

August 1957

From Minnesota,,,

MY FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE is now a memory, but those few days in New York will never be forgotten. The vital function of General Service Headquarters to our wonderful AA movement be-

time after it arrived. I soon found that I had an affiliation with other AAs in other groups, and very soon I learned to know our friend Pat, Minnesota's first AA.

This year at the Conference I met

Delegates to the General Service Conference have had a busy time since April—but not too busy to tell us about it



Corner

Delegates'



came very vivid to me, and I was filled with a feeling of the magnitude and humility of our way of life.

Only a few short and happy years ago AA touched my life; a new group of three members was formed. We met at my home, and I still remember how eagerly I waited for the literature from Headquarters in New York, and how wonderful it was to look through it for the first

one of Pat's two sponsors, and we talked one night until the early morning hours. Our conversation illustrated so clearly the gratitude we should all have for the existence of our General Service Headquarters. Here is the story:

Pat found the AA "Big Book" in the Minneapolis public library. He opened it to the section "How It Works,"—and a ray of hope came into his life. Somewhere he found

the courage to write to New York. People there in turn wrote a letter to the AAs in Chicago. Two men from the small group there took time off and bought railroad tickets to Minneapolis—to give away the wonderful thing they had been given and thus did AA take root in Minnesota. . . .

That morning last spring as I closed my eyes to get a few hours' sleep before our next Conference session, some horrible thoughts flashed through my mind: "What if there had been no place for Pat to write for help!" "What if there had been no letter from New York to Chicago?" "What if there had been no distribution of the Big Book?" I knew then that you could have written "Finished" to many useless and wasted alcoholic lives, because I and most of the AAs in Minnesota owe our very lives to the fact that those letters had a channel—a pipe line—to follow. At our next Conference session when one of the GSH staff members stated, "Direct correspondence with the groups is the life line of service," my heart said a grateful "Amen."

We have been given something

very precious in the Third Legacy of General Service. The small staff at Headquarters who now are of service to 7000 AA groups are devoted and dedicated people, and I am confident that when all our members understand the very important part the Conference and General Service Headquarters have played in their own sobriety—and the part they will play in the sobriety of those who are to follow—their hearts cannot help but be filled with gratitude.

Bill W.'s forthcoming new book, "AA Comes of Age," which the Conference learned had now gone to the printers; the projected 90-minute TV show; and the proposed two new pamphlets, tentatively entitled "What Kind of Old Timer Are You?" and "You and Your 1,999,999 Partners in AA," will be of great service in linking every AA member to our worldwide movement.

As I sit at home writing these few words about the Conference my heart again murmurs a grateful "Amen" and "Thanks." Being a delegate is a mountain-top experience. *A.A.S., Wilder, Minnesota*

From Florida,,,

I HAVE BEEN PRETTY BUSY since the Conference, getting the dates set for my report to the districts in my area.

I have been super-busy fixing up one of the rooms in our Club House

as an "Information Room" for AA worldwide services.

On the walls of this room are large displays: a world map with pins marking all groups outside the United States; the area map of

South Florida with groups in each district marked; a display of all Conference-approved AA literature; a Grapevine display showing the large-size original copy of the Grapevine, a 1948 copy, when the Grapevine put on a new jacket, and the present edition, along with other Grapevine information.

In three-ring binders we have every edition of the Grapevine since 1945. We have many other binders with information for the alcoholic: the AA Directories since 1947; all

the Third Legacy Information, of course; Conference Highlights; Interim Reports; Exchange Bulletins; Final Report of the Conference; Turn-over Slide; Scrapbooks; Prison and Hospital information; and last but not least all recordings produced by GSH.

This Information Room, we feel, can bring a greater understanding of our world services not only to newcomers but to the older members as well.

D.H., Miami, Florida

From Oregon...

DURING THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE this year my thoughts kept straying to the intangible we call "group conscience."

We who have found a new way of life in AA have received a great gift. As with any gift this one also must be cherished and guarded, that it may not diminish in value; this one also increases in value with use.

This gift has not been given to us all at once. It has come at three separate and distinct times: the Twelve Steps which was our first legacy, the Twelve Traditions which was our second, and finally the Third Legacy—which is our right and obligation to manage our own worldwide affairs. We can thank God, I believe, for the wisdom of the co-founders of this movement, that these legacies did not come to

us all at one time.

I think we can liken it to a wise and loving father who, wishing to provide for the future of his young son, leaves his estate in separate installments, knowing that as the lad grows older he will grow in maturity and judgment, and so be able to conserve and add to it. ...

... Which brings us to this thing called "group conscience." I have always been intrigued by the wording of our Second Tradition: *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority ... a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.*

What is the group conscience, and how does it function?

My own definition would be: the considered judgment of the group.

This definition brings us inevitably to something called personal

responsibility. As Bill W. said at last year's Conference, "Group conscience, to function properly, must be an *informed* group conscience." For any individual (or group) to form an intelligent opinion on anything which affects his welfare, he is entitled to know—and should know—all the pros and cons of the subject involved. How else can he form an intelligent opinion?

It is easy in AA to say "Let George do it." Then when George does it, and perhaps goes against our judgment, we are *so* quick to criticize George! The fact is, George didn't have the opportunity to get our opinion on that particular issue because we as individuals were either too lazy or too indifferent to counsel him.

We also learn from the Twelve Traditions that *our common welfare should come first*. . . . How, then, can we as individuals and groups best preserve our common welfare?

In any group where any issue arises I believe the criterion of decision should be: Does this action further the carrying of the message? It is so easy for us to turn thumbs down on some group action just be-

cause we don't like the individual or individuals proposing it. . . . Hence for our common welfare it would seem that we should learn to be objective.

Is not AA a great school in human relations? Is it not in AA that we learn how to get along with and respect each other's opinions? Where else could we—who are known as rebels—learn how to function as individuals, with society as a whole? Is it not here that we learn how to live?

To sum up, how can we become an informed "group conscience"?

1. By being objective in our thinking.
2. By exercising our rights as AAs and participating in group affairs.
3. By insisting on the principle of rotation of members of our steering committees and delegates in our inter-group, state and national activities.
4. By reading our publications and group directories.
5. By truly, in all our AA activities, placing *principles before personalities*.

Paul B., Portland, Ore.