

■ When is Breaking Your Anonymity Not an Anonymity Break?

While much has been written in A.A. literature about anonymity, including in a General Service Conference-approved pamphlet called “Understanding Anonymity,” communications coming into the General Service Office from members of the Fellowship suggest that there remains a great deal of *misunderstanding* about this “spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.” What follows are just a few examples of the types of inquiries that arrive through phone calls, e-mails and letters, and some of the responses from A.A. literature.

Q. “We have a member who moved here from somewhere else and he is using his last name in meetings. What should we say to this person who is breaking the Tradition of anonymity?”

A. A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote in *The Language of the Heart* (p. 15) that “It should be the privilege of each individual A.A. to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow A.A.s should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.” It is thus up to each individual to decide how anonymous he or she wishes to be, at any level below that of the public level. Giving your last name in an A.A. meeting is not “breaking” A.A.’s Tradition of anonymity.

In fact, the author of an article in the February 1969 Grapevine magazine attributed the following to A.A.’s other co-founder, Dr. Bob, regarding personal anonymity and the Eleventh Tradition:

“Since our Tradition on anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English language that to maintain anonymity at any other level is definitely a violation of this Tradition.

“The A.A. who hides his identity from his fellow A.A. by using only a given name violates the Tradition just as much as the A.A. who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matters pertaining to A.A.

“The former is maintaining his anonymity *above* the level of press, radio, and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity *below* the level of press, radio and films — whereas the Tradition states that we should maintain our anonymity *at* the level of press, radio, and films.” (*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, pp. 264-65)

Q. “What if I see public figures at a meeting, such as an actor or actress, or the local chief of police?”

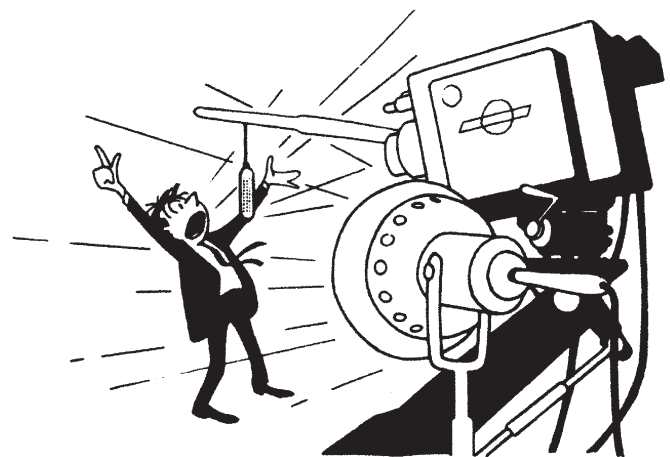
A. “Like everyone else, public figures should have the protection of anonymity to the extent that they desire it.” (“Understanding Anonymity,” p. 9)

Q. “I saw an ad in the paper for an A.A. group. It told where the group was meeting and everything. Shouldn’t you contact that group about breaking their anonymity at the public level?”

A. “Suppose a sick alcoholic never has the good fortune to meet an A.A. How is such a person going to find us? The search will be difficult if the local group thinks *it* should be anonymous, too. The (Eleventh) Tradition is talking about ‘*personal* anonymity,’ remember? Alcoholics will not be attracted to A.A. if they don’t know that it exists...” (“The Twelve Traditions Illustrated”)

Q. “I’m not ashamed of my alcoholism and don’t feel any need to keep my A.A. membership a secret. In fact, I think that my story will be able to help lots of others. I think that I should be able to use my full name in my book (or television interview, blog, Web site, etc.) when I share my A.A. experience. Why should anyone else have a problem with that?”

A. Disclosing your A.A. membership at the public level, in any publicly accessible medium, is considered a break of the A.A. Tradition of Anonymity. Bill W. wrote, in an article in *The Best of the Grapevine*, Volume 1, p. 278, “The old files at A.A. Headquarters reveal many scores of...experiences with broken anonymity. Most of them point up the same lessons. They tell us that we alcoholics



— “Twelve Traditions Illustrated”

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are the biggest rationalizers in the world; that fortified with the excuse we are doing great things for A.A. we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money — the same implacable urges that when frustrated once caused us to drink... ”

Q. “Why do we say that ‘anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our Traditions?’”

A. “...anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity.” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 187)

■ New from Grapevine



This collection of Grapevine stories, written by A.A. members who got sober in their teens, 20s and 30s, present the joys and challenges of getting sober at an early age. Soft cover GV27; \$10.99; e-book, \$9.99 – available for Apple, Kindle and Nook devices.

Other Grapevine titles now available on e-book (Apple, Kindle and Nook): *The Language of the Heart*; *The Best of Bill*; *Emotional Sobriety*, Vols I and II; *Step By Step*; *Spiritual Awakenings*, Vols. I and II. \$9.99 each except for *The Best of Bill*, \$3.99. Order online at aagrapevine.org

■ Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2013

Three new Class B (alcoholics) trustees, regionals from East Central and Southeast, as well as the trustee-at-large/U.S., will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2013. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2013, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new Southeast regional trustee will succeed El N., of Walhalla, South Carolina; the new East Central regional will follow Pam R., of Beverly Hills, Michigan. The next trustee-at-large/U.S. will replace Don M., of Metairie, Louisiana.

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

■ Central Office/ Intergroup Seminar

Washington, D.C. will be the site of the 27th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, September 28-30, 2012. Hosted by the Washington Area Intergroup Association, the event will be held at Doubletree Hotel & Executive Meeting Center in Bethesda, Maryland. This year's theme is “Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age.”

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, representatives from G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs, and from the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards.

Please make your reservations, at special Seminar rates, by September 25, by calling 1-800-955-7359, or online at www.doubletreebethesda.com.

Registration fee is \$25.00. For any questions, or for a Seminar registration/questionnaire, contact Tom E., office administrator, (202) 966-9783; www.aa-dc.org.

■ Regional Forums

There are two remaining Regional Forums in 2012. Check www.aa.org for information and online registration.

- Sept. 14-16, Pacific, Westmark Hotel Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska.
- Nov. 9-11, Southeast, Marriot Boca Raton, Boca Raton, Florida.

■ ‘The A.A. Group... Where it All Begins’

As A.A. Tradition (the long form of the Tradition Three) would have it, “Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.” However, as A.A. *members* would have it, group life requires so much more than themselves and two or three other warm bodies. Thus, the Conference-approved pamphlet “The A.A. Group...Where it all Begins” has 41 pages of shared experience, not counting the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions (short and long form) and Twelve Concepts.

Secret Pamphlet?

While “The A.A. Group” has been around since 1965 (and went through a major revision as a result of actions taken by the General Service Conference in 1990 and 2005), phone calls and e-mails received at the General Service Office from group members suggest that many A.A. groups remain unaware of the riches found between the covers of this one pamphlet. As one G.S.O. staff member put it, “It is probably the single most quoted resource at G.S.O. in terms of shared A.A. experience, yet sometimes you would think that it was a secret publication.”

So how *do* you go about starting a new A.A. group? If you are reading this *Box 4-5-9* issue, chances are you are already in an established group. But the time may come when you look around and decide that another group may serve you're A.A. community well. You may have heard the saying around A.A. that all you need to start a new group is a coffee pot and a resentment. According to information on page 17 of “The A.A. Group,” there is no resentment required, although you may wish to acquire a coffeepot. More importantly, though, is to establish that there is a need for a new group in your neighborhood; get the cooperation of other A.A. members; find a space to rent for a meeting; and acquire some A.A. literature, meeting lists and other supplies.

Once the group is off to a good start (say at least two or three months), then it is helpful to announce its presence to neighboring groups, to your local inter-group/central office (or whoever puts together the meeting lists), and to your General Service Office. Announcing the group to your General Service Office usually involves filling out the Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form, which can be downloaded from G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site (www.aa.org), or may be requested by mail: G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY, 10163.

According to Susan Donnor, nonalcoholic, G.S.O.'s senior member records

administrator, the General Service Office may receive as many as 50 or 60 New Group Forms per day. While the large majority of these new group announcements are able to be processed by the “long-timers” in G.S.O.'s Records Department without a hitch, a small percentage, says Susan, are forwarded for follow-up by a G.S.O. staff member.

Problems With New Group Forms

Two of the reasons a New Group Form may require a follow up have to do with the group name and the starting date. Part of announcing a new group is to select a name for the fledgling entity. And in A.A., there may be a possibility for a misstep in this area unless the members have looked for a shared experience. A brief note above the space for the group name on the New Group Form says: “A.A.'s Traditions suggest that a group not be named after a facility or member (living or deceased), and that the name of a group not imply affiliation with any sect, religion, organization or institution.” And so, group names that may result in a friendly phone call from a G.S.O. staff member might be similar to the following (fictional) examples: The Sandy Camel Club Group (facility); The Tom Sawyer Memorial Group, or even groups named after Bill W. or Dr. Bob (placing “principles before personalities”); Twelve Steps to Buddha (religion); or The Cub Scouts Group (organization).

Additionally, “Our A.A. group conscience, as voiced by the General Service Conference, has recommended that ‘family’ meetings, ‘double trouble’ and ‘alcohol and pill’ meetings not be listed.... The use of the word ‘family’ might also invite confusion with Al-Anon Family Groups, a fellowship entirely separate from A.A.... It is misleading



G.S.O.'s Records Department (all nonalcoholics): Susan Donnor, Sr. Records Admin.; Migdalia Ingenita; Taisha Ulloa-Arroyo, Files Coord.; Yvelle Foster-Daniels; Karen Hale, Mgr., Admin. Services/Special Projects; Ileana Alvarado-Romero.

to hint or give the impression that A.A. solves problems [other than alcohol] or knows what to do about drug addiction.” (“The A.A. Group,” p. 18)

Other names that might require a phone call, according to Susan Donnor, are those with the occasional profanity or an acronym that is questionable, although these represent the tiniest percentage of New Group Forms.

Another concern that cropped up in recent years is the use of “recovery” in a proposed group name. This may lead to a follow-up call to see if the group is focusing solely on recovery from alcoholism, or address problems other than alcohol as well. If the former, the group may be asked to consider using “sobriety” in the name, or in some way indicating that they adhere as a group to A.A.’s primary purpose. If the latter, G.S.O. would be unable to list the group at all.

The problem with “start date” comes from those groups that send in a form with a start date in the future, or just a few weeks before the form is received. This results in a gentle reminder letter that it is helpful not to send in the group form until after “the group is off to a good start (say at least two or three months).” While new groups are understandably eager to get themselves listed at G.S.O., follow-up phone calls sometimes indicate that these forms come from A.A. members—and others—who think that they need prior permission from G.S.O. to start a new group. Of course, this is not according to A.A.’s Third Tradition.

Problem or not, the office will hold on to your New Group Form for 30 days while the General Service structure in your area has a chance to contact your group and welcome you if that is their practice.

The Group Service Number — Much Misunderstood

Once your group form has been processed, you receive a letter giving you the “group service number.” Just what does this number mean? There are those who have communicated with G.S.O. regarding groups that claim to have been “recognized” as an official A.A. group because they received a number. However, your group service number implies no such approval. Nor does it constitute or imply endorsement of any group’s approach to or practice of the traditional A.A. program.

According to G.S.O. staff member Rick W., “Being ‘registered’ at G.S.O. simply means that an A.A. group has requested to have its general service representative (G.S.R.) or mail contact listed in our records for communication purposes. Being on the list at G.S.O. does not in any way make a group an official A.A. group; it simply allows us to be in touch with the group, to share information with them about what is happening in A.A., particularly through the G.S.O. newsletter *Box 4-5-9*.”

“A group does not need to be listed in the records at G.S.O. to be an A.A. group. When a group asks to be listed in our records, the computer system assigns it a unique

number, called a group service number. The same is true for any individual or entity, such as an area delegate, a district committee member, the chair of a committee at the area or district level, an intergroup/central office, an international General Service Office, etc. These are all assigned group service numbers. Because the identifier can apply to individuals or A.A. entities besides groups, ‘group service number’ is not really an accurate term, but we use the phrase anyway. It is A.A., after all.

“The group service number was created as a useful tool for keeping track of contributions and literature orders. For instance, a group treasurer might send in a contribution for the ‘Twelve and Twelve Group.’ This group might have originally been listed in our records as the ‘Monday Night 12 & 12 Group.’ The group service number is an easy way for us to match these records. Another example is that many groups have names that sounds alike (e.g. there are 357 groups in our records that contain the slogan ‘Easy Does It’). The group service number helps differentiate these groups from one another as well.”

(Next issue — “Now, About Those A.A. Group Problems”)

■ The Passing of a Friend: Dennis Manders, In Memoriam

Dennis Manders died on July 5, 2012, in Asheville, North Carolina at the age of 87. Born in Liverpool, England, he came to live in the U.S. with his family as a child. They settled in Long Island, where Dennis stayed for much of his adult life, serving the A.A. Fellowship as an employee of the General Service Office — starting out in 1950 as a bookkeeper and ultimately becoming G.S.O.’s chief financial officer. A nonalcoholic who was just barely aware of the fledgling Fellowship when he came to work for A.A., Dennis met Bill W. in his first weeks at G.S.O. and subsequently worked side-by-side with him over the course of many years.

“Dennis was kind and caring, but principled and serious at the same time,” says Don Meurer, today’s nonalcoholic chief financial officer at G.S.O., and one who has long considered Dennis a mentor and friend. “While he could give you a hug and counsel you on things, he would also want things done correctly and honestly. I still marvel at some of the files I have and the way he would keep detailed records,” adds Don. “And he did it by hand, without a computer.”

Well-known for his sense of humor and kindly disposition, some of the words used to describe Dennis over the years by friends and colleagues are: “wise,” “practical,” “funny,” and “philosophical.”

Describing what it was like when he first came to the General Service Office, Dennis recollected some years ago

for Box 4-5-9, “There were either 16 or 17 of us altogether in the office, including Bill. We had four or five staff members at that time, though they were called senior secretaries back then.

“I was hired in as the bookkeeper. The bookkeeping department had myself and two clerks. And that was the beginning of the whole accounting operation that’s here now.”

“Dennis understood the alcoholic personality,” says Don, “and it helped him keep his work mission focused.”

Reflecting on his first meeting with Bill W. years ago, Dennis recounted, “He asked me, ‘Do you drink, Denny?’ And being an honest guy, I said well, yeah, I like a beer once in a while. And he laughed. He thought it was the funniest thing in the world. ‘I’m so happy that you drink,’ he said. ‘We wouldn’t want to hire a teetotaler we’d be afraid was looking down his nose at us drunks.’”

Overseeing numerous business technology upgrades and G.S.O.’s steadily expanding services to the Fellowship, “Dennis pretty much had a hand in everything that went on,” says Don. Conducting the business of A.A., particularly A.A.’s International Conventions, grew increasingly complex throughout the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s, during which time A.A. was estimated to be doubling in size every seven years, and Dennis kept a firm grip on “the A.A. dollar,” ensuring that G.S.O. ran smoothly and that A.A.’s funds were properly disbursed and accounted for.

Credited with instituting many important money-

saving practices at G.S.O., such as purchasing paper by the carload for the production and publishing of A.A. books and pamphlets, Dennis also negotiated favorable lease agreements for office relocations and supervised a number of office remodelings.

More importantly, perhaps, to A.A. members, Dennis was a vital link to Bill W. and to A.A.’s early days. Along with Nell Wing, Bill’s longtime secretary, who passed away in 2007, these two nonalcoholics provided prodigies of service and proved to be willing participants in A.A.’s growth and reliable witnesses to the extraordinary evolution of the Fellowship.

A veteran of the United States Army during World War II and recipient of a Purple Heart, Dennis retired from G.S.O. in 1986 after more than 35 years. He and his wife Dorie moved to Tennessee and ultimately to North Carolina, where he served A.A. for an additional ten years as a senior advisor to the trustees’ Finance Committee. In his later years, Dennis was a member of the Lakey Gap Presbyterian Church in Black Mountain, North Carolina, where he served as a deacon for 10 years. According to some who knew him through his church, “Uncle Den said he never went into a room full of strangers, just a room full of friends he hadn’t met yet.”

It is with great sadness that A.A.s around the world recognize his death; yet it is with great gratitude, as well, for having known such a kind, compassionate and loyal friend.

■ Georgia On Our Minds...



80th A.A. International Convention • Atlanta • July 2-5, 2015

■ Openings for G.S.O. Staff

Applications are now being sought for G.S.O. staff members. G.S.O. staff are members of Alcoholics Anonymous. They rotate through various assignments such as Corrections, Public Information, Treatment/Special Needs, Literature and Conference. They also correspond with A.A.s on all aspects of recovery and service. Additionally, they represent the General Service Office at A.A. functions throughout the U.S. and Canada and provide the primary staff support for the General Service Board and the annual General Service Conference.

Desirable qualifications include excellent communication, time management and organizational skills, good computer skills, the ability to travel and work flexible hours, as well as the ability to work independently and as a team member. A.A. service experience will be taken into consideration, in addition to a willingness to relocate to New York City, if necessary. A minimum of six years sobriety in A.A. is required.

A pool of candidates will be maintained for a period of one year to fill vacancies that may occur during that time.

One opening will be available at the beginning of 2013. Interested and qualified members may request an application form by contacting: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163. The deadline for receipt of applications is October 31, 2012.

■ Two New Regional Trustees Join the General Service Board

In the spirit of rotation, following the 62nd General Service Conference, the General Service Board of A.A. welcomed two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees: Marty W., Western Canada region, and Andrew W., West Central region. While all trustees represent the Fellowship as a whole and no trustee can be said to “represent” a geographical section, these newly selected trusted servants bring a regional A.A. point of view to the board’s deliberations that will be invaluable.

Marty W., of Sidney, British Columbia, sober since 1996, succeeds Vic P. as Western Canada regional trustee. “It wasn’t until I jumped into the middle of the herd that A.A. began to work for me,” he says. “I had tried and tried before, lingering on the outskirts and I always seemed to get culled. Getting involved and in the center of A.A. was the only thing that worked.”

A 2009-10 (Panel 59) delegate, Marty was “thrilled and surprised” to be selected. “As our archives chair once exclaimed when she was elected, it felt like winning the lottery... So I thought it wise to put down the power tools for the day,” he jokes. “I then shut off the phone, drove to

one of my favorite spots and the prayer that came to me was to remain right sized.”

In his life outside of A.A., Marty is the sole proprietor of a Landscape/Hardscape Design and Installation business, which he has operated successfully for the last 28 years. He is involved in his community, coaching hockey, baseball and soccer, and volunteering at local events.

The experience gained through his professional background, when combined with his extensive A.A. experience garnered at assemblies, forums, workshops and committee meetings throughout his area, has provided Marty with a good foundation he believes will be helpful in his new work as regional trustee. “I believe compromise lies somewhere between acceptance and expectations. I’ve come to know and firmly believe that the two biggest gifts God ever gave humankind are free will and Alcoholics Anonymous. To this end, if I can attribute these accordingly, at least a little every day, I can be of service to anyone, anywhere.”

Andrew W., of Missoula, Montana, is also a past delegate, serving from 2007-08 (Panel 57). Selected to replace outgoing West Central regional trustee Ken B., Andrew sees his upcoming tenure on the board as a new adventure in service. “I love A.A. and am very grateful for this opportunity to put that love into action,” he says, while recognizing that serving on the General Service Board “will certainly be both challenging and rewarding.”

Sober since 1983, Andrew is an educator at a university in his home state of Montana, where he is professor and chair of the department of physics and astronomy. “Part of my work for my university has been to serve on and sometimes chair committees and our faculty senate. I have also served on and chaired committees for national organizations in my field. The people on these committees had diverse personalities and came from different backgrounds, but together we worked on our assigned tasks to conduct the business of the university or organization. That experience will hopefully help me in my new work as a trustee.”

Andrew feels well prepared on the service end as well, noting that “My service highlights start with going on Twelfth Step calls and working with newcomers. It is something that I still love to do and that all of us in A.A. can participate in.

“My time as a delegate was great,” he continues, “as it was a chance to really immerse myself in service in A.A. It was also great to serve on the Conference Finance Committee and to apply our spiritual principles to our financial matters.”

A.A.’s two new Class B trustees, along with the other twelve already on the board, each serve one four-year term; the seven Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees each serve six-year terms.

■ 2011 Membership Survey

Results of the 2011 random membership survey were recently published and provide a snapshot of the A.A. Fellowship. Like the previous survey, published in 2007, the results confirm some positive and interesting trends tracked over the past decade and illuminate the great importance of Twelfth Step work in attracting new members to the Fellowship.

More than 8,000 members from the U.S. and Canada participated in the survey, helping to generate a composite picture of some of the key characteristics of A.A. and its members. According to an analysis of the survey, the typical member is 49 years old, has been sober almost 10 years, attends two-and-a-half meetings a week, belongs to a home group and has a sponsor (often getting that sponsor in the first 90 days of sobriety).

Anonymous surveys of the Fellowship have been conducted by the General Service Office every three years since 1968. Their main purpose has been to keep A.A.s informed about current trends in membership characteristics and to provide information about the Fellowship to the professional community and the general public as part of the continuing effort to help those who suffer from alcoholism.

Survey questions cover personal statistics (age, gender, race, occupation, marital status), A.A. activity (frequency of meeting attendance, group membership, sponsorship), how the individual was introduced to A.A. in the first place (A.A. members, family, etc.), and “outside” considerations, such as experience with treatment facilities, the medical profession and other types of counseling.

Highlighting the importance of one-on-one Twelfth Step work and carrying the message to professionals, the survey indicates that 34% of the respondents cited an A.A. member as being most responsible for their coming to A.A., while 40% of the respondents were referred to A.A. by a health care professional. Additionally, 63% of respondents received some type of treatment or counseling before coming to A.A., and, of those, 74% said it played an important part in directing them to A.A. Subsequently, after coming to A.A., 62% of respondents received some type of treatment or counseling, such as



medical, psychological, spiritual, etc., and 82% of those said it played an important part in their recovery from alcoholism.

Men outnumber women (65% to 35%), and while the occupations represented in the survey cover a wide range from manager/administrator, professional/technical, and skilled trade to laborer, sales worker, educator, homemaker, etc., the single largest category for respondents was “retired” (17%).

Key findings of the latest survey are available online and in an updated version of the leaflet “Alcoholics Anonymous 2011 Membership Survey” (P-48) or a table-top display (M-13). To order, write to the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

■ A.A.’s Big Book: A Cultural Icon

With over 30 million copies sold, the Big Book has turned up in some pretty unusual places over the years. Stories can be heard throughout the Fellowship of copies appearing at just the right time — in used bookstores, prison libraries, steamer cabins and motel rooms. One story even has a copy of the Big Book showing up in a garbage bin where an alcoholic, down on his luck, was searching for scraps of food.

Born on the heels of the Great Depression, *Alcoholics Anonymous* is a book that has changed the lives of millions of alcoholics around the world. Capturing the essentials of alcoholism through the experience of the Fellowship’s earliest members — a group represented by mostly middle-aged white American males — the Big Book offers a program of recovery that has found broad application across all boundaries of gender, race, culture, language and religion.

Recognizing the Big Book’s unique ability to reach alcoholics with a message of hope, most recently the Big Book has turned up in an exhibition from the U.S. Library of Congress celebrating “Books That Shaped America.”

Founded in 1800, the Library of Congress is the nation’s oldest federal cultural institution, seeking to spark imagination and creativity and to further human understanding and wisdom by providing access to knowledge through its collections, programs and exhibitions. Today’s Library of Congress is a unique world resource. The collection of more than 144 million items includes more than 33 million cataloged books and other print materials in 460 languages; more than 63 million manuscripts; the largest rare book collection in North America; and the world’s largest collection of legal materials, films, maps, sheet music and sound recordings.

“This list of ‘Books That Shaped America’ is not a register of the ‘best’ American books,” says Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, “although many of them fit that description. Rather, the list is intended to spark a national conversation on books written by Americans that have influenced our lives.”

Curators and experts from throughout the Library of Congress contributed their choices for the exhibition, which runs from June 25th through September 29th in Washington, D.C., though there was much debate in having to cut worthy titles to accommodate the physical restrictions of the exhibition space. Some of the titles on display have been the source of great controversy, even derision, in U.S. history. Nevertheless, they shaped Americans’ views of their world and the world’s view of America.

Listed chronologically, the Big Book sits on this list of 88 iconic books between Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* (1938) and John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

Other books on the list include *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving (1820), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (1851), *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1868), Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925), William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *The Joy of Cooking* by Irma Rombauer (1931), and Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936).

In the years following publication of the Big Book, titles include, among others, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway (1940), *Native Son* by Richard Wright (1940), *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* by Dr. Benjamin Spock (1946), *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams (1947), J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison (1952), *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White (1952), *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (1953), *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss (1957), Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957), *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960), *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (1963), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley (1965), Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970), Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* (1980), and *The Words of César Chávez* (2002).

The list and the exhibit shine a light on the importance of books to shape and direct our lives and, in the experience of suffering alcoholics — in America and elsewhere — there is no book more important than *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Considered by many to be a cultural icon, its simple approach to alcoholism has opened the doors to recovery for millions both at home and abroad.

For more information on the exhibit or the Library of Congress, visit www.loc.gov.

■ ‘Anyone, Anywhere...’

An alcoholic reaches out for help — and the hand of A.A. is there, often across considerable divides of language, culture and geography. It is a story as old as the Fellowship itself, repeated daily in one dark corner of the world or another. As A.A. co-founder Bill W. noted, “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,” he continues, “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*.”

Providing evidence for A.A.’s Responsibility Declaration — “When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there; and for that: I am responsible” — yet another chapter was recently written in A.A.’s long-running saga of communication between one alcoholic and another. The exchange began, as many do, with an e-mail to the International desk at G.S.O. from an English-speaking alcoholic searching for help in Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria. The staff member who received the e-mail responded promptly, sharing experience, strength and hope — and the promise to search for A.A. contacts nearby. Some names were provided, and some A.A. literature sent to give the alcoholic a start. However, the staff member also happened to know an A.A. member with experience to share and put the two alcoholics together online.

Through e-mail, the second A.A. reached out to the first. “My name is Mike. I am an alcoholic. I am 2.5 years sober. My wife and I came to A.A. in April 2009 after many years as functional and then increasingly dysfunctional alcoholics.

“I live and work in Tajikistan. Both my wife and I are unreturned Peace Corps Volunteers. We met in a bar in Casablanca. For many years our lives revolved around the expat cocktail and party scene. We can now make the scene and drink coffee, tea, juice or soda. One of the things we’ve discovered is there always were people who did not drink. We just never noticed them. In the past I would have drunk myself to bed, I now read, or converse or watch movies. There is life and fun after the bottle.

“There are also far fewer embarrassing moments and rough mornings. Added bonus: I have a lot more money at the end of the month than I used to have. Yet, I try to remember not to become smug in my sobriety as the bottle can sneak up and hit like a baseball bat to the neck. When I think about how nice it would be to have a drink, I stop and ask myself, do I want a drink or do I want the entire bottle?”

“As they say, one is too many and 100 aren’t enough. So I live one day at a time. We don’t make meetings because there are none here, but we can be our own meeting and the books and other materials are meet-

ings in themselves. There are many like us in the international community. I have found it is easiest to say, ‘I used to drink and now I don’t.’ Most people don’t care or even notice.

“You will be okay. Just have patience and remember how horrible you felt when you decided you’d had enough. Hold that thought. Life goes on, and it gets better. Just relax and take it easy on yourself. Read the Big Book or whatever A.A. materials you can find online. Put your problem in the hands of your higher power and have faith it will get better — because it will.

“I don’t think I am sponsor material,” says the Twelfth-Stepper in closing, “but maybe my wife or I can throw you a lifeline.”

And the beat goes on.

PI/CPC

■ Chipping Away at the Stigma

These quiet disclosures helped him to lose his fear of the alcoholic stigma, and spread the news of A.A.’s existence in his community.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions , p. 186

Service-minded A.A.s in District 34, Area 79 (British Columbia/Yukon), take very seriously the idea expressed by Bill W. in *Twelve Concepts for World Service* that “to reach more alcoholics, understanding of A.A. and public good will toward A.A. must keep on growing everywhere.”

Recognizing a need for such understanding and good will, they formed a local Public Information/Cooperation With the Professional Community (PI/CPC) service committee and began putting together a series of grassroots informational presentations about A.A. for organizations in their own backyard. Starting with senior centers, the committee contacted peer counselors to provide A.A. literature and arrange for members to share their experience, strength and hope with this often homebound and underserved population.

With additional help from G.S.O.’s A.A. Guidelines and the PI and CPC Workbooks, the committee expanded their efforts to include speaking engagements at high schools, multicultural societies, youth centers, Victim Services Units, union halls, parole officers staff meetings, mental health worker staff meetings, CPC luncheons involving professionals in the education, health and legal professions, info fairs at the local college, and delivering the Big Book and other A.A. literature to local schools and libraries, all in the spirit of slowly chipping away at the stigma of alcoholism.

Keeping in mind that the Fellowship itself is sometimes

not completely aware of the value of PI/CPC efforts, the committee also hosted local workshops involving A.A. members from intergroups and surrounding districts, covering topics such as Speaking at Non-A.A. meetings; the Traditions, Steps and Concepts; Special Needs/Accessibility; and A.A. general service.

In June 2012, the committee received a request to address an elementary school — with 60 children, their teachers, and staff — the first such request of its kind from an elementary school. Initially, the committee was taken aback, as their previous talks had all been to adults or at least high school-aged youth and above.

However, after seeking feedback and shared experience from local groups, the area PI and Literature chairs and the G.S.O. PI staff coordinator, they contacted the school districts’ outreach liaison and the teachers to gain insight into some of the topics that had been previously discussed about alcoholism. The committee learned that teachers and the school liaison outreach worker had discussed items such as alcohol poisoning, peer pressure, and drinking triggers with the students.

The committee was also asked to invite Alateen to join in the presentation, and, mindful of cooperation not affiliation, reached out to them. They also set up a special meeting with the A.A. speakers who would be sharing in the presentation, reviewing the sensitivity and nature of speaking to elementary-aged children.

The pamphlet “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” has been completely revamped and was approved by the 2012 General Service Conference.

The revised pamphlet contains all new text and personal stories and portrays the strength and hope of a wide range of incarcerated alcoholics, from those serving a life sentence to kids at a juvenile detention center.



**It Sure Beats
Sitting In A Cell**



The presentation opened with personal introductions and information on how to get in touch with A.A., a little bit of A.A. history, followed by a discussion of “What A.A. is and what A.A. is not,” some explanation of the A.A. Preamble, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, with specific mention of A.A.’s Traditions regarding nonaffiliation; not engaging in controversy; its public relations policy on attraction rather than promotion; and keeping principles before personalities. This was followed by some questions to get the students involved, such as: Who is an alcoholic? What are some signs commonly associated with a drinking problem? and Other questions from the pamphlet “Speaking At Non-A.A. Meetings.”

The committee also utilized “A Message to Teenagers” and “Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?” and left the Young People’s DVD for the class to view at a later date.

Three A.A. members participated on the panel, sharing in a very general way what it was like during their drinking, when they started, what happened to bring them to A.A. and what it is like now in their sober lives. After the speakers shared, the floor was opened up to the students for a question and answer period, mentioning that no one speaks for A.A. as a whole and that attendees were there only to share their own experience, strength and hope.

Here are just some of the questions asked by the 12- and 13-year-old students from this elementary school: If you knew what it would do to you, why did you still do it? If you knew how bad it was going to be when you were younger, do you think you would have started? If you have someone in your family who is dealing with alcohol problems and looked like they needed help, what is something you can do to make sure they are okay? Do the Twelve Steps always work? Why is alcoholism an illness? Is being

drunk embarrassing? What do you do if you say to a family member that they are drinking too much and they get mad? Is it really that hard to stop drinking? If you never got help with your drinking, how do you think your lives would be today? What is withdrawal? Does drinking always get worse for alcoholics? After being in A.A., have you ever recommended it to friends who had a problem? Can being around an alcoholic turn you into one?

As a result of this presentation, the committee has been asked to participate in a professional development workshop for local teachers. Grateful to be helping further the understanding of alcoholism in District 34 and establishing public good will toward A.A., the committee happily accepted.

■ Did You Ever Wonder...?

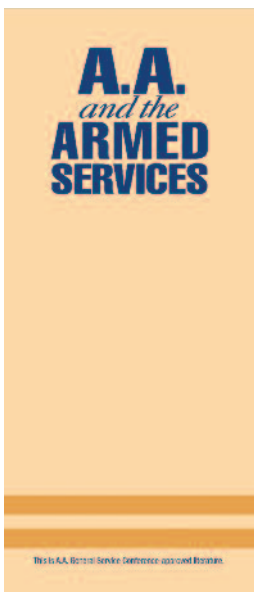
“Why is the long form of Tradition Two shorter than the short form?” This is a question that G.S.O.’s Archives receives nearly every week; it also comes up at Regional Forums.

Answer: A.A.’s Twelve Traditions were originally published in a series of articles starting with the May 1946 issue of the Grapevine. These are what we consider the Long Form of the Traditions. For the next several years, Bill W. traveled around the country explaining the Traditions and trying to get members to become more familiar with them. In 1949, A.A. member Earl T. of Chicago initially suggested to Bill that he rewrite the A.A. Traditions, stating that they were too long. Bill worked on shortening the Traditions with the idea of producing a concise statement for information and instructional purposes that could be printed along with the Twelve Steps.

In a letter dated June 17, 1949, Bill explained the following about the “short form” of the Traditions. He wrote, “*Accordingly, I have worked over the material once more, coming up with what I hope is a quieter and clearer job — something which would be a more fitting companion to the Twelve Steps themselves and of just about the same wordage.*”

After many searches through the years, the Archives staff has been unable to find any documentation by Bill as to why he chose to include the additional line in Tradition Two, “Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.” In their search they turned up a letter written by former G.S.O. Archivist Frank M.:

“*As you’ll recall historically, the climate was not fully positive for ‘organizing’ Alcoholics Anonymous in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. Folks thought things might get too complicated if Traditions were to come on line and a General Service Conference started. They worried about ‘control issues.’ Thus the line about ‘our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern’ was added to allay these fears.*”



The revision of this pamphlet, approved by the 2012 General Service Conference, was updated in order to include recent experiences from members on active duty as well as stories from veterans of the armed services.

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.

September

Aug. 31–Sept. 2—Phoenix, Arizona. State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 10756, Glendale, AZ 85318; www.area03.org

Aug. 31–Sept. 2—Fortuna, California. Redwood Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6943, Eureka, CA 95502; www.redwood-coastroundup.org

Aug. 31–Sept. 2—Los Angeles, California. XL Conv. Hispana de Estados Unidos y Canada. Inf. Com. Org., Box 19248, LA, CA 90019; www.40convencionhispanadeusaycanada.com

Aug. 31–Sept. 2—Polson, Montana. 29th Ray of Hope Camporee. Write: Ch., Box 1045, Polson, MT 59860

Aug. 31–Sept. 2—Jonquière, Québec, Canada. Congrès du Saguenay. Écrire: www.aa-quebec.org/region89/

Aug. 31–Sept. 3—Tampa, Florida. 26th Tampa Bay Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 262545, Tampa, FL 33685-2545; www.tampabayfallroundup.com

Aug. 31–Sept. 3—Madison, Wisconsin. Token Creek Labor Day Roundup. Write: Ch., 45 Bel Aire Dr., Madison, WI 53713

6–8—Cuidad de Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, Brazil. XVIII Conv. Nacional de Brazil. Info: aa@alcoolicosanonimos.org.br

6–9—Jekyll Island, Georgia. 34th Serenity Wknd. Write: Ch., 3184 Mark Mobley Rd., West Green, GA 31567

7–9—Waterbury, Connecticut. 54th Area 11 Conv. Write: Ch., 112 E. Main St., Meriden, CT 06450

7–9—Bloomington, Minnesota. 22nd Bridging The Gap Workshop Wknd. Write: Ch., 12070 Hierba Plc, San Diego, CA 92128; www.btgw.org

7–9—Park Rapids, Minnesota. 22nd Heartland Roundup. Write: Ch., 30284 Oakland Dr., Detroit Lakes, MN 56501; www.heartlandroundup.com

7–9—Asbury Park, New Jersey. NJ Roundup. Write: Ch., 5 Atkins Ct., Clifton, NJ 07013; www.njroundup.org

7–9—Edgewood, Texas. 3rd Edge of the Woods Conf. Write: Ch., Box 23, Edgewood, TX 75117; www.edgewoodconference.org

13–16—Saint Louis, Missouri. 54th ICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 15028, St. Louis, MO 63110; www.icypaahost.org

14–15—Sainte-Ursule, Québec, Canada. 32^{ème} Congrès du dist. 89-17. Écrire: Prés., 9 St-Laurent, Maskinongé, QC J0K 1N0

14–16—Fairbanks, Alaska. Pacific Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

14–16—Topeka, Kansas. 55th Area 25 Conf. Write: Ch., Box 67672; Topeka, KS 66667; www.kansas-aa.org

14–16—Fargo, North Dakota. ND State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 44, Fargo, ND 58107-0044; www.ndstateroundup.com

14–16—Houston, Texas. Area 67 Correctional Facilities Conf. Write: Ch., Box 925241, Houston, TX 77292-5241

14–16—New Braunfels, Texas. SWTX Area 68 Dist. 2 PI/CPC Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1694, Canyon Lake, TX 78133; www.area68district2.org

20–23—Amarillo, Texas. 66th Top of Texas Roundup. Write: Ch., 6410 Persimmon Ln, Amarillo, TX 79124; www.topoftexasroundup.com

21–23—Somerset, New Jersey. Area 44 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 402, Kenil, NJ 07847-0402

21–23—Beckley, West Virginia. Area 73 Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 24 Spring St., Westover, WV 26501; www.aawv.org

21–23—Gatineau, Québec, Canada. 15^e Congrès du dist. 90-22. Écrire: Prés., 664 rue du Berger, Gatineau, QC J8P 3Y2

21–23—Rimini, Italy. 28th Conv. of Italy. Info: www.alcolisti-anonimi.it

28–30—Crescent City, California. Sobriety By The Sea. Write: Ch., Box 871, Crescent City, CA 95531; www.sobrietybythesea.com

28–30—Grand Junction, Colorado. ColorDaze. Write: Ch., Box 4013, Grand Junction, CO 81502; www.colordaze.com

28–30—Lafayette, Louisiana. 27th Cajun Country Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502; www.cajunaa.org

28–30—Havre, Montana. Havre Mini Conf. Write: Ch., 35 Saddle Butte Dr., Havre, MT 59501

28–30—Wakefield, Rhode Island. Rhody Recovery Big Book Wknd. Write: Ch., 10 High St., Wakefield, RI 02879; www.rhodyrecovery.com

28–30—Pierre, South Dakota. Area 63 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 343, Pierre, SD 57501; www.area63.org

October

4–7—Cocoa Beach, Florida. 16th Nat'l Archives Workshop. Write: Ch., 728 West Ave., #1600, Cocoa, FL 32927; www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com

5–6—Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada. Congrès de Sherbrooke Dist. 88-02 and 88-15. Écrire: Prés., 177 Mullins, Sherbrooke, QC J1C 0N2

5–7—Aspen, Colorado. Joy of Living Conf. Write: Ch., Box 4186, Basalt, CO 81621; www.aspenaa.com

5–7—Smithville, Texas. 28th Fellowship In The Pines. Info: www.fellowshipinthepines.org

5–7—Montreal, Quebec, Canada. IAA Conv. Write: Ch., 455 Cayuga Rd., Ste 600, Buffalo, NY 14225

5–7—Saint John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. 48th Area 82 Assembly. Write: Ch., 1 Pittman Plc., St. Pearl, NL A1N 1V4; www.area82aa.org

6–7—International Falls, Minnesota. Area 35 Fall Assembly. Info: areachair@area35.org

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Box 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four 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

Planning Committee address: _____ 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/OR E-MAIL

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board

12-13—*Roanoke, Virginia*. Spring Into Action Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 8609, Roanoke, VA 24014; www.springintoactionroanoke.com

12-14—*Saint Augustine, Florida*. North FL Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 728 West Ave., Cocoa, FL 32927

12-14—*Sun Valley, Idaho*. Area 18 Fall Assembly & Conv. Write: Ch., Box 2041, Sun Valley, ID 83353

12-14—*Angeles City, Philippines*. 17th Internat'l Fall Roundup. Info: www.alcoholics-anonymous-philippines.org

19-21—*Goleta, California*. 28th Santa Barbara Conv. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731; www.sbaaconvention.org

19-21—*Fort Wayne, Indiana*. INCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 5348, Ft. Wayne, IN 46895

19-21—*Mackinac, Michigan*. 24th Fall Wknd. Write: Ch., 1915 E. Michigan Ave., Ste D, Lansing, MI 48912; aalansingmi@att.net

19-21—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 72nd Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6, Bovard, PA 15619

25-28—*Bossier City, Louisiana*. 67th Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., 2800 Youree Dr., Ste 362, Shreveport, LA 71104; www.aacentraloffice.us

26-28—*Branson, Missouri*. Colors of Fall In The Ozarks. Write: Ch., 220 N. Spring St., Nevada, MO 64772; www.wmano-aa.org

26-28—*Elizabeth, New Jersey*. 24th NE Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1060, East Orange, NJ 07017; www.newmantowoman.org

26-28—*Amherst, New York*. 71st Buffalo Fall Conv. Write: Ch., 681 Seneca St., Buffalo, NY 14210; www.buffaloaaany.org

26-28—*Pughtown, Pennsylvania*. Downingtown Young People's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 211, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462; www.dypcaa.org

26-28—*Sheridan, Wyoming*. Area 76 Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 111, Sheridan, WY 82801

26-28—*Kingston, Ontario, Canada*. Area 83 Fall Assembly. Write: Ch., 121 Tremount St., Whitby, ON L1M 1G1; www.area83aa.org

November

1-4—*Honolulu, Hawaii*. 51st Hawaii Conv. Write: Ch., Box 23434, Honolulu, HI 96823; www.annualhawaiiiconvention.com

2-3—*Cornwall, Ontario, Canada*. Cornwall Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1984, Cornwall, ON K6H 6N7; www.aacornwall.com

2-4—*Northglenn, Colorado*. Area 10 Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 48107, Denver, CO 80204; www.coloradoaa.org

2-4—*Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada*. Wetaskiwin Roundup. Write: Ch., RR#1, Falun, AB T0C 1H0

2-4—*Repentigny, Québec, Canada*. 33 Congrès dist 90-08 and 90-18. Écrire: Prés., 729 Montigny, Repentigny, QC J6A 6N7

3-4—*Queens, New York*. 32^{va} Conv. Hispana de Area 49. Inf: Com. Org., 458 Columbia St., #4E, Bklyn, NY 11231

9-10—*Wichita, Kansas*. 29th Wichita Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 47713, Wichita, KS 67201; wichitafallroundup@gmail.com

9-11—*Boca Raton, Florida*. SE Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

16-18—*Lake Geneva, Wisconsin*. 23rd McHenry's Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 717, McHenry, IL 60051-0717; www.soberfest.org

22-24—*New York, New York*. Big Apple Roundup. Write: Ch., The Center, 208 W. 13th St., NY, NY 10011; www.bigappleroundup.org

23-25—*Mount Pleasant, Michigan*. MCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 192, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804; www.mcpaa.org

23-25—*Saint Louis Park, Minnesota*. Founder's Day Wknd. Info: www.foundersdaymn.org

23-25—*Wilmington, North Carolina*. VII Conv. Estatal NC. Inf: Com. Org., 2024 Ranch Mill Circle, Raleigh, NC 27610

24-25—*San Justo, Buenos Aires, Argentina*. 8va Conv. Internacional y 60^o Aniv. Info: 8convencionaa@gmail.com

January

25-27—*Springfield, Illinois*. The Journey Continues. Write: Ch., Box 10244, Springfield, IL 62791