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NEWSLETTER 8

JUNE 1985

INTERNATIONAL AA CONVENTION -- The 50th Anniversary International AA Convention in Montreal July 4-7 will have two gay workshops and a gay meeting as part of regular convention activities. There will also be a Gay Hospitality Center at the Hyatt Regency Hotel plus a dance for gay men and lesbians on Saturday night July 6 starting at 10:30 p.m. at the College du Dieux. The IAC and gay groups in Montreal are coordinating the Hospitality Center and the dance. We hope to see you at the convention!

BE TRUE TO THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

"Your way isn't right... do it my way!"

How often have you run into this sort of attitude in handling the affairs of your AA group, club, roundup or whatever? Many years of AA experience show that when things are done the AA way, it's always our way.

The Twelve Traditions are one of the most important yet least understood aspects of Alcoholics Anonymous. One of AA's greatest strengths is that it has no "rules" or "laws." We drunks have little use for rules.

But the Traditions are what hold us together in AA unity, whether it be at the group level or worldwide. And a simple fact of AA experience is that when the Traditions are violated, problems arise. These are often, as Tradition Six reminds us, "problems of money, property and prestige." It doesn't matter which Traditions are violated or overlooked or if the violations are intentional or out of ignorance; problems always arise in one form or another.

An actual example: a large gay meeting place (it could just as easily be nongay) in a big city had over two dozen "AA groups" which were not autonomous. They pooled their money and then the group secretaries met monthly to decide non-AA matters such as building maintenance and how to best spend, or save, all the money. Friction and open hostility were rampant. It was personalities before principles and it was money, property and prestige instead of carrying the AA message of hope and recovery.

After years of dissension, the meeting place took two simple steps which resolved the problems and brought it happily within the Traditions. First, it formed one AA group, with over two dozen meetings and a group steering committee which handles only AA matters. Then, to handle property maintenance and things a non-AA landlord should handle, it formed a "club" with a board of directors entirely separate from the AA group. The group pays rent to the club for all its meetings and also buys its literature and sends its contributions to Central Office and GSO. The board handles landlord matters.

Everything was great until the board of directors decided the Twelve Traditions didn't apply to them because they weren't an AA group as such. They sponsored a club fund-raising theater event outside of AA, seeking money from the non-AA gay and lesbian community. A lot of AA members got upset. Tempers flared. A public controversy arose, because in addition to outside fund-raising, the AA name was being used involving an outside enterprise. Was AA endorsing and lending its name to the theater event? Was the theater endorsing AA?

The solution was found in the GSO literature which had been used in separating the AA group from the landlord board. AA Guidelines on Clubs says that while there is no such thing as an "AA club," all club matters must be guided by the Traditions: "the members accept no funds from outside the AA membership. Naturally, this includes any kind of fund-raising that would involve the public." Also, clubs don't accept non-AA donations of furniture or supplies. The 1967 AA General Service Conference "voiced recognition of the fact that clubs should operate within AA Traditions and abide by them to the fullest."

Similar stories could be told about small individual groups and regional roundups which ignore the Traditions. Perhaps there is one "rule" in AA, and that's an easy, common-sense rule of thumb: if it's AA, the Twelve Traditions apply.

--Patrick J., IAC Chairperson

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY? No, no, not that kind. One of the hottest best-sellers of all time is "Alcoholics Anonymous"--the AA Big Book. It's really interesting reading, as are "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" and the other AA hard-cover books. A great, easy-to-read 87-page booklet is AA's "Living Sober." And AA has a wealth of pamphlets about recovery, unity and service and the AA General Service structure. It's your AA. Why not find out more about it.

THE IAC MEETINGS -- The IAC will meet July 4 from 9 a.m. until 12 noon in Montreal, just prior to the opening of the 50th Anniversary International AA Convention. A new deputy chairperson will be elected to a one-year term, succeeding Alan H. of Philadelphia, who will become chairperson for a year upon approval of the voting members present. Chairperson Patrick J. of Los Angeles will become past chairperson, an office which was held by Eric F. of Toronto. Treasurer Bob D. of Toronto will retain his two-year post, and a new secretary will be elected to a two-year term to fill a vacancy. There will be a varied meeting agenda, setting goals for the coming year.

The IAC met last at the Houston Roundup over Thanksgiving weekend and planned activities for the upcoming International Convention in Montreal. David A., then AA Trustee-at-Large for the U.S., joined us for this four-hour meeting and there were far-ranging discussions about Alcoholics Anonymous and gay people. David sponsors several gays and at one point asked how many gays in the room were sponsors to straight AAs. Interestingly, more than two-thirds of the hands went up. The meeting was a learning, and loving, experience for all.

GAY ROUNDUPS -- A new roundup this year is the First Annual Maine Connection Roundup in Portland, Aug. 30-Sept. 2; PO Box 33, Old Orchard Beach ME 04064. Planned for 1986 is a new roundup in Chicago, probably in the last part of June; IAC Roundup Committee chair Peter L., chairperson of this year's Palm Springs Roundup, has been busily sharing his many years of roundup experience with Chicago. "Maybe they can avoid some of our past mistakes," Peter says. Palm Springs Roundup celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, as does San Francisco's Western Roundup/Living Sober. In their 6th year are the Big Apple Roundup in New York City and the Capital Roundup in DC. Seattle's roundup is 8 years old. Some upcoming roundups are:

June 13-16 Tenth Anniversary Palm Springs Roundup, at the Palm Springs Americana Hotel. 2424 Newport Blvd. Suite 110, Costa Mesa CA 92627.

June 21-23 Seattle, Northwest Regional Conference; 801 E. Harrison Suite 105, Box 552, Seattle WA 98102.

Aug. 9-11 Capital Roundup, Washington DC; PO Box 76786, Washington DC 20013.

Aug. 16-18 Tenth Anniversary San Francisco Western Roundup/Living Sober; PO Box 974, San Francisco CA 94101.

Aug. 30-Sept. 1 San Antonio-Austin Roundup; PO Box 15631, San Antonio TX 78212.

Aug. 30-Sept. 2 The Maine Connection Roundup, Portland; PO Box 33, Old Orchard Beach ME 04064.

Sept. 6-8 San Diego Feeling Good Roundup, PO Box 3999, San Diego CA 92103.

Oct. 6-8 Freedom Roundup, Philadelphia; PO Box 15978, Philadelphia PA 19103.

Oct. 6-8 Toronto Gratitude Roundup; Suite 2220, 45 Dunfield Ave., Toronto Ont. Canada M4S 2H4.

Nov. 28-Dec. 1 Big Apple Roundup, New York; PO Box 451 Village Station, New York NY 10014.

Nov. 28-Dec. 1 Houston Roundup; PO Box 27703 Dept. 339, Houston TX 77027.

Other roundups which the IAC lacks information on are the Walk the Walk in New Haven CT, in August; the Ohio Roundup in Cleveland, in August; and the Live and Let Live Roundup in Kansas City, in September.

A DETERMINED GROUP -- The IAC gets hundreds of letters from individuals, groups and the professional community. One that really spells AA arrived several weeks ago from a small town in Canada. It's from Rob and Don: "Hi, fellow guys and gals, We are still only 2 but we are strong in our committment to have a group one day. We even have a meeting every week regardless of the fact of only the two of us. We benefit greatly, even though we want new blood. A few have come but don't return. But that's OK too. All the best and much love. God Bless. Rob and Don."