

Alkali Lake: A Native Community Sobers Up

What it was like: In the early 1970s, the Shuswap community of Alkali Lake in north-central British Columbia was devastated by alcoholism. By their own admission, the devastation touched 100 percent of their native community — the impact felt by children, parents, husbands and wives.

A once hard-working people now lived in a village strewn with the refuse of alcoholism: broken-down cars, untended houses, windows covered with cardboard, furniture broken and dirty, and the pervasive spirit of sadness presiding over it all like a cloud.

As far back as the elders can remember there was no use of alcohol on the reserve before 1940. But just before World War II, a general store was set up at Alkali Lake by a European immigrant to the area who gradually introduced alcohol into the community as a means of “softening people up” during the negotiation process for the furs that community members brought to the store to trade.

At first, only a few families were affected, but once alcohol entered the community system, a gradual deterioration of the health and well-being of the people followed. Compounding this problem, a whole generation of Alkali Lake young people was sent off to residential schools, where, while they were provided with educational opportunities, were separated from their parents, families and native customs — force-fed a set of European values and told over and over that their own cultural foundations were inferior, “primitive,” even sinful. And adding to the growing alienation and despair was the introduction of widespread physical and sexual abuse — extending by some estimates to nearly 90 percent of the youth population of Alkali Lake.

And so, across three decades, this native community of some four hundred people had become a waking nightmare for most of its members.

What happened: In 1972, after years of drunkenness and despair, one woman hit bottom and vowed to stop drinking. Inspired by her daughter’s refusal to come home with her until she sobered up, Phyllis put down the drink and reached out to Father Ed, an Oblate Brother and alcoholism counselor from nearby Williams Lake who had been trying to convince Alkali Lake people to come to an A.A. meeting for several years. A few days later, Phyllis’ husband, Andy, also quit drinking and they soon began holding A.A. meetings in their house with Father Ed. As far as they knew Andy and Phyllis were the only two non-

drinking people in the entire community.

A year later, Andy and Phyllis were still sober, celebrating their anniversary with a cake provided by Father Ed, and slowly, over the next seven years, a handful of people stopped drinking and began working with Phyllis and Andy to restore some measure of health to the people of Alkali Lake. In a sure sign that even through their alcoholism and addictions the people of the com-

munity wanted something better for themselves, they elected Andy as Chief of the reserve in 1972, shortly after he stopped drinking.

Using his newfound influence, Andy began to set the village on a course toward sobriety — expelling the bootleggers who had attached themselves to the community and encouraging people to seek treatment. One of the first steps taken by the newly elected Chief was to set up weekly alcohol awareness meetings. These gatherings were run by Alcohol and Drug Program staff from nearby Williams Lake, and consisted of presentations, discussions, films and tapes about the nature and impact of alcoholism on individual and family well-being. These regular meetings were later reorganized into an A.A. group on the reserve, which was run entirely by the A.A. members of Alkali Lake.

By the end of 1973 there were less than a dozen sober



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people in Alkali Lake. Then, in 1974, some 35 people went to treatment. A turning point had been reached. By the end of 1975, 40 percent of the community was sober. The process was by no means easy, but by 1979, 98 percent of Alkali Lake people completely abstained from the use of alcohol.

Critical to the community's recovery was the reintroduction of traditional Native culture, and a deliberate effort was made to revive traditional Native forms of spirituality and healing. Because much of the community's own cultural resources had been lost during the dark years, traditional teachers from other communities were asked to come to Alkali Lake in order to help the people rediscover their indigenous identity and spirituality. Through this process, the use of the sacred pipe and sweat lodge was reintroduced, and these cultural resources became powerful instruments helping many Alkali Lake people find their way back to sobriety and a path of wellness.

The community's story of recovery soon became a model for other tribal communities overcome by alcoholism, and in 1986 the people of Alkali Lake told their story to the world in a film titled *The Honor of All: The Story of Alkali Lake*, which details the community's devastation, its downfall, and ultimate transformation.

A.A. meetings, adapted to fit the community's reality, were a critical rallying point for many people, providing a therapeutic as well as a spiritual outlet. And such cultural activities as sweat-lodge ceremonies, powwows, and healing circle meetings became commonplace. For others, involvement in church-based activities, rodeo, or outdoor pursuits such as hunting, fishing and horseback riding were important. A recreation center was opened, a hockey rink was developed, a summer baseball league was organized, and many alcohol-free parties, dances and social gatherings were held, all to provide people with healthy environments that would support their recovery processes.

What it is like now: The story of Alkali Lake is not a fairy tale in which everyone lives happily ever after, as the impact of alcoholism, alienation and abuse reverberates still. As one member of the Serenity Group — the A.A.

group that meets on the reserve — shared recently, "I was taken away at five years old, me and my sister. And given to a white couple. The father was mean. They shaved off our hair, and I had a lot of anger at my mom and dad because it felt like they gave us away. So I used alcohol to ease my pain.

"I went to treatment in 1988, in Victoria, British Columbia. The first two weeks I didn't go to the A.A. meetings, but after that I tried it. I thought A.A. was for old people.

"But slowly I began to talk about some of the things that were going on in my life — the anger, the fear, the spiritual stuff.

"For me, I had been abused when I was young and I began to work through it in A.A. with the Steps. And as a result, I have more spirituality today; I'm a better father to my children today."

So, recovery is still taking place in Alkali Lake — for oldtimers and newcomers alike.

"It's been almost 10 months since I sobered up and I take in almost three meetings a week," says Henry J., one of the newcomers to the group. "For quite some time when I was drinking I was pretty wrapped up in my own world. I knew there was sobriety around Alkali Lake, but I was apart from it, dealing with my own problems, not thinking about anybody else.

"But sobriety has really benefited me, especially with my family, and now everything seems to be falling into place. Without meetings, I wouldn't be where I am today."

Says Freddy J., one of the group's oldtimers, about the sobriety that began to develop in Alkali Lake, "I was about the tenth person to have it. Andy and Phyllis are still around and some of the original members are still hanging in.

"We started slow, and in about 1983 things started moving pretty fast, and in the time between '72 and '83 our community went from 100 percent drinking to 90 percent sober. But sobriety and healing didn't go hand-in-hand, the healing came after the sobriety — healing from grief. We lost quite a few members of our community to alcoholism, and we saw a lot of devastation and death coming in all forms: murder, suicide, fire, infants dying, elders dying, and I guess somehow, through a miracle of a higher power, people started going to alcohol treatment and then from there it became stronger and many individuals, once exposed to the healing, began to work on themselves.

"The group is still growing today, with young people coming in," says Freddy. "We're still here."

The group also hosts the Esk'etemic A.A. Roundup that happens each July. "This coming July will be our 40th anniversary," notes Ken J., another of the group's oldtimers, "and we have a New Year's Day celebration that this year was our 41st."

The Roundup regularly attracts people from all over the globe. "Some come ahead of time just to help out and some don't even want to leave," says Ken. "This year we

had close to 600 people, some from as far away as Atlanta, and a couple of years ago we had some people from Japan. Last year we had a lady from Russia.”

Trish L., a past delegate from the BC/Yukon Area, and a recent visitor to the Roundup adds, “From the sobriety birthday meeting where local milestones over the past year are celebrated, to the call-up meetings, to the beautiful dinner — pride in the success of the individuals and of the success of the community absolutely shines through.

“This year there was a group of interns from St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver there to observe as part of their addiction training — a great Cooperation With the Professional Community connection that has been forged over the years. Everywhere I looked, there was pride and joy. It was remarkable and humbling.”

Monica M., another attendee of many roundups at Alkali Lake, was working in the area when the film *The Honor of All* made its debut in 1986. “I had the privilege of attending the premiere showing of the film,” she says, because of the work she was doing with a nearby school district.

“The evening was a profound experience of hope and honesty. They held a community feast. There were so many people they had two showings, filling the school gym each time. Then the film. There wasn’t a dry eye in the place when it was done. I will never forget the acknowledgments they gave to the individuals who had supported the development of A.A. in the community. The evening ended with a friendship dance. Everyone shook the hand of everyone there. What a feeling of unity, of common purpose! I was early in my sobriety. What an impact it had on me; if they could do it, then just maybe I could, too.

“Shortly after, I moved away from Williams Lake, but have gone back six times to attend the Esk’etemc Roundup. Camping together adds a wonderful dimension, particularly of unity and love of life. It’s so encouraging to see the children playing, comfortable with the A.A. setting. The spirit of joy, family, community, and outreach is evident.

“The Esk’etemc members are generous in explaining their culture. One year, I was privileged to participate in a sweat with a group of women. The leader introduced us to the connection they have with their ancestors, the universe, the spirit of everyone present.”

“A.A. has been a really big part of my life, my sobriety and my healing,” says Irene J., a longtime member of the Serenity Group. “Over the last 38 years, A.A. has really stabilized me, where I know I can come here and get the support I need.

“What I’ve learned is that sobriety doesn’t bring automatic happiness. There are bumps and challenges along the way. We had three suicides within our family and had to look at things like sexual abuse and incest, which were really difficult at times. But I was able to use the Steps and deal with a lot of it.

“I also really believe in having a higher power or something greater than myself, ’cause I know I’m not that great. And I believe in using some of our traditional ceremonies along with A.A. When you think back to our history, long before contact with other cultures, when there were stresses, our people had successful ways of dealing with them. So what we’ve been doing is looking at how we can use those similar methods today.

“When we look at the sweat-lodge ceremony, it has a lot of components that can assist us. Number one is safety — when we go into the sweat lodge there’s safety. There’s also security. There’s trust. Whatever is said and done stays in there. And there’s the freedom where I can say whatever I want, talk about whatever I want, and I’ll still be accepted when I leave there. It’s similar to A.A., where we all have that same feeling of hopelessness and helplessness and we are together in it.

“And after dealing with all those demons — all those skeletons in my closet, I’ve come to see it’s not that bad after all. There’s nothing I can do to go back and change the things that have happened in my life, but I can change how I see it and how I deal with it today. The power that I have is what I can do today.”

And so it goes, in Alkali Lake — and in the A.A. world beyond.

■ Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. Literature

A.A. members read a lot, drawing hope, help and inspiration from the wide range of A.A. material published by A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine. However, a question that has popped up frequently from some of the Fellowship’s more eagle-eyed readers concerns the book *As Bill Sees It*, and the many quotes contained within it:

Q. Why are some of the quotes in *As Bill Sees It* different from their original sources, and why were Bill’s words changed?

A. As he did with so many things in A.A., Bill anticipated the concerns this might raise, adding the following information in the book’s Foreword: “This volume includes several hundred excerpts from our literature, touching nearly every aspect of A.A.’s way of life.” He then notes the sources of most of the material from which the book’s content was chosen, principally the Big Book, Twelve and Twelve, and Grapevine, and explains “Because the quotations used were lifted out of their original context, it has been necessary in the interest of clarity to edit, and sometimes to rewrite, a number of them.”

So, for all the A.A. readers out there who have been wondering who had the gall to change Bill’s writing, it was Bill himself!

■ Annual General Service Conference

Once more it is time for A.A.'s annual General Service Conference, which will take place April 17-23, 2016, in New York City. The theme of the 66th Conference is "Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts," underscoring the importance of A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

Consisting of delegates from the 93 service areas of the United States and Canada, along with trustees, directors and General Service Office, Grapevine and La Viña staff members, the purpose of the Conference is to deliberate on matters affecting the Fellowship as a whole.

For months, preparations have been underway throughout the Fellowship for the annual gathering — from the election of new delegates, to the deliberation of groups, districts and areas on matters of interest, to the distribution of information on agenda items throughout the service structure, the Conference process has been picking up steam throughout the year.

Actively in session for a single week. At 7:30 a.m. there

is a meeting of the GSC Serenity Group, an open A.A. meeting for those who wish to attend. As the week progresses, there are presentation/discussion sessions, brief area highlights given by new delegates, financial and board reports from trustees and directors and elections for incoming regional trustees.

Beyond the meetings and reports, the essential work of the Conference is done through thirteen delegate committees, that meet early in the week to discuss a series of topics that have been submitted for each committee. After discussion, each committee prepares a report that is presented to the Conference as a whole later in the week, with any specific recommendations the committee may have. After full discussion and vote by the entire Conference, any item receiving a two-thirds majority becomes a Conference Advisory Action.

Since the very first Conference in 1951, open debate has been a hallmark of the Conference process and the 2016 General Service Conference will be no exception. Like each of the Conferences before it, the 66th and its 131 or so Conference members will be guided by the principles handed down to each new generation of A.A.s as an inheritance from the founders and early members: the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.



A new International Edition Library of A.A. Literature (above) has been established in the Publishing Department. This impressive A-Z country-by-country reference library brings together copies of books gathered over decades. Notable and recent additions to this resource mix, which includes publications in a wide selection of the total 90 languages licensed via this office, include editions ranging from Arabic to Czech, Farsi to German, Portuguese to Sinhalese and Twi to Zulu. The much-anticipated Rarotongan Big Book, currently nearing completion, will hopefully be the next new Big Book edition to be printed and added this year. There are 68 current translations of Alcoholics Anonymous (69 total languages, which includes the original English). A.A.W.S. prints the Big Book in 34 languages, with 35 printed by local service structures.

■ G.S.O.'s Shipping Department: A Model of Consistency

In this day and age of mobility and workplace opportunity, it's rare to have an employee with 30-plus years of service — and rarer still to have a whole department full of them!

Such is the case, however, with the shipping department at G.S.O. Manned by five nonalcoholic employees, their length of service to the Fellowship totals nearly 150 years.

First hired in 1973, Ronnie Shelton is the department's oldtimer, with Bill Heinitz (1979) and Frank Smith (1980)



not far behind. Aubrey Pereira, the department supervisor, started working at G.S.O. back in 1982, and Willie Johnson is the new kid on the block, having started just an eye-blink ago in 2015.

“We work very well together,” notes Aubrey, acknowledging that now, after so many years, they have gotten pretty good at “doing more with less.” Considering the explosion of material the five-man team handles each year,

including letters, books, pamphlets and newsletters, in what is an ever-growing, worldwide mailing operation, the department runs incredibly smoothly, day after day, year after year.

“At one time we had just a single cabinet of foreign literature,” says Aubrey, “and now we’re providing material in nearly 50 languages.”

Add to that the shipping needs of the Grapevine, whose in-house special item fulfillment they have just taken over, and it's easy to see why the shipping department is a hub of activity at G.S.O.

“It can get a little hectic,” Aubrey admits, but things have shifted somewhat over the years, with more and more orders coming in via email. “But we still have to mail the orders out,” he adds.

Nonalcoholics Shipping Department employees, from left Ronnie Shelton, Willie Johnson, Frank Smith, Aubrey Pereira and Bill Heinitz.

Finding the proper balance between expedience and economy for the thousands of orders received — whether via email, snail mail, telephone or fax — falls to Aubrey, the supervisor, who utilizes the latest technology to “rate shop” to find the quickest and least expensive means of getting orders out. “We don’t want the customers to suffer, either by waiting too long for their material — or by paying too much.

“But, basically, the shipping operation has remained the same throughout the years: We still pick and pack the orders by hand, though it's a lot easier now to track shipments and prepare financial reports.”

Overall, the department handles most of the Fellowship's small orders and orders shipped to the Eastern states. With a distribution center in Kansas City and one in Canada that handle most of the large orders and international shipments; the fall and winter seasons, October through April-May, are the heaviest for ordering literature, with a general slow-down during the summer months. “January is pretty much the busiest time — January and February,” explains Aubrey. “And, of course, when we have a new item.”

Most recently, the department was stretched to the limits with orders of the 75th Anniversary edition of the Big Book, a faithful replica of the original first edition. “We were sending them out by the truckload,” says Aubrey.

One of the largest jobs, however, that they have to tackle on a regular basis are the several annual Regional Forums. It usually takes about six weeks to prepare for each Forum, first ascertaining whether the shipping department has the required literature in stock, ordering it (as needed), then shipping it, often to places not necessarily on the well-beaten path, “Such as Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories,” Aubrey cites.

“We also get bombarded with shipping requests prior to each Conference,” Aubrey explains, “and time is a criti-





Shipping Department Supervisor Aubrey Pereira.

cal factor. There's a lot of coordination necessary — with packages of committee background material, Conference information, and other material going out — and the sheer volume is tremendous.”

Explaining how they are able to accomplish so much so consistently, “You have to understand,” says Aubrey, “we like what we do.” He admits it can be a little repetitive, even boring at times, “But we get our satisfaction out of the reaction we get, when visitors come by the office and say, ‘Oh, you guys... you’re the center, the hub.’”

“Basically, everything starts and ends here, in a manner of speaking” — the mail comes in through this department and the orders eventually go out the same way.

“It’s a unique place to work and it’s great working with a bunch of guys who get along so well. As a nonprofit, we’re always tasked with keeping costs down, and we have to continue finding ways of doing more for less,” says Aubrey, and finding that balance can be an adventure, he adds. “But that’s what makes it fun.”

A model of consistency, they’ve been having fun for quite some time now.

■ Carrying the A.A. Message Through Zonal Service Meetings

The hand of A.A. extends — literally — around the globe. Today, an A.A. presence can be found in more than 170 nations worldwide, with membership estimated at over two million.

There are an estimated 115,000 A.A. groups around the world and A.A.’s literature has been translated into languages as diverse as Afrikaans, Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, Nepali, Swahili, Twi, and Vietnamese, among many others.

Critical in these efforts to carry the message across boundaries of geography, culture, language and race has been the development and growth of the World Service Meeting and its offshoot interim zonal meetings, designed to provide a forum for A.A. representatives in

far-flung places to talk over common problems and share common solutions.

Always aware of the need for structure to guide A.A.’s growth, A.A. cofounder Bill W. began thinking in the 1960s about a worldwide service meeting, where older A.A. countries could share their experience with newer, sometimes floundering service structures, and in 1969, the First World Service Meeting was held in New York City, with delegates from 16 countries representing five continents.

Held every two years, the event alternates between New York and other locations around the globe, and has convened in such diverse cities as Cartagena, Colombia; Auckland, New Zealand; Oviedo, Spain; Malahide, Ireland; Mexico City, Mexico; and most recently, Warsaw, Poland. The 24th WSM will be held in the fall of 2016 in New York.

Over the years, a number of common themes have emerged from the deliberations of the WSM and, at one time or another, nearly every country has expressed a continuing need to provide accurate information and reliable, well-translated literature about A.A. to professionals in all fields and to the general public. Delegates have also emphasized the principle of anonymity and its application to individual members at the public level of press, radio, TV, films and, in this day and age, the Internet and other news media. They have also warned against keeping Alcoholics Anonymous itself a secret or being too anonymous within the group or service structure.

Recognizing the difficulties some countries face in getting A.A. started — and keeping it going — interim zonal meetings were developed to help A.A.s in places where the Fellowship is small and struggling. The idea for zonal meetings came out of the Fifth WSM in Finland, where a workshop on Communication Between Countries shared experience and ideas on ways to carry the A.A. message and discussed ways of fostering better communication.

Held in cities around the world in the years when the World Service Meeting is not held, the primary purpose of zonal service meetings is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who still suffers. These service meetings seek ways and means to accomplish this goal by providing a forum for the delegates to share the experience, strength and hope of the countries they represent and who come together from all parts of the zone. It can also represent an expression of the group conscience of the region and provide a link to the World Service Meeting for countries unable to be represented there.

- *The Meeting of the Americas* (originally called the Ibero-American Service Meeting and now known as the Reunion de las Americas) was the first of the zonal meetings to convene, in 1979 in Bogotá, Colombia, and was attended by delegates from 10 countries.

- *The European Service Meeting* gathered for the first time in 1981 in Frankfurt, Germany, with 14 countries represented.

- *The Asia-Oceania Service Meeting* was first held in 1995 in Japan, and its success led to a second meeting in

Auckland in March 1997, with Australia, Hong Kong, Korea, New Zealand and Thailand participating.

- The first *Eastern European Service Meeting* took place in April 2002 in Warsaw, Poland, with 14 countries represented. This meeting has subsequently merged with the European Service Meeting.

- The first *Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting* took place in June 2003 in Johannesburg, South Africa, with 17 delegates from nine countries.

- While not a full-fledged zonal meeting, in 2007, service structures from countries in French-speaking Africa gathered in Paris to begin the process of sharing together, forming what is known as R.A.C.O. (Réunion de Service de la Zona Afrique Centrale et Occidentale). Additionally, A.A. in countries from the Middle East began meeting together in what is known as the *Middle East Region Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous* (MERCAA).

At these meetings, delegates offer progress reports sharing their experience, strength, and hope in carrying the message and, while much of the sharing revolves around the problems and challenges of slow and sometimes painful growth, delegates frequently return home armed with very workable solutions from others who have overcome similar difficulties.

According to the delegates of one zonal meeting, the following steps have been useful in helping countries carry the message more effectively: 1) Setting up committees to provide information about A.A. to health-care and other professionals; 2) working to form a service center with a telephone to speed distribution of A.A. literature, provide information, and function as a focal point for communication between groups and the public; and 3) helping people understand A.A.'s Seventh Tradition.

Over the years, as A.A. has grown in places both nearby and remote, experience has shown that developing a sound structure is essential for effectively delivering services to groups and members and carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. These A.A. services work best when adapted to the needs and capabilities of each location — to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, community relations, and institutions work. In this effort, zonal meetings are a tangible manifestation of A.A.'s well-known Responsibility Declaration, "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

In 2015, four zonal meetings were held: 11th Asia-Oceania Service Meeting, Dubai, U.A.E., with 18 delegates representing 24 countries in 15 service structures; 18th European Service Meeting, York, England, with 43 delegates representing 25 service structures; 19th Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), Mexico City, Mexico, with 23 delegates in attendance, representing 18 countries in 17 service structures; 7th Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting, Johannesburg, South Africa, with 25 delegates from 11 nations.

■ Sponsorship: Our Silent Legacy

When we think of leadership in A.A., we often think of our trusted servants — those A.A.s among us who have shown a willingness and an aptitude for leadership at the group, district, or area level and beyond. But what of those A.A.s who provide the Fellowship with a different kind of leadership — a more intimate leadership, perhaps?

In his article "Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need," after discussing many of the qualities that go into good service leadership, Bill W. addressed this second, more personal, kind of leadership: "Every sponsor is necessarily a leader," he wrote. (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 292) "The stakes are huge. A human life, and usually the happiness of a whole family, hangs in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example — well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death."

So, if our sponsors are leaders, how do they lead? The General Service Conference has focused on the topic of sponsorship numerous times over the years, and the following excerpts from Conference presentations shed some light on this question.

Vera M., from Southwest Ohio, shared in 1991, "When I came to A.A. nobody asked me to meet any specifications, they just accepted me as I was, with love. My first sponsor treated me with compassion, which, I believe, means with gratitude. She understood that sponsor and sponsee meet as equal people."

"Sponsorship is important to ensure that A.A. will continue," said Dorothy M. of Southern Indiana. "My sponsor was there to suggest the things I needed to do to stay sober. She was there to answer the questions I had about the program. She was there to explain the Steps and to help me work through them. She was there when I had no mind to think with. She was there to think for me. She was there with the kind of quality sobriety that I wanted. She was there to show me how to achieve quality sobriety. She was responsible."

George B. of New Mexico drew this picture of sponsorship: "With my sponsor, Walt, at the wheel, we head north out of Alamogordo under the brilliant blue of the New Mexico sky. Reflecting upon the spring area assembly that has just concluded, we chuckle over some of the issues raised and comments made, yet talk earnestly of others. Our conversation is frequently punctuated by long and comfortable silences. During one such moment of quiet, I glance to my right and notice that Sierra Blanca — White Mountain — has received a fresh dusting of snow. Far off to the left lie the glistening white sands of the missile range. Whiteness. Peace. Calm. Serenity. It suddenly occurs to me

that after 12 years Walt is still driving me to meetings!

“I think back to when Walt would arrive at my door at 6:30 on Wednesday evening, regular as clockwork. How much I just wanted to be left alone to wallow in my self-pity, to begin another night’s bout with the vodka bottle! How I wished that just this once he would forget to come by or have car trouble, or at least more pressing business to attend to than to go to that damn meeting! But no, 6:30 came and there was Walt. And I, still enervated from the previous night’s boozing, would drag my aching body out to his car for yet another interminable trip of twenty miles down the mountain to his favorite meeting.”

In 1967, Herb M., an A.A.W.S. board member, explained about sponsorship, “That which we give away we keep. That which we keep we lose. Such is the basis of our responsibility — to pass on to another alcoholic the message of love and understanding that made our own sobriety possible.... There has been unanimous agreement among us that the very substance of our sobriety lies in our willingness and our readiness to share this recovery experience with another.”

“We should be as careful with another’s sobriety as we are with our own,” added Clarence K. of Michigan, “remembering that the newcomer’s life and future may depend on us.”

Describing the privilege and responsibility that goes along with sponsorship in A.A., Peter W., a regional trustee from Eastern Canada, delivered the keynote address to the 26th General Service Conference in 1976, highlighting the fundamental role sponsorship plays in the Fellowship. “A.A. had its origin in the principle of sponsorship — the need we have for one another. Sharing our experience, strength, and hope with each other could mean our survival.

“This principle is equally as valid today as when Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob. The world of alcoholism

has changed, will continue to change. But our need for one another remains as vital today as it was in Akron in 1935. The need is best exemplified by sponsorship.

“The privilege of being a sponsor insures our sobriety. It also helps us function effectively in recovery by recognizing the needs of others. It enables us to find within ourselves a response to those needs. Watching a fellow member grow in A.A. is a spiritual experience. It is a privilege for us to be used as instruments in the lives of others....

“Sponsorship is woven intricately through our Legacies. To deny it could weaken our Fellowship... Bill calls it the language of the heart. It transcends the appearance and the personality of the individual and goes directly to the soul....

“Sponsorship is the silent legacy of our Fellowship, given to us by those who went before us. It can spell the difference between survival and stagnation.”

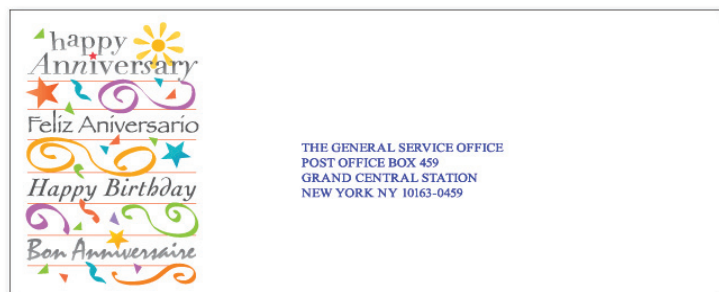
In closing, Peter noted, “To love the lovable requires very little effort, but you and I are called upon to love the unlovable, to help that person become lovable. Can you think of any greater responsibility? Can you think of any better way to do it than sponsorship?”

A.A. has many tools to help members with sponsorship — to sponsor and to be sponsored. In particular, A.A.W.S. publishes the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship,” and the Grapevine publishes a booklet on sponsorship titled *One on One: AA Sponsorship in Action*, which shares the individual experience of sponsorship from a wide range of A.A.s.

Additionally, many groups focus regularly on sponsorship, making temporary sponsors available to newcomers, many of whom are fresh out of hospitals or prison. And sponsorship can also take place within the service structure, as noted by Christiana C. of Ireland at the 1975 European Service Meeting in Frankfurt, Germany: “With the help of my sponsors, I became active in service at the group, area, and intergroup levels. Over time I

■ The Birthday Plan

For many years, A.A. members have celebrated their sobriety by sending a contribution to the General Service Office. Your birthday (or anniversary) money helps to support G.S.O.’s services to members and groups throughout Canada and the U.S., to ensure that the A.A. message is carried around the world. The services that G.S.O. provides the A.A. groups cost more than \$6 per member per year. Members customarily contribute \$1, \$2 or even \$5 a year for each year of sobriety—others may give a penny or a nickel a day for each day of their sobriety. You may request these Birthday Contribution Envelopes (FR-5) from G.S.O., for yourself or for your group, at no charge.



came to realize that sponsorship into service is of vital importance. I cannot survive without A.A. Yet you and I are A.A. How well it functions depends on how well we abide by our principles and Traditions, on how much we give of ourselves.”

Indeed, sponsorship takes many forms, even country-to-country sponsorship as A.A. continues to spread around the world, with more established service structures reaching out to those less developed. In one example, Germany sponsored Poland in the 1980s. Poland was then in a position to help spread A.A. to other eastern European countries. Other instances include Japan helping carry the message to Korea; Finland (among others) working with A.A.s in Russia and Estonia; and Mexico acting as a sponsor to Cuba, where meetings have now taken hold and the Fellowship is starting to grow strong.

As one workshop report from the 1991 General Service Conference summed things up, “In a nutshell: A.A. would not be A.A. without sponsorship.”

■ Opening for Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee

The trustees’ Nominating Committee asks that trustees, delegates and directors submit any names they deem appropriate as candidates for Class A trustee, to replace the General Service Board trustee Terrance M. Bedient, when he rotates in 2017. Class A trustees are chosen from a variety of professional backgrounds, including doctors, lawyers, clergy, media, social workers and educators.

Please submit your candidate’s business or professional résumés to the Secretary, trustees’ Nominating Committee, General Service Office by July 31, 2016.

■ Openings for A.A.W.S. Nontrustee Directors

A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) has started its search to fill the vacancy for one nontrustee director, which will open following the 2017 General Service Conference. Interested A.A. members are encouraged to submit a résumé.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons, which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

Basic qualifications for this position are: a minimum of seven years of continuous sobriety; a sound business or professional background is preferable, but not limited to the following areas—finance, management, publishing,

legal, or information technology; the ability to work with others; availability to attend all regular meetings of the A.A.W.S. Board (currently, up to eight per year), three weekend meetings of trustees’ committees (to which corporate board directors are appointed), and the Conference, for one week in April.

In addition, directors may be called upon to attend subcommittee or other meetings and to represent A.A.W.S. at Regional Forums or other A.A. functions. Résumés should be sent to A.A.W.S. Board secretary, at the General Service Office, no later than July 1, 2016.

■ Opening for A.A. Grapevine Nontrustee Directors

A.A. Grapevine’s Corporate Board has started its search to fill vacancies for nontrustee directors that may open following the 2017 General Service Conference. Interested A.A. members are encouraged to submit a résumé.

Basic qualifications for this position are: a minimum of seven years of continuous sobriety with a working knowledge of the A.A. service structure and familiarity with *The A.A. Service Manual*; ability to work with others in a group conscience setting; experience serving on boards of directors (nonprofit experience is most helpful); knowledge of organizational strategic planning, problem-solving and implementation of change; experience with organizational management and finances; and familiarity and experience with publications media including new communication technologies and methodologies.

The time commitment required is significant and includes availability to attend four planning committee meetings of the A.A. Grapevine Board, as well as attendance at three General Service Board weekends, which include quarterly A.A. Grapevine Board meetings and meetings of trustees’ committees (to which corporate board directors are appointed). Trustees’ committees may also include conference calls between in-person meetings. In addition, directors attend the General Service Conference for one week in April and may be called upon to represent A.A. Grapevine at Regional Forums or other A.A. functions.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in A.A., the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons, which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of Alcoholics Anonymous. Résumés should be sent to Janet Bryan, office manager, A.A. Grapevine, by May 31, 2016.

■ Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2017

Three new Class B (alcoholic) trustees — from the East Central and Southeast regions and the trustee-at-large/U.S. — will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2017. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2017, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new East Central regional trustee will succeed Bill F., of Marietta, Ohio; the next Southeast regional will follow Chet P. of Orlando, Florida. The new trustee-at-large/U.S. will fill the position currently held by Bob W., of Westfield, Massachusetts.

A sound A.A. background is a basic qualification for Class B trustees. Ten years of continuous sobriety is desirable but not mandatory. Candidates should be active in both local and area A.A. affairs; and, because trustees serve the entire Fellowship, they require the background and the willingness to make decisions on matters of broad policy that affect A.A. as a whole.

It is also important that trustee candidates understand the commitment of time required. Trustees are expected to attend three quarterly board weekends, with meetings often scheduled from Thursday afternoon through Monday morning, and the General Service Conference, which lasts for one week. Often trustees are asked to attend a Regional Forum weekend. In addition, regional trustees are usually asked to serve two years on either the A.A.W.S. or Grapevine Corporate Boards, which meet more frequently than the General Service Board.

Please submit your candidate's résumé to the Secretary, trustees' Nominating Committee, General Service Office.

■ P.I. Appointed Committee Member

The trustees' Committee on Public Information has an opening for an appointed committee member (ACM). We are searching for an appropriate individual to fill this position and would appreciate any recommendations.

Some of the qualities most desirable for this appointed committee member opening are:

- Experience in A.A. service.
- Professional expertise in social media/networking communications. The new ACM is needed by the committee for planning and projects related to online communications.
- Availability for meetings of this trustees' committee held during General Service Board weekends (usually the last weekend in January, July and October), as well as one meeting during the General Service Conference in April.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to work within the committee structure.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

To obtain a résumé form for this opening please call the P.I. desk at G.S.O. (212) 870-3119, or email publicinfo@aa.org. Deadline for applications is March 1, 2016.



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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. Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site. **Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site.**

March

- 4-5—Wichita, Kansas. 41st Wichita Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1814, Wichita, KS 67201; www.springroundupwichita.com
- 4-6—Cambridge, Massachusetts. Beacon BB Wknd. Info: www.beacongroupaa.com
- 4-6—Dearborn, Michigan. March Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 390, Southfield, MI 48037-0390; www.aa-semi.org
- 4-6—Rochester, New York. 35th Flower City Fellowship Conv. Write: Ch., 1000 Elmwood Ave., Greenhouse, Rochester, NY 14620; www.rochester-ny-aa.org
- 4-6—Bismarck, North Dakota. West Central Reg. Svc. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2451, Bismarck, ND 58502; www.aanorthdakota.org
- 4-6—Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. 64th Regina Roundup. Write: Ch., #107-845 Broad St., Regina, SK S4R 8G9; www.aaregina.com
- 11-12—Collinsville, Illinois. Area 21 Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 923, Edwardsville, IL 62025; www.aa-sil18.org
- 11-13—Albany, Georgia. 19th Flint River Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 72007, Albany, GA 31708; www.flintriverroundup.org
- 11-13—Alexandria, Minnesota. 12th Big Ole Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1212, Alexandria, MN 56308; bigoleroundup@yahoo.com
- 11-13—Aberdeen, North Carolina. Area 51 Corrections Conf. Info: corrections@aanorthcarolina.org
- 11-13—Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 73rd ON Reg. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 69027, St. Clair Postal Outlet, Toronto, ON M4T 3A1
- 18-19—Mount Iron, Minnesota. 37th Winter Rap Up. Write: Ch., Box 227, Gilbert, MN 55741
- 18-20—San Ramon, California. NCCAA Spring Conf. Write: Ch., 150 Cleveland Rd, #97, Pleasant Hills, CA 94523; www.norcalaa.org

- 18-20—Colorado Springs, Colorado. Area 10 Spring Svc Assembly. Info: www.coloradoaa.org/assembly
- 18-20—Portland, Maine. 17th NE Fellowship of the Spirit. Write: Ch., 29 Taylor St., #2, Portland, ME 04102; www.nefots.org
- 18-20—Niagara Falls, New York. Eighth Cataract City Conv. Info: niagaraintergroup@gmail.com
- 18-20—Tarrytown, New York. 48th SENY Conv. Write: Ch., Box 752, Rockville Centre, NY 11571; convention@aasenyo.org
- 18-20—Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Area 83 Internat'l Spring Assembly. Info: chairperson@area83aa.org
- 24-27—San Diego, California. SD Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 12186, La Jolla, CA 92039; www.sandiegospringroundup.com
- 24-27—Suva, Fiji. First Australasian Conv. Write: Ch., 48 Firth St., Arncliffe, NSW, 2205, Australia; www.aanatcon.org.au
- 25-27—Omaha, Nebraska. NCYPAA III. Write: Ch., 342 N. 76th St., Omaha, NE 68114; www.ncypaa.org
- 25-27—Panamá City, Panamá, Central América. 37ava Conv. De América Central. Info: www.aapanama.org

April

- 1-2—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Area 60 Getaway Wknd. Info: altdelegate@wpaarea60.org
- 1-3—Ames, Iowa. Aim for Ames. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010; www.aimforames.org
- 1-3—Tonopah, Nevada. Area 42 Pre-Conf. Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 9080, Mammoth lakes, CA 93546; www.nevadaarea42.org

- 1-3—Morehead City, North Carolina. Crystal Coast Roundup. Info: ccr@ec.rr.com
- 1-3—Independence, Ohio. NE OH Gen. Svc Mini-Conf. Write: Ch., Box 32534, Euclid, OH 44132; miniconference@area54.org
- 1-3—Williamsburg, Virginia. Serenity Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 832, Midlothian, VA 23113; www.serenityweekend.net
- 8-10—Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. 60^{ma} Área 77 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 372, Aguadilla, PR 00605
- 8-10—Manchester Village, Vermont. 53rd VT State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 33, Williston, VT 05495; www.aavt.org
- 14-17—Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Springtime in the Ozarks. Write: Ch., Box 409, Eureka Springs, AR 72632; www.springtimeintheozarks.com
- 15-17—Fairmont, Minnesota. 22nd Sunlight of the Spirit Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 748, Fairmont, MN 56031-0748; sosweekend@gmail.com
- 15-17—Erie, Pennsylvania. 41st Swing Into Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Erie, PA 16512-1357; www.aeriepa.org
- 22-24—Chipley, Florida. Country Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 677, Chipley, FL 32428; chipley_countryroundup@hotmail.com
- 22-24—Fort Wayne, Indiana. 36th NE Indiana Conv. Write: Ch., 2118 Inwood Dr., Ft. Wayne, IN 46815; www.aaftwayne.org
- 29-1—Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Iron Range Get Together. Write: Ch., 22109 State Hwy 65, Goodland, MN 55742
- 29-1—Longueuil, Québec, Canada. 34^e Congrès de Longueuil Rive-Sud. Info: congressaaloungueuil@gmail.com

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Box 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20____

Name of event: _____

Location: _____ CITY STATE OR PROVINCE

Address to list: _____ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET)

_____ CITY STATE OR PROVINCE ZIP CODE

Web site or E-mail: _____ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

Contact person: _____ NAME PHONE # AND E-MAIL

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board

May

- 6-8—*Ketchikan, Alaska*. 34th First City Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 9275, Ketchikan, AK 99901; www.area02alaska.org
- 6-8—*Kailua-Kona, Hawaii*. 28th Big Island Bash. Write: Ch., Box 370727, Keauhou, HI 96739; www.bigislandbash.com
- 6-8—*Salzburg, Austria*. Deutschsprachiges Ländertreffen. Info: <https://www.anonymy-alkoholiker.de/content/05vera/05dlt2016.php>
- 12-15—*Eretria, Evia, Greece*. 22nd Internat'l Conv. Info: parthenongr.ana@gmail.com
- 13-15—*Bloomington, Illinois*. BNAA Roundup Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1384, Bloomington, IL 61702-1384; bnaservice10@gmail.com
- 13-15—*Tulsa, Oklahoma*. OK State Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12468, Tulsa, OK 74159; www.aaoklahoma.org
- 13-15—*Rock Springs, Wyoming*. Area 76 Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1172, Rock Springs, WY 82901; www.aa-wyoming.org
- 13-15—*Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Canada*. Area 81 Spring Assembly and Roundup. Write: Ch., 28-50 Ducks Landing, Stratford, PE C1B 2X8; www.area81aa.ca
- 20-22—*Crestview, Florida*. Sunshine Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1404, Crestview, FL 32539
- 20-22—*Ashland, Wisconsin*. Area 74 Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 31, Herbster, WI 54844; www.area74.org
- 20-22—*Oconomowoc, Wisconsin*. 65th Area 75 Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2022, Brookfield, WI, 53008; ourdistrict34@gmail.com
- 27-29—*Rosemont, Illinois*. XXXIV Conv. Del Estado De Illinois. Para Info: xxivconvencionaaestadoillinois@yahoo.com
- 27-29—*Covington, Louisiana*. SE LA Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., 241 Cedar Land, Ponchatoula, LA 70454; www.springroundupla.com
- 27-29—*Bloomington, Minnesota*. Gopher State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 390533, Minneapolis, MN 55439-2026; www.gopherstateroundup.org
- 27-29—*Dallas, Texas*. 30th Gathering of Eagles. Write: Ch., Box 35865, Dallas, TX 75235; www.dallasgatheringofeagles.org
- 27-29—*Richardson, Texas*. LIV Conv. Estatal Hispana de TX. Para Info: Com. Org., Box 271312, Dallas, TX 75227
- 27-29—*Höllviken, Malmö, Sweden*. SWECYPAA. Info: www.swecypaa.se

June

- 2-5—*Lahaina, Hawaii*. MauiFest. Write: Ch., Box 893, Kihei, HI 96753; www.mauifest.org
- 3-5—*Mobile, Alabama*. Azalea City Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 9005, Mobile, AL 36691; www.mobileaa.org
- 3-5—*Denver, Colorado*. Addt'l SW Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 3-5—*Bozrah, Connecticut*. Soberfest. Write: Ch., Box 1681, Meriden, CT 06450; soberfest@ct-aa.org
- 3-5—*Dubuque, Iowa*. Area 24 Spring Conf. Info: www.2016area24springconference.com
- 10-12—*Akron, Ohio*. Founder's Day. Write: Ch., Box 12, Akron, OH 44309; <https://foundersdayregistration.akronaa.org/>
- 10-12—*Kenton, Oklahoma*. 40th Camp Billy Joe Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 944, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240
- 10-12—*Olympia, Washington*. Capitol Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 7205, Olympia, WA 98507; <http://capitoljamboree.org>
- 10-12—*Calgary, Alberta, Canada*. 35th Calgary Roundup. Info: www.gratituderoundup.com
- 24-26—*Pendleton, Oregon*. Pacific Northwest Conf. Write: Ch., 2777 SW 196th Ct., Aloha, OR 97003; www.pnc1948.org

July

- 8-10—*Thunderbay, Ontario, Canada*. Eastern Canada Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 15-17—*Leadville, Colorado*. Area 10 Summer Svc Assembly. Info: www.coloradoaa.org/assembly
- 15-17—*South Bend, Indiana*. Svc. Comm. Colloquium. Write: Ch., Box 721, South Bend, IN 46624; colloquium@sjcmd.org
- 22-24—*Rimouski, Québec, Canada*. 37^{ième} Congrès du Bas-St-Laurent. Écrire: Prés., BP 651, Rimouski, QC G5L 4B0; www.aa-quebec.org/region88/Congres.html
- 29-31—*Jefferson City, Missouri*. 65th MO State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 7524, Columbia, MO 65205; www.mostateconvention.org
- 29-31—*Baie-Comeau, Québec, Canada*. 46^{ième} Congrès de Baie-Comeau. Écrire: Prés., C.P. 2052 Succursale, Mingan, Baie-Comeau, QC G5C 2S8

August

- 3-7—*Palm Harbor, Florida*. 60th FL State Conv. Write: Ch., 632 Addison Dr., NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33716; <http://60flstateconvention.com>
- 12-14—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. PENNSCY-PAA 28. Write: Ch., 135 Abbeyville Rd, #206, Pittsburgh, PA 15228; www.pennscypaaxxviii.org
- 12-14—*Austin, Texas*. Capital of TX Conf. Write: Ch., Box 4946, Austin, TX 78785; www.capitaloftexasconference.org
- 26-28—*Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada*. Western Canada Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org