

Around AA

Items of AA information and experience

First Conference Without Bill?

The 21st General Service Conference was held the week of April 19 at the New Yorker Hotel in New York, N.Y., and for the first time a beloved face was missing. But one of the 90 Delegates said, "Those of us who have learned to see and to hear with our hearts know that Bill is still present."

The theme of this Conference was "Communications: Key to AA Growth," and among its advisory actions was this word on anonymity: "The use of full names and addresses, where indicated, could improve communications *within* AA." The 129 members of the Conference (Delegates plus General Service Board Trustees and General Service Office and Grapevine directors and staff members) agreed on other recommendations, including: an end to the two-year moratorium on area applications for additional Delegates; establishment of an Institutions Correspondence Service; formation of a Conference Committee on Professional Relations, to work with the new Trustees' committee set up for that purpose.

Where will the 1975 International Convention take place? Delegates from areas coveting the honor handed out lapel decorations and miniature hats to brighten the Conference (and advertise the cities of their choice). One year at a time! — but a Convention does call for long advance planning.

Tribute to AA's Founders

The Annual AA Founders Day Celebration in Akron, Ohio, this year takes on special significance. June 25-26-27, on

the campus of Akron University, there will be such notable events as an Old-Timers' Panel (four AAs with a total of 125 years' sobriety) and an original play about Bill W. and Doctor Bob, as well as regular AA and AI-Anon sessions. On the last day, a memorial service for both founders will be held at Doctor Bob's grave.

Since the university year will be over, visitors may be lodged in the dormitory for a modest sum, and parking will be free. (See this month's Calendar for further information.)

Postscript

This department's April report on the memorial meetings for Bill W. referred briefly to just a few of the gatherings that brought about 1,000,000 AAs together around the world. One of the areas mentioned has requested fuller coverage.

In loving remembrance of Bill W., more than 500 members of AA groups all over Long Island gathered in Robbins Hall, Central Islip, N.Y., February 14, 1971. Among speakers at the meeting, exceeded by an early Delegate, were: a non-AA physician, clergymen of various denominations, the chairman and Delegate of the Southeastern New York Area of the General Service Conference, and three old-timers, who voiced moving expressions of love and gratitude. Reflecting elements of Bill's life, the service included the Preamble, the Twenty-Third Psalm, St. Francis' Prayer, selections from the Big Book and *As Bill Sees It—the AA Way of Life*, and the singing of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

A Recording With a Heart

A special service is in use at the Washington, D.C., Intergroup Office, open from 10:00 AM till 10:00 PM. It is a tape-recorded message for Spanish-speaking people who do not know English.

When the volunteer at the desk gets a Spanish-speaking person on the telephone, he (or she) immediately flips the button to turn on the Spanish-language recording. It tells the person to contact Antonio F. and gives his telephone number and the appropriate time to call.

The tape was made by Antonio, chairman of two Spanish-speaking groups now growing in the D.C. area. It works wonders!

— F.F., Bethesda, Md.

How the Message Spreads

Mary came into AA about two and a half years ago. She lives in New York and spends all her winters in Mexico. In 1969, with only a few months in the program, she again went to Oaxaca. Not only was there no AA in that part of Mexico, but for her it was "the scene of the crime." Out of her own need, she got a group started.

The following winter, at my New York group, I kept passing the hat so the new Mexican group could print flyers for a public information session on its first anniversary. The group has now grown from three to 20 people. The nearest AA groups are in Veracruz, eight hours away by bus, and in Chiapas, equally distant. So the Oaxaca AAs have only each other. They meet every night. Vacationing there, I was moved to tears by the first meeting I went to. This seemed to me what AA must have been in the beginning, when a small group truly shared experience, strength, and hope. They are so sincere. They are almost all Zapotec Indians, whose Spanish is as bad as mine, so we got along just fine.

They had two nights of public meetings for their second anniversary and were right on! Before the meetings, Mary and I passed out flyers in the public market. The people were stunned to find American women caring, and they took every flyer we could get our hands on. That night, a young man came to the

meeting with the flyer in his hand. He is an Indian (Spanish-speaking), about 25, and had been drinking all his life. He hadn't known there was help. I don't know who cried more — he or I.

Anyhow, the groups from Chiapas and Veracruz came to the anniversary. The AAs of Chiapas have all banded together and bought a bus, so they can get around. Above the windshield is lettered "Alcoholicos Anonimos de Chiapas." They couldn't care less about anonymity — they are so *grateful*. They are family people, and the families are whole again. They had driven for 10 hours over the Sierra Madre Mountains to get there.

— M. W., Manhattan, N.Y.

When 40-year-old Wally hit bottom, two years ago, he knew where to find help. He had been briefed on AA 15 years earlier by his grandfather, who joined the program in 1938 and died in 1957 — still uninterruptedly sober at the age of 81. Wally is active in a New Hampshire group.

— J. W. S., Greenfield, N.H.

Helping Hand Reaches 670 Miles

In 1969, Doug K., a member of our Helping Hand Group in Chelsea, Mass., was going on a vacation to Springhill, N.S., his original home. Someone said to him, jokingly, "Get us some speaking commitments while you're there." When Doug returned, he said — much to the group's surprise — that he really had made arrangements for us to speak at an institution in Springhill.

Although the Canadian town is 670 miles away, the group accepted and fulfilled its commitments. It was the start of a wonderful exchange that has grown into a bond between these two groups. The Springhill group has come to Chelsea on two occasions, and some of the Helping Hand members have made four trips to Nova Scotia. Last New Year's Eve, several of us joined the Canadian group for its anniversary. We are in touch with each other through the mail and talk over the phone quite often.

There are no words for the feelings we all have when one group or the other

is preparing for a trip across the border. When it's time to return home, there are tears and laughter; but, most important, there is the knowledge that, if we all continue to practice the AA program, there will soon be another exchange.

— F. S., *Lynn, Mass.*

Salute to a Good Friend

A well-deserved national honor — a Presidential Commendation — has been awarded to Austin H. MacCormick, member of the Grapevine Corporate and Editorial Boards, nonalcoholic Trustee on the AA General Service Board, chairman of that board's Literature Committee, and a member of its Nominating Committee. The wording of the citation seems appropriate: "in recognition of exceptional service to others, in the finest American tradition."

But this valued, long-time friend of AA was actually being saluted for his work in another field (though one in which AA often plays a part), as President Nixon's accompanying letter indicated: "... In your work with the

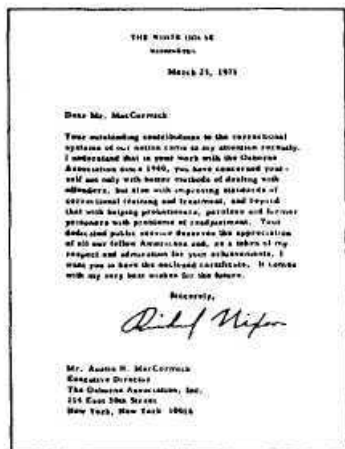
that with helping probationers, parolees, and former prisoners with problems of readjustment. ..."

A Prison Group Comes of Age

I was privileged to be one of three AAs who set up the group at Kentucky State Reformatory, in La Grange. On September 9, 1949, we attended its first meeting, held in the warden's office, and five inmates were present.

Now, we "outside" AAs have a committee of 23 to work closely with the committee of the Sincerity Group, on the "inside" (and with another group in the maximum-security prison at Eddyville). We provide outside speakers for the two regular meetings each week. For the three special meetings each year — group anniversary, Thanksgiving, Christmas — the team always includes an out-of-state speaker and a former inmate who found his AA in a prison group. Now, when I take the podium at La Grange, I look out into a sea of 208 smiling alcoholic faces. And you know the best part (ole selfish me) — I'm still sober.

— J. C. B., *Louisville, Ky.*



Osborne Association since 1940, you have concerned yourself not only with better methods of dealing with offenders, but also with improving standards of correctional training and treatment, and beyond

Spiritual Arithmetic

As you all know, the new U.S. Postal Service raised the letter rate to eight cents on May 15. And I am sure we are all aware of the fact that postage is one of the largest parts of the budget of the General Service Office. These wonderful people at GSO dispense their service to all groups, regardless of an individual group's ability to contribute. Some of the prison and hospital groups are not financially able to send as much as they would like to. (Please don't get me wrong — I know of prison groups that make regular contributions to GSO.) So it is necessary for us fortunate people outside the walls to help carry the load.

Now here comes the pitch. After hearing a talk about the Birthday Plan, I did some arithmetic. I had been sober some three years. Let's see — one dollar for each year — times two. I wrote a check for six dollars and sent it on its way to GSO.

— Anonymous, *Oregon*