured that if the Birthday Plan had been in effect during all his years of sobriety he would have contributed a total of \$55.—and sent in a check for that amount.

Under the Plan, a member contributes a dollar for each year of sobriety each year on his anniversary, up to a maximum of \$10.

The Centerline Van Dyke (Michigan) Group takes no chances on its A.A. Handbook & Directory not becoming well known to members. Here's what is inscribed on the cover of the 1956 edition:

"This book is the property of all the members of the Centerline Van Dyke Group. No one member should even unintentionally be the cause of this information being withheld from any member of the group."

'CARRYING THE MESSAGE,' FINDS IT BEAT HIM HOME

A. A. In Iceland Well Established, Airman Reports

Clark G., a Loner with the U. S. armed forces at Keflavik Airport, Iceland, says that A.A. "is here to stay in this country," following his first visit to a meeting in Reykjavik where he had an opportunity to talk to a number of local members.

The meeting itself was conducted in Icelandic but a translator helped Clark two ways: while group members were speaking and when Clark himself spoke briefly to the group. Clark reports "some progress" in setting up a group at his base.

NEEDED HELP

"Must admit that I could have used another member's help, along with that of the Man top-side, on a recent weekend," Doc B. writes from Taiwan, where he is stationed as a U. S. serviceman. "However, a little reading and thought, not to forget a prayer or two, pulled me through a period that I'd rather forget. When I say that *we* beat it, I use the plural because much of my help came from thoughts of you and the many others in our groups who have been so willing to give what help there might be to another member."

Usually, "Loners" wind up by joining a group. In Los Angeles, however, a group has joined a loner. Ten members recently visited Bob W., who is confined to his home and unable to attend group meetings. The session was a "huge success;" at its conclusion, to mark Bob's ten years' sobriety, the visitors took up a special collection which was forwarded to G.S.H. for worldwide Twelfth Step work.

Sergeant Roy H., a Loner in Rabat, Morocco, thinks that he and a fellow serviceman who was familiar with the A.A. program in the States may be able to start a small group on their U. S. A. F. base.

Pat S., a Norwegian who found A.A. in Florida, is a man with a special personal mission these days. He has asked G.S.H. for the names of A.A. contacts in his homeland so that he can help to keep his fellow-countrymen in touch with A.A. in this country. "I hope that it may help them; I know that it will help *me*," Pat writes.

When Pat's sister, who lives

in New York, wrote to their family in Norway to tell them of Pat's sobriety, several members of the family replied immediately that they were familiar with A.A. from having heard broadcasts on the government-controlled radio. They were already trying to live the A.A. "way of life," they said, *even though none of them had a drinking problem!*

Capetown Group Backs Services

Ever hear of the Rondebosch Group in Capetown, South Africa? Staff members at G.S.H. believe members throughout the world will be as thrilled as they were recently when a draft for \$110. was received from the group.

Secretary Terry E. wrote in the note accompanying the contribution: We feel so indebted to you all for the wonderful work you do which makes it so much easier for us and, indeed, for all groups to carry this message."

TRANSLATION

Overseas interest in the new Conference-approved pamphlet, "Is A.A. for You?," is reflected in a report from Puerto Rico where the introductory folder has recently been translated into Spanish and mimeographed for general distribution, with the approval of Service Headquarters.

The first edition of 50,000 copies of the questionnaire is nearly exhausted and a new edition, on heavier paper, is now on the press.

English-speaking A.A. members in Ponce, Puerto Rico, now have their own weekly meetings in the local McKinley School.

BULLETIN EDITORS

Ann....Conference, Groups,
Loners
Eve.....Group Relations
Hazel...Hospital & Prison
Groups, Loners
Anita....Group Relations
Ass't.
LibInformation

Lisbon Doctor Helps Organize Unit In Portugal

The role of A.A. Internationalists (seamen) in planting A. A. seeds throughout the world is illustrated in a recent report from George O. who tells of his efforts and those of a local doctor to organize a group in Lisbon, Portugal.

Plans were made to insert a paid notice of a meeting in the *Anglo-Portugese News* and a small hotel room was reserved. Two copies of the Big Book and a supply of pamphlet literature had been given to the doctor by George, who was scheduled to be one of key speakers explaining the A.A. program.

"Dr. Mesta is doing everything he can to help start the group," George writes, adding that when the doctor goes on vacation his assistant will take over.

FROM ALASKA

Bill H., radio man on the US NS "Mission Santa Ynez," is in his first few months of sobriety. Here's an excerpt from a recent letter:

"I mentioned that I would not tell the rest of the ship's personnel about being a member, that I was afraid of the taunts, etc. Well, I no longer care if they know or not. But I am getting a big kick out of them saying, "Where in the H--- do you go until two in the morning and come back sober?" I just grin. I feel strong enough to take anything they can throw at me but I just get a big bang out of keeping them worried. In Anchorage, Alaska, a couple of the fellows were following to see where I was going. Well, the Club is on the second floor of a building, no name on the door. So I dove up the steps, into the Club rooms and just disappeared. They are all just about to die of curiosity."

First Things First

Growth Is Rapid In New Zealand

Groups in New Zealand are continuing to grow pretty fast, "according to David D., Wellington. "We have our growing pains, but we get over them." Dave reports that his wife and three other ladies have formed the first Al-Anon Family Group in Wellington.

Nick G., chairman of the North Star Group, Fairbanks, Alaska, holds what is believed to be a special distinction in our normally distinction-less fellowship: He seems to be the first Eskimo A.A. member!

The group in Moree, New South Wales, Australia, has grown to 28 members, "with eleven who are reserving the right to qualify further," Jack M. writes. Jack was scheduled to attend the annual conference of group delegates at Sydney in mid-July.

New Mirror? No, New Man!

Bill S. writes from aboard the S. S. Tullahoma:

"This A.A. program more than just works; it seems to perform miracles, especially when this fat boy looks in the mirror. I am not so afraid to look in one any more, either. I now know that it will be me who stares back. Although that's no great shakes, it sure beats that article I used to see almost four years ago."