

August 1977

Around AA

Items of AA information and experience

The 27th Conference—an Experience on Two Levels

Something more than hard work powers the annual AA General Service Conference (U.S.-Canada), held this year April 17-23 at the Statler Hilton Hotel in New York City. Between Sunday's opening dinner and AA meeting and Saturday's closing brunch, the sessions of this meeting did indeed call for full-time-plus work on the part of the 133 Conference members: area delegates, trustees, directors of AA World Services, Inc., and the Grapevine, and staffs of the GV and the General Service Office.

Conference Spirit

But the ultimate purpose of this meeting gave it an atmosphere that lifted all the proceedings far above drudgery. The pervading spirit was summed up beautifully by one of GSO's nonalcoholic employees. Shirley Grant, supervisor of the Stenographic Department, spontaneously wrote this note to the general manager, April 23:

"After Conference week, I am overwhelmed and grateful to know that the mountains of paper and folders, millions of words, hours of meetings, and efforts to keep a department running efficiently and smoothly (tasks sometimes tedious and sometimes routine) all really translate into helping and reaching *out there*.

"To see everyone who is part of the Conference unselfishly spending unbelievable hours a day, not for prestige or personal gain, but for concern for others, being total *human* beings, is indeed a rarity in our blase society. To spend a week with people who love and respect each other, who might disagree but never forget their common purpose

—to be in that kind of environment, even for a short while—is a recharge for me personally, and makes everything seem worthwhile. Thank you for one of the most memorable experiences of my life."

Conference Business

The theme of this Conference was "The AA Group—Where It Begins." Topics for presentations, discussions, and workshops included: the principle of rotation, the role of the alternate, how the group conscience operates, the Conference Charter and Warranties, the Grapevine, *Box 4-5-9*, the selling of non-AA literature by AA groups, the role of the regional trustee, and cooperation and communication among all levels of service.

Conference committee reports and floor discussions led to Conference Advisory (to the trustees) Actions'. Among those approved by the General Service Board were the following (most, as condensed in the Conference issue of *Box 4-5-9*):

GSO Relocation—agreed with G.S. Board, after reviewing independent feasibility study, that relocation is inadvisable now.

Directories—approved listing of groups by states and provinces alphabetically, not by AA regions, plus continuation of listing of groups' contributions to GSO. Further approved continued publication of addresses and listing the group service number along with other group information.

Institutions—agreed that the Conference Institutions Committee should be divided into two separate committees [as the trustees' Institutions Committee already had been], one on Correctional Facilities and one on Treatment Facilities.

Policy—approved admission of some overseas (nonparticipating) observers at future

General Service Conferences (U.S.-Canada), on request, one per country, at their own expense.

Cooperation with the Professional Community—recommended that, in the spirit of cooperation, we should respond to all calls for help with information about AA, whether the call comes from an alcoholic or from a professional calling for his patient or client.

Finance—agreed that a "prudent reserve" for the board should consist of the preceding year's operating expenses of the board, AAWS, and the Grapevine combined.

Agenda—recommended for the 1978 Conference that the theme be built around the individual and the group—growth through participation.

Non-AA Literature—suggested that AA groups be discouraged from selling literature not distributed by the General Service Office and the Grapevine.

Three Advisory Actions on the Grapevine read as follows (in full):

- That delegates be responsible for establishing area Grapevine committees, using the area and district service structure to achieve the goal of a Grapevine representative in every group.
- That one copy of the Grapevine, along with a Grapevine order form, be included in every kit mailed out to new groups by GSO.
- That the Grapevine continue to publish the "About Alcoholism" section, along with the disclaimer [top of p. 40 in this issue].

Native American AAs Convene

Seven Intertribal Conventions—described as "the direct result of the power of our Great Spirit working through the Fellowship of AA"—have brought Indian members together in the states of Washington and Idaho and the province of British Columbia. The first of these gatherings was at Lapwai, Idaho, in April 1976; the most recent, at Cedar Hill, Wash., in June of this year.

Of the convention at Mission City, B.C., April 1-3, 1977, Art S. writes: "There were Haidas from the Queen Charlotte Islands, Tshimshians from Alaska, Salish, Kwakwiltl, Yakimas, Crees, Ojibways, Shushwaps, and many of our non-Indian brothers and sisters, all gathered for one common purpose—to share and care at an AA convention. The young singers and drummers were proud to take part. The dancers in their traditional

regalia performed with loving pride, and when one of our revered elders gave the invocation, we listened with our hearts."

At Mission City, an old-time Indian banquet had been prepared, including moose and salmon. For a crowd estimated at 1,500, the menu had to be eked out with some anachronistic fast food from local dealers. But it wasn't eating that was foremost in the minds of these AAs. The convention has as its theme "In a Sacred Manner—We Live." All the Intertribal Conventions use the same symbol, described by Art as "a small wooden structure depicting a tribal house, which represents the spiritual culture of our people. Perhaps, in the days to come, this symbol with its accompanying power will be present in Alaska, Manitoba, and elsewhere. We do thank our Great Spirit for the loving gift of Alcoholics Anonymous."

New Information Sheet

Upon the recommendation of the General Service Conference, the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community has prepared a paper condensing "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous." It is designed "for anyone sent to AA" and "for administrators of court programs and other referring agencies."

Evidently, there has been a long-felt need for such a paper. Agency people who are considering AA as a resource may not know exactly what services the Fellowship offers, and alcoholics who are referred to AA (often under duress) may wonder *what* they are getting into. "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous" is based on material in AA literature, boiled down to about three and a half pages on a single folded sheet.

The paper explains what AA is, what it does, and what it does not do. It suggests measures that may be used when proof of an alcoholic's attendance at meetings is required. It deals with the question of the non-alcoholic addict and with the attitude of AA groups toward the influx of referrals. For those interested, a list of pertinent AA pamphlets and Guidelines is also included.

"Information on Alcoholics Anonymous" may be ordered—free in quantities of up to 100—from the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10017. Since it is not copyrighted, it may be reprinted or excerpted without asking permission.