

## A.A. Takes Its Inventory

The theme of the 1993 General Service Conference is "A.A. Takes Its Inventory—the General Service Conference Structure," and at all levels throughout the Fellowship, groups, districts, areas, the General Service Office and Grapevine, the two corporate boards of A.A.W.S. and Grapevine, and the board of trustees have begun an examination of their assets and liabilities.

While the inventories of each of these elements of the General Service Conference structure will necessarily turn up separate and distinct problems and concerns, each inventory undoubtedly will have at its core the questions, "How well are we carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous?" and, "What could we be doing better?" Though each element of the Conference structure is linked through our primary purpose, when taken together these inventories will offer a profound vision of just where Alcoholics Anonymous is, where it has come from, and where it is heading.

In the Big Book, on page 64, Bill W. notes that "A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values."

In addition to establishing the overall theme of the 1993 Conference, the Conference Agenda Committee also put forward a number of presentation/discussion topics which will be taken up by the entire Conference body. In five different presentations under the general topic, "A.A. Takes Its Inventory," the Conference will consider a number of related areas, such as the purpose of the General Service Conference, the Conference relation to A.A., the General Service Conference and its general procedures. It will also look at the Conference relation to the General Service Board and its corporate services, the composition, jurisdiction, and responsibilities of the General Service Board; the general Warranties of the Conference Charter; finance; and the A.A. Grapevine.

Whether it be an individual inventory or the inventory

of an entire organizational structure, the question of exactly how and by what means such an inventory can be accomplished must be addressed. As Bill W. noted in the Twelve and Twelve on the topic of the Tenth Step, "Although all inventories are alike in principle, the time factor does distinguish one from another."

Even though, as with any inventory-taking procedure, there may be a temptation to "wander morbidly around in the past," Bill explains that "when our inventory is carefully taken, and we have made peace with ourselves, the conviction follows that tomorrow's challenges can be met as they come."

In the September/October 1992 issue of the Southern California Area Assembly newsletter, alternate delegate Ken R. of the California Northern Coastal Area had this to say about the inventory process: "We need to proceed in a spirit of openness, putting principles before personalities, especially our own. On the other hand, we will sometimes need to discuss actions of individuals, committees, Conferences, and boards and do so in a way that is principled without shrinking from the inventory just because what happened, happens, or may happen involves particular individuals. This, too, is putting principles before personalities."

While any thorough inventory must be intensely subjective and personal, a considerable amount of work has gone into the development of some objective means of collecting these inventories and reporting them. Many groups and districts use the model discussed in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group," and different area structures have developed formats which work especially well for them. (These are available from G.S.O.'s Conference coordinator.) At the General Service Board level, general service trustee Harold G. has been largely responsible for putting together a series of questions which can be adapted as desired by the trustees and the two corporate boards in order to provide a framework for their respective inventories. Essentially, the questions, aimed at stimulating both reflection and discussion, divide naturally into two different areas: an inventory of the individual as a member of the board, and an inventory of the effectiveness of the board as a whole.



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**Box 4-5-9** is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1993.

**Mail address:** P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163

**Subscriptions:** Individual, \$3.50 per year; group, \$6.00 for each unit of 10 per year. Check—made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc.—should accompany order.

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As many who are familiar with the Conference process note, the spiritual and material work of the Conference is not confined to the week-long gathering each spring, but rather reverberates and echoes throughout the year. Doubtless, in that spirit, this Fellowship-wide inventory will carry well beyond the seven Conference days in April of 1993 and will continue to benefit the Fellowship for years to come.

NOTE: If your group, district or area wishes to share the results of their inventory process, the Conference coordinator will be pleased to receive them for use as background material for the Conference.

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## ***SERVICES AT G.S.O.*** **An Ongoing A.A. Challenge: Public Information**

If there's one person on the G.S.O. staff who never doubts that the period we live in could well go by the name of the Age of Communication, it's the one who sits at the Public Information desk. Through television, newspapers, films, fax machines, telephones, books, magazines and computers, there's a public out there, seeking information. And whenever questions about A.A. filter through any one of those channels, they fall into the lap of the current Public Information staff person, Joanie M.

"The purpose of public information is to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers," Joanie says. "This is achieved through informing the general public about what A.A. is and who we serve.

"It seemed overwhelming at first," Joanie says, referring to the varied responsibilities the assignment carries, particularly the 450 pieces of mail that cross her desk each month, not to mention the equivalent number of telephone calls she gets in the same amount of time.

Letters and phone calls come from local P.I. committees asking for shared experience and guidance so that

they may better reach the public, which includes, or is in contact with, the alcoholic who still suffers. Joanie is aware that the work of these committees is the heart of A.A. public information—what better way to demonstrate what A.A. is about than to have P.I. committees invited to speak anonymously at schools, staff booths and give out information at health fairs, or visit local media people to share A.A. information?

A day at the P.I. desk may begin with a call from an A.A. member who is concerned about what appears to be criticism of their beloved Fellowship in a local newspaper. Joanie's response in each case is based on Bill W.'s writings in Warranty Five of Concept XII: "For much the same reason we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. . . . Nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the worldwide good will which A.A. enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

"Almost without exception it can be confidently estimated that our best defense in those situations would be no defense whatsoever—namely, complete silence at the public level. . . . But, under no conditions should we exhibit anger or any punitive or aggressive intent. Surely this should be our inflexible policy."

Another call is from an A.A. member upset by learning of another A.A. identified by full name or picture in the media. Joanie explains that information on anonymity breaks are sent to the area delegate for follow up. G.S.O. seldom comments on anonymity breaks directly to the media involved because of the understanding that it is up to individual members and groups to preserve and protect our Traditions.

In addition, there's the coordinating of press feature stories and radio and television public service announcements and sending out the annual Anonymity Letter to the media. The 1992 letter went out to 6,900 media contacts.

The staff member on the P.I. assignment serves as secretary to the trustees' and Conference Public Information Committees. Additionally, there are four subcommittees which periodically meet, then report to the trustees' P.I. Committee. In effect, all of the members of these committees are striving to live up to Bill W.'s urging that, to reach the millions of alcoholics still out there, ". . . We need . . . the increasing good will of editors, writers, television and radio channels. . . . These publicity outlets . . . should be opened wider and wider. . . ." (Concept XI, *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*, p. 51)

"It is a critical assignment," she says, "a single large public blunder could cost many lives and much suffering, because it would turn new prospects away. Conversely, every real public relations success brings alcoholics in our direction."

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## Come One, Come All To Canada's Fiftieth A.A. Birthday Party!

"Welcome to Canada! Bienvenue au Canada! Toronto is proud to host our country's 50th anniversary convention from July 2-4, 1993, and to share our joy with A.A. members from all over the world."

With evident zest, Tommy H., past Eastern Canada Class B (alcoholic) trustee, adds that the two-day convention is expected to attract more than 10,000 members of A.A., Al-Anon and Alateen, many of them from the United States. "Of course," he points out, "in A.A., the border between the U.S. and Canada does not exist. Canadian A.A. is represented proportionally at the General Service Conference and on the General Service Board, and the General Service Office in New York serves A.A. in both countries equally. As Bill W. wrote in a salute to Canada (A.A. Grapevine, May 1951), 'This far-flung Society of ours has the odd quality of being everywhere the same, yet everywhere so different. We A.A.s are totally alike, whether by regions or by nations.'"

The 1993 anniversary convention will be held at the Metro Convention Centre in cosmopolitan Toronto, the capital of Ontario and Canada's largest city. Located on the northwest shore of Lake Ontario, "Toronto" is a Huron Native American term for "meeting place," an apt monicker by any A.A. yardstick.

The weekend-long convention will feature panels, workshops, alkathons, and a selection of fun events ranging from a sunrise breakfast at the top of the CN (Canadian National) Tower to boat cruises of Niagara Falls.

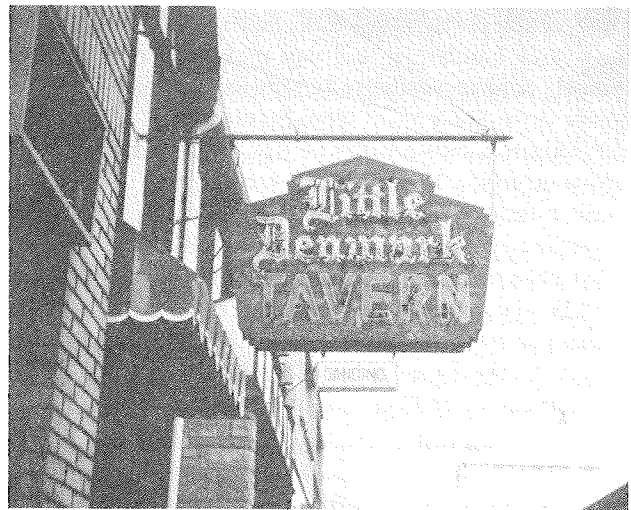
Registration forms listing available hotel accommo-



1170 Yonge Street, handy to the liquor store and railroad station just across the street, was the home of Toronto's beloved A.A. clubhouse from 1944 to 1960.

dations, and requesting first, second and third choices, have been distributed to districts, intergroups (central offices) and general service representatives throughout Canada and to large urban hubs in the United States. Registrants are being assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so the sooner you sign up, the better.

For registration forms or further information, call the special Canadian hotline staffed by logistics chairperson Wes B. in his Toronto home—(416) 233-6843—or write to: Chairperson, 50th Anniversary Housing Bureau, P.O. Box 126, 207 Queen's Quay West, Toronto, Ontario M5J 1A7, Canada. (If mailing from the U.S. remember the extra postage: 40 cents for a first-class letter, 30 cents for a postcard.)



The Little Denmark Tavern, where two nonalcoholic ministers met with six alcoholics in 1943, and A.A. in Canada "officially" began. Little Denmark is long gone, but the New York Archives has one of its small red table lamps to preserve that moment in time.

Conventioneers will feel at home in Toronto, a city rich in A.A. lore, as indeed is all of Canada. A.A. got a toehold there in 1940, when the Reverend George Little of Toronto, a zealous temperance worker, showed the Big Book to a "hopeless" alcoholic who subsequently sobered up. The two men went to work, introducing many a Toronto drunk to the new way of life.

However, relates Eastern Canada Class B (alcoholic) trustee Marc P., "it wasn't until January 13, 1943 that the first Canadian group held its initial meeting in a bleak room above the Little Denmark Tavern in Toronto. Today about 5,200 A.A. groups, with a membership of 91,000, are flourishing in all ten Canadian provinces."

Interestingly, Marc points out, "French A.A. existed



in Canada 14 years before it did in France. The first French-speaking A.A. group in the world met in Montreal in September 1945. Forty-eight years later, there are more than 1,500 French-speaking groups in Quebec, with an estimated 31,000 members. Their literature needs are served through an organization called Le Service des Publications Francaises des A.A. du Quebec, which translates and publishes A.A. Conference-approved literature in French."

Like all A.A.s, Canadian oldtimers would go to any length to carry the A.A. message. In the B.C. Yukon area during the 1940s, for instance, some A.A.s reportedly carried two-ounce bottles of booze, plus a modest supply of barbiturates, to help the suffering alcoholic with a "hair of the dog"—a practice that was largely abandoned by 1950. And in June of 1948, some industrious Nova Scotia A.A.s produced the first issue of the "Bluenose Bulletin," which for some time was the only newsletter of its kind in Eastern Canada.

Over the years, thanks to the development of strong local service structures, A.A. has reached into every town and hamlet in this vast nation, even into the sparsely settled Northern Territories and native settlements. Says Robie C. of Nova Scotia: "Joining together to celebrate a half-century of A.A. in Canada will be a joyous occasion. It also will be a time of new hope for some, a time of reflection for others. but perhaps more important, it will be a time when we can all take a moment to realize that the next half-century, like tomorrow, is only a promissory note. To maintain what our founders have given us will require the same dedication to service, the same spirit of love and gratitude, and the same grace of God that has brought us this far."

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## A Look Back in Time— The Old Is New Again

The year was 1940 and a significant one it was for A.A. The book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published a year earlier, was winning favor from respected religious leaders. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. gave the landmark dinner that established A.A. once and for all as a self-supporting fellowship because of his view that "money would spoil this thing." The first clubhouse for A.A. members opened its doors on West 24th Street in New York City, and a neighborhood or so away, the Fellowship rented its first world service office (later renamed the General Service Office). Then, on November 14, 1940, the ancestor of *Bar 4-5-9* was typed and duplicated on a cranky mimeograph machine.

Called simply the A.A. Bulletin, the two-page newsletter noted that A.A. had grown from 100 members in

1939 to a total of "approximately 1,400," showing that "your efforts and ours have been exceptionally worthwhile." With a Bill W. touch of the visionary, it added, "Continued A.A. activity will moan (*sic*) a great deal not only to each of us as individuals, but also to the many who are still unaware of the fact that there is an answer to the alcoholic problem which is practicable on a large scale."

Today that "large scale" has come to pass, with more than a million members in the U.S. and Canada alone, and the number of women has jumped from almost none to 35 percent. The membership growth overseas is just as astonishing. In 1940, the Bulletin reported, "A.A. correspondence touches Africa, England, France and Australia" although "nothing of consequence has developed as yet in these distant places." A half-century later, there are over two million members (including Internationalists and Lone members) in approximately 141 countries—from Spain to Nigeria, from Singapore to Vietnam and the Cayman Islands.

The Bulletin further pointed out that, "This office has in the past year handled over 2,000 inquiries, answering each by personal letter." Do a fast forward and you learn that in 1992 the General Service Office answered almost as many letters in one month (not counting requests for literature).

For "the general information of all A.A. members," the 1940 Bulletin listed about 16 cities "where there are isolated members." A sampling of these shows extraordinary growth. The Loner in North Dakota, for example, would have three thousand members belonging to 167 groups throughout the state to share recovery with him today. As for the chap struggling to stay sober in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, he could now take his pick of 19 local groups. It's difficult to be a Loner in Wisconsin with about 26,000 A.A.s populating 1,588 groups.

Five cities were listed by the Bulletin as "communities where A.A. work is well-established and weekly meetings are held": Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Boston, Massachusetts; Indianapolis, Indiana; Wallingford, Vermont; and San Diego, California.

From the very beginning, as the Bulletin records, G.S.O. tried to provide "the name and address of at least one member in each of the established groups for the use of travelling or visiting members" looking for a meeting to attend. Today there are four confidential A.A. *Directories* that are updated on a yearly basis: Eastern U.S., Western U.S., Canada, and the International A.A. Directory.

The more the Fellowship expands, the more we stay essentially the same—hewing to our primary purpose "to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety," with compassion, caring and the ability to laugh at ourselves. "We all know," the old A.A. Bulletin concludes, "that the A.A. solution really works if followed with patience, honesty and sincerity. So we sym-



pathize with the new prospect who said he DID want to stop drinking, but after listening to our A.A. story said, 'Oh, that! I tried it for two whole weeks and it doesn't work.' "

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## An Informed Group Conscience

"Where does A.A. get its guidance?" begins the essay on Tradition Two in the Twelve and Twelve, "Who runs it?"

Well, for most A.A.s the answer to these questions is clear: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." However, when A.A. was younger, a number of the Fellowship's friends and newcomers alike looked with some incredulity at this prospect. Their skepticism was expressed in this way: "When told that our Society has no president having authority to govern it, no treasurer who can compel the payment of any dues, no board of directors who can cast an erring member into outer darkness, when indeed no A.A. can give another a directive and enforce obedience, our friends gasp and exclaim, 'This simply can't be. There must be an angle somewhere.' "

Well, years of A.A. experience have proved that the group conscience does work, though the early skeptics may not have been too far off in their suspicions of the existence of "an angle somewhere." That angle may well be the word "informed"—a word often left out of references to the group conscience. Yet, without the word "informed," A.A.'s vaunted group conscience could easily become rule by majority or rule by force.

The Random House College Dictionary defines the word "inform" as "to train or instruct; to supply knowledge or enlightenment," and without the availability of sufficient instruction and enlightenment, it is all too easy for the group conscience to stray from A.A. principles and get tangled up in the often messy bog of personalities. As Robbie S., of Fayetteville, Arkansas, put it (in a June 1988 Grapevine article entitled, "It Takes Us All"), "At first, group conscience simply was 'a vote.' You get *your* side and I'll get *my* side, and then we will vote. Principles won't be the consideration here, but rather personalities. The best personality will win and then we will go along until there is an uprising from another camp or until there is waning enthusiasm in the winner's camp and the losers will try again.

"Later, I saw the group conscience as a consensus of opinion. Consensus meant to me that you really didn't give in at all but acted like you did for the time being.

"Now, my concept of group conscience has grown as I begin to understand all the words in the Second Tradition. The informed group conscience means to me that we try and profit from those who have gone before us, especially if we want what they have. It means that we listen to the members who have experience, strength, and hope to share on a particular issue, whether these experiences are majority or minority experiences. And then we each turn within to contribute to a collective understanding of God's way of doing business. And with this insight, we will trudge the road of our group's happy destiny—that of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

There can be a number of impediments, however, along the way to a group's "happy destiny." "Few obstacles have been tougher to remove than those which blocked the way to realization that A.A.'s group conscience can be the only ultimate authority in our affairs," wrote Bill W. in *A.A. Comes of Age* (p. 99). And, noting the difficulty that some A.A. oldtimers had with accepting the group conscience, particularly if it clashed with their own dearly held notions of how things ought to be run, Bill continued that, "Harder still to accept was the now proven fact that the conscience of the group, when properly informed of the facts and issues and principles involved, was often wiser than any leader, self-appointed or not."

The impact of group conscience decisions can be felt in myriad ways, from the election of a group's officers to the selection of A.A.'s trustees at the General Service Conference; from how a group chooses to handle the influx of new members from treatment centers or people with special needs to the development and publication of A.A. Conference-approved literature.

But how does a group get informed?

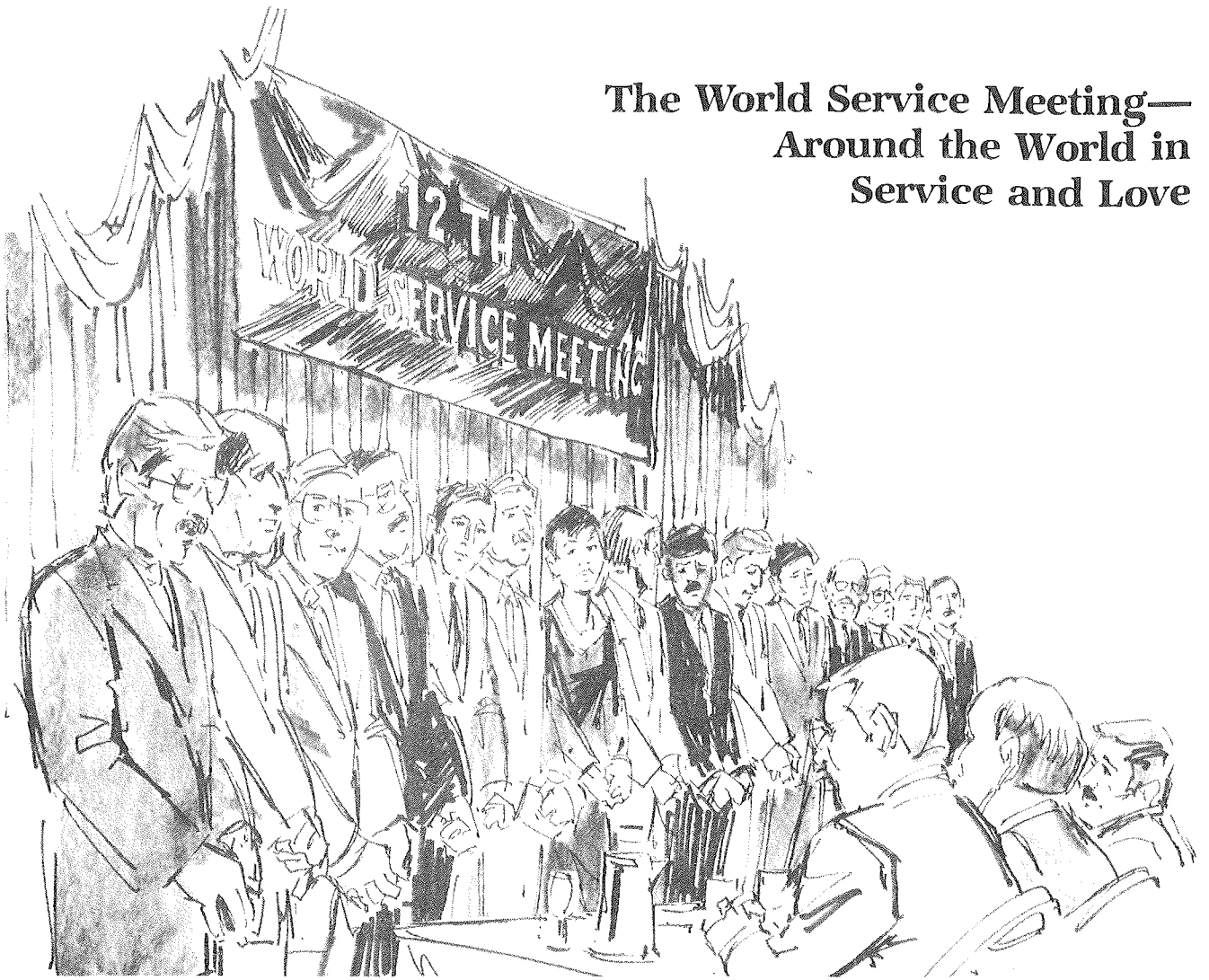
As D.L. of Alamogordo, New Mexico notes in a February 1985 Grapevine article, "Painful as it may be, the place to start in achieving an informed group conscience is with myself. . . .

"I believe that for a group conscience to be well informed, we must become knowledgeable about many things. First, we must be knowledgeable about our Twelve Traditions. The future of our entire Fellowship depends on it. . . . If we are truly to achieve an informed group conscience, we will as individuals ensure that we are knowledgeable about our A.A. way of life. We will read our literature and be willing to share that with newcomers. We will understand and participate in our service structure. We will ensure that we truly have group conscience meetings."

As D.L. continues, "I want A.A. to survive for myself, for my son, and for the as yet unborn members of the future. And that requires that I become responsible. God will indeed take care of us, but only if we do our part."

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## The World Service Meeting— Around the World in Service and Love



With A.A. in 141 far-flung countries spanning the world—flourishing in many, but still a slender lifeline in others—delegates to the Twelfth World Service Meeting came together last October in New York City with heightened awareness that, at home or in the world outside, we are only as strong as our weakest link.

After five days of presentations, workshops, reports and unvarnished sharing, Bruno H. of Sweden expressed a prevailing sentiment when he said, “I thought our problems at home were unique to us; now I realize that everyone has similar ones. But some of you are older in the Fellowship—you have solved some big problems and then shared the solutions here with me as a representative of my country. I hope that in time I may do the same.”

The theme of the 1992 Meeting was “Service: Everyone’s Privilege.” Delegate Charles McK. of Great Britain recalled A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob’s observation that, “Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words ‘love’ and ‘service.’ ” (*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, p. 338)

“Friendship, trust and love are coming out so clearly in this meeting,” Charles exclaimed. “Certainly, we need

to indicate guidelines, but love tells us that A.A. is a divine anarchy where rules, bylaws and such do not exist. Our trusted servants lead by example, not by mandate.”

While not a decision-making body, the biennial World Service Meeting does provide a forum for sharing to help maintain A.A. unity and continuity around the world. The 39 delegates from 24 countries spoke 15 different languages; but they communicated just fine, thanks to simultaneous translations into English and Spanish at the main sessions, and to A.A.’s pervasive language of the heart.

The World Service Meeting has four committees: Agenda, Literature/Publishing, Policy/Admissions/Finance, and Working With Others. Here is a sampling of concerns that were shared, considered or recommended.

- Some countries have encountered difficulties owing to the referral to A.A. meetings of persons with problems other than alcohol. They report that improved communication with referring individuals and agencies is helping considerably.
- What to do about non-A.A. terminology at A.A. meet-



ings, such as "straight," "clean," and "using"? One country said that the A.A. service piece describing open and closed meeting discussions is read at a number of meetings, another utilizes the pamphlet "Problems Other than Alcohol."

- Most countries try to provide some A.A. literature gratis for groups in correctional facilities.
- After a discussion of the need for more literature directed specifically to young people, it was recommended that the trustees' Literature Committee of the U.S./Canada General Service Board consider the addition of young people's stories to the Big Book.
- It was recommended that "Back to Basics" be the theme of the Thirteenth World Service Meeting, to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, October 9-13, 1994.
- The literature committee recommended that each general service office and World Service delegate share what their countries are doing in carrying the message to neighboring countries; what literature translations have been done; what other languages are needed within their countries and whether or not they need monetary help from the International Literature Fund to accomplish this.

For most of the delegates saying goodbye was hard to do. In his final remarks, Guy F., of French-speaking Europe expressed gratitude for A.A.'s spiritual network. "You have taught me not just through sharing," he said, "but through your every action." Italy's Nico P. spoke of "the wonderful friendships I have made here." And Iceland's Magnus J., referring metaphorically to life as a fairy tale, said that he had met "the ugly, mean witch who turned me into a rock. Only now in A.A., I am no longer a rock. I experience love in these rooms where A.A. meets. I have learned also that this love can last only if I give it away."

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## A.A. in Hungary Is An Exciting Frontier

"Thank God, it is growing. Thank God, it is working." Writing from Budapest, Kati M. adds that new groups are popping up everywhere, in places with names like Pécs, Komló, Szigetvár, Miskolc and Karcag, which Katie says is her "old hometown."

Since 1988, when Hungary's first meeting was held in Budapest, A.A. in that Eastern European country has enjoyed steady growth. In 1990 there were five groups; two years later these have doubled and are well on the way to doubling again. "All of a sudden," Kati reports, "we must look for more and more empty places for new meetings for the newcomers. And just like in the United States, there are people here who come back

after slips and try again. Only this time around, they are taking sobriety more seriously."

Here Kati recalls a letter she wrote three years ago to the International desk at the General Service Office: " 'Oh, the Hungarian people are so stubborn,' I said then. 'They do not want to get sober.' Those days are over, thanks be!"

Now, Kati continues, "we are very happy, very sober and working hard to carry the message. Last year, we sent out about 1,000 letters to medical people and members of the clergy, explaining that A.A. is growing in Hungary and how it works. We also are visiting some of the hospitals."

Enclosing a contribution in her letter for copies of the new Hungarian translations of the Big Book and some pamphlets, Kati expressed her gratitude for the program: "In Budapest, the 'oldest' member has three years' sobriety, and there are many who have been sober one and two years. They are the seeds of Hungarian A.A. and make its promise come true."

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## 1995 International Convention Theme Selected

Thanks to all who responded to our call for suggested themes for A.A.'s 60th Anniversary Celebration, to be held in San Diego, California, June 29-July 2, 1995. We received many great suggestions for a Convention theme (with some duplications). After a careful review, the trustees' International Convention Committee has selected "A.A. Everywhere—Anywhere."

As the time gets closer, we will keep you posted on plans for the celebration. Thanks again for your much appreciated input.

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## New From G.S.O.

- Big Book (Danish translation) (SDA-1) \$26.25
  - Big Book (Swahili translation) (SW-10) \$14.00
  - "Pass It On" (Spanish translation) (SS-99) \$14.15
  - Markings on the Journey (Spanish) ½" VHS cassette (SS-100) \$16.00
  - "44 Questions" (Latvian translation) (SL-10) \$2.35
  - *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (Lithuanian translation) (SU-2) \$5.25
  - Romanian translations of the pamphlets: "Is A.A. for You?" (SM-33) \$1.45; "This Is A.A." (SM-31) \$1.95; "Understanding Anonymity" (SM-37) \$1.65; "If You Are a Professional . . ." (SM-36) \$1.55
- 20% discount applies to all.



## Correctional Facilities

### The Walls Are High, But A.A. Can Hurdle Them

Thanks to creative funding in Southeast Texas, A.A. Grapevines and Big Books are landing in prisons and jails in greater numbers than ever before, reports Martha W., a past delegate who presently serves as an appointed committee member on the trustees' Correctional Facilities Committee.

"This past year," she relates, "one of our district C.F. committees found a way to beat the no-money blues. The members bought a bunch of Big Books from the General Service Office for the bulk price of \$4.10 apiece, then turned around and sold them at their January and August conventions for \$5.00. As if that weren't enough, they asked the buyers to give back the books they'd just purchased—each one to be used as a gift for someone behind bars. It was suggested that donors might like to write an inscription on the flyleaf first."

The response was exciting, Martha says. In all, about 390 Big Books were bought at the inflated price and then given back, many with inscriptions such as "Easy Does It," "Good Luck!" and "From a grateful A.A. member." The committee's literature fund was some \$350 richer, and many inmates on waiting lists for the Big Book finally got their own personal copy.

Not to be outdone, Martha adds, the Houston Intergroup C.F. Committee has a highly creative drive of its own. "Every few months, often coinciding with a special A.A. event such as Gratitude Month in November," she explains, "the committee announces the sale of one-year Grapevine subscriptions, at the usual U.S. price of \$12, to be donated to incarcerated A.A. members. Simultaneously they distribute flyers at meetings, proclaiming that 'Prison walls are high but the Grapevine can go over them.' Then they just set up tables and sell Grapevines, sometimes like hotcakes. Last year, in one three-month period, 268 subscriptions were sold and immediately 'recycled' into correctional centers here. On top of that, intergroup 'matched' that figure for a total of 568 subscriptions."

Buying and giving away a Big Book or a subscription to the Grapevine "is another, wonderful way to Twelfth Step," Martha points out. "A lot of people are reluctant to go into a jail or a prison, but they do welcome an alternative way to be personally involved."

From time to time, she notes, "the Houston Area C.F. Committee holds one-day workshops. These don't raise funds directly; but in orienting A.A.s to correctional

facility work, they raise their consciousness to the urgent need for literature. This is important, because so many of our members have no idea of how widespread alcoholism is in our jails and prisons. When they do understand, they're much more apt to help."

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### A.A. in Prison Audio Cassette

Eleven inmate stories from the booklet *A.A. In Prison: Inmate to Inmate*, are now recorded on a 60-minute audiocassette. An excellent tool for those who take meetings into correctional facilities. (M-55) \$2.75; 20% discount applies.

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## Treatment Facilities

### T.F. Panel at North East Regional Conference

Harold D., delegate from Vermont (Panel 42), who is the 1993 chair of the Conference Treatment Facilities Committee, co-chaired the treatment panel at the 1992 Northeast Regional Conference, October 2-4. The panel was well attended by a mix of delegates, past, present and future, as well as many interested members of the Fellowship.

Some of the concerns were how to get A.A.s interested in doing treatment contact Twelfth Step work, and how to keep them interested. This problem exists in the small states of Rhode Island and Vermont, as well as the populous areas of New York and Boston. The small states expressed the view that they have so few calls for contacts that A.A.s wander off into service areas that are more active. The Boston area, with about 1,500 local treatment centers, has contact people suffering from burnout because they don't have enough people available to handle the calls they receive. A related problem is keeping the telephone list of contact people current. The range of people involved in doing this work is based on the size of the area. In Boston, for example, the contact list may be in the hands of one of several intergroup offices, while in Vermont one person maintains a state-wide contact list. The results of this discussion did not net any new results. Treatment chairs and intergroups can ask people to send in their new telephone



numbers, but that may not work as well as the personal touch. One suggested solution was for the treatment chair to call the contact people periodically and update the list. One area uses the network facility of the Worldwide Bridging the Gap program. This gives treatment facility chairs an interstate contact list.

Members of the panel agreed that once the contact is made we should try and keep in touch with the new person during those early days. The panel shared the real need for A.A.s to attend treatment facility meetings. This creates an early bonding between clients, contacts and the Fellowship.

Because of the current economy and other influences, many treatment facilities have reduced the in-house programs from 28 days to programs of from 12 to 15 days. Shorter programs spell out a need to have A.A. close at hand for those who choose to join us.

The panel related experiences dealing with clients coming from treatment who may not be alcoholic. It is not our place to judge or prescribe, but a contact person may discover that A.A. is not what this particular individual needs. At this point, the panel concluded, we need to stick to our single purpose and remember the words of the Preamble. Although it is tough not to try and help all that come to us, we can't "fix" everyone; we are a support group for alcoholics and we can help the person find the right program.

The panel agreed that being a temporary contact for someone is good old-fashioned Twelfth Step work. We may mistakenly view the caller as having some period of sobriety because they have been in treatment, but this may not be quite accurate. It was highly recommended by the panel that temporary contacts follow the time-tested Twelfth Step suggestion of taking a buddy along for the first contact. The caller may be drunk or high by the time you pick them up. The person may have been ordered to call, and may have little or no interest in going to A.A. Treatment committees can use local sharing sessions to promote the use of caution when making contact with newcomers.

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## P.I.

### They Divide the Work in Southeast New York

"... when we get into questions of action by groups, by areas, and by A.A. as a whole, we find that we must to some extent organize to carry the message—or else face chaos. And chaos is not simplicity."

In Southeast New York (SENY), this caveat, delivered

by Bill W. in 1966 (*As Bill Sees It*, p. 162), has not gone unheeded. By dividing their functions, three service entities—the Public Information arms of the area assembly, the General Service Office, and New York Intergroup are cutting out chaos (almost) and enhancing their effectiveness in carrying the A.A. message.

Explains immediate past area chairperson Paul S., who now serves as alternate delegate: "In theory, getting things done is a piece of cake. As *The A.A. Service Manual* states (p. S98), 'Central Offices [intergroups] provide local services; general service committees maintain the link between the A.A. groups and the A.A. General Service Board by means of the General Service Conference. So these two separate but vital service structures coexist in many areas in mutual cooperation and harmony. . . .' The concept is clear but, in practice, it requires constant updating and revision.

"In many areas," he explains, "well-established intergroups were providing local services for A.A. groups and their members back in the early 1940s, long before the first Conference convened in 1951, and started spawning more service committees than even visionary Bill ever dreamed possible. At the same time, here in Southeast New York, Manhattan Intergroup has its counterparts in the other boroughs of New York City. Inevitably, this expansion has caused overlapping and duplication of services over the years, not to mention crossed communications signals."

In order to "distribute the workload," Paul reports, "SENY's P.I. chairperson and I have met regularly this past year with two of the New York Intergroup people—Barbara C., P.I. coordinator, and Turlough McC., P.I. committee chairperson—and with Joanie M., the G.S.O. staff member who is coordinator on the P.I. desk. We have aired and shared our problems candidly and found new ways to help each other."

The centerpiece of change is a carefully thought-out activities chart that shows who handles what in six main categories: Live TV and Radio, Audiovisual Materials, Schools and Colleges, Health Fairs, Films and Public Meetings, and Requests for Information on A.A. Looking under Schools and Colleges, for example, one quickly sees that G.S.O. provides literature packages when appropriate; intergroup provides volunteer A.A. speakers for medical, nursing and high schools, and arranges for A.A. Conference-approved films to be shown; and SENY arranges for A.A. speakers and film showings outside the greater New York City area.

The flow chart, which is patterned on one developed in Philadelphia some years ago, appears deceptively simple but involved hours of planning, as intergroup's Barbara C. can attest. She points out that "the present categories can be expanded or changed to include many more efforts. We greatly need guidelines for connecting with preteenagers and the elderly, to name a few. Fortunately, this format for cooperation between intergroup



and A.A. general service is very flexible and can accommodate new directions we haven't even thought of."

It can accommodate the needs of other service entities too, as many of them are quick to see. "Our group has been meeting with 11 other intergroups in Southeast New York," Paul says, "to help them develop similar programs—not just for P.I. committees but for Correctional Facilities and C.P.C. (Cooperation With the Professional Community) as well."

Sharing the work "certainly took a load off my mind from the very beginning," comments Mike L., the SENY Area's immediate past P.I. chairperson. "Take health fairs. Because we used to handle every aspect of P.I. for 75 school fairs in 13 counties, we were always playing catch-up. Now, with G.S.O. sending literature to local P.I. committees, and intergroup referring the inquiries to us, the P.I. committee can concentrate on setting up and staffing the booths and talking one-on-one to alcoholics who may want our help."

Paul, Barbara, Turlough and Mike all stress the importance of frequent contact. "It continually reminds us that we share common problems and goals," says Barbara, "and that the effectiveness of any one committee is the sum total of all our efforts. In other words, we need each other."

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## C.P.C.

### 'Paris Wasn't Built In a Day'—and Neither Are A.A. Friendships

Speaking before a sharing session of the General Service Board last August, two board members—Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee John Hartley Smith, M.D., of Vancouver, British Columbia, and Class B (alcoholic) trustee Marc P. of Quebec—both noted that the work of committees on Cooperation With the Professional Community is continuous and cited the need for more A.A. volunteers.

"Today," said John, immediate past-chair of the trustees' C.P.C. Committee, "C.P.C. needs to widen its efforts to reach lawyers, corrections personnel, teachers, engineers, health care professionals, psychologists and more. We need to put together more display booths and make contact with these professionals where they meet—at their conferences. We need to step up our informational meetings and distribute more literature here and abroad."

In certain situations, he explained, "we might suggest

the inclusion of A.A. information in professional school curricula. And, certainly, each of us can assist in providing information about A.A. to those professionals we come in contact with by giving them literature and explaining what A.A. can and cannot do."

Here John pointed out that "professionals historically have received the message of A.A. from their own colleagues—the first of them Carl Jung, who came to believe that science had no answer to alcoholism but that A.A.'s spiritual program did. Then there were Dr. William Duncan Silkworth, M.D., of Towns Hospital, New York, who wrote the first published medical paper on A.A.; and Dr. Harry Tiebout, whom Bill W. hailed as 'our first friend of psychiatry.'"

By 1955, John continued, "religion had taken a look at the Fellowship. Father Ed Dowling, who helped to start the first A.A. group in St. Louis, was the first clergyman of his faith to note the surprising resemblance between the spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (founder of the Jesuit Order) and A.A.'s Twelve Steps. The list goes on and on, to include professionals in almost every field of endeavor."

Gratefully acknowledging their help, Bill W. said, in an October 1948 Grapevine article about the Eleventh Tradition: "Somehow we have been spared all the pains of medical or religious controversy, and we have good friends both wet and dry, right and left." A.A. "has no need for self-praise," he added. "It is better to let our friends recommend us; and our whole public relations policy, contrary to usual customs, should be based upon the principle of *attraction* rather than promotion."

Noting that "we have come a long way but there is much to do," Eastern Canada regional trustee Marc P., who presently chairs the trustees' C.P.C. Committee, discussed the need to reach out to professionals who work with minority populations. "When A.A. began in Montreal in 1944," he related, "the early members embarked on the time-consuming method of sharing one-on-one with sometimes resistant professionals. Since then, the message has been carried to a large extent through the print media, by translating the literature, and by producing public service announcements in French for radio and television.

"Additionally, through the annual A.A. Bilingual Convention, members have explained their willingness to be helpful to invited professionals. Some of these professionals, who also are A.A. members, have come forward as well, and they have been of invaluable help to our active area C.P.C. committee."

At present, he notes, "we are working to improve our contacts with members of the clergy and the judiciary in this minority population. Sometimes it's slow going, but Paris wasn't built in a day; and, meanwhile, our antennae are out scanning for A.A. members who will commit to showing up when needed."

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## 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.

### February

- 5-7 — *Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.* Sixth Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., 31 Pine Grove Tree Ct., Comp 32, Site #1, RR #8, Fredericton, NB E3B 5W5
- 5-7 — *Brawley, California.* Imperial Roundup. Write: 148 22nd St., El Centro, CA 92243
- 5-7 — *Universal City, California.* 18th SFVAA Conv. Write: Ch., 7970 Woodman Ave., #201, Van Nuys, CA 91042
- 5-7 — *Dun Laoghaire, Ireland.* 18th Conv. Write: Ch., Community Center, Monks-town Farm, Monstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland
- 7-9 — *Arevalo Iloilo City, Philippines.* National Conv. Write: Ch., Plaza Rizal Jaro, Iloilo City, Philippines
- 12-14 — *West Palm Beach, Florida.* Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 325, Boca Raton, FL 33429
- 12-14 — *El Paso, Texas.* 31st Jamboree. Write: Sec., Box 3115, El Paso, TX 79923
- 20-21 — *Kiev, Ukraine.* Fourth Anniversary Meeting. Write: Ch., u./Nikolaeva D.3, KB22, 252217, Kiev, Ukraine
- 26-28 — *Warwick, Bermuda.* Big Book Study. Write: Ch., Box WK178, Warwick, W.K.B.X., Bermuda
- 26-28 — *Wilmington, Delaware.* NERAASA '93. Write: Ch., Box 3721, Wilmington, DE 19807
- 26-28 — *Burlington, Iowa.* Southeastern Iowa Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 431, Ft. Madison, IA 52627
- 26-28 — *Kansas City, Kansas.* Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1281, Mission, KS 66222
- 26-28 — *Middleburg Heights, Ohio.* 18th Annual N.E. Ohio Mini-Conf. Write: Ch., 1937 19th St. S.W., Akron, OH 44314-2775
- 26-28 — *Corpus Christi, Texas.* CBIA Jamboree. Write: Ch., 3833 So. Staples, Suite 44, Corpus Christi, TX 78411

### March

- 5-7 — *Gulf Shores, Alabama.* Ninth Annual Jubilee. Write: Ch., Box 1183, Foley, AL 36536-1183
- 5-7 — *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.* North Shore Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 91086, West Vancouver, BC V7V 3N3
- 5-7 — *Jekyll Island, Georgia.* Sixth Unity

- Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 1464, Tifton, GA 31793
- 12-14 — *Fresno, California.* 46th Spring Conf. Write: Tr., 1540 Market St., Room 150, San Francisco, CA 94102
- 12-14 — *New Orleans, Louisiana.* 25th Annual Big Deep South. Write: Ch., 4041 Tulane Ave., Ste. 301, New Orleans, LA 70119
- 12-14 — *Cherry Hill, New Jersey.* 29th Southern NJ G.S.C. Write: Ch., Box 25, Clementon, NJ 08021
- 12-14 — *Toledo, Ohio.* 11th N/W Ohio S/E Michigan General Service Mini-Conf. Write: 4615 N. Holland Sylvania Rd. #7, Toledo, OH 43623
- 18-21 — *Miami Beach, Florida.* Florida Roundup (presented by gay & lesbian members). Write: Ch., Box 030237, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33303-0237
- 19-21 — *Indianapolis, Indiana.* 40th State Conv. Write: Ch., 700 East 60th St., Anderson, IN 46013
- 19-21 — *Provo, Utah.* Utah Area 69 Pre-Conf. Write: Ch., Box 116, Levan, UT 84639
- 19-22 — *Amarillo, Texas.* Eighth Annual Top of Texas Oldtimers. Write: Ch., Box 32302, Amarillo, TX 79120-2302
- 26-28 — *Goodyear, Arizona.* West Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1491, Surprise, AZ 85374
- 26-28 — *Ames, Iowa.* Aim for Ames Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 2491, Ames, IA 50010
- 26-28 — *Ruston, Louisiana.* Second Annual Upstate Conv. Box 651, Ruston, LA 71273-0651
- 26-28 — *Topeka, Kansas.* KSCYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 3342, Lawrence, KS 66046
- 26-28 — *Lynchburg, Virginia.* Area Committee Spring Assembly. Write: Ch., 7711 Fisher Dr., Falls Church, VA 22043
- 27-28 — *Arlington, Texas.* Spring Assembly. Write: Ch., 220 Valley Ln., Weatherford, TX 76086

## Closed Meeting Topics From the Grapevine

For more detailed suggestions, see the pages noted.

*February* (page 27): What we used to be like; what happened; what we are like now.

*March* (page 40): Adversity; A.A. and treatment facilities.

### April

- 2-4 — *Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.* Southern Alberta Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 212, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Y5
- 8-11 — *San Diego, California.* Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 4577, Carlsbad, CA 92018
- 9-11 — *Rosemont, Illinois.* GLRCYPAA III. Write: Ch., 1430 Miner St., Box 158, Des Plaines, IL 60016
- 9-11 — *Reno, Nevada.* 21st Annual Reno Spring Festival. Write: Ch., Box 72, Reno, NV 89504
- 15-17 — *Rapid City, South Dakota.* Rushmore Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 594, Rapid City, SD 57701-0594
- 16-17 — *Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada.* B.C./Yukon Area Quarterly Conv. Write: Ch., 1058 7th Ave. East, Prince Rupert, BC V8J 2J8
- 16-18 — *Lancaster, Pennsylvania.* Tri-State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 5032, Lutherville, MD 21094
- 16-18 — *Scranton, Pennsylvania.* Sixth Men's

## Planning a Future Event?

Please send your information on May, June or July events, two days or more, in time to reach G.S.O. by *February 10*, the calendar deadline for the April/May issue of *Box 4-5-9*.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_

Name of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Place (city, state or prov.): \_\_\_\_\_

For information, write: (exact mailing address) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone # (for office use only): \_\_\_\_\_

Flip up this end of page — for events on reverse side



## April (cont.)

- National Conf. Write: Ch., Box 3653, Scranton, PA 18505-3653  
23-25 — *Lincoln, Nebraska*. Spring Fling Conv. Write: Ch., 866 South 33rd St., Lincoln, NE 68510-3401  
30-May 1 — *Mosney, Ireland*. All Ireland Conv. '93. Write: Ch., Breaffy, Castlehar, Co. Mayo, Eire, Ireland

## May

- 7-9 — *Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada*. 27th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 73, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4V5  
14-16 — *Aptos, California*. NORCAL Woman-to-Woman Conf. Write: Tr., 261 Cleveland Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941  
14-16 — *Metro, South Dakota*. Three Legacies. Write: Ch., 1100 W. 23rd St., Mitchell, SD 57301  
27-30 — *New York, New York*. 36th ICYPAA. Write: Ch., Box 951, Bronx, NY 10466  
28-30 — *Castlegar, British Columbia, Canada*. 20th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., 314 3rd Ave., Castlegar, BC V1N 2A6  
29-30 — *Sophia Antipolis, France*. French Riviera Conv. Write: Ch., 20, Allee de la Tour, Domaine de Pierrefeu, 06560 Valbonne, France