



## A.A. In A Time Of Change

Presentation by Michelle Mirza,  
G.S.O. Archivist

April 17, 2021

## G.S.O. Archives Mission

**The mission of the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office Archives is to document permanently the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, to make the history of the organization accessible to A.A. members and other researchers, and to provide a context for understanding A.A.'s progression, principles and traditions.**





# Vital records of the corporations archived

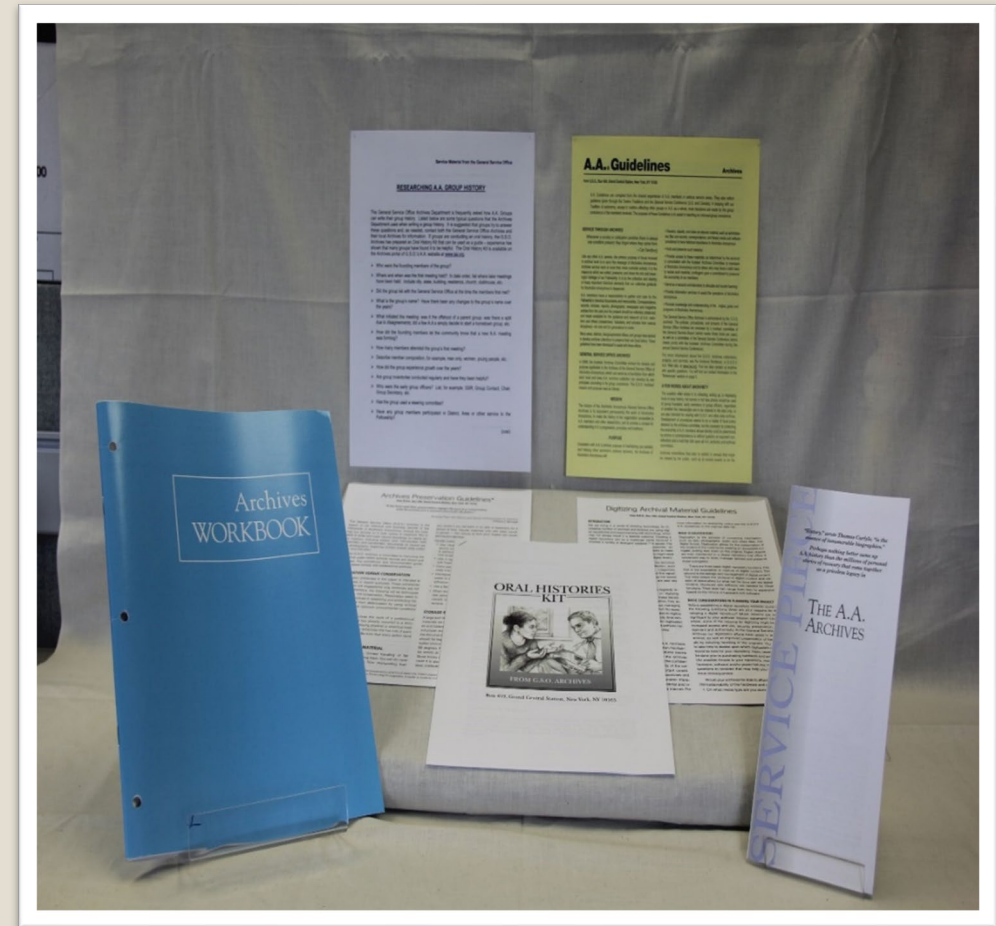


- General Service Board minutes and committees' background**
- A.A.W.S. Board minutes and committees' background**
- AA Grapevine Board minutes**
- Historical records from A.A.'s beginnings**



# Services We Provide

- Information services for researchers and members
- Assistance and support for local A.A. archives





“Those letters ... carry the story of how A.A. started and grew all over the world — these unique and precious communications, holding the history of A.A. forever safe and intact — I treasure deeply in our archives.”

*(Grateful to Have Been There, by Nell Wing)*

**“I DO NOT THINK THAT ANY OF US WOULD PRESUME ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN ITS PRESENT FORM WOULD NECESSARILY LAST FOREVER. WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT IT WILL LEAD TO BETTER THINGS FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM ALCOHOLISM.”**

**(BILL W., REMARKS AT THE 1956 GSC)**



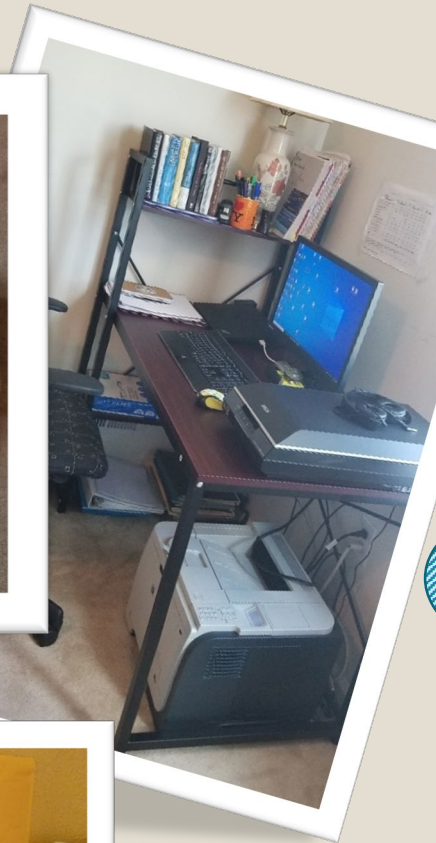


**“In the area of principles, we should conceive certainty; in the area of policy, comparative certainty; and in the area of practices, compromise if necessary.”  
(Bernard Smith, 1953 General Service Conference)**



# 71st General Service Conference





	A	B	C	D	E	
1	Date	Publisher	Title	Author	Laserefiche File Nam	Note
2	11-Mar-20	Harvard Gazette	Public urged to ramp up social distancing, increase coronavirus tests	Alvin Powell	2020_03_11_HG	
3	17-Mar-20	Vice Magazine	Coronavirus is forcing A.A. meetings to close, and people are worried about relapse	Carter Sherman	2020_03_17_VICE	anonymity break; New York Association
4	17-Mar-20	Boston Globe	You're not alone': How the recovery community is sticking together during the coronavirus shutdowns	Steve Annear	2020_03_17_BG	
5	18-Mar-20	Vogue Magazine	How Zoom Is Keeping Me Sobriety	Molly Jong-Fast	2020_03_18_VM	
6	18-Mar-20	Reuters	Meet the Americans still going out and gathering in large groups	Andrew Hay and Jessica Resnick-Ault	2020_03_18_REUTERS	not following national g
7	19-Mar-20	Washington Post	My name is Joe and I'm an alcoholic. Where is everybody?	Petula Dvorak	2020_03_19_WP	
8	19-Mar-20	ABC 10	Sobriety amid coronavirus: Sacramento's recovery community moves online	Samantha Solomon	2020_03_19_ABC	
9	19-Mar-20	The Fort Morgan Times	COVID-19: Support groups, Alcoholics Anonymous offer modified services during outbreak	Slade Rand	2020_03_19_FMT	
10	19-Mar-20	Spectrum News	Addiction Treatment Centers Make Adjustments During Covid-19 Pandemic	Matt Hunter	2020_03_19_SN	
11	19-Mar-20	Grand Haven Tribune	AA meetings canceled, creating challenges for recovering addicts	Matt DeYoung	2020_03_19_GHT	
12	19-Mar-20	MainLine Today	Staying Sober During the Coronavirus Pandemic	Melissa Jacobs	2020_03_19_MLT	
			Addiction during self isolation: Staying in contact with others is key to staying			

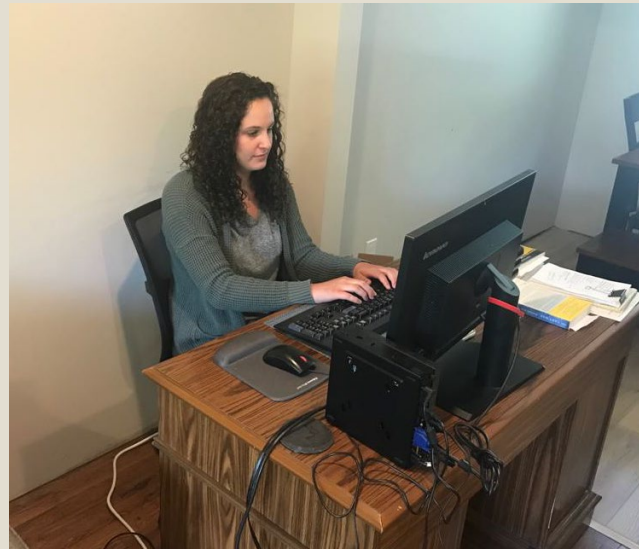
In the spirit of documenting this moment, the G.S.O. Archives set out to create a COVID-19 (coronavirus) archives, documenting A.A.'s activities.

## Alcoholics Anonymous provides support online during COVID-19 pandemic

By Beth Penney - April 9, 2020



While bars and restaurants may be closed, alcohol abuse is still a concern during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alcoholics Anonymous has moved its meetings online to continue to provide support. NTV's Beth Penney reports.



### 'This is the last door on the road for a lot of people.' How the pandemic changed Alcoholics Anonymous — possibly forever

NEWS  
NOV 15, 2020  
BY NADINE YOUSIF  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
TORONTO.COM

In a typical week, Mark attends four Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in Toronto. But over the last seven months, the meetings have been far from typical.

Since the arrival of [COVID-19](#), people who once sat together in close proximity to share their struggles with addiction now do so on a screen, their faces trapped in individual squares on a Zoom meeting. Some attendees choose not to have their camera or microphone on, making for quieter celebrations than usual for sobriety milestones. As more than 80 per cent of the Greater Toronto Area's AA meetings have moved online, moments of casual socialization before and after, also referred to as "fellowship time," are no longer possible. The passing of a donation basket is a thing of the past.

"The value of the fellowship is being able to see the flesh, not to speak to other heads

### WESTERN WASHINGTON AREA 72 Pandemic: Challenge and Response An Archives Project Proposal

We are living in a time when fundamental changes have occurred within and outside of Area 72. Rather than wait 10 or 20 years to ask the question, "How has the pandemic changed our Area?," it might be valuable to gather some of that history now, as it unfolds. A summary of the research could make one or more highly informative articles for our newsletter (or not). The body of this work will be valuable to future researchers.

One way to approach this question might be to survey members of the Area. There should be questions seeking quantifiable information, like the number of home groups before the pandemic and the number of zoom meetings now. Other lines of inquiry might reveal the heart of AA: how have we helped each other cope with this?

Below is a draft suggested survey for members of the Area.

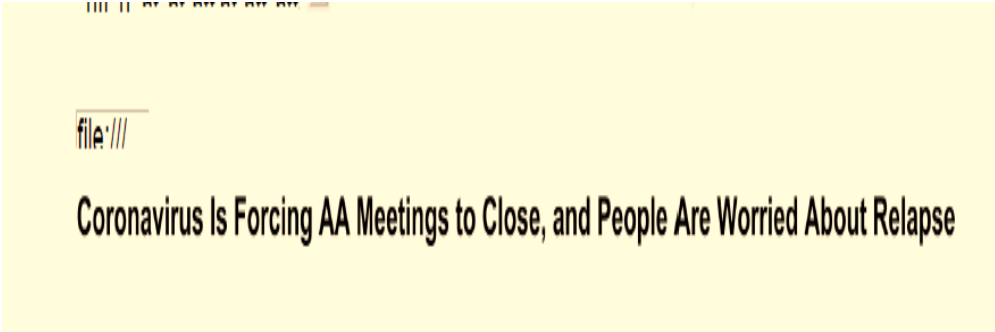
We already know that shutdown responses may not have been optimal by everyone all the time. We are members from all walks of life dealing with an unfolding crisis. It must be stated up front that this survey is not going to be used to blame or shame anyone or raise them to hero status either. We just want to gather facts and catch the "spirit of the moment" be it full of fear, or hell-bent to save the world, or more likely a trudge down the middle of the road more-or-less together.

#### The goals of this survey are to:

1. Inform a future historical document concerning Area 72 and the pandemic.
2. Possibly identify some areas of strength and weakness for consideration by current and future servants.
3. Provide members with a view of our area, our strengths, the challenges we face and our common ongoing effort to keep the hand of AA available to all who may need it.
4. Inspire new members into deeper levels of service.

# Virtual Alcoholics Anonymous meetings provide those in recovery a reprieve

By [https://](https://www.wxxl.com/story/news/health/2020/05/26/virtual-alcoholics-anonymous-meetings-recovery-reprieve/) - MAY 26, 2020  
Since the New York state PAUSE order went into effect in March, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and other support groups have transitioned to virtual meetings. As WXXI's Noelle Evans reports, it's come with challenges, and opportunities.



**yahoo/life**

## How the pandemic may have changed AA and recovery culture — in surprisingly hopeful ways — forever

**Beth Greenfield**  
Senior Editor

Tue, January 12, 2021, 8:00 AM-13 min read

At a recent open meeting of [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) — the 86-year-old international peer-support recovery program, which opens some of its meetings to the general public — more than 75 people attended, many expressing powerful human vulnerabilities. It was nothing new for those familiar with the popular 12-step program. But felt especially poignant due to where it took place: on the videoconferencing Zoom, because of the ongoing pandemic.



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[A.A. Groups Using Digital Platforms to Find Sobriety During Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak](#)

## A.A. Groups Using Digital Platforms to Find Sobriety During Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

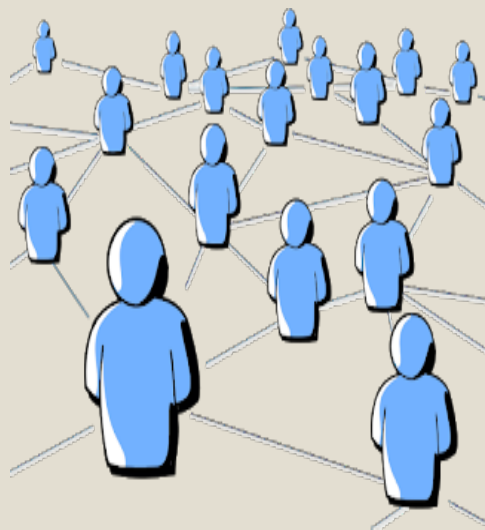
Virtual Meetings, Email, Phone, Social Media Allow Message of Recovery to Carry On – “ONE DAY AT A TIME”

March 23, 2020

Contact: [pressinfo@aa.org](mailto:pressinfo@aa.org)

The General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous for the U.S./Canada functions as a repository for A.A. members and groups who are looking for shared experience from the A.A. Fellowship. As the global situation related to Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to develop, G.S.O. is fully committed to its role as an important resource center to help navigate this unprecedented public health emergency.

It is important to note, G.S.O. is not an authoritative body over A.A. groups, nor does it initiate rules or directives, as each A.A. group and entity is autonomous and decisions are made through an individual group conscience. Providing guidance on health issues is outside the scope of the A.A. sharing that G.S.O. offers. For anyone experiencing



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## Physically Distanced but Digitally Connected The Alcoholics Anonymous Message Carries On Amid Coronavirus (COVID-19)

May 11, 2020

Contact: [pressinfo@aa.org](mailto:pressinfo@aa.org)



A.A. in the digital age has certainly taken on a new meaning in these challenging times. Alcoholics Anonymous is not a place or an event; it exists in the hearts, minds and help freely offered by its members.

Most recently, Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected many A.A. groups that normally would meet in-person. The General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous U.S./Canada, which functions as a repository for A.A. members and groups who are looking for shared experience from the A.A. Fellowship, has some general experience to share regarding this issue.

Some A.A. members have shared that meeting online has been an adjustment and has at times had its challenges. Adhering to state/provincial and federal guidelines, many A.A. members have switched from “in-person” meetings to digital meetings, on platforms such as *Zoom*, *Google Hangouts*, *Conference Calls*, *GoToMeeting* and *What’s App*, allowing the group to continue to focus on A.A.’s primary purpose: to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In a sense, however, this current experience is not necessarily new for A.A. From its earliest beginnings, the A.A. founders recognized the need to reach beyond the face-to-face transmission of the A.A. message, giving rise to the development of A.A.’s basic text, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This book and other A.A. materials which are widely available on multiple platforms – digital, audio and video – has literally circled the globe and opened the door to recovery for thousands of alcoholics looking for help.

# NATIONAL A.A. ARCHIVES WORKSHOP Zoom Workshop 2020

## THE WONDER WORLD OF ARCHIVES

### *NAAAW Online Works*

WHEN: Saturday, September 26,  
1:00-5:00pm EST

WHERE: Zoom ID and password

### *Tentative Agenda*

- History of NAAAW with Gail L., me
- Preservation demos and our website
- GSO Archives tour with Michelle M
- Previews of upcoming workshops: h  
hosting a workshop in your area

[naaaw.org](http://naaaw.org)

Presented by BC/Yukon Area 79 Archives Committee

## The Early Days of A.A.



Sunday Oct 4, 2020  
1pm - 3pm..... PDT  
3pm - 5pm..... CDT  
4pm - 6pm..... EDT

"Walking With Sister Ignatia and the Fellowship"

Presented by

*Sister Judith Ann Karam*

Class A Trustee on the

General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

"The GSO Archives and Dr. Bob's Early Writings"

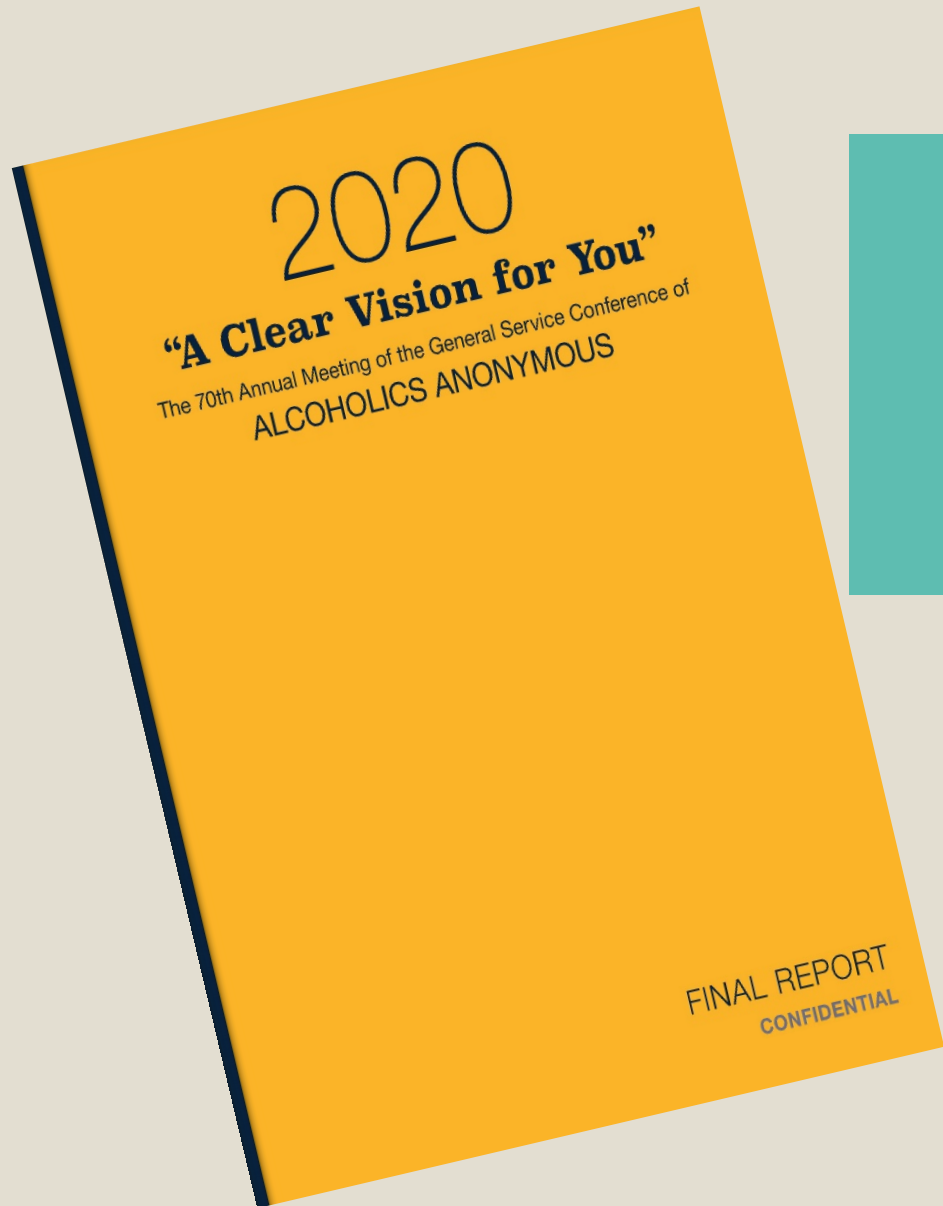
Presented by

*Michelle Mirza*

Archivist at the

General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

2020-09-15 Forward: archives





Alcoholics  
Anonymous®

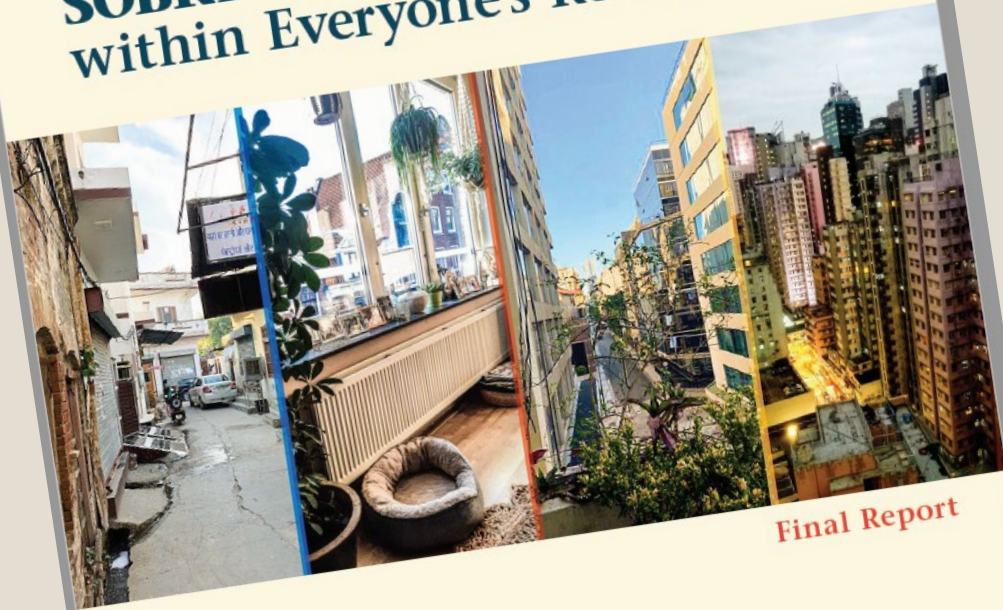
## 2020 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

*“Love and Tolerance Is Our Code”  
“El Amor y la tolerancia es nuestro código”  
« L’amour et la tolérance, voilà notre code »*



THE PURPOSE  
OF OUR SERVICE:

# SOBRIETY within Everyone's Reach



Final Report

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
26TH WORLD SERVICE MEETING**  
A Virtual Event | November 28-30, 2020



## The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety within Everyone's Reach

Delegates representing 44 countries, zones or service structures gathered via videoconference November 28-30th for the 26th World Service Meeting (WSM), focused on the theme "The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety within Everyone's Reach." Originally scheduled as a face-to-face event, because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the three-day event was held virtually for the first time in its history.

Traditionally alternating on a bi-yearly basis between New York and locations around the world, circumstances this year ushered in a historic opportunity to connect and despite being multiple time zones apart delegates gathered with dedication and purpose to address issues and solutions facing our worldwide Fellowship.

Since its inauguration in 1969, the WSM has provided a continuing international forum for sharing experience and ideas on carrying the Alcoholics Anonymous message of recovery around the globe. Its success in bringing together A.A.'s far-flung service centers reflects a final vision of A.A. co-founder Bill W., who believed that there could be "one world for A.A." to assure that help would be available to suffering alcoholics, no matter where they are or what language they speak. And so, these critical service meetings have taken place ev-

ery other year since their inauguration, slowly expanding the reach of the Fellowship around the globe. Yet, as the 25th World Service Meeting came to a close in Durban, South Africa, in October 2018, no one could have predicted the turn of events that would lead to the historic 26th WSM in 2020, a year overtaken with global concerns about COVID-19.

Hosted by the trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in the U.S. and Canada, numerous logistical and technical challenges had to be overcome once the shift to a virtual meeting had been determined in response to the global pandemic. "This has been such a challenging year for everyone," said Mary C., acting International desk coordinator at the A.A. General Service Office in New York, who led the team which put together the virtual WSM. Nevertheless, she noted, "It's especially important to communicate openly with each other and to share ways in which we can keep A.A. sustainable and available to everyone."

Echoing that sentiment was Toby D., a first-term delegate from Denmark: "We are not alone with the problems of the pandemic. You see that the feelings of the Fellowship in each particular country are felt all over the world, and it's good to know we are trying to figure things out together."



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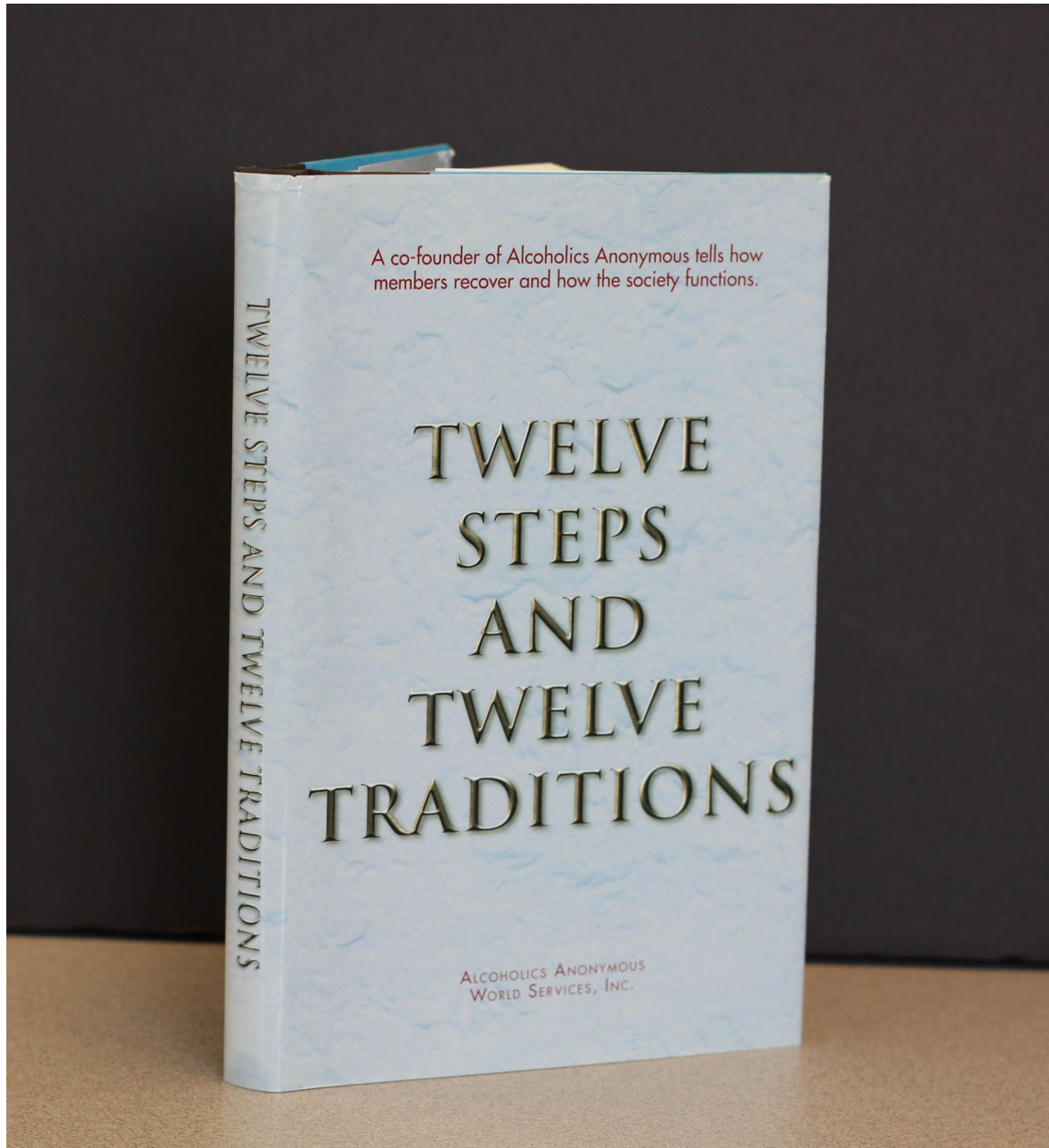
## The Traditions of AA.

12.1

- ~~1. An AA Group is a spiritual entity having, but not being~~
- ~~2. We sense that every group is to be~~
1. We recognize an AA group to be a spiritual entity dedicated to one purpose only - that helping those who suffer alcoholism to recover by spiritual means.

# Take A Ride Through History





“When World War II broke out, this spiritual principle had its first major test. A.A.’s entered the services and were scattered all over the world. Would they be able to take discipline, stand up under fire, and endure the monotony and misery of war?”

(Bill W., Step Three)

# Mail Call for All A. A.'s in the Armed Forces

When the idea of bringing out a New York Metropolitan A.A. paper was conceived, one of the first thoughts was that it might prove particularly helpful to our members in the Service. If anyone doubts what such a paper can mean to these men, here, we think, is the answer. Corporal Hugh B., now in England, had no knowledge of our project when he wrote one of us recently: "Your letter of ten days ago was much appreciated and was one of, if not the, most newsy A.A. letters I have received. Certainly was interesting to hear about the boys and gals all over the world. Made me think that we should have a monthly publication.—Think it over!"

The records kept by our Central Office show approximately 300 A.A. members now in Service, with some 40 coming from the New York area and belonging to various Metropolitan Groups. These figures, due to constant changes, are probably not complete. Of the New York crowd, the files indicate 26 are in the Army, 9 in the Navy, and 5 scattered between the Merchant Marine and other auxiliary services. Eleven are known to be commissioned officers and the remainder are serving in the ranks.

These men, and in a few cases, women, are as a rule cut off rather abruptly from any direct contacts with the Groups and are often subject to disturbing new influences and unusual temptations to take that fatal first drink. They, it would seem, face a harder battle in their recovery than most of us, benefiting, as many of us do, from almost daily association with our fellow members. Yet frequently they come through unscathed! We would like to give you a few examples of their clear thinking along A.A. principles:

A Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) who joined A.A. over two years ago, wrote us recently from a South Pacific Island — "Your mention of John N.—(an A.A. of even longer standing, now a lieutenant in the Army. Ed.) "caused me to investigate—He was evacuated for stomach trouble two days before I looked him up and for four months he had been only half a mile from my camp. Such is life!" (Both these men have had fine records of sobriety with A.A. and have now seen considerable service at an advanced base. What an A.A. meeting that would have been. Ed.)

\*

In December, John N.—, the Army lieutenant, had written—"We have arrived at a New Island and are set up in a coconut grove. Your letter was most welcome. How often these days I think of the fine times I had in A.A. and the wonderful people I have met. The whole thing means an awful lot to me and I thank God for being allowed to be a part of it . . . My work is interesting but

hectic but I have really improved on the 'Easy Does It' department. I know who to thank for that too.—So Flushing has a separate group now—That is wonderful!"

\*

Again we quote our naval correspondent—"I should like to address an A.A. gathering now, as I have a perspective that few get the opportunity to enjoy, having been completely apart from the Group for nearly a year, and it is easy to see the fundamentals closely, and determine the main factors—I think even more closely than when one is steeped in A.A. work with daily contact. It is easier to see how the program works into every day normal life too."

\*

Once more, from Bob H., now an Army sergeant overseas, written last Thanksgiving Day—"When I think of myself just eighteen months ago, I realize, too, just how much I have to be thankful for. I've been more fortunate than most—maybe some day I'll feel

I've earned my breaks.—I should hate to have anything happen to me now, before I have a chance to do something, however small, worth-while with my life." (This man had worried about not getting the *spiritual side* of the program. Ed.)

\*

## THE WORDS OF A DANGLING MAN

"Off Again, On Again Finnegan" has a new lot of loyal rooters: the "You're In—You're Out" selective service inductees, aged twenty-six to thirty-eight.

For the past six months, on alternate Tuesdays, the Home Editions of the paper you read had us in the Army or Navy "this month", but by Seven Star Final Edition the two Washington authorities hadn't had a press interview (today) was quoted as "until later in the twenty-six would so we go—crazy

But wait: *Easy Does It* has been for half a year pounded into a first "first step" at conclusions, coming excited things "seem" to be pace, mentally, and as they may seem.

It permits, above all, the serenity with reflection, as I repeat the turning my will and my life over to the of My Higher Power.

Does that sound simple? Or do you think I'm putting down one little word after another here because that's what our program tells me I should do? Well, I'll tell you, if, twelve months ago, I had been riding the Selective Service Merry-go-round (without A.A.) two things would have happened: (1) My wife would have been relieved at the prospect of my being in service, preferably in Timbuctoo (if that's at the other end of the world); and (2) I would have been a rip-roaring, hell-bent-for-another-drink, psychoneurotic alcoholic.

Today, I'm sober and not in service. Tomorrow, I may be in service, I don't know. But I *do* know that tomorrow I'll be sober, through the Grace of God and Alcoholics Anonymous. *David R.*



II, NO. 6, NOVEMBER, 1945 P. O. BOX 328, GRAND CENTRAL ANNEX, NEW YORK, 17 YEARLY, \$1.50; COPY, 15c

*A monthly journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of the Editors.*



“We live in an era of change. Our Twelve Steps probably won’t change; the Traditions, not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service — let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever.” (Bill W., 1960 GSC talk)

**Thank you!**



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