

April/May 1999

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1965. Who can forget the acceptance of the Responsibility Declaration by 10,000 A.A.s and their friends massed in the Maple Leaf Gardens! The film *Bill's Own Story* was introduced at this 30th anniversary celebration.

Miami, Florida, 1970. Mortally ill, Bill W. made a final, surprise appearance at the Sunday morning big meeting before a weeping, cheering audience of nearly 11,000 people (he would die five months later, on Jan. 24, 1971, in Miami). At the 35th, the coffee supply held. This time the ice cream ran out.

Denver, Colorado, 1975. A crowd of 19,800 surpassed wildest expectations. Workshops and panel discussions were so jammed that the fire department repeatedly closed down attendance. At this 40th birthday party, the stirring flag ceremony, now a beloved tradition, was held for the first time, with 29 countries represented, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house. The theme "Let It Begin with Me" was articulated by all the flag bearers in their own language. The world's largest coffeemaker produced a half-million cups of brew daily sans mishap.

New Orleans, Louisiana, 1980. An elaborate Mardi Gras parade launched festivities marking A.A.'s 45th. More than 22,500 registrants, their families and friends filled the Superdome for the big meetings, which were translated simultaneously into French, Spanish, German and English. Celebrating the theme "The Joy of Living," 33 countries joined in the flag ceremony. At the first true marathon meeting, a nameless drunk off the street sobered up and then appeared at the Sunday spiritual meeting. An unforgettable moment came when a stranger told the assemblage, "I am probably the only person here who was present when Bill met Dr. Bob." He then introduced himself as Dr. Bob's only son, Robert "Smitty."

Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1985. Hotels in the beautiful French-Canadian metropolis were so packed that some participants at the 50th roomed 75-90 miles out of town. Fifty-four countries marched in the flag ceremony, and Ruth Hock, Bill W.'s (nonalcoholic) secretary who had typed the original *Alcoholics Anonymous* manuscript, received the 5-millionth copy of the Big Book. The theme "Fifty Years with Gratitude" threaded through the meetings and workshops, which were enriched by the colorful anecdotes of oldtimers sharing their memories. Attendance: over 45,000.

Seattle, Washington, 1990. A.A.s came from 75 countries, some of them representing nations that had once been part of a closed-off U.S.S.R. Approximately 48,000 people participated in A.A.'s 55th Birthday party. A marathon candle, symbolically lighting the way to sobriety for the still-suffering alcoholic, burned from Thursday midnight to Sunday morning. Nell Wing, A.A.'s first (nonalcoholic) archivist, headed home with the 10-millionth copy of the Big Book.

San Diego, California, 1995. The theme "A.A. Everywhere—Anywhere" translated into A.A. sharing in a multitude of ways at the 60th anniversary, celebrated by 56,000 A.A.s with their families and friends. There were 87 countries represented in the flag ceremony, and the closing meeting concluded with the release of 10,000 balloons and dancing in the isles.

A.A.'s 65th Birthday—the first of century—will be in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 29-July 2, 2000. Information regarding registration, hotels, tourist attractions and more will be published Box 4-5-9 as the date draws closer. As with International Conventions, registration information will be mailed to groups and to intergroups/central offices in September 1999. In the meantime—don't drink, go to meetings and save your money.

Why Should We Pay To Go to A.A. Events?

Why, some members have asked, do A.A.s have to pay a fee to attend an A.A. conference, convention or other special event? As one Californian wrote to the General Service Office, "Some of us have difficulty when it comes to having the A.A. name attached to any gathering that requires payment to participate. What's more, some of the prices at many of these functions are not cheap." And, he adds, what about the payment of travel expenses and lodgings for certain 'select' speakers?"

It's true that A.A. membership is free, and meetings and most A.A. events are self-supporting in the spirit of the Seventh Tradition. But conferences and conventions are A.A. get-togethers beyond the group-meeting level, generally ranging from special one- or two-hour meetings to banquets and weekend events—area, statewide, regional and international. These events require months of planning, preparation and money presented up-front to the hotel and other commercial facilities involved. Arrangements may also be made for A.A.s with special needs: providing wheelchair accessibility, sign-language interpreters for the deaf and, in some instances, programs in Braille for the blind.

Additional expenses include the printing of flyers, schedules, postage and supplies, not to mention meeting space, insurance coverage, travel and accommodations for the invited speakers, many of whom thousand miles or more from the convention site. A.A. Guidelines on Conferences and Conventions, available from G.S.O., state, "It should be made clear, when the speakers are booked, what terms are being made for expenses. Unless it's otherwise specified, speakers have a right to assume that all their travel, meal and hotel

expenses will be paid. Speakers will also expect hotel or motel accommodations as a matter of course; if they're to be guests in private homes, this should be explained well before their arrival."

How are the costs of a convention covered, and what can be done to ensure that the venture won't go deep in the red? According to the aforementioned Guidelines, "there's no substitute for common sense here; the committee must take a businesslike approach to finances and keep expenditures somewhere within a conservative estimate of anticipated revenues."

Among the sound methods that seem to be in general use: (1) underwriting of the event by area groups. Since the registration fees can be established at a level sufficient to cover the total costs, this should result in no actual out-of-pocket costs to the groups; and (2) building a convention fund to which the area groups contribute year-round. This method obviates the need to charge a registration fee except for visitors from out-of-state.

The criterion for using the A.A. name generally specifies that the event be put on by A.A.s for A.A.s about A.A.s. Although a golf tournament or a dance are beyond the purview of A.A.'s primary purpose, such events are often scheduled as social adjuncts to the main meetings and workshops scheduled.

When Al-Anon participates in an A.A. convention, the relationship and financial arrangements usually follow one of two patterns: When an A.A. convention committee invites Al-Anon to participate with its own program, A.A. may pay all expenses (for meeting rooms, coffee, etc.) and keep all income from registrations and such in a single fund earmarked to cover the convention bills, after which any excess income reverts back to A.A. Alternatively, Al-Anon may have a separate registration and cover its own expenses directly, besides assuming its share of common expenses. In this case, Al-Anon receives its own share of the registration income and also shares in any losses incurred.

G.S.O. and Y2K

As many are aware, a phenomenon exists in the Information industry because computer programs historically used dates whereby the year was represented by only two digits (for example 95 rather than 1995). Therefore, arithmetic operations, computations, comparisons, sorting, etc. will yield incorrect results when working with years outside the range of 1900-1999. The scope of the problem spans all industries and is the first problem to be truly global.

Since G.S.O. deals mostly in legacy applications our problem extends across all applications except for Records and Grapevine Subscriptions which have been rewritten more recently. Legacy applications were written when frugality was the rule and every byte of saved storage was important in order to minimize expensive storage space and lessen data entry time. Moreover, programs written in the '70s were never expected to still be in use 30 years later.

The planning and methodology necessary to change from two to four digit years can be daunting and the magnitude of the project enormous. The entire portfolio of software must be assessed to see if all of our systems interact with one another it is not possible to change one system at a time. They must all be changed before major testing can begin.

To date our entire portfolio of hardware has been assessed; G.S.O.'s PC application software and hardware has been surveyed, tested and addressed; an impact assessment has been performed; and date alternatives have been evaluated and a solution selected. We expect to be completely ready for comprehensive testing in April 1999.

New Audio Cassettes



Living Sober (MB-7) four tapes in book-like binder. \$18.00; 20% discount applies.

Pioneers in A.A. (MB-4)
Stories from the Pioneer section of Alcoholics Anonymous. Three tapes in book-like binder, begin with story #2, "He Had to Be Shown," through story 12, "The Keys of the Kingdom."
\$18.00; 20% discount applies.

