

# Give a Lot, Get a Lot!

*A former General Service Delegate describes the spiritual returns from working with "the most anonymous"*

**M**Y period as delegate for the British Columbia-Yukon area is just about over, and very soon I'll be entering a new phase of life in Alcoholics Anonymous.

In a way, there's a sense of sadness after the intense activity of the past four years, and yet I'm rather looking forward to learning my new role in AA—a role in which I hope I'll be able to bring into use all the wonderful lessons and experiences of the past, in a manner I feel more suited to me — quietly, in the background.

Since our area assembly last month and the election of the new delegate, I've tried to assess exactly what I have been taught and what I have given, and it seems to me, as in all facets of AA, my personal rewards far outshadow my personal contributions. So, coupled with the sense of sadness is a sense of thanksgiving that, at long last, I have made some sort of useful contribution to the society I know and love.

I've searched for the crowning highlights of my AA life and find

them as elusive as sobriety when I first came in.

Perhaps it was meeting, listening to, and feeling the intense love of Bill and the vision that he created and the needs that he revealed at both the General Services Conferences I attended.

Perhaps it was the sincere dedication to AA service that has been displayed in both personal contact and various communications, by all at the General Service Office. I know that whenever my enthusiasm for the job I had been selected to do started to wane, and I began to think I was too tired to try to do this or that or the other thing, this remembrance lifted me, and gave me the strength and courage to go on.

Maybe it was the telephone call from Tom G., the native Indian from Telkwa, who came to AA to get a drink on a Sunday and who stayed to become sober and found a group that embraces his family. Tom had come to Vancouver to take his granddaughter home, and his telephone call meant that the message of fel-

lowship I had tried to give had become a reality to him, and so I had indeed been blessed. Or maybe it was those other phone calls from visitors to Vancouver from the groups outside the city. For each told me the same thing: that the fellowship of AA had become a reality — and so again and again I was blessed.

Maybe, though, it was the warmth of the AA members I found as I traveled the assembly area trying to share the experiences of the General Service Conferences, and the friends I know I have there.

But, perhaps, as time mellows the experiences, it will be the disappointments, the discouragements, the unexpected barriers, that will prove the crowning highlights. For in a real sense they were a challenge and they forced unwilling me to search the whole AA program, all its breadth and all its depth, to seek out answers and these then enriched my experiences and made them colorful.

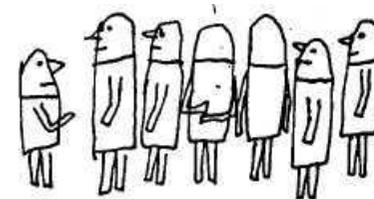
And what about lessons?

I've learned something of the spirit of anonymity by which our fellowship has flourished and how vital it is for me as an AA member to try to do what I do in AA without thought of personal thanks or reward, but rather under the inspiration of doing for the sake of giving and receiving — doing especially for those who will never know me, never see me, and so can never personally thank or reward me.

I've learned that a group is sacred; that the group conscience is indeed

the most powerful voice in Alcoholics Anonymous; that the group itself is a reflection of the collective voices and personalities of all its members and that so long as it stays with its primary purpose, it can do nothing but flourish and expand and bring the joy and happiness of sobriety to those who embrace it.

I've learned that as a member of a group, I must exercise restraint to do or say nothing that consciously would offend; that I have to discipline myself to represent my group within the framework of *its* concepts and not mine; that it was through the group and groups that I was given sobriety, and not through any one or any several individuals.



I've learned that as a sincere member of AA I have responsibilities to my fellow members, to my group and to AA as a whole, and that as I live up to these responsibilities, so I gain a keener sense of participation and a deeper appreciation of belonging, and so possibly I will grow a little.

I know, today, how vital it is that an attitude of love be the backdrop for all that I do and say; that service in AA is the great vehicle by which love may be expressed; that so long as I maintain a loving attitude, I can

well leave the results in the hand of God.

And what of my contribution? Really, little more than any other member — an attempt to carry the message of the fellowship to all who will listen—and thereby play a part in the unity of AA and help to make it possible for any alcoholic anywhere to receive the help that was given me.

These experiences have given me new self-respect, new confidence,

new faith, new fellowship and, I believe, a new understanding of my God.

So it is, with a growing appreciation of the wondrous fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, that I am standing still for a while so that I may be ready, and prepared and willing to go along in my new role in Alcoholics Anonymous.

In gratitude,

B. S., Vancouver, B. C.

## Happiness Is a By-Product

*A new General Service Delegate speaks of the rewards of "the extra mile"*



Each of us carries in his bloodstream of inheritance the genes of the great and of the misguided. We can call on our good genes to help us grow, and to work to cover the bad ones.

The common man is common only when he sleeps. When he is awake he can observe and learn. The big difference between people is what they do with their time when awake. This becomes the key to every person's tomorrow.

Man is the one creature endowed above all other species with the extraordinary capacity to grow in intellect and in that indefinable quality we call character.

In man's highest ideal there is even room for the Golden Rule, to love every man as oneself — even to love and forgive an enemy.

The growth of the cultural attributes of man has no terminal point. That's why we seek but do not achieve perfection. There is no one stage in man's life where the growth of his intellectual, cultural or spiritual life is stopped, except by his own indifference, apathy—love of the easy moment, diversion of his time by fruitless interests and, too often, by living in an environment where little or no value is placed upon inspiring people to improve themselves. That's why we attend meetings—to find the right environment. We so often chase happiness by going into debt personally, morally and spiritually and, as a people, seek happiness in acquiring more things.

In the humdrum of daily life and taxes, no great issue calls us to go the extra mile. We look at those who get more than we do. We seldom

look the other way to see that most people have less food and clothing, to say nothing of luxuries, and not much chance to better themselves.

Two distasteful dishes, however, are frequently on our menu. One is to "eat crow" in order to right a wrong, and the other is to forget one's own self-importance and not take oneself too seriously. These dishes have a way of improving in flavor, however, after a bit of experience.

Of all our material gains none compares to the gain of finding that life is more than bread and bed. This is what we stand for.

The reward for the extra miles may come in promotions and increased pay, but of more value than such remunerations will be the compensation that will come out of growing inward satisfaction and the respect and love of our fellow-man. These things must be earned. I believe this is the reason most of us went the extra mile to be here today.

W. H., Columbus, Ohio