



NEWSLETTER 7

SEPT. 1984

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE IAC CHAIRPERSON:

The next 12 months promises to be an active, very productive time for the IAC in Service: carrying the A.A. message of hope and recovery to gay/lesbian alcoholics everywhere. Equally important is the effort of gay people for Unity in A.A. as a whole through the 12 Traditions. Only through A.A. Unity can there be Service, and personal Recovery from alcoholism.

The IAC has two most vital projects in the next several months, in addition to our usual busy agenda of directly carrying the message by answering many hundreds of inquiries from individuals, groups and the professional community.

The General Service Office (GSO) and A.A. Board of Trustees have asked the IAC to do the planning for two gay/lesbian workshop/panels and an openly gay meeting at A.A.'s July, 1985 50th Anniversary International Convention in Montreal. We will also coordinate a gay/lesbian hospitality suite. We will contact gay roundups and the groups in our World Directory to seek volunteers, and to find six speakers and two moderators for the workshops plus three speakers and a chairperson for the meeting. Some 1500 or so A.A. members will attend each workshop and the meeting. Other Convention plans will be detailed in a future newsletter or mailing.

Also, the IAC plans to publish our new, comprehensive gay/lesbian pamphlet with several individual stories. It is an excellent pamphlet, written entirely by gay people for gay people. It points out how the A.A. program of personal recovery in no way judges anyone and that A.A. is indeed a happy path toward peacefulness and freedom. The pamphlet includes an all-new "20 Questions" to help gay people determine if they might be alcoholics.

The pamphlet, and hospitality at the Convention, will take a lot of funding. Groups and roundups will soon receive a special funding request. We will need your help.

A.A. will be 50 years old in 1985. It is a time for sharing and for gratitude. But, for lesbians and gay men in A.A. and for A.A. as a whole, it is also a time for much-needed reflection. During the first 35 years or so, there was no such thing as an A.A. group for gay people. Today there are perhaps a thousand such groups, and many tens of thousands of us also go to nongay meetings. (Please see the attached "How IAC Fits in With A.A. General Service.") As with A.A. as a whole in its early years, these gay/lesbian groups have had their share of growing pains. And, importantly, many in A.A. have felt the pain but not much of the joy of the explosive growth of gay/lesbian involvement in the Fellowship.

The 1984 General Service Conference overwhelmingly voted in its advisory actions "that a pamphlet for the homosexual alcoholic not be developed." The IAC has had as a prime objective the creation of such Conference-approved literature. A Conference delegate who championed the pamphlet in 1983 told me after the 1984 Conference, "The gay pamphlet dominated things. It was seen as a threat to the Traditions, something which would draw the A.A. name into public controversy... The feeling was that things like gay lovers is not a part of the A.A. program." I truly appreciate the delegate's frankness, and his friendship.

Alcoholics Anonymous will soon begin our second 50 years. And it is gay people who must extend the hand of A.A. friendship to those in the Fellowship who do not know us very well. Although we can feel maligned if we wish, it is we who have one distinct advantage: almost all of us grew up in heterosexual homes, and we know a great deal about that environment. But the "straights" in A.A. know very little about us; we are for the most part quite foreign to them. Lack of understanding breeds distrust and fear... "homophobia" is what gays call it.

But it's almost impossible, especially in A.A., to distrust someone who stands right there beside you, loves you, and follows the path of sobriety with you. We do not have to fully accept each other to walk that A.A. path hand in hand. But what we must not do is judge each other. As usual, the Big Book says it best:

"God alone can judge our sex situation." (Bottom of page 69.)

In A.A. Service and Unity,

Patrick J.

HOW CAN GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS HELP IN A.A.UNITY? Get involved! Your gay/lesbian group can ask nongay speakers to speak at your meetings, and you can speak or share as an openly gay person at nongay meetings. Get involved by volunteering to answer the phones at your local Intergroup/Central Office, or ask to be put on their 12th Step call list if you feel ready to do 12th Stepping. Larger cities have a separate gay/lesbian 12th Step list. Make sure your group has a General Service Representative (GSR) and a representative to your Intergroup/Central Office meetings. Make sure your group contributes a part of its 7th Tradition to the Intergroup/Central Office and to GSO. If you don't know how to do this, find out. Gay roundups have found that inviting a nongay speaker, especially an area delegate or even a regional trustee, adds a great deal to their roundup. If you don't think delegates or trustees would accept such an invitation, you probably have never invited one. The same goes for asking any nongay A.A. member to speak at your gay/lesbian meeting. Do it!

ROUNDUPS -- New gay roundups are springing up all the time. And the existing ones are growing. There is obviously a need for roundups and regional gay conferences; for one thing, they're a lot of fun and a great way to get together and meet new friends. Roundups, however, tend to think strictly regional and give little thought to all the other roundups elsewhere. At least three weekends of the year have two major roundups, which forces all the roundup "junkies" to make a choice. Some violate the spirit of the Traditions by seemingly joining A.A. with other organizations, like A.A./Alanon or A.A./N.A. In A.A. it's "cooperation without affiliation." The IAC is getting up a new list of all roundups and contacts at those roundups, which we will share with all on the list. We also mail registration brochures free of charge if provided well before our regular mailings. Our Roundup Committee chairperson is Peter L., who has participated in most all of the roundups. Peter welcomes all comments and suggestions about how the IAC can help with your roundup and roundups in general. Some upcoming roundups are:

- Sept. 1-3 San Antonio- Austin; Box 15631, San Antonio TX 78212 (512) 225-8679
- Oct. 5-7 Toronto; 45 Dunfield Ave. Suite 2220, Toronto, Ont. M4S 2H4 Canada
- Oct. 5-7 Philadelphia; Box 15978, Philadelphia PA 19103
- Nov. 22-25 Houston; Box 27703, Dept. 339, Houston TX 77027
- Nov. 22-25 New York Big Apple; Box 451, Village Station, New York NY 10014

ELECTION OF OFFICERS -- The IAC delegates and officers met July 14, 1984 at the new Walk the Walk Roundup, Yale University, New Haven CT. Elected as new officers are: Chairperson, Patrick J. of Los Angeles; Deputy Chairperson, Alan H. of Philadelphia; Treasurer, Bob D. of Toronto, and Secretary, Ed C. of Pittsburgh. Outgoing Chair Eric F. of Toronto became Past Chair. It was agreed that the IAC would continue to mail one free World Directory of Gay/Lesbian Groups to all groups in the Directory and to our list of vitally interested individuals, despite the large expense involved. The International Convention in Montreal was discussed at a special IAC meeting later in the day. The next IAC business meeting will be at the Houston Roundup on Thanksgiving weekend. A member of the A.A. Board of Trustees will be invited to this meeting.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION -- Deputy Chairperson Alan H. and a former Chairperson, Patricia McG. of New York met on July 23, 1984 with Sarah P. of GSO, coordinator of the International Convention, and Lois F., General Service Conference coordinator at GSO. Sarah relayed details of this meeting to the Trustees' International Convention Committee. The results are covered in general in the Open Letter at the beginning of this newsletter; there will be ongoing meetings and discussions between IAC personnel and GSO/Trustees about the Convention, with GSO expecting IAC's recommendations for gay workshop titles, speakers, and moderators plus gay meeting chairperson and speakers early next year.

IAC LIAISON WITH GSO -- Patricia McG. of New York, one of the IAC's greatest strengths since it was formed almost four years ago, has agreed to serve as our liaison with the General Service Office. Pat will be working closely with GSO on details of gay/lesbian participation at the International Convention as well as many matters on which the IAC and GSO work together. (Without Pat and another lesbian, Nancy T., there would be no IAC.)

... We at the IAC wish you all every happiness in sobriety!



-- HOW IAC FITS IN WITH A.A. GENERAL SERVICE --

The IAC is a bringing together of gay people in Alcoholics Anonymous, while stressing A.A. Unity through the 12 Traditions. Gays/lesbians have similar experience, strength and hope to share with one another as members of A.A. and to share with the gay/lesbian newcomer. The IAC is a special service association which helps assure gay people that they are welcome in A.A., wanted in A.A., and needed in A.A.

The IAC is not a part of the A.A. General Service Office, but has a cordial working relationship with GSO. The General Service Board welcomes gay groups. Dr. John Norris, then chairperson of the Board, said in a 1977 presentation: "We have never discouraged A.A.'s from forming special-purpose meetings of any or all kinds to meet the needs of interested individuals, but we have been hesitant to consider as groups those that might seem to exclude any alcoholic, for whatever reason." GSO's newsletter Box 459 reported Dr. Norris' statement in Vol. 26, No. 4 (copyright A.A. World Services, reprinted with permission), and pointed out that all A.A. "groups" must follow the Traditions and are listed in A.A. meeting directories. A "meeting" (not listed), is still part of the A.A. fellowship even though it might exclude some alcoholics, such as nongays. The Box 459 article quoted an October 1977 Grapevine story: "Homosexuals believe that their sexual orientation and the specifics of their emotional relationships would not be understood or accepted in regular A.A. meetings... Whether or not we agree with all this thinking, the point is that many alcoholics do believe in it. And they believe in it seriously enough to form these special groups and make them work." The Grapevine story also mentioned other categories of "special-purpose groups"--young people, and professionals.

Gay people in Alcoholics Anonymous have formed many hundreds, perhaps a thousand, gay/lesbian groups and meetings. About half are not listed in A.A. directories, for several reasons. Some are simply not listed as "gay." Some are closeted and not listed at all. Some exclude nongay alcoholics. And some Central or Intergroup offices still refuse to list gay groups.

The IAC through its World Directory of Gay/Lesbian Groups of Alcoholics Anonymous urges all groups to become listed at local Central offices and at GSO (we get most of our listings through these sources). The very best way for A.A. to attract the suffering gay/lesbian alcoholic is through gay listings in the directories.

The IAC is one of seven "Special International Groups" in all of A.A. World Services U.S., Canadian and International directories:

SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

Birds of a Feather International (pilots); c/o Al Johndrow, S. Montgomery, Tacoma, WA 98409 (206-473-2731)

International Advisory Council for Homosexual Men and Women in A.A., IAC; P. O. Box 492, Village Station, New York, NY 10014

International Advisory Council of Young People in A.A.; Annual Meeting, P. O. Box 19312, Eastgate Station, Indianapolis, IN 46219; *Frank Cassidy, 215-687-3209; Tony Pulido Jr., 713-862-4404*

International Deaf Group by Mail; Carl J. Molenock, Rte 1, Box 387A, Fairmont, WV 26554 (When corresponding with Carl, please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for his reply.) (*Second contact: George W. Jones, Box 265, Amesbury, MA 01913*)

International Group, Doctors in AA; Annual Meeting, Lewis K. Reed, M.D., 1950 Volney Rd., Youngstown, OH 44511 (*Res: 216-782-6216; Bus: 216-788-7357*)

International Lawyers in AA; c/o Secretary, I.L.L.A.A., 111 Pearl St. Room 202, Hartford, CT 06103, *Igor Sikorsky, 203-527-1854*
(Canadian Liaison: P. O. Box 2138, Sarnia, Ontario N7T 7L1)

World Hello (International Correspondence Group); Polly Daw, 117 Lincoln Park Dr., Syracuse, NY 13203 (315-479-5166)



INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL for Homosexual Men and Women in Alcoholics Anonymous

Post Office Box 492, Village Station, New York 10014

ORDER FORM FOR PUBLICATIONS

ITEM	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL COST
Pamphlet: "Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic?"			
Single copy:	[free]	_____	_____
Quantity order:	\$0.15/ea.	_____	_____
World Directory of Gay/Lesbian Groups of Alcoholics Anonymous	\$2.50	_____	_____
Information on how to start a lesbian/gay group of AA		[single copy free]	
Copy of the Advisory Council's Newsletter/Calendar		[single copy free]	
Fact sheet of information about the International Advisory Council		[single copy free]	
Information on how a group can become a member of IAC		[single copy free]	
Donation to the International Advisory Council			_____

TOTAL: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

NAME OF YOUR GROUP: _____

DATE: _____

PLEASE NOTE: The IAC needs your group and individual contributions. We send our newsletter, newcomer pamphlet and about 600 World Directories free of charge (one each) to gay groups of A.A. and to vitally interested individuals. We also answer thousands of group and individual inquiries. IAC workers receive no pay; our printing, mailing and other costs are soaring as we grow. You can help with a generous contribution (tax deductible). Thank you!