

# ARCHIVES CORNER

Summer 2023

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## Timeline of A.A. History

*Part 1: the first 5 decades*

*1930s – 1979*

“Whenever a society or civilization perishes there is always one condition present: they forgot where they came from.”

– *Carl Sandburg (from A.A. Archives Workbook)*

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*Materials with illustrations are from the “Timeline of AA History” available at GSO Archives, with minor editing by District 43 Archives for this display.*

# 1930-34

## ORIGINS

The origins of Alcoholics Anonymous can be traced to the Oxford Group, a religious movement popular in the United States and Europe in the early 20th century. Members of the Oxford Group practiced a formula of self-improvement by performing self-inventory, admitting wrongs, making amends, using prayer and meditation, and carrying the message to others.

In the early 1930s, a well-to-do Rhode Islander, Rowland H., visited the noted Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung for help with his alcoholism. Jung determined that Rowland's case was medically hopeless, and that he could only find relief through a vital spiritual experience. Jung directed him to the Oxford Group.

Rowland later introduced fellow Vermonter Edwin ("Ebby") T. to the group, and the two men along with several others were finally able to keep from drinking by practicing the Oxford Group principles.

One of Ebby's schoolmate friends from Vermont, and a drinking buddy, was Bill W. Ebby sought out his old friend at his home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn, New York, to carry the message of hope.

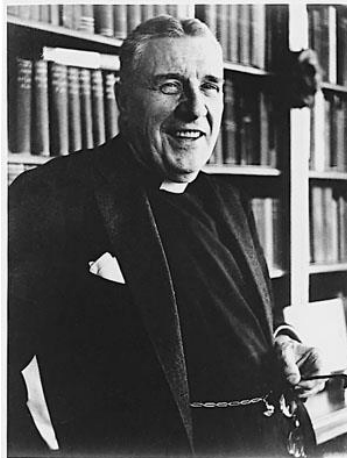
Bill W. had been a golden boy on Wall Street, enjoying success and power as a stockbroker, but his promising career had been ruined by continuous and chronic alcoholism. Now, approaching 39 years of age, he was learning that his problem was hopeless, progressive, and irreversible. He had sought medical treatment at Towns Hospital in Manhattan, but he was still drinking.

Bill was, at first, unconvinced by Ebby's story of transformation and the claims of the Oxford Group. But in December 1934, after again landing in Towns hospital for treatment, Bill underwent a powerful spiritual experience unlike any he had ever known. His depression and despair were lifted, and he felt free and at peace. Bill stopped drinking and worked the rest of his life to bring that freedom and peace to other alcoholics. The roots of Alcoholics Anonymous were planted.

# 1935

## **BILL AND LOIS JOIN THE OXFORD GROUP**

Following Bill W.'s spiritual awakening at Towns Hospital (late 1934), he and wife Lois join the Oxford Group — a nondenominational movement whose tenets are based on the “Four Absolutes” of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love — and begin to attend meetings at Calvary House, behind Manhattan’s Calvary Episcopal Church there. Bill is inspired by the charismatic rector Rev. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker (below), who emphasizes one-on-one sharing and guidance.



## **BILL’S GROUP WITHIN A GROUP**

Bill is asked to speak at a large Oxford Group meeting at Calvary House. His subject is alcoholism, and after the meeting Bill is approached by a man who says he desperately wants to get sober. Bill invites the man to join him and a small group of alcoholics who meet at nearby Stewart's cafeteria after the meetings. Bill is unsuccessful in his efforts to reach these alcoholics. Eventually his ability to help alcoholics grows, after he seeks counsel from Dr. William Silkworth of Towns Hospital. Dr. Silkworth suggests he do less preaching and speak more about alcoholism as an illness.

## **A BUSINESS TRIP TO AKRON**

A short-term job opportunity takes Bill to Akron, Ohio.



In the lobby of his hotel, he finds himself fighting the urge to join the conviviality in the bar. He consults a church directory posted on the wall with the aim of finding someone who might lead him to an alcoholic with whom he could talk. A phone call to Episcopal minister Rev. Walter Tunks results in a referral to Henrietta Seiberling, a committed Oxford Group adherent who has tried for two years to bring a fellow group member, a prominent Akron surgeon, to sobriety.



## THE MEETING AT THE GATEHOUSE

Henrietta Seiberling, daughter-in-law of the founder of the Goodyear Rubber Company, invites Bill to the Seiberling estate, where she lives in the gatehouse (below). She tells him of the struggle of Dr. Robert S., and the meeting of the two men takes place the next day — Mother’s Day, May 12, 1935. In the privacy of the library, Bill spills out his story, inspiring “Dr. Bob” to share his own. As the meeting ends hours later, Dr. Bob realizes how much spiritual support can come as the result of one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic.



## FORGING FRIENDSHIPS IN AKRON

Bill joins the Smiths at the weekly Oxford Group meetings held in the home of T. Henry Williams and his wife Clarace, both particularly sympathetic to the plight of alcoholics. Soon, at the suggestion of Dr. Bob’s wife Anne, Bill moves to their home at 855 Ardmore Avenue (below).

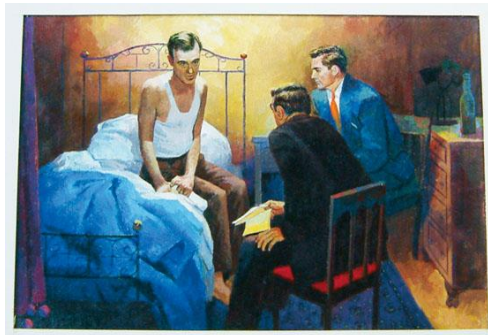


## **MEN ON A MISSION**

Dr. Bob lapses into drinking again but quickly recovers. The day widely known as the date of Dr. Bob's last drink, June 10, 1935, is celebrated as the founding date of Alcoholics Anonymous. Dr. Bob and Bill spend hours working out the best approach to alcoholics, a group known to be averse to taking directions. Realizing that thinking of sobriety for a day at a time makes it seem more achievable than facing a lifetime of struggle, they hit on the twenty-four-hour concept.

## **“THE MAN ON THE BED”**

Eager to carry the message, Bill and Dr. Bob search for another person to help. After a slow start, their call to Akron City Hospital yields a prospect — Bill D., a lawyer. During the visits of Bill and Dr. Bob, Bill D. takes their message to heart and promises never to drink again — a vow he keeps for life. Now remembered as the “man on the bed” (below, as depicted in a painting by an A.A. member), Bill D. becomes the third member of what will eventually be called Alcoholics Anonymous.



## **BILL’S RETURN TO NEW YORK**

Bill returns home to New York to seek a job, but his need to help other alcoholics is no less urgent. He begins to look for prospects at Towns Hospital, where he finds Hank P., an ambitious businessman who becomes his first success from Towns. Another success is Fitz M., a Southerner and the son of a minister. Both become Bill’s close friends and allies.

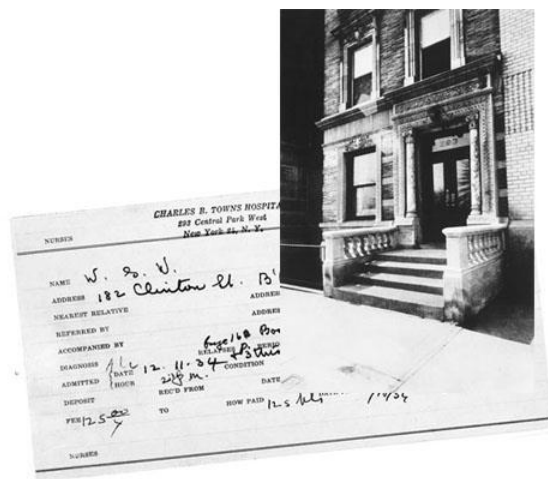
## WEEKLY MEETINGS AT 182 CLINTON

In an effort to strengthen his prospects' chances for recovery, Bill welcomes alcoholics to his home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. The Tuesday night meetings soon give way to temporary residency for some participants — the kind of “way station” arrangement that Dr. Bob and his wife Anne have pioneered in Akron.

**1936**

## AN OFFER SPURS “GROUP CONSCIENCE”

Charles B. Towns, owner of Towns Hospital suggests that Bill move his work to the hospital, where he could treat alcoholics, conduct his meetings, and share in the establishment's profits. At the Clinton Street meeting that very evening, Bill tells his group of the offer — but the members object, insisting that spreading the message for money would violate its integrity. Below: Bill's admission slip to Towns.



**1937**

## THE OFFICE THAT WILL GO DOWN IN A.A. HISTORY

Bill begins to commute to a small office at 17 William Street, Newark, New Jersey (below), joining Hank P. to raise money for a new business venture — Honor Dealers, an attempt to create a cooperative program for gasoline dealers in northern New Jersey. The office secretary is a young woman named Ruth Hock.



## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

In late 1937, Bill pays another visit to Dr. Bob in Akron. Comparing notes, they are astonished to find that at least 40 of the many alcoholics with whom they've worked have stayed sober for two years. This discovery leads to exciting possibilities: Bill and Bob discuss developing a chain of hospitals dedicated to the treatment of alcoholics; employing salaried workers who would spread the word; and literature — especially a book, meant to carry the message far and wide.

## **ACTION IN AKRON**

Oxford Group meetings for alcoholics continue at the large home of T. Henry and Clarace Williams (below), with Dr. Bob sometimes joining Mr. Williams to lead meetings. The recovering alcoholics of the group refer to themselves as the “alcoholic squadron of the Oxford Group.”



## **A MOMENTOUS MEETING**

Bill's attempts to raise money for his and Bob's vision prove unsuccessful. In 1937, his brother-in-law, Dr. Leonard Strong, Jr., is able to set up a meeting with men connected to the philanthropies of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (below). At a December meeting attended by Bill, Dr. Bob, Dr. Silkworth, and a few group members from New York and Akron, the potential backers are moved and impressed by the Fellowship's work. However, after it is pointed out that money could spoil the movement's purpose, the meeting reaps welcome enthusiasm and moral support, but no funds.



# 1938

## **ROCKEFELLER'S STANCE**

Frank Amos (below), who attended the December meeting and is a close friend of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., agrees to assess the Akron group and explore the possibility of opening a small hospital for alcoholics. In February 1938 he spends several days in the city. Impressed by the recovery rate of Akron group members, he proposes a recuperative facility to be run by Dr. Bob. To Rockefeller he recommends a sum of \$50,000 for the early work, but Rockefeller thinks the Fellowship should be self-supporting. The philanthropist does, however, contribute \$5,000 toward Bill and Dr. Bob's basic needs.



## **THE ALCOHOLIC FOUNDATION**

Frank Amos and others who had attended the December meeting offer to confer with Bill, Leonard Strong, and various members of the New York group to consider how the movement can be given an organizational framework. As a result, the Alcoholic Foundation is formally established on August 11, 1938, with Dr. Bob as a trustee and Bill on the advisory committee.

## **THE TWELVE STEPS**

As he begins to write the A.A. Book, Bill comes to the point where he must outline an actual program for the recovering alcoholic to follow. Drawing on the teachings of Sam Shoemaker, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the Oxford Group-inspired six-step procedure used by Bill and Dr. Bob as they carry the message. The steps grow to 12, and the A.A. Twelve Step program is born.

## **THE BIG BOOK GETS STARTED**

Bill writes a book meant to aid the alcoholic who is unable to attend meetings or find fellow alcoholics with whom to talk. At the Newark office, he dictates his handwritten notes to Ruth Hock (below) as she types, reviewing and revising drafts all the while. These chapters are mimeographed and mailed to potential financial backers, as well as to Eugene Exman, the religion editor at Harper & Brothers publishers.





## WORKS PUBLISHING: A FARSIGHTED PLAN

Harper & Brothers offers to publish the Big Book, much to the delight of Bill and the trustees. But the astute businessman, Hank P., convinces Bill to sell shares in their own company and to publish the volume themselves. Hank works up a prospectus for what will become Works Publishing Company, with 600 shares of stock selling at \$25 per share (below).



**1939**

## THE BIG BOOK TESTS THE WATERS

Four hundred mimeographed copies of the Big Book manuscript are sent out for comments and evaluation by members, friends, and other allies. Among those making valuable contributions are a Baltimore doctor who suggests having a physician write the introduction (a job taken on by Dr. Silkworth) and Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick (below), the highly respected minister of Manhattan's Riverside Church, who warmly approves of the book and responds with a positive review to be used as the Fellowship wishes.



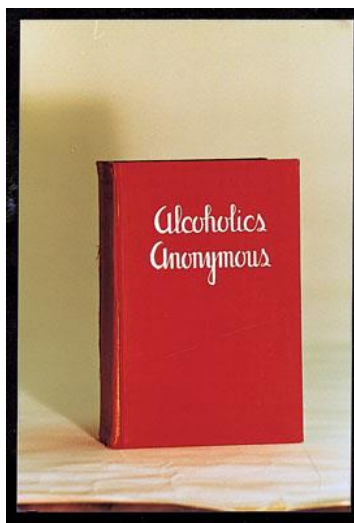
## AN OFFSHOOT — AND NEW NAME — IN CLEVELAND

Clarence S., a Cleveland resident who attends Oxford Group meetings in Akron, announces that he and other Clevelanders will be starting a group open only to alcoholics and their families. Like some other breakaway groups, they will also adopt the name of the Big Book mimeographs now circulating in Akron — “Alcoholics Anonymous.” In May 1939, the first A.A. meeting in Cleveland is held in the home of Al G. (also known as Abby G.), a patent lawyer.



## PUBLICATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

In April 1939, some 5,000 copies of the Big Book — titled Alcoholics Anonymous — roll off the press. After an anticipated Reader’s Digest article fails to materialize and a radio broadcast results in no orders, sales are few and far between. This disappointment foreshadows a bleak summer for the New York fellowship.



## BILL AND LOIS LOSE 182 CLINTON STREET

As the Great Depression eases and property values rise, the company that owns the mortgage on 182 Clinton Street (below) sells the building, forcing Bill and Lois to move out. Thus begins the couple’s two years of temporary residency in the homes of Hank P.

and other A.A. families. Bill and Lois continue carrying the program's message for the duration of this unsettled period.



### **DR. BOB SERVES WITH SISTER IGNATIA**

In the spring of 1939, Dr. Bob suggests to Sister Ignatia Gavin (below), with whom he had worked at Akron's St. Thomas hospital since 1934, that they start treating alcoholics. She agrees, and over the years Sister Ignatia and Dr. Bob will bring comfort and aid to almost 5,000 hospitalized patients.



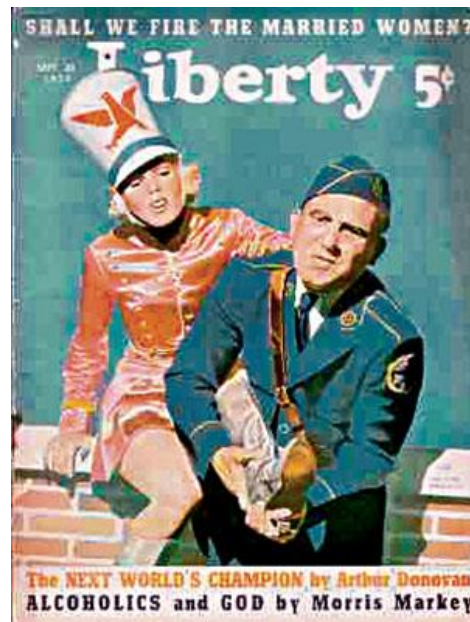
### **A FIRST FOR WOMEN**

After reading the Big Book while a sanitarium patient in Greenwich, Connecticut, Marty M. starts attending meetings at 182 Clinton Street. She will become the first woman in Alcoholics Anonymous to achieve lasting sobriety.

### **A LIFT FROM LIBERTY**

Seeking publicity for A.A., Charles Towns recounts its history to writer Morris Markey, who will submit the article "Alcoholics and God" (a title with which Bill isn't comfortable) to Fulton Oursler, editor of the popular weekly Liberty. After the article's publication on

September 30, 1939, sales of the Big Book increase by several hundred and the Newark office receives 800 pleas for help from alcoholics and their loved ones.



## ANOTHER SPLIT FROM THE OXFORD GROUP

In the fall, tensions grow in the Akron Oxford Group, with the alcoholic members wanting more independence. The alcoholics decide to meet at Dr. Bob's home, though Bob remains loyal to T. Henry and Clarace Williams. As this fledgling group grows, it shifts its meetings to King School, an elementary school in Akron.

# 1940

## ROCKEFELLER'S DINNER

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. hosts a dinner at the exclusive Union Club (below) to publicize Alcoholics Anonymous. Because Rockefeller believes that A.A. should be self-supporting, and this is understood by the guests, no money is solicited or raised. Nevertheless, Rockefeller sees to it that the event receives favorable and widespread publicity. Within a month, small donations trickle in from members, slightly easing the financial difficulty faced by A.A. during this early period.



## THE FIRST NEW YORK CLUBHOUSE

With the house at 182 Clinton Street no longer available for meetings, New York members meet wherever they can. Two of them, Bert T. and Horace C., find and guarantee the rent on a small building at 334 1/2 West 24th Street in Manhattan. The clubhouse (below) soon bustles with activity, and Bill and Lois, still homeless, move into one of the two upstairs bedrooms later in the year.



## A.A.'S FIRST HEADQUARTERS

In March 1940, Works Publishing moves from Newark to a small office at 30 Vesey Street (below) in lower Manhattan. Though something of a financial gamble, the move means that for the first time the Fellowship has a headquarters of its own.



## A CHALLENGE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF ANONYMITY

A star catcher for the Cleveland Indians, described by the press as “rollicking” because of his heavy drinking, announces that he has achieved sobriety through his year-long membership in Alcoholics Anonymous. His name and face are splashed over sports pages nationwide. Such violation of the Fellowship’s principle of anonymity leads Bill and members everywhere to consider anonymity’s pros and cons.

## ENTER FATHER DOWLING

On a rainy winter night in late 1940, a kindly clergyman from St. Louis appears at the 24th Street Clubhouse. Leaning on his cane, Fr. Edward Dowling, SJ, (below) introduces himself

to Bill, states that he has been reading *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and then points out the parallels between the Twelve Steps and his own Jesuit order. Thus begins a spiritual sponsorship between Fr. Dowling and Bill that will last for the next 20 years.



**1941**

### **THE SERENITY PRAYER**

Ruth Hock receives a newspaper clipping of the Serenity Prayer that had been printed in the *New York Herald Tribune* in June 1941. Ruth and many A.A. members in New York and elsewhere all immediately feel this prayer's relevancy to A.A.'s principles. Soon, the prayer is printed on cards and is being passed out to A.A. members everywhere. The prayer has since become a central part of A.A. heard in meetings around the world. The prayer's authorship is generally attributed to well-known Protestant theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr.

### **A.A. MARCHES WEST**

A.A. spreads beyond Ohio, with groups beginning to meet in cities as large as Chicago and New Orleans and Houston. Alcoholics in Topeka, Fort Worth, Tucson, Omaha, and Honolulu also “join the club,” as do those in smaller towns in the Midwest and West.

### **THE SATURDAY EVENING POST MAKES HISTORY**

The interest of Judge Curtis Bok, owner and publisher of *The Saturday Evening Post*, is piqued when he learns of A.A. from two Philadelphia friends. Bok then calls on hard-nosed reporter Jack Alexander to tell the organization's story. The resulting 7,500-word article is published in the magazine on March 1, 1941, putting Alcoholics Anonymous on the map of public consciousness and spurring a dramatic increase in Big Book sales and membership.

### **THE FIRST SPECIALIZED INTEREST GROUP**

The first known all-women group is founded in Cleveland in 1941, making it A.A.'s inaugural specialized interest group. Women in New York, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, and San Diego soon follow suit, and by the mid-1940s the ratio of women to men in the

A.A. population is roughly one in six. Women's groups light the way for other specialized groups, which will eventually include those for young people, the elderly, gays and lesbians, and doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.

## **BILL AND LOIS MOVE TO BEDFORD HILLS**

Friends in Westchester County, a half-hour north of New York City, help Bill and Lois work out a financial plan that enables them finally to acquire a house in Bedford Hills. On April 11, 1941, the couple spends their first night there. The comfortable shingled, hip-roofed house (below), which they will name Stepping Stones, affords them a measure of privacy for the first time since Alcoholics Anonymous was founded.



## **BILL HITS THE ROAD**

Membership reaches some 2,000 by Spring 1941, and by the end of the year jumps to approximately 8,000 members in 200 groups across the country. Bill begins what will be three years of traveling to visit groups, getting to know many members individually.

**1942**

## **A.A.'S PRISON GROUPS**

A campaign for prison reform by Clinton T. Duffy, warden of San Quentin Prison in San Francisco, calls for addressing the special needs of inmates who had been drinking when committing a crime. Duffy seeks aid and advice from California A.A. members, leading to the formation of a prison group at San Quentin. The inmates hold their first meeting in 1942.



*Cafeteria at San Quentin Prison*

## A LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

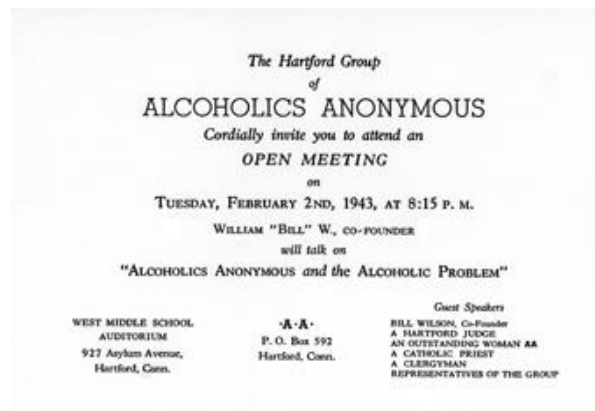
After reading an article on Alcoholics Anonymous in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr. Sylvester Minogue (below), the medical superintendent of Rydalmere Hospital in Sydney, writes a letter to the AJP with a request that his letter be forwarded to the Alcoholic Foundation. His request for information leads to his getting a copy of the Big Book and continuing correspondence with secretary Bobbie B. of the New York office, setting the stage for the startup of A.A. groups in Australia.



**1943**

## BILL KEEPS TRAVELING

As group after group sprouts up, Bill continues traveling around the country, often accompanied by Lois. His arrival in towns large and small is cause for great excitement as A.A. members flock to hear his talks and speak with him one-on-one. The announcement shown below invites people to hear Bill speak at an open meeting in Connecticut.



## CANADA'S SECOND GROUP FORMS IN WINDSOR

In October 1943, a second Canadian group gets off the ground when alcoholics begin to meet in Windsor, Ontario.

## A.A. IN WARTIME

As World War II is fought overseas, the Fellowship does its part. An April 1943 article (below) in the Fort Worth (Texas), *Star-Telegram* reports that A.A. has reduced war



industries worker absenteeism due to alcoholism. The article states that the A.A. program has helped as many as 5,000 workers return to their jobs.

producer for such assistance. As  
speedily as other requests are re-  
ceived, national headquarters here  
plans to assign investigators from  
hol that will do the good that pro-  
hibition could not do because of  
obnoxious restriction of freedom.  
Two-thirds of the membership ac-



the groups in the nearest localities  
to go to work on restoration of  
sick individuals to full efficiency  
in the same manner as thousands  
have been rebuilt in the eight years  
history of the movement.  
tive now have laid the foundation  
for permanent recovery while half  
the veterans, as they might be in-  
dexed, have had no relapse since  
joining the program, although they  
were often pronounced incurable.

## 1944

### THE AA GRAPEVINE DEBUTS

An eight-page bulletin intended to bring A.A. news to members (including soldiers overseas) expands to become the Fellowship's official magazine, with the first issue published in June 1944. It comes to be called A.A.'s "meeting in print."



### BOX 459 OPENS TO RECEIVE MAIL

"About Your Central Office," a bulletin distributed to A.A. groups by the Alcoholic Foundation, announces "As of May 1, 1944, our new address will be P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station." Box 459 will become both the post office address and symbolic address of Alcoholics Anonymous. In its early days A.A. is an organization that must rely heavily on communication by mail.

### MARTY M. AND THE NCEA

Inspired largely by the efforts of Marty M., Dr. E. M. Jellinek, America's premier researcher on alcoholism, joins two other medical authorities to form the National Committee for

Education on Alcohol (NCEA). NCEA is headquartered in a Yale University Building in New Haven, CT (below). On behalf of the NCEA, Marty embarks on a nationwide tour to tell of her struggle with alcoholism.



### **WOMEN'S PRISON GROUPS BEGIN TO MEET**

The first reported women's prison group meets on March 18, 1944, at Clinton Farms in Clinton, New Jersey.

### **THE FIRST FRENCH-SPEAKING GROUP**

Dave B. of Montreal, an ex-bank clerk and accountant who had slipped far down the ladder because of alcoholism, sobers up after reading the Big Book sent to him by his sister. He contacts A.A. in New York and soon starts holding meetings in his home, launching the first French-speaking A.A. group in the world.

## **1945**

After World War II ends, A.A. groups begin to spring up in other lands, with word of the fledgling organization spreading south of the border, across the Atlantic, and to the Pacific Rim. The next decade also witnesses the Fellowship's first international convention and the creation of the General Service Conference.

### **KNICKERBOCKER HOSPITAL TREATS ALCOHOLICS**

At New York's Knickerbocker Hospital, a pioneering experiment accepting alcoholic patients for treatment begins. The A.A. ward is headed by our first friend in medicine, Dr. William Silkworth.

### **A.A.'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY**

More than 2,500 of the Fellowship's members and friends from 36 states and two Canadian provinces gather in Cleveland to honor Bill W. and Dr. Bob and to celebrate ten years of Alcoholics Anonymous. Sponsored by the city's 44 groups, the two-day event includes open-house meetings, parties, a tea, an assembly at Severance Hall (below), and a closing dinner at the Carter Hotel. According to a Grapevine reporter, the speeches of Bill and Dr. Bob trace the development of A.A. with "gratitude, humility, and simplicity."



## A MAGAZINE ARTICLE'S REACH

"Maybe I Can Do It Too," an article about A.A. member Edward G. that ran in the October 1944 edition of *Reader's Digest*, appears in translation in several of the magazine's international editions, as it will for the next four years. As a result, alcoholics from around the globe write to the Alcoholic Foundation seeking to learn more about the Fellowship.



## FIRST MEETINGS IN AUSTRALIA

In a letter to Archie McKinnon, a psychiatric nurse interested in helping alcoholics in Sydney, Bobbie B. of the Alcoholic Foundation provides the names of two other men who share the same aim: Dr. Sylvester Minogue and Fr. Tom Dunlea, the founder of Boystown in Australia. The three nonalcoholics band together to form the country's first A.A. group, with Rex A. the first member to achieve and maintain sobriety.

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN GROUPS SPRING UP

Early in 1945, five African-American residents of St. Louis form a group that quickly expands. In Washington D.C., Jim S., sponsored by a local A.A. named Charlie, begins to hold meetings in a rented room at a local YMCA; Jim later helps start the first group in Harlem. By 1950, African-Americans will have formed groups in Detroit, Chicago,

Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and other cities and towns. In a country of great diversity, A.A. groups will welcome all alcoholics who wish to stop drinking.

## AN ATLANTIC OUTPOST

After seeking advice from the Alcoholic Foundation, Steve V., an A.A. member formerly of Trenton, N.J., forms a group in St. Georges, Bermuda. It jumps from two to six members within a month and grows quickly thereafter. The next year, the *Hamilton Mid-Ocean News* will publish a series of twelve articles on Alcoholics Anonymous.

## THE LIGHTER SIDE

The reports and letters printed in the Grapevine are interspersed with the occasional alcohol-related cartoon, like the “Down Alibi Alley” submission by a member (below). Early editions of the magazine also include a jokes column called “Barley CORN!!”



## OVERTURES FROM HOLLYWOOD

In the wake of the success of *The Lost Weekend* — the Oscar-winning 1945 film about a struggling alcoholic — three Hollywood studios offer A.A. as much as \$100,000 for rights to the Fellowship’s story. The Alcoholic Foundation, fearing such films would amount to a violation of privacy, refuses the offers on behalf of A.A. members.



Still from "The Lost Weekend"

# 1946

## **IRELAND JOINS THE PROGRAM**

The decision of a Philadelphia A.A. member and former tavern owner, Connor F., to travel to Ireland leads to the formation of the first Irish group. Connor and his wife visit a Dublin sanitarium, where a doctor introduces them to patient Richard P. of Belfast. After reading the Big Book presented to him by Connor, Richard writes to a few contacts who had learned of A.A. through Fr. Tom Dunlea. (Dunlea, a nonalcoholic and one of the founders of Australia's first group, had also spread the message on a trip to Ireland.) Before long, Ireland's inaugural A.A. group is meeting in a room at the Country Shop on Dublin's St. Stephen's Green.



## **THE TWELVE TRADITIONS**

One by one, A.A.'s Twelve Traditions developed by Bill W. are put into print for the first time. The medium for their distribution is *The Grapevine*.

## **A.A. IN THE NEWS**

The rapid growth of A.A. is reflected in the increasing press coverage the society receives. The Kings Feature Syndicate article shown below appeared in newspapers nationwide in the spring of 1946. It focused on women alcoholics, who were joining A.A. in ever-greater numbers.



## **FIRST KNOWN MEETINGS IN MEXICO**

Americans Lester F. and Pauline D. organize a group for Mexico City's English-speaking community. Meanwhile, a Mexican resident of Cleveland, Ricardo P., translates portions of the Big Book into Spanish. The importation of Spanish-language alcoholism-related publications and the creation of Spanish-speaking A.A. groups is approved at a late-summer conference of Mexico's Board of Public Information.

## **ROADS INTO AFRICA**

In 1946, the A.A. movement springs to life in South Africa in three different places. The founders, unknown to one another, are: Arthur S., who reads of A.A. in *Reader's Digest*, contacts the Alcoholic Foundation and forms a group in Johannesburg; Pat O'F., of Capetown, who also has consulted the Alcoholic Foundation; and Val D., who achieves sobriety after reading a copy of the Big Book handed to him by a priest and soon starts a group in the town of Springs.

## **TRUSTEES ISSUE STATEMENT ON FUND-RAISING**

In an effort to halt attempts by various charities to ride the coattails of A.A.'s ascendancy, the Alcoholic Foundation issues a statement aimed at organizations that imply sponsorship by A.A. in their personal appeals to the public. It reads, in part, "Alcoholics Anonymous not only fails to endorse the present solicitations of funds but looks with disfavor on the unauthorized use of its name in any fund-raising activity."

# **1947**

## **FIRST STIRRINGS IN ENGLAND**

Though the first official A.A. group in England won't be formed until 1948, the ball gets rolling when a visiting American woman, Grace O., writes to five Londoners who are in touch with the Alcoholic Foundation and schedules a meeting at the Dorchester Hotel (below) for March 31, 1947. The eight attendees include two A.A. members from North America: an A.A. from Hollywood, California, whose acquaintance she had made on the voyage across the Atlantic, and "Canadian Bob," whom Grace had met in a London restaurant and who will figure large in A.A.'s growth. Meetings will continue in restaurants and residences, among them the home of Canadian Bob.



## **SERVICEMEN LAUNCH GROUPS IN THE PACIFIC**

In the wake of World War II, American servicemen stationed at military bases in the Pacific launch A.A. groups, with the Alcoholic Foundation acting as facilitator. In the summer of 1947, a group in Guam grows from four members to 24 in one month. In Okinawa, the Pioneer Group begins meeting in the fall of 1947.

## **A MISSION TO NORWAY**

George F., a Norwegian immigrant and coffee shop owner in Connecticut, writes home after many years to share the good news of his sobriety through A.A. When he learns that his brother, a typesetter for an Oslo newspaper, is an alcoholic one step from ruin, George and his wife sell their shop and move to Norway. After initially showing no interest in the Twelve Steps, George's brother takes the message to heart and becomes sober almost immediately. Through placing small ads in his paper George's brother eventually forms a group of A.A. members — Norway's first.



*Image of the harbor, Oslo, Norway*

## **A.A. BECOMES SELF-SUPPORTING**

Bill W. reports that income from the Big Book and contributions from individual A.A. groups have made the Alcoholic Foundation "self-supporting." The idea of contributions grew from an estimate that all expenses could be met if each group were to send the Foundation a sum equal to \$1 per member per year. Contributions were entirely voluntary, and equal service was provided to all groups regardless of their contribution record—a policy still in effect today.

## **THE A.A. PREAMBLE**

In the June 1947 edition of the A.A. Grapevine, a statement defining the Fellowship and its mission appears for the first time. The statement, known as the A.A. Preamble, is quickly adopted by A.A. groups and becomes a standard inclusion in A.A. literature.

## **EXPANSION IN CANADA**

By late 1947, Alcoholics Anonymous groups begin to form in the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. The Fellowship is now country-wide, with groups having been founded in Ontario in 1943, Quebec in 1944,

Alberta and Manitoba in 1945, British Columbia in 1946, and Saskatchewan in 1947. The photo below shows a meeting place in Cheticamp, Nova Scotia.



### **A FITFUL START IN BRAZIL**

After two years of sporadic correspondence between the Alcoholic Foundation and a few American residents of Brazil, the Foundation lists Herb D. as an A.A. official contact. In September 1947, Herb requests and receives a batch of A.A. pamphlets and the name of another A.A. member living in Rio de Janeiro. The two men seek members and the first group in Brazil takes shape.



*Aerial view, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

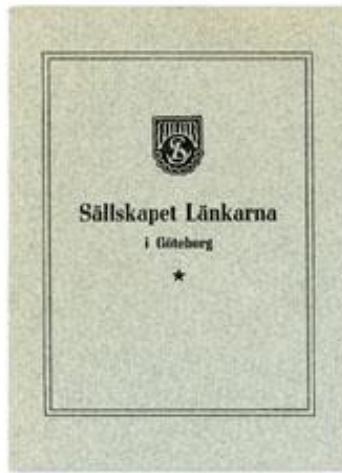
**1948**

### **A SWEDISH OFFSHOOT**

Frank B., a Swedish-American who had become sober in Newark, New Jersey, moves to Sweden and reports to the Newark group that he has joined an A.A. group in the town of Borås — much to the surprise of the Alcoholic Foundation. The group is in fact affiliated with the Links Society. (Founded by an officer of the Temperance Board in Stockholm, the Links Society was loosely based on the A.A. concepts, with which the officer had become familiar on a trip to the U.S. in 1939.) An exchange of letters between the Foundation and the secretary of the Borås Links group ensues, leading to a listing with A.A. in February



1948. In later years, more Swedish groups will shift their affiliation from the Links Society to A.A., and the Swedish G.S.O. will issue the Twelve Steps in booklet form (below).



### **FINLAND GETS THE MESSAGE**

A few alcoholics join weekly meetings at the home of a couple employed by the Helsinki Welfare Office. Along with “Mom and Dad,” as the leaders are called, they learn of Alcoholics Anonymous when “Maybe I Can Do It Too” appears in the Finnish edition of *Reader’s Digest*. The group soon begins to adhere to the principles of both A.A. and the Sweden-born Links Society. In years hence, Finnish groups will become connected to A.A. The placard below reads “First Things First.”



### **START-UPS IN KOREA**

In early 1948, a nonalcoholic priest named Father Mosley starts a group in Seoul after he receives A.A. literature from New York. Two other groups meet sporadically over the next three years, but the first group to be listed with the Alcoholic Foundation will not be formed until 1952: Yong Dong Po, named after the town in which it first meets.

### **A.A.’S POST-WAR BOOM IN JAPAN**

After an article on A.A. appears in *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, the Alcoholic Foundation is flooded with letters from American servicemen based in Japan. The Foundation forwards their names to Harry G., who was in Tokyo writing a book on the War Crime Trials of 1945–48. (Harry had written the Foundation in December 1947, suggesting that Japan was

fertile ground for A.A.) He and an A.A. member from Indiana start an English-speaking group, eventually leading to the establishment of native groups across Japan.



*Japanese temple*

## **DR. BOB'S ILLNESS**

In the summer of 1948, Dr. Bob learns he has terminal cancer, leading him to shut down his office and retire from medical practice. In December 1948 Dr. Bob will give his last major talk before a crowd of A.A.s in Detroit, Michigan.

**1949**

## **THE SCOTTISH MESSENGER**

In 1948, Sir Philip D., a Scottish gentleman farmer who has long struggled with alcoholism, travels to the U.S. at the invitation of the Oxford Group. There he meets A.A. member George R., who acquaints him with the Fellowship's principles. Sir Philip returns home determined to stop drinking and to carry the A.A. message. He succeeds, and Scotland's first known groups are founded in May 1949 in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, where meetings are held in the St. Enoch Hotel (below).



*St. Enoch Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland*

## **BILL W. ADDRESSES THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION**

At the invitation of Dr. Kirby Collier of Rochester, New York, one of A.A.'s earliest admirers in the psychiatric profession, Bill W. participates in an alcoholism symposium at

the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting in Montreal, May 1949. His address marks the acceptance of A.A. by yet another major American medical organization. Bill's address is titled "The Society of Alcoholics Anonymous."

## **RAPID GROWTH IN HOLLAND**

In January 1949, Henk Krauweel, of the Medical Bureau for Alcohol in Amsterdam, reports to the Alcoholic Foundation that he and two of his patients, John V. and Carel A., intend to organize an A.A. meeting in mid-February. They do so, and with much success. In the next two years, a number of groups will be started in Rotterdam, Haarlem, The Hague, and other Dutch cities.



*Amsterdam canal*

# **1950**

## **A.A.'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION**

In July 1950, Alcoholics Anonymous' 15th anniversary is marked with an international convention in Cleveland, with some 3,000 people in attendance. One of the most significant events is the adoption of the Twelve Traditions. The convention, held at the Cleveland Public Auditorium (below), also features the last public message to the Fellowship by Dr. Bob, who stresses, in his brief remarks, kindness and "keeping it simple."



*Postcard showing the Cleveland Public Auditorium*

## **DENMARK: FROM RING i RING TO A.A.**

In 1948 a group belonging to a national temperance society called Ring i Ring is founded by Dr. Martensen, a doctor who treats alcoholic patients. It meets in a restaurant (below) at Copenhagen's zoo. In the summer of 1949, A.A. member Gordon McD. and his wife visits Ring i Ring at a meeting place in Lyngby, a small suburb outside Copenhagen. The group changes its name to "Ring i Ring Danish A.A." in January 1950 and lists with the Alcoholic Foundation. In the next few years, other Ring i Ring members will break away and hold closed meetings based on the Twelve Steps and other A.A. principles.



*Palme-Lunden restaurant, Copenhagen, Denmark*

## **THE DEATH OF DR. BOB**

Dr. Bob dies of cancer on November 16, 1950. During the Akron physician's 15 years of sobriety, the Fellowship he started with Bill W. had transformed the lives of close to 100,000 men and women and their loved ones.

# **1951**

## **A.A.'S FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

The first General Service Conference, orchestrated by chairman of the Alcoholic Foundation Bernard Smith, is held in April 1951 at the Commodore Hotel in New York. Bill W. later writes of its significance to A.A.: "The delegates . . . listened to reports from the Board of Trustees and from all of the services. There was warm but cordial debate on many questions of A.A. policy... [It was proved] as never before that A.A.'s Tradition Two was correct: Our group conscience could safely act as the sole authority and sure guide for Alcoholics Anonymous."

## **A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD**

In San Francisco in October 1951, the American Public Health Association presents Alcoholics Anonymous with the Lasker Award, "in recognition of its unique and highly successful approach" to an "age-old public health and social problem." The award is made possible through the benefactions of Mary and Albert Lasker, New York philanthropists. A ceremony with Bill W. and Board of Trustees chairman Bernard Smith as speakers is

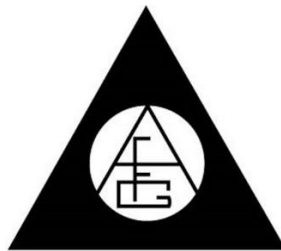
attended by some 3,000 A.A.s and family members, physicians, public health experts, and clergymen. Smith is shown in the newspaper photograph below.



**1952**

### **THE ARRIVAL OF AL-ANON**

In loosely organized Family Groups, loved ones of A.A. members had gathered together and shared their experiences since the Fellowship's earliest days. At Bill W.'s urging, his wife Lois moves to create a separate fellowship that will formalize these meetings. With Anne B., who had initiated a Family Group in Westchester County, New York, Lois sends a letter to 87 such groups suggesting that they unite under the name of Al-Anon. The response is positive, and Al-Anon Family Groups is born. In January 1952 Lois and Anne shift the growing organization's office from Stepping Stones to the 24th Street Clubhouse in Manhattan.



### **CARIBBEAN BY WAY OF CANADA**

Though there had inquiries from the Bahamas as early as 1944, Burton L., an A.A. member from Toronto now living in Nassau, forms the first stable group in the Bahamas in 1952 — four members who meet on Sunday afternoons. The group, one of the first in the Caribbean, makes a contribution of \$6 when it registers with the Alcoholic Foundation.

**1953**

### **A POST-WAR BEGINNING IN GERMANY**

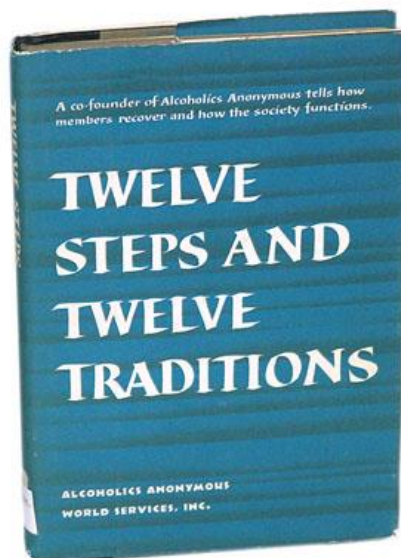
A handful of U.S. servicemen, all recovering alcoholics stationed at U.S. Army Base I Munich after the end of World War II, take on the responsibility of forming the first known A.A. group in Germany. On a mission to sober up local alcoholics, they post notices of a

meeting to be held at Hotel Leopold (below) on November 1, 1953. Among the 25 attendees are Max, Kurt, and Heindrich, who will meet with the Americans in what will come to be called Germany's "mother group."



### **TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS IS FIRST PUBLISHED — 1953**

Bill W. becomes increasingly devoted to writing projects, one of which emerges as Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions — the book that sets forth his deepest understanding of A.A.'s basic principles.



### **NICARAGUA'S INAUGURAL GROUP**

In the fall of 1953, Grupo de A.A. La Merced is founded in León by Jack M., who took up residence in Nicaragua in 1950, and then joined A.A. while on a brief visit to the United States Groups in the capital city of Managua and other Nicaraguan population centers will start meeting a decade later, facilitated by the Alcoholic Foundation.

### **THE BIG BOOK HITS BELGIUM**

At a gathering of English-speaking and Belgian alcoholics in Brussels, Jean L. introduces the Big Book and the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Within months of the October

1953 meeting, groups start assembling not only in Belgium's capital but also in cities and towns in Flanders and Wallonia.



## **1954**

### **BILL W. DECLINES HONORARY DEGREES**

In the wake of Alcoholics Anonymous' success, several colleges and universities offer Bill W. honorary degrees. He declines, explaining why in this excerpt from a letter to Yale University, which had proposed an honorary Doctor of Laws degree: "The tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous . . . entreats each member to avoid all that particular kind of personal publicity or distinction which might link his name with our Society in the general public mind." He then quotes A.A.'s need for anonymity, as stated in Tradition Twelve.

### **THE ALCOHOLIC FOUNDATION BECOMES THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

Changing the name of the Alcoholic Foundation to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous was first proposed at the first General Service Conference in the spring of 1951, but the switch becomes official in 1954. The motivation is to signal that the A.A. membership is taking full responsibility for itself.

### **MEMBERSHIP EXCEEDS 100,000**

By the end of A.A.'s second decade, some 130,000 members are meeting in approximately 6,000 groups on five continents.

## **1955**

### **A.A. IN ARGENTINA**

In the early 1950s, Hector G. of Buenos Aires is rescued from alcoholism after reading Alcoholics Anonymous and seeking the aid of a physician. He writes to the Alcoholic Foundation, which sends him A.A. literature in Spanish and asks permission to list him as a contact for referrals. Hector founds Argentina's first known group, and in 1955 will report that its members are relishing their newfound sobriety.

### **MR. EDDIE OF EL SALVADOR**

Edward F., who has carried the Fellowship's message to several alcoholics in Boston and San Francisco, moves to San Salvador with his Salvadoran wife. After initially finding it

hard to arouse interest in A.A., a friend of his wife introduces Edward to her alcoholic uncle, Don A., and the two men form a group that meets at the home of Atilio, a wealthy alcoholic. As membership grows, meetings are moved to the Garcia Flamenco school building. “Mr. Eddie,” as he becomes known, will later help start groups in other Central American countries.



## **FIRST MEETINGS IN MADRID**

A Mrs. Garcia of New York informs G.S.O. New York of the wish of Dr. E. Pelaz, a psychiatrist at a Madrid sanitarium, to launch an A.A. group. The G.S.O. sends Pelaz pamphlets and the name of its Madrid contact, American Ray C. Ray and fellow alcoholic Dan C. begin holding English-language meetings in June 1955. By the end of the year membership has increased fourfold and a Spanish-American group is meeting at Pelaz’s sanitarium. Before long, the Spaniards form a separate group, which quickly attracts more members and spurs the formation of A.A. groups countrywide.

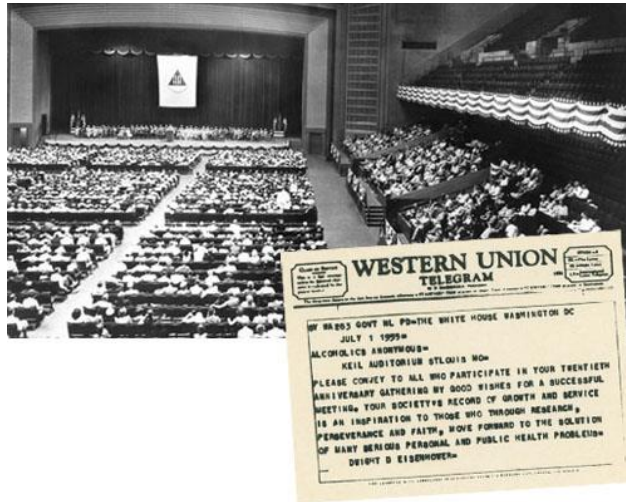
## **SECOND EDITION OF BIG BOOK PUBLISHED IN 1955**

The second edition of Alcoholics Anonymous reflects the membership’s growing diversity. The chapters on A.A. principles remain the same, and eight of the stories of early members’ efforts to achieve sobriety are retained in a section called “Pioneers of A.A.” In addition, 24 new stories appear in two separate sections: “They Stopped in Time” and “They Lost Nearly All.” The Twelve Traditions are added as well.

## **A HISTORIC INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION**

In July 1955, some 5,000 people attend the second International Convention in St. Louis (below). President Dwight D. Eisenhower recognizes the occasion with a congratulatory telegram. Among the important events at this 20th anniversary gathering is Bill’s presentation on A.A. history and the importance of understanding it. In addition, the second edition of the Big Book is launched. The Al-Anon Fellowship, now four years old, participates in five workshops.





## BILL W. PASSES THE TORCH, JULY 1955

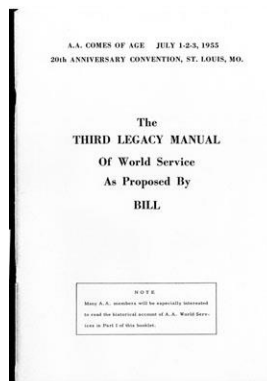
The St. Louis Convention culminates with Bill officially handing leadership of A.A. over to the members. The resolution he reads is passed with a roar of approval: “Be it therefore resolved that the General Service Conference... should become as of this date... the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuators of the world services of our Society, the voice of the group conscience of our entire Fellowship, and the sole successors of its co-founders, Doctor Bob and Bill.”

## A.A. COMES OF AGE

The St. Louis Convention of 1955 affirms the Fellowship’s maturity as Bill W. passes to the members the responsibility for A.A.’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. The Convention signals a decade of change—one that sees the consolidation of family groups under the name of Al-Anon, a separate fellowship that, like Alcoholics Anonymous, has spread to almost every corner of the world.

## THE THIRD LEGACY

At the St. Louis Convention, Bill speaks of the Fellowship’s Third Legacy, that of Service. In his words “. . . an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer. . . from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action.” Fifty thousand Third Legacy booklets (below), known today as The A.A. Service Manual, will be printed and distributed to A.A. groups.



## **A BULLETIN FOR LONERS**

Hundreds of Loners — individuals who are listed with A.A. but do not belong to a group — are being mailed G.S.O.'s monthly bulletin, "Twelfth Stepper," each issue of which features personal stories of Loners from around the world. The stated purpose is to enable such members "to share A.A. love and gratitude, strength and faith with one another." A previous bulletin — "The Internationalists Round Robin," launched in 1949 — had grown out of the efforts of Captain Jack S., a sailor who found sobriety in A.A. and maintained it by exchanging letters with groups he helped start around the world.

**1956**

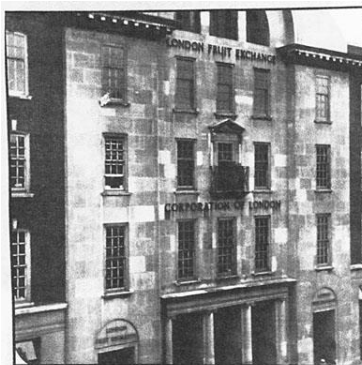
## **VENEZUELA JOINS THE FOLD**

A few Americans who gather for A.A. meetings in Caracas place a small ad in a local English-language newspaper. It draws the attention of Christiaan V., who previously attempted to start a Spanish-speaking group. With the help of the Americans, Christiaan carries the message to Luis and Clyde, and the three men become the first link in a chain of groups that will spread across Venezuela.



## **A.A.'S FIRST OVERSEAS GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

The quick growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and Ireland makes apparent the need for a separate General Service Board. After seeking guidance from G.S.O. New York, representatives from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland meet in London on October 28, 1956. They resolve to establish a Board of Trustees based on the U.S. model, to be known as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain & Ireland, Ltd. The first G.S.B. outside the U.S., housed in London's Fruit Exchange (below), will begin operations in 1957.



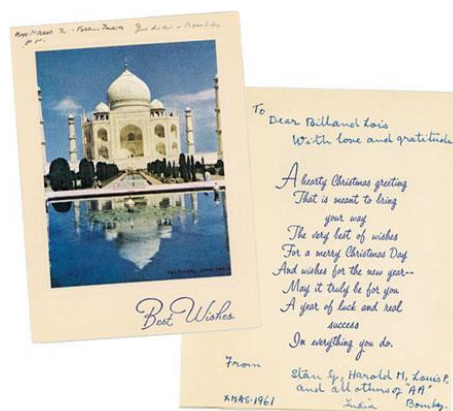
# 1957

## **NORTH AMERICAN HOSPITAL GROUPS**

By the beginning of 1957, the General Service Office in New York is maintaining contact with more than 230 hospital groups in the United States and Canada — the legacy of the pioneering A.A. groups formed two decades earlier at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, and Towns Hospital and Knickerbocker Hospital in New York.

## **INDIA: LONERS NO MORE**

In January 1957, Charley M., an A.A. member employed by the National Film Board of Canada, contacts Sylvia M. and Supatti M., both New Delhi Loners listed with G.S.O. New York. (Charley had expressed to the office his wish to stay active in A.A. during a 36-month business sojourn in Asia.) The three placed an ad in local newspapers, drawing responses from seven alcoholics— among them Mahindar S. G., who, like Sylvia and Supatti, is already listed. By May, New Delhi meetings are attracting eight to 12 people; by year's end, groups will be active in Calcutta and Bombay. Shown below is a greeting card sent by a Bombay group to Bill and Lois in December 1961.



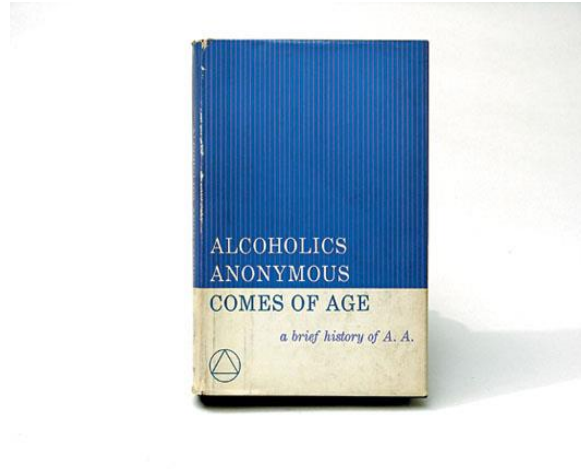
## **LETTERS FROM GREECE**

An American pilot who is an A.A. member reports to G.S.O. New York that he has presented a copy of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to Rev. Charles Hanna, pastor of the American Church in Athens. Rev. Hanna begins corresponding with G.S.O. New York in early 1957. His efforts bring together three American Loners living in Athens — Frank O. and servicemen Gus and Cal — who hold Greece's first A.A. meeting in the port city of Piraeus.



## A LANDMARK BOOK

In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, published October 1, 1957, Bill recounts A.A. history from a personal standpoint and reviews the proceedings of the St. Louis Convention. A section describing the Three Legacies is included, as are talks by A.A. friends in the fields of religion and medicine.



## THE ARRIVAL OF ALATEEN

Concern for the problems of the children of alcoholics was the topic of a special session at the 1955 St. Louis Convention. This concern increases as letters from teenagers (a few of whom had started groups of their peers) begin to flow into the Al-Anon office. As a result, Al-Anon founds Alateen in 1957 and publishes the booklet *Youth and the Alcoholic Parent* (below).



**1958**

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN A.A.

In late April 1958, the first conference for A.A.'s younger members (then defined as those under age 40) is held at Hotel Niagara in Niagara Falls, New York. "The A.A. Exchange Bulletin" (the precursor to the newsletter Box 4-5-9) reports that the purpose of the International Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) is "to provide delegates with a thorough rundown of the application of our A.A. program to the individual difficulties

encountered by young people in dealing not only with alcoholism but also with the other problems peculiar to their generation.” ICYPAA is held annually.



## SIGNING ON IN SINGAPORE

Dick D., who regularly corresponds with G.S.O. New York, writes in March 1958 that the Singapore group, founded in 1957, now has 12 members and two likely prospects.



## DRAMATIZATIONS OF ALCOHOLISM

When called upon, Alcoholics Anonymous plays an advisory role in the dramatization of alcoholism on television or in movies. In one instance, G.S.O. New York staff members work closely with scriptwriter J. P. Miller in preparation for the October 1958 broadcast of “The Days of Wine and Roses,” a “Playhouse 90” production. The play, examining the lives of an alcoholic married couple seeking help from A.A., will reach an international audience when it is produced as a movie in 1962.



## STATE OF THE STRUCTURE

As a service to readers, the January 1958 Grapevine prints a chart outlining A.A.'s services and the Conference structure. Text in the top box notes that “over 7,000 groups, including 500 in hospitals, prisons, and other institutions and 760 overseas, are registered at the General Service Headquarters.”

## A PRISON GROUP DOWN UNDER

A.A. groups in prisons had spread across the U.S. from 1942 onward and had also begun meeting in Canada, Ireland, and Finland. In 1958, Australia's first known “group behind walls” is formed — the Magpie Prison Group at Fremantle Prison (below) in the port city of Fremantle, Western Australia.



**1959**

## AUSTRIA WEST, AUSTRIA EAST

In 1959, two A.A. members from Reichenall, Germany, decide to carry the message across the Austrian border to Salzburg. With the aid of their first contact, a physician from a local clinic for nervous diseases, they help a few alcoholics form a group. To the east in Vienna, two alcoholic women who are being treated in the clinic of a psychiatrist, Dr. Rotter, hear of A.A. and found a group on their own. With a gentleman from Linz, they begin to hold meetings in private homes. Both groups independently seek the advice of German groups and receive German-language A.A. literature. A current Vienna meeting place is shown below.



## **COLOMBIA: SEVEN YEARS TO SUCCESS**

After years of failed attempts, a stable Colombian A.A. group is finally formed in January 1959. The principal players are Arturo E. of Medellin and Alejandro S. of Baranquilla, who had met while being treated for alcoholism in a Baranquilla clinic in 1952. While the men twice tried to launch a group (Alejandro, a prosperous businessman, had become familiar with A.A. principles while undergoing treatment in a Miami hospital), only Arturo is able to stay sober and carry through. His first group, which meets in Medellin, plants the seed for those that will follow in Bogotá and other Colombian cities.

## **1960**

### **FRANCE'S FIRST FRENCH-SPEAKING GROUPS**

While American A.A.s had met in Paris as early as 1949, the first known French-speaking group forms after the newspaper *France Soir* runs a series of articles on Alcoholics Anonymous by journalist Joseph Kessel in the summer of 1960. A letter to the newspaper from Manuel M. (originally from Spain) results in his receiving A.A. literature and the start of a group of four: Manuel, François B., Jean M., and Lennard (a Swede). In 1961 the group, which takes the name *Groupe Quai d'Orsay*, will gain the sponsorship of Americans who established an A.A. group in Paris in 1955. More groups are formed, growth accelerates, and in the early 1970s France's General Service Office will open in Rue Trousseau.

### **GUATEMALA GETS GOING**

Guatemala's first known A.A. group begins meeting in January 1960, through the efforts of Miguel Angel R. and Paulino G. The seed had been planted four years before by Reinaldo G., a friend of Miguel's who had joined A.A. in San Francisco before returning home to Guatemala. An Intergroup office will open three years later.

### **THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION**

Long Beach, California, plays host to A.A.'s 25th Anniversary celebration in July 1960. Some 8,900 attendees are joined by many of the Fellowship's pioneers — among them Bill and Lois, Sister Ignatia, Marty M., Dr. Jack Norris, Warden Clinton Duffy, and Dr. Harry Tiebout, a psychiatrist who championed A.A. and brought Marty M. into the program.

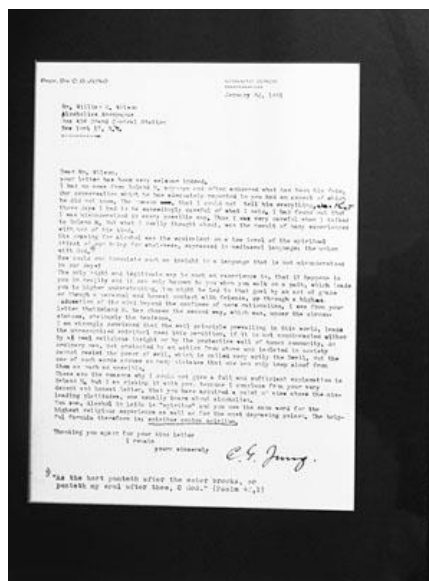
### **COSTA RICA'S STRUGGLING START**

Although the Costa Rican government's Committee on Alcoholism (COA), established in 1954, had some success in treating alcoholics, the only connection to A.A. was a perfunctory reading of the Twelve Steps at meetings. After a shaky beginning in 1958, A.A. Grupo Tradicionalista No.1 — started by a small group of COA patients — becomes stable in 1959. By the summer of 1963, eight groups will be meeting countrywide and a General Service Office will open in San José.

# 1961

## BILL WRITES TO CARL JUNG

In a 1961 letter to Swiss-German psychoanalyst Dr. Carl Jung, Bill expresses his gratitude for Jung's long-ago message to Rowland H., who was treated by Jung and who would later lead friend Ebby T. to the Oxford Group. Bill wrote, "You frankly told [Rowland] of the hopelessness of further medical or psychiatric treatment," [and also of the possibility of] "a spiritual awakening or religious experience — in short, a genuine conversion." Bill described these statements as "beyond doubt the first foundation stone upon which [A.A.] has been built." Jung responds with a gracious letter (below) confirming that the most appropriate antidote to alcoholism is spirituality, which is emphasized in the Twelve Steps.



## BIG BOOK SALES TOP HALF A MILLION

By 1961, more than 500,000 copies of Alcoholics Anonymous have been sold, plus editions translated into Spanish, French, and German.

## ISLAND HOPPING IN THE CARIBBEAN

A.A. groups in the Caribbean, including those in the Bahamas and Trinidad, receive support in 1962 when the dedicated Gordon MacD. visits the Antilles and meets with secretaries of the groups in the region. The aim of what is called "the Caribbean Crusade," launched by Gordon and other members in 1959, is to develop and reinforce A.A. in the Caribbean and to facilitate cooperation between Caribbean and Latin American groups. Among the islands joining the fold in 1962 are Barbados and Grenada, both in the Lesser Antilles.





# 1962

## **DR. NORRIS ELECTED CHAIRMAN**

Dr. John L. Norris, the medical director of Eastman Kodak and a nonalcoholic trustee of A.A. since 1948, becomes chairman of the General Service Board. “Dr. Jack,” described by Bill as “a most selfless and devoted worker,” will be instrumental in the development of Regional Forums. His involvement with A.A. will continue after he steps down from the Board of Trustees in 1975.



## **UK ISLAND GROUPS**

Guernsey gets on board in 1961 when Pru, a Loner, arranges for meetings to be held in the study of the headmaster of St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic School in St. Peter Port. When the group moves to a room above a café, membership grows from six to a dozen. But not until the group finds a permanent home at Princess Elizabeth Hospital in 1981 will it undergo significant growth. A group starts meeting in the nearby island of Jersey in 1962, and small inter-island conventions are held for four or five years — in Guernsey in autumn, in Jersey in spring. The first A.A. group on the Isle of Mann, to the north in the Irish Sea, will be formed in 1966.



## **TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE PUBLISHED**

In 1962, the General Service Conference accepts Bill’s long-awaited manuscript for Twelve Concepts for World Service. In the introduction, Bill writes that his aim is “...to record the ‘why’ of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.”

# 1963

## **TWO STARTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Two A.A. groups begin to meet regularly in Santo Domingo in the spring of 1963. One, the Spanish-speaking Grupo Santa Mercedes, grows from two to 18 members by the end of the year. G.S.O. New York lists as the contact person Abe F., who is also one of two men in the second group, for English speakers; this group, however, will last for only two years.



## **ANNIVERSARIES IN NORTHERN EUROPE**

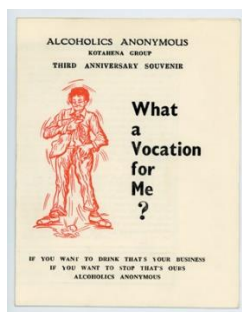
Belgium, by 1963 home to 18 A.A. groups in eight cities and towns, issues invitations (below) to its tenth anniversary celebration. Also marking its tenth anniversary is A.A. in Germany, with 26 groups in 14 cities and towns.



# 1964

## **START-UPS IN SRI LANKA**

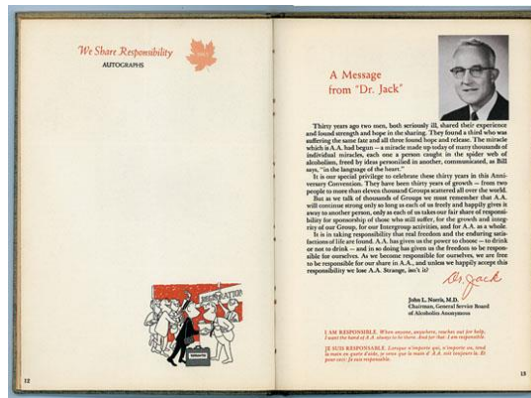
A Loner in the former Ceylon had been listed with G.S.O. New York since 1959, but not until 1964 is the first known A.A. group in the country formed. Its site is the capital city of Colombo, where a second group takes shape a year later. Soon A.A. spreads to other Sri Lankan locales. In 1976, a group in the Colombo suburb of Kotahena will mark its third anniversary with the publication of this booklet (below).



# 1965

## TEN THOUSAND-PLUS IN TORONTO

In July 1965, more than 10,000 members from around the world meet in Toronto for the 30th Anniversary International Convention. Some 250 members of A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen, plus 24 internationally known nonalcoholic authorities on alcoholism, are featured speakers at 69 jam-packed sessions. As the Convention ends, attendees clasp hands and recite the newly developed Declaration of Responsibility, led by Bill and Lois. The Convention program and souvenir book are shown below.



## BEGINNINGS IN BOLIVIA

An A.A. group in La Paz, Bolivia, was listed with G.S.O. New York in 1965, but little is known of its origins. Better documented are the two men considered A.A.'s Bolivian pioneers: Oscar G. and Jorge L., who meet in the city of Santa Cruz in 1971. After three years, Oscar will become a Loner when Jorge leaves for a job in La Paz. With a local woman named Dorita, Jorge forms an all-new group in La Paz, planting the seed for the eventual start-up of groups in Cochabamba and again in Santa Cruz. In 1987, the Cochabamba group hosted the first national meeting of A.A.s from across Bolivia.



## 1965-1984: A MILLION MEMBERS AND GROWING

Alcoholics Anonymous began its fourth decade on firm footing, garnering respect far and wide. Over the next 20 years, cooperation and sponsorship among A.A. countries grew, the Fellowship's International Conventions expanded in size and spirit, and the language of the heart was spoken in at least 40 different tongues.

# 1966

## THREE START-UPS IN ECUADOR

After a group of physicians from the Ecuadorean city of Cueca observe A.A. groups in neighboring Colombia, they are instrumental in getting a local group off the ground: Grupo Alianza Amiga, listed with G.S.O. New York in March 1966. The second known group takes shape when Eduardo A., who had achieved sobriety through A.A. in Washington, DC, returns home to Guayaquil and arranges with a local priest to hold meetings in his church. In the fall of 1971, the Guayaquil group helps Paulina M., who had gotten sober in Coral Gables, Florida, and Javier J., a businessman from Lima, Peru, to launch the first known group in the capital city of Quito.



## THE TRUSTEES' NEW ALIGNMENT

In a move that stresses the Fellowship's full acceptance of responsibility for conducting its own affairs, the 1966 General Service Conference recommends and accepts a new alcoholic-to-nonalcoholic ratio of Trustees on the General Service Board. With the gradual addition of U.S. and Canadian Trustees-at-large, the Board's membership would now be made up of 14 alcoholics and seven nonalcoholics.

## A BULLETIN CHANGES NAMES

In the 1966 Holiday issue, the name of the newsletter "A.A. Exchange Bulletin" (subtitled "News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.") is changed to Box 4-5-9, named after G.S.O.'s post office box at New York's Grand Central Station. In 1967, the journal will go trilingual with the launching of French and Spanish editions.



## **LONERS AND GROUPS IN VIETNAM**

As war rages in Vietnam, 10 American soldiers there are listed as Loners by G.S.O. New York in 1966. In 1967, soldiers' groups in Vietnam number 11. By 1971, groups in Saigon, Long Binh, Cam Ranh Bay, and other locations keep in touch through SEA SIDE (SEA standing for South East Asia), a bulletin started by M/Sgt. Andie A. In a letter to G.S.O. New York, a soldier named Frank writes from the battle lines: "For years I prayed for sobriety, but now I pray the Serenity Prayer. God bless you."



**1967**

## **SWITZERLAND: THE MESSAGE IN THREE LANGUAGES**

The year 1967 sees the creation of Switzerland's first General Service Office, when the Gremium (German for "committee") begins serving German-speaking A.A.s. The country's first known group was French-speaking, however, taking shape in 1956 when an alcoholic in Geneva learned of Alcoholics Anonymous at a lecture, obtained A.A. literature, and arranged a meeting with friends. The first known German-speaking group in Switzerland was launched in 1963 in Lucerne. The first known Italian-speaking group will be formed in the canton of Tessin in 1974. In 1979 another G.S.O., serving French and Italian Switzerland, will open in Geneva.



## **AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD FROM THE FRANCISCANS**

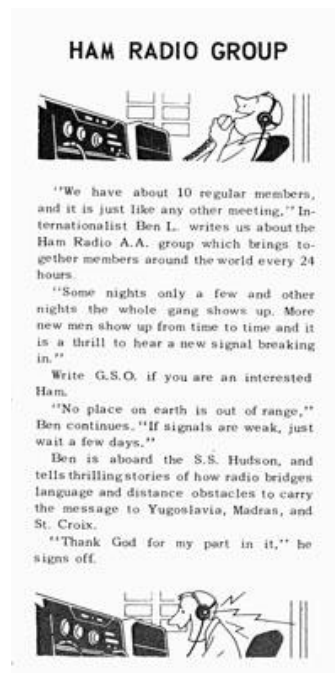
In April 1967, Alcoholics Anonymous receives the International Award of the Conventional Franciscan Fathers and Brothers. Dr. John L. Norris, chairman of the Board of Trustees, accepts the plaque and citation, which notes, in part, "The sympathetic understanding and

the patient application of charity toward those afflicted with the disease of alcoholism has brought about the rehabilitation of thousands of alcoholics formerly thought to be hopeless alcoholics.”



## MEETING OVER THE AIRWAVES

Ben L., an Internationalist aboard the S.S. Hudson, writes to Box 4-5-9, in 1967 to report on A.A.'s first known ham radio group. “We have about 10 regular members,” he writes, “and it’s just like any other meeting.” The group brings together members around the world every 24 hours. “Some nights, only a few and other nights the whole gang shows up,” he continues. “More new men show up from time to time, and it is a thrill to hear a new signal breaking in.”



## BILL'S WRITINGS PRINTED AND BOUND

The A.A. Way of Life, a collection of Bill's writings, is published in 1967 as a daily source of comfort and inspiration. The title of the book will be changed in 1971 to As Bill Sees It.

## **1968**

### **FIRST TRIENNIAL SURVEY IN U.S. AND CANADA**

At the 28th International Congress on Alcohol and Alcoholism, held in late summer 1968 in Washington, D.C., A.A. chairman Dr. John L. Norris reports on the findings of the first survey of members from all states and provinces. Sixty percent of the 11,355 men and women who responded at 466 meetings in 1968 reported that they had gone without a drink for a year or more. The survey, which will be taken every three years, also finds that 41 percent of members said they had not drunk alcohol since their first A.A. meeting.

## **1969**

### **THE FIRST WORLD SERVICE MEETING**

For the first time, representatives from countries where A.A.s have established a G.S.O or a literature distribution center convene to share information on service structures, group services, publishing, and finance. The date is October 8-11, 1969, and the place is New York City. Attendees include Bill W., Chairman Dr. John L. Norris, G.S.O. New York manager Bob H., and delegates from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Holland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the U.S.

### **HUNGARY'S FIRST OPEN MEETING**

Midge M., a staff member of G.S.O. New York, travels to Budapest in June 1969 to attend a conference held by the International Institute on Prevention and Treatment of Alcoholism. While there, she arranges Hungary's first known open A.A. meeting. Members Peter B. of the Netherlands, Inge L. (West Germany), Richard P. (Ireland), and Cecily C. (U.S.) address a group of Hungarian alcoholics as Archer Tongue, director of the Institute, translates. While a small group will be formed in Budapest in 1972, A.A. won't become firmly established in Hungary until the late 1980s.



### **GROWTH OF SPANISH-SPEAKING GROUPS**

As of 1969, 1,500 Spanish-speaking groups are listed at the G.S.O. in New York.

# 1970

## HOSPITAL AND PRISON GROUPS WORLDWIDE

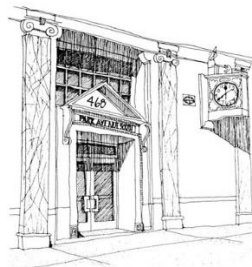
A G.S.O. New York report of the 1970 World Service Meeting notes that 54,031 “institution members” belong to the Fellowship worldwide: 20,160 members in 742 hospital groups and 33,871 members in 895 prison groups.

## UNITY IN MIAMI

Miami is the site of the Fellowship’s fifth International Convention in July 1970, the keynote of which is the Declaration of Unity: “This we owe to A.A.’s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.” Attending are 11,000 people from 50 states and 27 countries — as reported by Box 4-5-9, “the biggest assemblage of alcoholics the world has ever seen — all of them sober!” The convention marks Bill W.’s last public appearance at an A.A. gathering.

## A NEW HOME FOR G.S.O. NEW YORK

In April 1970, the G.S.O. takes an 11-year lease on new quarters at 468 Park Avenue South in New York City, gaining more space and saving rent money in the process. The office occupies the entire sixth floor.



# 1971

## LONERS GATHER IN MALAYSIA

In February 1971, Enos C., an A.A. Loner working in Kuala Lumpur, places a notice in the Malay Mail newspaper seeking other Loners interested in holding meetings. Six weeks later, Enos reports to G.S.O. New York that with the addition of two Canadian A.A.s in Kuala Lumpur, the fledgling Pertama Group already numbers five. By the end of the decade, four more groups will have started in Sarawak and other Malaysian cities.

per let. 3/18/71

GROUP INFORMATION CARD		BASE TYPE OR PRINT
1. CITY OR TOWN: KUALA LUMPUR	2. COUNTY OR PROVINCE:	
	3. COUNTRY: MALAYSIA	
4. NAME OF GROUP: KUALA LUMPUR	GROUP:	INDICATE NIGHT OF MEETING: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9
5. MAILING ADDRESS FOR GROUP: FILE	Enos C. Malaysian American Assurance Co. 5th Fl., Chartered Bank Bldg. Jalan Ampang Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	
6. PHONE CONTACT FOR GROUP:	Enos C.	29041
7. MEETING PLACE:	This: 8:15 p.m.	
RETURN THIS CARD TO:	P.O. BOX #48 GRAND CENTRAL STATION N.Y. 10101	8. NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS: 3



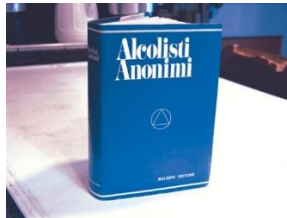
## **THE DEATH OF BILL W.**

At the age of 75, Bill W. dies on January 24, 1971, at the Miami Heart Institute in Miami Beach, Florida. On February 14, groups around the world hold memorial meetings honoring Bill's work as co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, author of the Big Book and other publications, and architect and articulator of the Fellowship's principles.

**1972**

## **ITALY COMES ABOARD**

The start-up of A.A. in Italy is said to be 1972, when a small group of Americans meeting in Rome is joined by locals Giovanni and Ermanno. Assisted by some of the Americans, the two men soon join with Carol C. to form the first known Italian-speaking A.A. group. Two years later, a group will be founded in Florence, and Milan will follow suit in 1976. In 1978, representatives of several groups meet to start negotiations with G.S.O. New York for the sponsorship of the publication of *Il Grande Libro* (the Big Book), which is already being translated into Italian. They succeed, and *Alcolisti Anonimi* (droit) is published in 1980.



**1973**

## **BIG BOOK DISTRIBUTION REACHES ONE MILLION**

The one millionth copy of Alcoholics Anonymous, A.A.'s Big Book, is presented to President Richard Nixon in a ceremony at the White House.

## **BANGKOK'S FIRST KNOWN MEETINGS**

In Bangkok in 1971, two Americans of Irish descent — Jim L., a businessman with three years of sobriety, and Evelyn K., wife of a civil engineer under contract in Bangkok — team up to form an A.A. group. The next year they are joined by Jack B., a Redemptorist priest. In 1973, the three move their meetings from Evelyn's apartment to the Holy Redeemer Rectory and welcome new member Joanne — the wife of an American Embassy official — and George, a German-born U.S. military member. The stabilization of the Bangkok group soon gives rise to the founding of A.A. groups in Ubon and other Thai cities.

## **LOIS'S ROUND-THE-WORLD TRIP**

In an echo of their 1950 visit to Europe, Lois W. sets out on a nine-week trip around the world a year after Bill's death. Her traveling companion is Evelyn C., an early volunteer at the Al-Anon Clearing House and later a staff member at the Al-Anon World Service Office. During their journey the women meet with members of A.A. and Al-Anon in South Africa,

Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Honolulu. (Shown below is a gift later presented to Lois, the Serenity Prayer in Japanese.) In *Lois Remembers*, Lois will write that “Seeing and feeling the loving devotion and oneness of A.A. and Al-Anon around the world did much to submerge in an overwhelming sea of gratitude my sense of personal loss.”

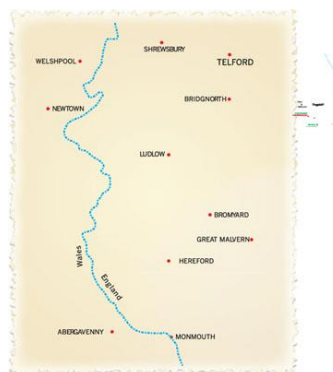


## MUSINGS FROM MEMBERS

*Came to Believe*, a 120-page booklet published in 1973 by A.A., is a collection of stories by members who tell in their own words what significance the phrase “spiritual awakening” holds for them. One story describes, “I began to see another part of me emerging — a grateful me, expecting nothing, but sure that another power was beginning to guide me, counsel me, and direct my ways.”

## INTERGROUPS IN WALES

The first known group in Wales was founded in Abergavenny in 1963. Until then most alcoholics who wanted to attend A.A. meetings had to cross the border into England. A decade later, the Welsh Borders Intergroup is founded to link groups on both sides of the border (shown below are the towns where the groups meet). An intergroup has also been established in South Wales—the Cymraig Intergroup, composed of groups in Cardiff, Swansea, Llanelli, and Newport.



**1974**

## POLAND'S FIRST STEPS

A group of alcoholics who have been meeting with physicians and therapists since the mid-1960s in the city of Poznan decide in 1974 to meet on their own and follow the principles

of A.A. (Earlier meetings had been organized by therapist Maria Grabowska, who had tried to have the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Steps published in Polish newspapers but was thwarted by the censorship office.) Led by Rajmund F., a Pole who became sober in 1973 and was fluent enough in English and German to translate A.A. literature, the group takes the name Eleusis, after the ancient Greek city the Roman Emperors favored as sanctuary. Growth accelerates, and by June 1985 almost 100 groups will be meeting across the country. The decorative plate shown below was presented to G.S.O. New York by grateful Polish members.



## DELEGATES DESCEND ON DENVER

“Let It Begin with Me” is the theme of the Fellowship’s 40th Anniversary International Convention, held in Denver, Colorado in 1975. Some 19,500 attendees stream into the city, and Host Committee members register arrivals at the rate of 400 per hour. At the formal opening session, a replica of the Big Book dominates the dais and gives new meaning to the word “big.” It is 28 feet tall.



## A VOTE IN URUGUAY

Pablo L., an actor, undergoes detoxification at Montevideo’s Clinica del Prado in 1966, is given a copy of the Big Book, and in turn seeks out an A.A. group to join. The closest is in Buenos Aires, where he frequents A.A. meetings during an extended stay. Returning home, he visits hospitals to carry the message. He then finds ADEA (for Amigos del Enfermo Alcohólico, or friends of the alcoholic patient), where alcoholics and their families share experiences. While some aspects of the A.A. program are used, others—including anonymity—are rejected. After A.A. Argentina urges ADEA to follow all A.A. Traditions

and to take the Fellowship's name, the issue is put to a vote. The ayes have it, and on March 18, 1974, the first known Uruguayan meeting of A.A. is held in Montevideo.



**1975**

### **LIVING SOBER IS PUBLISHED**

In 1975, A.A. published *Living Sober*, a book of member experiences that describes methods of living without drinking. The material for the book was gathered in the early 1970s from group and individual correspondence of shared experience, then writers compiled it into a book. The book becomes a popular addition to A.A. literature.

### **A NEW BEGINNING IN PORTUGAL**

English-speaking groups in Portugal had met as early as 1956 in Lisbon and 1959 at Lajes Air Force Base in the nearby Azores. Yet A.A. doesn't take root in the country until 1975, when American Ed A. returns from rehabilitation in the United States and begins spreading the A.A. message in hospitals. As a result, Portuguese-speaking groups are founded in Lisbon, Oporto, and Algarve. Aiding the growth and stability of the groups is Portuguese-language A.A. literature sent by A.A. Brazil.

### **A.A. ARCHIVES OPEN AT GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE**

In November 1975, Lois W. and Tom S. of Jacksonville, Florida (a trustee who chairs the archives committee), cut a blue ribbon to officially open the A.A. Archives at G.S.O. New York. In a brief speech, Dr. John L. Norris points out that A.A. must continually renew itself by going back to its source, recalling Bill W.'s frequent request that the Board and G.S.O. "should put everything they do on the record." The archivist is nonalcoholic Nell Wing (below), who served as Bill's secretary for many years and is described as a "one-woman walking encyclopedia of A.A. lore."



### **A.A. IN JERUSALEM**

With the aid of Canadian A.A. members who are part of the UN forces in the Middle East, the Shalom Group is formed in Jerusalem in 1975. The next year, member Jay S. reports to

G.S.O. New York that twice-weekly A.A. meetings are being held in Tel Aviv as well as Jerusalem, in both English and Hebrew. The Shalom Group will also host a two-day convention to celebrate the first anniversary of A.A. in Israel.



**1976**

### **FAST-FORWARD IN ICELAND**

Though the Reykjavik Group had been meeting in Iceland since 1954, a breakthrough occurs in the early 1970s, when a government-sponsored program begins flying alcoholics to the U.S. for help on a regular basis. Almost invariably they return eager to carry the A.A. message, leading to the 1976 publication of the Big Book in Icelandic. The subsequent explosive growth in membership results in a change in public opinion regarding alcoholism and the establishment of new treatment centers.

### **JUNAAB CREATED IN BRAZIL**

While records show A.A. meetings were held in Brazil as early as 1947, the country's first General Service Board — Junta Nacional de Alcoólicos Anônimos, or JUNAAB, is created in February 1976.



### **THIRD EDITION OF BIG BOOK PUBLISHED IN 1976**

Thirteen new stories appear in the Third Edition of Alcohólicos Anônimos. By the summer of 1976, more than 1,450,000 copies of the Big Book's first two editions had been distributed worldwide, and both a Braille edition and audio tapes have been released.

### **MEMBERSHIP TOPS A MILLION**

At the opening of the 26th annual meeting of the General Service Conference, held in New York in April 1976, new figures for the Fellowship's worldwide reach are reported: an estimated 28,000 groups in 92 countries, with membership totaling more than 1,000,000.

# 1977

## **A YOUNGER FELLOWSHIP**

An A.A. survey conducted in 1977 shows that over the previous three years the proportion of young members (those under 30) in the U.S. and Canada has jumped 50 percent and now accounts for almost 20 percent of North American membership. Surveys done by A.A. in Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Finland, France, Mexico, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and West Germany yield similar results.

## **EARLY MEETINGS IN CAMBODIA**

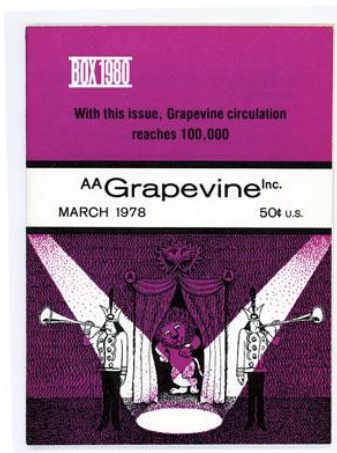
In the wake of the 1975 capture of the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge, thousands of Cambodians fill refugee camps along the Thai border. In one camp a U.S. aid worker, whose brother is an A.A. member back in New York, recognizes that alcoholism affects many of the refugees, leading her to order and translate A.A. publications. Though up to 60 people attend daily gatherings based on A.A. principles, these meetings cease when the camp closes. Some 15 years later, A.A. reappears in Cambodia when a few members start a group in Phnom Penh. A.A. Australia responds to a request for sponsorship and helps members establish Khmer-speaking groups.



# 1978

## **A MILESTONE FOR THE AA GRAPEVINE**

With the March 1978 issue, the circulation of the Fellowship's "meeting in print" reaches 100,000. In June 1944, copies of the periodical's first edition had numbered 1,200 and had gone out to 165 subscribers and other members of A.A.



## THE FIRST ZONAL MEETING

Born of an idea brought forward at the 1978 World Service Meeting, the first zonal service meeting – during which countries share experiences, strengthen unity, and offer help to A.A.s where service structures have yet to be set up – takes place in Bogota, Colombia in 1979. Delegates from ten Latin American countries convene in what is called the Ibero-American Service Meeting. Later, this biannual meeting will be called REDELA, a shortened form of Réunion de Las Americas (Meeting of the Americas). Zonal meetings will be launched in Europe in 1981, Asia/Oceania in 1995, and Sub-Saharan Africa in 2003.



**1979**

## A.A.'S FIRST PUBLIC INFORMATION FILM

In the fall of 1979, the first public information film produced by the Fellowship – the 28-minute “Alcoholics Anonymous: An Inside View” – is released to A.A. service entities in the U.S. and Canada, enabling groups to provide it to television stations for airing. A panoramic view of sober living in A.A., the film shows a cross section of members in various settings: at work, at home, and at A.A. get-togethers and meetings.

## GROUPS FOR THE DEAF

By the spring of 1979, G.S.O. New York has listed seven A.A. groups for people who are deaf. Also listed is an international deaf group whose members communicate by mail. Box 4-5-9 reports that the use of non-A.A. interpreters, when necessary, “gives rise to the confidentiality question,” but experience has shown that goodwill on both sides usually puts the issue to rest.

