

# **A Guide to the AA Grapevine**

*The Story of the International Journals of Alcoholics Anonymous  
and a Workbook for Grapevine and La Viña Representatives*



The AA Grapevine, Inc.  
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### *Responsibility Declaration*

*I am responsible. When anyone,  
anywhere, reaches out for help, I want  
the hand of AA always to be there.  
And for that: I am responsible.*

# *AA Preamble*

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

There are no dues or fees for AA membership;  
we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.



**General Service Conference  
Advisory Action, 1986:**

*“Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through  
the Conference-approval process, the Conference recognizes  
the AA Grapevine as the international journal  
of Alcoholics Anonymous.”*

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This workbook is service material, reflecting AA experience shared at the AA Grapevine Office.

# The AA Grapevine

## Statement of Purpose

The AA Grapevine is the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. Written, edited, illustrated, and read by AA members and others interested in the AA program of recovery from alcoholism, the Grapevine is a lifeline linking one alcoholic to another.

Widely known as a “meeting in print,” the AA Grapevine communicates the experience, strength, and hope of its contributors and reflects a broad geographic spectrum of current AA experience with recovery, unity, and service. Founded in 1944, the Grapevine does not receive group contributions, but is supported entirely through magazine subscription sales and additional income derived from the sale of Grapevine items.

The awareness that every AA member has an individual way of working the program permeates the pages of the Grapevine, and throughout its history the magazine has been a forum for the varied and often divergent opinions of AAs around the world. Articles are not intended to be statements of AA policy, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either AA or the Grapevine.

As Bill W. expressed it in 1946, “The Grapevine will be the voice of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. Its editors and staff will be primarily accountable to the AA movement as a whole . . . Within the bounds of friendliness and good taste, the Grapevine will enjoy perfect freedom of speech on all matters directly pertaining to Alcoholics Anonymous. . . . Like the Alcoholics Anonymous movement it is to mirror, there will be but one central purpose: The Grapevine will try to carry the AA message to alcoholics and practice the AA principles in all its affairs.”

# Preface

W elcome to the AA Grapevine and La Viña, the international journals of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This workbook is a basic resource for all Grapevine and La Viña representatives — or for any AA member, in fact, who is interested in the magazines and their use as tools for helping alcoholics get sober and stay sober and better understand the principles of AA.

Part One offers an overview of the magazines. It describes their basic contents and how they carry the AA message today. This section is designed to answer some of the questions you or your group may have about the Grapevine and foster deeper interest in the magazines. Recently updated and revised, it also includes a new chapter about La Viña, AA's Spanish-language magazine, and highlights new developments at the Grapevine such as the redesigned website and the Digital Archive, which contains some 12,000 Grapevine articles going back to 1944.

Part Two explains what the job of GvR/RLV entails at the group, district, and area levels, and offers practical, hands-on suggestions on how to do it — all based on the experience of seasoned Grapevine and La Viña reps. It presents a wide variety of ideas, so that you can select the ones that best suit you and the needs of your group. There are also a number of suggestions for organizing special area and district events that committees might choose from and fact sheets that can be copied and used as handouts.

Those who wish to learn more about AA history can turn to the appendices, which provide more information on the Grapevine's landmark publications and some of the Conference Actions that have guided the magazine, along with a presentation delivered at a past Conference and a glossary of important terms.

We hope this information is useful, and, in the tradition of AA, we hope you will want to pass it on . . . to other Grapevine and La Viña reps and to your fellow AAs. For more information, contact the Grapevine office at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, or by visiting the companion to this guide, the GvR/RLV section of the Grapevine website at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

We look forward to hearing from you!

In fellowship,  
The Executive Editor  
[ee@aagrapevine.org](mailto:ee@aagrapevine.org)

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**Part One:**

# **The Story of the AA Grapevine and La Viña**

*The AA Grapevine and La Viña are the international journals of Alcoholics Anonymous. A monthly collection of articles written and illustrated by members and others interested in AA, the Grapevine reflects the diversity of experience and thought found in the Fellowship and the power of the AA way of life.*

*La Viña is AA's bimonthly Spanish-language magazine.*

*The AA Grapevine, Inc., is the name of one of the two operating arms of the General Service Board. The other is AA World Services (AAWS). AA Grapevine, Inc., publishes the Grapevine, La Viña, and collections of magazine articles in books, CDs and other formats. AAWS manages the General Service Office and publishes the Big Book and other Conference-approved media, along with general service material and other information about AA.*

## Chapter One

# The AA Grapevine Magazine

### *The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous*

The AA Grapevine became the national journal of AA in 1945, after AA groups throughout the United States voted to make it their central publication. Four years later, when the Grapevine's readership had expanded to include members in Canada and Europe, the designation was changed to "the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous." In 1986, the General Service Conference reaffirmed the magazine's place in AA with an advisory action that states: "Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through the Conference-approval process, the Conference recognizes the AA Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous."

#### ***A Modest Beginning***

The Grapevine was the brainchild of six AA members in the New York area who published the first issue in June 1944. The print run of that inaugural issue was about 1,200, with 165 subscribers. Today, approximately 112,000 AA members subscribe to the Grapevine, and 9,000 subscribe to *La Viña*. Some are loners, homebound AAs, and others who have difficulty getting to meetings and rely on the magazine for sharing AA experience. But the majority are AA members who welcome the Grapevine every month as a lively way to enhance their sobriety.

#### ***"Our Meeting in Print"***

To many, the Grapevine is also known as "Our Meeting in Print," a name coined during World War II, when the editors sent a copy to every known AA

member in the armed forces. Cut off from meetings and contact with other members, the grateful soldiers referred to the Grapevine as their "meeting in print," a name that has stayed with the magazine for sixty years.

Today, the Grapevine not only carries the words "Our Meeting in Print" on the cover, but its format resembles an AA meeting as well, beginning with the Preamble on page one and ending with the Serenity Prayer on the back cover. Photographs of the windowshades bearing the Twelve Steps and Traditions "hang" on the inside cover, and in between are all the makings of a good meeting: discussion topics, humor, announcements, and, above all, the stories of experience, strength, and hope of alcoholics practicing the principles of AA.

#### *in their own words*

##### ***Mail Call***

**A WWII veteran on the Grapevine:** *I received my first issue of The Grapevine (Vol. I, No. 1) in June of 1944. At that time, I was in the army,*



*stationed overseas. So far as I knew then, there were no AAs within several thousand miles of me, so you can imagine the kick I got out of that first number. . . .*

*I think I probably felt a good deal like a shipwrecked sailor when the rescue vessel steams into sight. For what that first Grapevine did for me, more than anything else, was to assure me that I was not alone. . . . [A]fter that I knew that no matter where I went, my Grapevine would sooner or later catch up with me. And I knew, too, that in its pages I would find the help I needed.*

*R.H., AA Grapevine, June 1954*

## The Inside Story

Each issue of the Grapevine typically offers between twelve and fifteen stories written by members of AA and, on occasion, by AAs' dedicated friends. The stories are direct and personal, and as varied as the Fellowship itself. Grapevine writers come from all walks of life and every generation and geographic area. And because it is a monthly publication, the Grapevine is the only AA literature that offers an ongoing picture of the current Fellowship.

Like the personal stories heard at meetings, the stories in the Grapevine cover a wide range of experiences — from problems solved to emotional and spiritual healing. Many focus on the transformation recovering alcoholics experience by describing, as the Big Book suggests, “what we were like, what happened, and what we are like now.” Others focus on the Twelve Steps, the Traditions, and the tools of AA.



The author of “Spiritual Agony” resolves a lifetime of hatred after visiting — and forgiving — the woman who murdered her friend. (February 2001)

## Departments

In addition to stories of recovery, the magazine publishes articles on the Twelve Steps and Traditions, long-term sobriety, and about how AAs use the principles of AA in their everyday lives. These articles are highlighted in the departments described below.

### Steps and Traditions

The Grapevine has been publishing articles on the Steps since the beginning. Its first Step article appeared in the November 1944 issue. Bill W. began laying out the framework for the Traditions in a series of Grapevine articles published in 1945. Today the Grapevine runs a series on the Steps and Traditions in alternate years. Articles on the Traditions are published in years ending in even numbers, articles on the Steps in the odd-numbered years.



### Along Spiritual Lines

This department invites members to share their varied spiritual experiences and their highly individual understandings of a power greater than themselves.



“The Hate and Pain Guy” follows the journey of a man filled with such rage that no one could get near him. Then he gets sober and becomes the one man who can reach a group of hopelessly angry and dangerous teens. (July 2002)

## The Home Group



### Home Group: "The Heartbeat of AA"

The idea for this department came from readers who wanted to share the experience, strength, and hope they receive from their home groups where, for so many AAs, recovery begins.

## Sponsor/ponsee

### Sponsor/Sponsee

For many, the power of AA begins with one alcoholic talking with another about their drinking lives and the program of AA. The stories in this section discuss the sponsee-sponsor relationship from both sides of the experience.



### Spotlight on Service

Articles in this department bring to mind co-founder Dr. Bob's famous saying, "Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words 'love' and 'service.'" Topics run from the ABCs of service (ashtrays, brooms, and chairs) through participation in the general service structure of AA.



### Old-Timers Corner

In this department, AA old-timers look back on the long roads of their recovery and offer insight into their spiritual and emotional growth. They also share about ongoing challenges in sobriety and reflect on the miracle of not drinking today.



### Y.E.S.

With firsthand reports from "Youth Enjoying Sobriety," stories in this department dispel notions such as "Teens are too young to be alcoholics" or "Sobriety is the death of fun."

They also offer assurance that no one is alone in AA, no matter what age she or he is.



### Around AA

This report, which appears three or four times a year, provides information about news events in the Fellowship and the General Service Office.



### If Walls Could Talk

Featured in the center spread of the magazine, this is a display of photographs of AA meeting places around the world sent in by Grapevine readers.

### GvR Corner

This features news and notes about the Grapevine and its website for Grapevine representatives and information they may want to share with the groups.



### Beginners Meeting

Stories in this department focus on the experiences of newcomers to AA, as well as on the basics of staying sober in our early days.

### AA in Cyberspace

Started in 2000, this department features articles about AA members who have found the internet useful in their sobriety. Occasionally, it includes selections from i-Say, the Grapevine's moderated online forum.

### Is AA Changing?

This department gives members a chance to voice concerns about the changes they see in local meetings or in the Fellowship at large.

### Your Move

This collection of opinions addresses such concerns as singleness of purpose, profanity at meetings, and closing prayers. It provides an opportunity for publishing a balanced selection of opinions, usually written in response to an article published in the magazine.



### *i-Say*

This selection of sharing about special topics from i-Say, the Grapevine’s moderated online bulletin board, allows magazine readers a chance to learn what AAs are saying on the web and gives online AAs a chance to share in print.

### *Distilled Spirits*

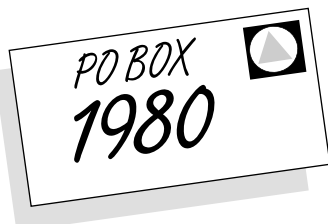
Excerpted from letters and unpublished articles, these short reflections on a variety of AA topics are published sporadically to add more voices and quick flashes of insight to the magazine.



### *Time for One More*

This one-page piece, on the final page of the magazine, is a brief “last chance to share” before the Serenity Prayer.

### *In Every Issue*



### *PO Box 1980*

PO Box 1980 is the letters section of the magazine, where readers share their thoughts about recent articles as well as matters of current interest in AA. It is designed

to be a “forum for debate” and often includes more controversial material than the rest of the magazine.



### *Discussion Topics*

Every issue of the magazine includes a group of discussion questions, based on an article in the issue. They are designed to give groups an AA topic to focus on at meetings and to guide discussion of Grapevine articles. Readers also can share their thoughts on the topic on i-Say, the Grapevine’s online bulletin board, at [www.aa-grapevine.org](http://www.aa-grapevine.org)

### *Quote of the Month*

Like a slogan, this is a short phrase that offers insight and encouragement to those trudging the “Road of Happy Destiny.” Every quotation comes from a published Grapevine story and coincides with the quotation of the month on the Grapevine wall calendar and pocket planner.

**“Give me the courage to be imperfect.”**

From the June 1972 Grapevine

### *Calendar of Events*

A listing of AA events taking place the following month is published in each issue. A calendar of events being held over the next three months can be found on the website: [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org)

### *A note to contributors*

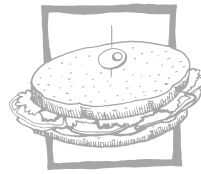
Information on submitting art, articles, or information about events can be found in Chapter 3.

### Cartoons and Jokes

A sense of humor is a staple of recovery for many AAs and a mainstay of the magazine. The first cartoon appeared in the magazine's third issue, and a humorous feature — "Barleycorn" — was launched the second year. The current humor column, "Ham on Wry," instituted in 1985, is a collection of new jokes and "oldies but goodies" that poke gentle fun at alcoholic shenanigans and the lighter side of life in AA.

"Picture This," inaugurated in 1999, adds visual punch to this feature, with photographs of inadvertently funny scenes. The photos in "Picture This" are contributed by Grapevine readers.

### Picture This



## Ham on Wry

EN ROUTE TO HIS NEXT PERFORMANCE, a juggler was stopped by a cop.

"What are these matches and lighter fluid doing in your car?" the officer asked.

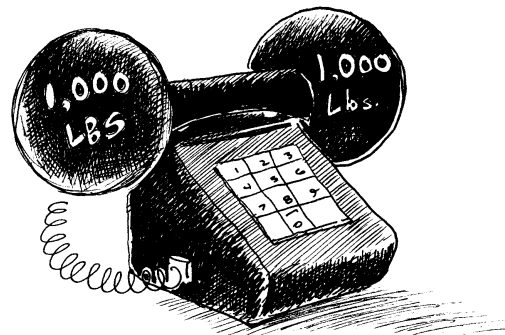
"I juggle flaming torches" responded the juggler.

"Oh yeah?" said the cop. "Let me see."

The man stepped out of his car and began to juggle flaming torches. A couple driving by slowed down to watch.

"Wow!" the driver said to his wife. "I'm glad I quit drinking — look at the test they're giving now."

*Anonymous*



LATE ONE NIGHT, two drunks left the bar where they were drinking, hurried down the street, and walked suddenly through the gates of a zoo just as a lion roared.

"Oh good," one drunk said to the other. "We're right on time. The movie is just starting."



"So I'm powerless over alcohol! What makes you think my life is unmanageable?!"

THE WIFE OF A NOT-YET-RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC visited a fortuneteller. The mystic stared into her crystal ball and proclaimed, "I have some terrible news. In the near future, your husband will suffer a hideous, violent death."

The poor woman was visibly shaken. "W-w-will I be acquitted?" she asked.

Bob M., Cleveland Heights, Ohio



"You say you just have an occasional cocktail, Mr. Todd?"

### AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE

Any old drunken bum can get into AA. But to get into Al-Anon, you've got to know someone.

Anonymous



### HEARD AT MEETINGS....

"Experience is not what happened to you. Experience is what you did with what happened to you."

D.J.W., Tukeila, Washington

"Alcoholics are in a class by themselves. Everyone else has graduated."

Michelle D., via e-mail



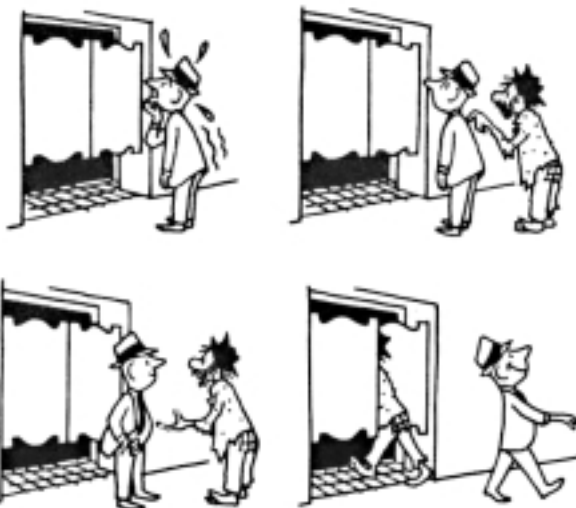
"HOW MANY MORE OF THESE HAVE YOU GOT STASHED AROUND THE YARD!?"

### The Spirit of Fun

A reader recently explained why she liked Ham on Wry: "It reminds me not to judge myself or others too harshly. Through laughter, whether shared or solitary, we progress spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and even physically as we learn not to take ourselves too seriously." (AA Grapevine, August 2003)

### Victor E.

The creation of Jack M., a Grapevine editor, Victor E. made his debut in the July 1962 Grapevine. For more than forty years, Victor has stood before the saloon, looking longingly past its swinging doors, but every time his Higher Power has intervened and kept him from drinking. Some readers wonder how strong Victor E.'s sobriety is, since he keeps showing up at a bar. Others feel he is no different from any other alcoholic facing this cunning and baffling disease. Whatever his shortcomings and however strong his desire to drink, Victor E. hasn't picked up a drink in all these years. And that's how he earns his name.



The first cartoon of Victor E., as it appeared in the July 1962 issue of the Grapevine.



## AA Grapevine Online! [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org)

### A Mirror of the Fellowship on the Internet

When it was launched in 1997, the Grapevine website consisted of three sections: general information about the AA Grapevine and La Viña magazines, a calendar of future AA events, and instructions on how to order the two publications. By 1999, it had grown to include selected articles from present and past issues and a catalog describing all of the Grapevine's publications in English and Spanish. Several interactive features were soon added, including Rule #62, where visitors can exercise their wit by adding their own captions to cartoons, and i-Say, a moderated, edited bulletin board where visitors can discuss different topics every month, much as they do in PO Box 1980. Selected La Viña articles from recent issues and a catalog of Spanish-language items were made available online as well. In 2002, a special section for Grapevine and La Viña representatives was created, offering Grapevine and La Viña reps an abridged version of this workbook and a special bulletin board, accessible by password, where registered group, district, and area GvRs can share ideas.

Then in 2004, the AA Grapevine website was redesigned, to provide a platform for the new Grapevine Digital Archive. Renamed the AA Grapevine Online!, [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org) features three main sections on the home page:

- An editorial "window" highlighting the current issues of the AA Grapevine and La Viña, including links to three Grapevine articles, two

La Viña articles, and a monthly discussion topic.

- A Digital Archive "window," which links to the Digital Archive section of the website and to special Digital Archive features, such as a story of the day.
- A "What's new at the Grapevine?" "window," where important events and new publications from the AA Grapevine, Inc. are announced.

At the same time, AA Grapevine Online's standard menu includes classic articles on the Steps and Traditions, basic information about Alcoholics Anonymous and how to reach us, the history of the Preamble, the Traditions, and the magazine itself, a sobriety calculator for counting days, and a special section for people who would like to contribute to the magazines. Plans to expand the Spanish-language portion of the website are in the works.

*by Bill*

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"Our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart."

### AA Grapevine Digital Archive

While past Grapevine articles contain a wealth of experience, finding them has not always been easy. Readers had to query the office or their area's archives, or hope they could be found in an anthology of collected articles. Now there is a much faster path to AA history — the Grapevine's new Digital Archive.

Launched on the eve of the magazine's sixtieth anniversary, June 1, 2004, the Digital Archive makes more than 12,000 Grapevine articles and letters available to everyone with access to the Internet. Archive subscribers can type in a topic such as "spirituality" or "anonymity" and find a wealth of articles on the subject. They can also find articles by department, such as Around AA or Ham on Wry, as well as by author, geographic location, or issue. Readers who want to browse can scroll through topics to see what the Fellowship and its friends have had to say about spirituality, twelfth-stepping, the Con-

cepts, or the history of AA.

In addition, two special features, "Story of the Day" and "Grab Bag," offer visitors different examples of AA experience, strength, and humor every twenty-four hours. These two features are free to everyone, whether they subscribe to the Archive or not. ☺

#### What You Will Find on the Digital Archive

- 12,000 stories
- Thousands of jokes
- Articles by such historic figures as Bill W., Dr. Bob, Jack Alexander, Carl Jung
- AA history in the making
- Six decades of AA experience, strength, and hope

# AA Grapevine *Online!*

Our Meeting In Prison  
The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous

- Home
- Current Grapevine
- La Viña
- Subscriptions
- Catalog
- Digital Archive

### Digital Archive

Welcome to The AA Grapevine, Inc.'s, Digital Archive! Here you can find every article, letter, editorial, special feature, joke, and cartoon published in the Grapevine magazine from our first issue in June 1944 to one year ago on a 12-month rolling basis. The Archive is still in development, so be sure to keep coming back for additions and improvements!

#### Story Of the Day

In 1957, after seven years of sobriety and regular attendance at AA, I decided I was spending too many hours helping drunks and not enough tending to my own business. It was time, I decided,... (more)

#### Grab Bag



The laugh's on us!

#### Browse by Department

- [AA Around the World](#)
- [AA in Prison](#)
- [AA Online](#)
- [About Alcoholism](#)
- [Along Spiritual Lines](#)
- [Around AA](#)
- [Around the Tables](#)
- [Beginners Meeting](#)
- [Cartoons](#)

- [Is AA Changing?](#)
- [Letters to the Grapevine](#)
- [Old-Timers Corner](#)
- [Quote of the Month](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Short Takes](#)
- [Sidebars](#)
- [Special Sections](#)
- [Sponsor/Sponsee](#)
- [Spotlight on Service](#)

#### Browse by Date

- [1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s](#)

#### Browse by Topic

- [AA History](#)
- [AA Conventions, Early Days, Four Absolutes...](#)
- [AA Is For Everyone](#)
- [Inmates, Military,](#)

## Chapter Two

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# La Viña: AA's Spanish-Language Magazine

### *The Origin of the Magazine*

The Spanish-speaking AA Fellowship in the United States, Canada, and other countries has grown dramatically in the last two decades. While several AA bulletins and magazines — some of them modeled on the Grapevine — have appeared in Spanish-speaking countries over the years, most are geared to their national community and have had limited distribution elsewhere. For some time, many Spanish-speaking members have wanted to read and submit articles to the Grapevine in their own language. These needs were taken to the General Service Conference in 1991, and a recommendation was issued that the Grapevine begin publishing at least one article in Spanish every month. These articles appeared regularly between September 1991 and June 1996.

The Fellowship brought a request for a Spanish language edition of the Grapevine within the United States and Canada to the General Service Conference again in 1995. The Conference endorsed the idea, and three months later, a special edition of the Grapevine was produced in Spanish. After a business plan for the new magazine was approved by the trustees' Finance Committee, the Grapevine began working on a regular bimonthly publication for Spanish-speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Called *La Viña* to echo the title of the English magazine, the first issue came off the press in June 1996. Copies were distributed to subscribers in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe.

The General Service Conference had asked the Grapevine to publish *La Viña* on a trial basis for five years, and when that period expired in 2001, the response to the magazine was so positive that the Confer-

ence recommended that *La Viña* continue to be published by the AA Grapevine and supported by the General Service Board as a service to the Fellowship. Today, the print run is 15,000 magazines every other month. The number of subscribers has grown slowly but steadily every year and now tops 9,000.

### *La Viña Does Not Compete with Other Magazines*

*La Viña* does not compete with any national or local AA publication written in Spanish. Like the Grapevine, *La Viña* reflects the diversity of our Fellowship, including its geographical and cultural richness, and has international appeal. Even though *La Viña* was created at the behest of the United States/Canada General Service Conference, it carries the message to Spanish-speaking alcoholics anywhere they reach out for help. Many *La Viña* readers subscribe to their local publications and to *La Viña* as well, which keeps them connected with AA's Spanish-speaking community, with the Grapevine readership, and the Fellowship at large.

Initially, most of the stories that appeared in *La Viña* were translations of stories published in the Grapevine. But today, *La Viña* publishes mostly original material in Spanish, and occasionally *La Viña* stories are translated into English and appear in the Grapevine. In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, *La Viña* strives to be self-supporting, and as it moves toward that goal, it receives financial support from the General Service Board.

### **A Snapshot of the Spanish-Speaking AA Fellowship in the United States and Canada:**

Registered groups: 1,650

Intergroups and central offices: 91

Spanish-speaking districts: 51

*Approximate statistics as of 2003, source: GSO*

### *in their own words*

#### **A Past Delegate Talks About Getting Sober and Doing Service in the Spanish-Speaking Fellowship**

*I got sober in 1986 by attending meetings at Renacer Hispano, a Spanish-speaking group in Washington, D.C. We met in a small dark room, and for the first two years it was all I knew about AA. I was extremely fearful of people and tried to avoid all contact with the group's officials. But one day they asked me if I would accompany them to a district meeting. In fact, the group needed a GSR. I had no idea what any of these service terms meant, but I did not want to appear ignorant, so I accepted the job. Thus began my service career.*

*I quickly found out that I could be useful by translating area and district reports from English into Spanish and vice versa. It was the early 1990s and in my area everything was done in both English and Spanish. I became the area secretary. Assemblies had interpreters, and all reports were issued in both languages. The participation of Hispanics skyrocketed. At the beginning, there were only two or three of us who attended area assemblies. Nowadays, the Area 13 committee is made up of about half English-speaking members and half Spanish-speaking members.*

*In 1994, I became a Grapevine district committee chair and attended the celebration of the Grapevine's 50th Anniversary. In those days, Spanish-speaking*

*members would buy the Grapevine even though there was only one article in Spanish in the whole issue. I became one of the people who clamored for a Spanish magazine at our regional service assemblies. I was very happy to see the creation of La Viña.*

*I have witnessed the number of Spanish-speaking groups in our area grow from 13 groups to 36. I believe that committees at the district and area levels should work with both magazines; they should all be Grapevine/La Viña committees. We work for the good of AA as a whole regardless of our native tongue.*

*Past delegate, Washington, DC*

### **La Viña Comes of Age**

The first issues of La Viña were almost indistinguishable from the Grapevine. The overall format was the same; most stories were translated from the English magazine; and Grapevine covers and illustrations were frequently reproduced in La Viña.



La Viña has the same basic “meeting” format as the Grapevine. It begins with the Preamble on the first page, lists the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions on the inside covers, and ends with the Serenity Prayer on the back cover. Most of the departments which appear regularly are the same as the Grapevine's: El Aspecto Espiritual (Along Spiritual Lines), El Rincón de los Veteranos (Old-Timers Corner), El Servicio en AA (Around AA), Pasos y Tradiciones (Steps and Traditions), Si las paredes

hablaran . . . (If Walls Could Talk . . .), and Jóvenes en AA (Y.E.S., Youth Enjoying Sobriety).

Originally, the magazine was produced by the Grapevine editorial staff with the help of bilingual freelance editors, who read and edited manuscripts in Spanish, translated Grapevine articles, and proofread the magazine. The Grapevine art director provided the design, using many covers, templates, formats, and illustrations from the Grapevine. Shortly after the magazine was endorsed by the 2001 General Service Conference, a new La Viña editor and a dedicated freelance art director were hired, and they began to develop a separate graphic and editorial identity for La Viña. New fonts and icons began to be selected, and the layout was changed. Most noticeably, the covers were original, reflecting the content of La Viña instead of the Grapevine. For instance, the July issue of the Grapevine and the July/August issue of La Viña traditionally focus on AA in prison. While before, the exact same cover was used for the prison issue in both magazines, La Viña now designs its own cover taking into account the specific needs of the Spanish-speaking reader (see both covers below).



La Viña also has its own Box 1980 letters section (Apartado 1980), a forum where Spanish-speaking members of our Fellowship share their views about recovery, AA-related matters, and articles they've read in the magazine.

### *A note to contributors*

Information on contributing to La Viña can be found in chapter 3.



*Apartado 1980, the letters section of La Viña magazine.*

### **La Viña's Calendar of Events**

The calendar features AA-related events that take place in the United States, Canada, in Spanish-speaking countries, or anywhere else, provided they are conducted in Spanish. Like the Grapevine, La Viña does not publish contact names or phone numbers. And although the majority of listings are for conventions and other large events, the magazine does print announcements for smaller gatherings such as group anniversaries when there is space.

### **La Viña Online**

The AA Grapevine website ([www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org)) also contains information about La Viña. The current issue of La Viña is on display on the opening page. By clicking on the cover, one can access the table of contents as well as two articles from the current issue. Or, by following the links at the top of the page, one can find out about La Viña's history, its statement of purpose, how to submit stories and art, and how to use the magazine to enhance one's sobriety. There is also information in Spanish about the Grapevine. An online catalog featuring the Grapevine's and La Viña's products in Spanish needs some additional development to be fully bilingual. As La Viña continues to grow, we will make additions and improvements to the website to make it more accessible and user-friendly to the Spanish reader.



## Chapter Three

# The Making of the Magazines

### Who Writes the Grapevine?

Each issue of the Grapevine consists of about fifteen articles and eight to ten letters written by AA members from all over the world. Each month, 200-250 manuscripts arrive via mail, e-mail, and fax which means the editors can select the best, most solid AA experience from a wide range of submissions. While many worthy articles have to be turned down, contributors are generally encouraged to try again, and many who were turned down once or twice have found themselves in print the third time around. These writers find themselves in good company, too. Over the years, the editors have turned down manuscripts from many frequent contributors, quite a few professional writers, and trustees of AA's General Service Board. It is truly a process of principles before

personalities. In every issue of the magazine, at least half of the articles are written by first-time contributors.

Upon occasion, the Grapevine receives manuscripts from nonalcoholic friends of AA, or will seek out articles about a specific topic from AAs who have written in the past. Articles of a more informational nature, such as a report on AA online or an International Convention, may be researched and written by editorial staff, as are interviews.

Some readers have asked why, since so much material is available, the Grapevine asks for more. The answer is that a constant flow of manuscripts assures the editorial balance, variety, and timeliness necessary for an effective magazine. There is always a need for AA experience of all kinds; the more there is to choose from, the better the Grapevine will be.

### Steps of Magazine Production

1



200-250 manuscripts come in from AA members every month

2



Editors read, select, respond, and file by subject

3



15 or so articles are selected for each month's issue

4



Manuscripts are copyedited for style, grammar, and spelling

5



Designed, with art by volunteer AA members

6



Proofread, sent to printer, and checked at all stages of production

## *Who Illustrates the Grapevine?*

The Grapevine and Grapevine items are designed by a professional art director, who is a member of AA. Whenever possible, the art director chooses contributions from volunteer artists (AA members who give their time and talent to the Grapevine in the spirit of service), as well as gifted amateurs. Thanks to the internet and digital photography, the Grapevine's pool of artists includes women and men from all over the U.S. and Canada. Still, when an article calls for a specific image, the art director often must sketch it or take a special photograph.

## *How Is Material Selected for Publication?*

Each manuscript received at the Grapevine office is read and evaluated by the editorial staff, and a few manuscripts are reviewed by the Editorial Advisory Board as well. As the editors read a manuscript, they ask: "If I heard this at a meeting, would it help me?" "Is this in accord with AA's Twelve Traditions?" "Will this help the Fellowship as a whole?" Some articles are "success" stories, while others deal with problems, but in all cases, an honest expression of experience, strength, and hope is more important than professional writing or AA "expertise." Since the emphasis in both magazines is on first-person accounts of lives reclaimed from alcoholism, the focus is always on recovery through the AA program and issues within AA — and not, for example, on the wider field of alcoholism.

## *Who Writes La Viña?*

La Viña receives about fifty submissions every month, including stories, letters to Apartado (Box) 1980, photographs, cartoons, and art. Manuscripts are received in many formats: as electronic files, typewritten, or hand-written. The materials are organized by a part-time bilingual editorial assistant, who sorts them

by general topic and date of arrival, and sends acknowledgment letters to all contributors.

The manuscripts are then read by La Viña's editor. In selecting manuscripts for publication, the editor considers the appropriateness of their subject matter for each issue and follows the same editorial guidelines used for the Grapevine. More than fifty percent of the manuscripts submitted to La Viña are eventually published, but La Viña has to turn down many worthy stories simply because there is not enough space for them in the magazine or because there are too many similar stories at a given time. As a general rule, stories that focus on recovery, practicing the program, carrying the message, and living sober have a greater chance of being published than stories that focus on the myriad problems people have while they are drinking (i.e., "drunkalogs").

Some texts require significant editing for length and clarity, but an effort is always made to respect the voice and regional flavor of the writer. Local vocabulary from different parts of the Spanish-speaking world is left intact. If a word is not widely used, a more generic term may be provided in parentheses for clarification.

La Viña's editor meets regularly with the Grapevine staff, and there is a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions for both publications. The editors also discuss stories that have a powerful impact, which may be translated for inclusion in both magazines.

## *Who Illustrates La Viña?*

The design of the magazine is done by a freelance art director with a background in fine art and journalism. Pictures and art received from the Fellowship are reviewed by both the editor and the art director and selected based on their graphic quality and appropriateness. Many of the illustrations are created in a variety of media and electronically redesigned. Presently, most of the photographs received are of group meeting places. La Viña also reproduces photographs and cartoons from the Grapevine's archives, but it always welcomes original work from its readers.

## ***Guidelines for Contributing to the AA Grapevine and La Viña***

### ***Writing Articles***

Before writing, you might want to leaf through a few issues to see what kinds of articles are published. Most are first-person accounts of the writer's experience with alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous. The magazines publish stories for special departments, such as Along Spiritual Lines, AA Around the World, The Home Group, and Youth Enjoying Sobriety as well. Articles about the Steps and Traditions, jokes for Ham on Wry, and letters for PO Box 1980 and Your Move are welcome, too, as are submissions to i-Say and Rule #62 on the website. But you are not confined to these topics. The editors are always looking for innovative material, as long as it relates to AA experience and reflects an awareness of AA's singleness of purpose. Articles are reviewed by the editorial staff and selected by consensus, a process which can take several months.

Length and format: The magazines publish work of different lengths, from snappy one-liners and one-paragraph anecdotes to five — or six-page articles (2,000–3,000 words). All manuscripts should be double-spaced. Manuscripts sent by e-mail should be submitted in the body of the message or as attached files, saved in "Word," "Simple text," or "Rich text." Handwritten manuscripts should be written clearly on one side of the paper.

### ***Submitting Photographs, Illustrations, and Cartoons***

Photographs may be submitted for "Picture This" or "If Walls Could Talk." We also use photographs, line drawings, and paintings when they relate to specific articles. The annual Grapevine Photo Contest for photographs for the Grapevine Wall Calendar is announced in the magazine. Original cartoons, never published elsewhere, are also welcome.

Format: The Grapevine and La Viña accept original black-and-white or color photographs, slides, and art, in any size. Art sent via e-mail must be in a JPEG or GIF format, no larger than 90K. Photographs must be scanned using a very high resolution (at least 600 dpi).

### ***What the Magazines Do Not Publish***

Neither magazine publishes poems, prayers, song lyrics, tributes to individuals, plays, previously published material, or anything unrelated to AA or that violates the principles of AA.

### ***Send submissions to:***

The Grapevine, Editorial Dept., 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115 or by e-mail to [gveditorial@aagrapevine.org](mailto:gveditorial@aagrapevine.org). Please include your full postal address so we can respond to you. Guidelines for the web features i-Say and Rule #62 can be found at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org). Articles written in Spanish can be submitted to La Viña at the address above.

## *Putting an Issue Together*

Once submissions are evaluated, each author receives a response letting him/her know whether or not their submission has been accepted. Accepted manuscripts are filed by subject category for future use. For each issue, the editors go through the archive and choose an assortment of material that is balanced in terms of subject matter, length, geographical origin, tone, viewpoint, and other factors. Decisions are made about the order in which articles appear: the editors seek a sense of rhythm – the magazine’s “pacing” – throughout each issue.

Manuscripts are then copyedited for punctuation, grammar, clarity, and consistency of style, and prepared for the art director. At the same time, copyright release forms are sent to the writers. The art director designs and lays out the issue by computer and submits two or three cover designs for consideration. Once a cover has been selected, the staff proofreads the articles one last time, and the new issue is shipped to the printer, where the magazine is printed, bound, and mailed.

### **A Word About Timing**

The process of article selection for any issue begins about three months before the issue is due to come off press, and about four months before the cover date. Take the December issue as an example: Articles are selected around the beginning of August; the editing and production process takes three months; and the issue comes off the press the first of November, in time to be mailed to subscribers by the cover date. As a result, a Christmas article mailed to the Grapevine in November would arrive after the December issue is already printed. (It might, however, be saved for the following December.)

### ***Guidelines for Submitting Information to the Calendar of Events***

In each issue, the Grapevine publishes a listing of AA events taking place in the following month. This list is not comprehensive; the Grapevine depends on

readers and event organizers for all information. Events are listed as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the Grapevine. The Grapevine provides no travel or accommodations information, and, at the suggestion of the 1990 Conference Committee, publishes no hotel locations. Events in countries other than the U.S. and Canada are listed in the International Events section for up to four months. Events must be presented by AA members for AA members and must extend over more than one calendar day. All events are also listed in the online calendar of events on the website, [www.aa-grapevine.org](http://www.aa-grapevine.org).

Information should include the name of the event, the dates when it will take place, the city and state or province where it will take place, a complete postal address to which readers can write for further information, and an e-mail address or website, if available. The Grapevine does not publish phone numbers, names, or e-mail addresses containing last names. The deadline for publication is the end of the month three months prior to the month of the event. Events for which information is received too late for publication in the magazine will be listed in the Online Calendar of Events on the website.

Mail information for the calendar to: Calendar of Events, The Grapevine, 475 Riverside Drive, NY, NY 10115. Or e-mail it to: [gveditorial@aagrapevine.org](mailto:gveditorial@aagrapevine.org) or fax it to: 212-870-3301.

### ***La Viña’s Calendar of Events***

La Viña’s calendar appears bimonthly. The calendar features AA-related events that take place in the U.S., Canada, in Spanish-speaking countries, or anywhere else, provided they are conducted in Spanish. All notices have to be received by e-mail, letter, or fax at least three months prior to the event. Like the AA Grapevine, La Viña does not publish contact names or phone numbers. Provided there is enough space, an announcement might appear in more than one issue, if appropriate. Also depending on space, although the majority of events listed are large events such as con-

ventions, assemblies, etc., the magazine occasionally prints announcements for smaller gatherings, such as group anniversaries.

## General Guidelines For Reprinting Art and Articles

### Articles

The AA Grapevine Corporate Board has set the following policy for reprinting material that has appeared in the Grapevine, La Viña, or the Grapevine website:

Permission to reproduce articles or other AA Grapevine or La Viña material, either in print or via electronic media (such as web pages), must be obtained from the AA Grapevine, Inc. If permitted, each article or item must be reprinted in its entirety to avoid quoting the author out of context and must carry the following credit line:

Copyright © the AA Grapevine, Inc., (Month, Year). Organizations, publications, or websites outside of AA must add the following:

Permission to reprint the AA Grapevine, Inc., copyrighted material [in this publication, organization, or website] does not in any way imply affiliation with or endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or the AA Grapevine, Inc.

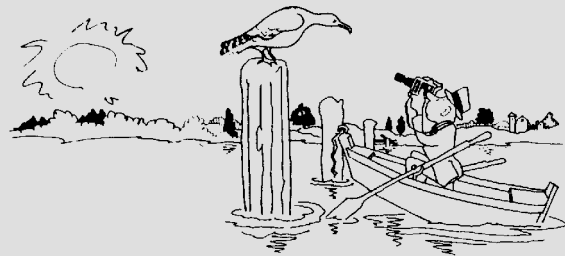
### Logo and Artwork

Only the Grapevine cartoons, Victor E. and Clara T., may be reprinted with permission.

The AA Grapevine, Inc., does not grant permission to reproduce either its logo or registered trademarks (The AA Grapevine, Inc., Box 1980, The Grapevine, La Viña, "AA Grapevine Online!", the Grapevine Digital Archive, and the Grapevine logo) or its artwork or any other cartoons on any other website or in any other publication. 🐦

### Criteria For Annual Grapevine Photo Contest

- Any AA member may submit photographs. Both amateur photographers and professionals are eligible.
- Color photographs may be sent as prints, slides (but not negatives), or in digital format on CD. Digital images should be high-resolution files (300 dpi, 9" x 12") suitable for print reproduction, or "raw" picture viewer documents.
- Subject matter: landscapes and seascapes, animals and flowers, small towns and big cities, close-ups and long shots, unusual effects, and seasonal shots. Entrants are encouraged to be creative, to capture the ordinary in new and different ways, to strive for the dramatic, to capture a mood or an unusual composition, and to be sure there is a strong focal point.
- No portraits or identifiable faces.
- The location of the photograph and the name and address of the photographer should be noted clearly on **each** submission.
- Any number of photographs may be submitted.
- Entries become property of the AA Grapevine and cannot be returned.
- The deadline for the next year's calendar is posted in the magazine and on the website.
- Entries should be sent to: Wall Calendar Photo Contest, The Grapevine, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115



## Chapter Four

# How the Magazines Carry the Message

### *Our Primary Purpose*

**AAs** have been using the Grapevine to carry the message to active alcoholics, AA members, and the general public for sixty years. Today, with La Viña, they can carry the message to Spanish-speaking alcoholics as well.

### **A Twelfth-Step Tool**

As in a meeting, the magazines' personal stories of what it was like in the throes of alcoholism help new and prospective members recognize the painful hallmarks of their illness with all the power of one alcoholic talking with another. Stories of "what we are like now" in recovery often offer readers their first glimmer of hope, while articles on the Steps and Traditions keep readers grounded in the principles of AA. The magazine is a monthly regular reminder of the help available, even when a subscriber slips; as one GvR put it, "The Grapevine keeps coming, even when the alcoholic doesn't."

Many subscribers make a point of passing along each issue after they read it; others use subscriptions as gifts to sponsees or newcomers. Individuals and groups give subscriptions to hospitals and treatment centers, and current magazines can be found in the waiting rooms of those who work with alcoholics — doctors and lawyers, for example. The magazines give new and prospective members a chance to get acquainted with AA in a low-key, no-pressure way, in private, and offer professionals a fuller understanding of the principles of the program and what meetings are like.

**"The Grapevine keeps coming, even when the alcoholic doesn't."**

### *in their own words*

#### **AA Under the Mattress**

*My new life in Florida was a relapse waiting to happen. I did everything wrong. I went to only one or two meetings a week. I associated with alcoholics who drank and used other substances.*

*I was arrested May 7, 2002, for domestic violence after a three-day binge. In the county jail, I searched for literature from AA and found none. I had just about given up when I was moved to a different bed; under the mattress was a 1999 issue of the AA Grapevine. I read that Grapevine every day, and it helped me remember what my goal is: "To be happy, joyous, and free!" I am currently serving a three-year sentence followed by six years' probation, and right now I'm in a state treatment community within prison. I am struggling, but that's okay, because I have my goals in place, and I will strive to achieve them. The Grapevine saved me when I was at my lowest. I have now been sober for over a year.*

*Phil Y., AA Grapevine, October 2003*

### **A Lifeline for Loners, Homers, Internationalists, and AAs on the Road**

The Grapevine and La Viña are vital links to AAs who cannot go to meetings and have little contact with their fellow AAs. Homebound AAs and those in nursing facilities, as well as AAs who live in remote settings or in places where there are no meetings in their language often rely on the magazine or use it along with the Loners and Internationalists Meeting (LIM) newsletter published by AAWS.

AAs who attend meetings regularly find the magazines useful on vacations, business or family trips, when they commute to work, when they are home caring for their families, or when they are ill.

### *in their own words*

#### **AA to Go**

*I love taking the Grapevine with me whenever I go out of town: it's light, easy to pack, has the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Preamble, and, best of all, provides instant meetings with fellow AAs! Wherever I am, I am always reminded that in AA we are never alone.*

*A. Nonnie Mouse, Capitola, California*

#### **An Aid to Emotional Sobriety and Spiritual Growth**

The Grapevine and La Viña have a great deal to offer old-timers, middle-timers, and others in recovery. With stories on the ravages of alcoholism, the magazines can be an effective guard against complacency, reminding readers of what alcohol can do to alcoholics and of the importance of keeping it green. With their emphasis on the principles of AA and service, they can enrich a member's understanding of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts and be powerful tools of spiritual and emotional growth as well.

#### **A Resource for Groups**

The magazines provide groups with many of the basic ingredients for a well-grounded meeting:

- the essential AA texts for meetings — the Steps, Traditions, Preamble, Serenity Prayer, and Responsibility Declaration.
- discussion topics each month on the principles of AA and the tools of the program, which stand alone or can be discussed after the group reads an article.

- a steady supply of AA stories.
- updates on major AA events.
- AA material to give to newcomers or to institutions where group members serve.
- articles about AA history and about other groups, which may help a group function more smoothly and better carry the message of AA.

### *in their own words*

#### **In Solitary But Not Alone**

*One night a few other inmates and I decided to have our own meeting in solitary confinement. The amazing thing about this was that every one of us was new to this AA stuff, and in solitary confinement, the only reading materials allowed are the Bible, the Koran, and personal mail. Fortunately for us, a new inmate came in who happened to have a copy of the Grapevine. . . . We decided on a topic: this vicious cycle that we are always on because we refuse to admit to God, ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. I read the editor's note and something about these words created one hell of a conversation between the inmates on K-6: "Find yourself before you try to find someone else."*

*Finding yourself is the most difficult thing an alcoholic can do because making a fearless and searching moral inventory of yourself can create ego deflation. It's even more difficult for the person who undertakes this search alone, because if he slips and falls, he has no one to pick him up. That's where groups like AA come into play. . . . Most people don't realize the importance the group has in their lives until they stop attending and try to stay sober on their own. Thanks, Grapevine, for our first successful meeting.*

*Jose D., AA Grapevine, October 2003*

### **A Mirror of the Current Fellowship**

Publishing between 250 and 300 new stories a year, La Viña and the Grapevine provide an up-to-date picture of AA's current membership and a look at how they adhere to the enduring principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. At the same time, they try to respond to changing times with reports on how AAs are carrying the message on the Internet, for instance, or reaching out to alcoholics in areas like the SubSahara and China. And today, with the growth of its website and forums like i-Say, the Grapevine allows AA members to share their experience in recovery even sooner and offers an even more immediate mirror of the diverse Fellowship of AA.

### **The Free Press of AA**

Guaranteed "perfect freedom of speech on all matters pertaining directly to AA," the Grapevine and La Viña offer the Fellowship a safe haven to air their divergent views, to share their often contradictory opinions, and to say what is on their minds about such topics as AA's

primary purpose, cross-addiction, or the Lord's Prayer. Such freedom of expression is as important to personal recovery as it is to the Fellowship as a whole, fostering the honesty and self-respect vital to spiritual growth.

Inviting the full range of thought and experiences from members beyond the service structure as well as within, the magazines not only enrich the body of information upon which the Conference makes decisions, but point the way to needed changes — like the publication of La Viña itself. As Bill put it in a letter to AA groups, the Grapevine should express "the widest differences of opinion on all topics of a strictly AA nature," helping to create "a powerful AA tradition so that no individual or single group of individuals ever dominate our National Organ." The chorus of opinion printed in the magazines reminds us that ". . . there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience," and helps the Fellowship adhere to the Traditions that are the keys to the future of AA.

*by Bill*

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Reflecting on the Grapevine in *AA Comes of Age*, Bill W. described the Grapevine as "our biggest and best means of communicating current AA thought and experience in staying sober, in hanging together, and in serving. . . . The Grapevine was seen as the monthly mirror of AA in action, always the same principles yet ever growing and ever finding better ways of doing and thinking on new fronts of our exciting adventure in living and working together."

### A Place for Minority Opinions

As “the free press of AA,” the Grapevine is a forum where — within the bounds of relevance, good taste, and our AA Concepts and Traditions — any AA can get anything he wants off his chest without hindrance of censorship. This freedom has been carefully written into the basic documents of AA by their wise authors, for the very good reason that the Grapevine is the only place where the voice of minorities can be heard outside of committee rooms — from whence, otherwise, only the opinion of the majority might ever issue. This unifying function of the magazine, airing opinions so that they may be weighed, sifted, and used as bases for decision, has more than once stood the movement in good stead, as it doubtless will in other great decisions to be made in the future.

AA Grapevine, October 1962

### A Tool for Public Information

Through its direct, first-person stories, the Grapevine helps inform the general public and members of the professional community about the way AA members stay sober. Copies of the magazines and subscriptions donated to schools and libraries are an important part of this outreach.

An AA member, whose work frequently brings him into contact with professionals who work with alcoholics, says this about the Grapevine: “Whenever I speak to a group of professionals, I tell them they need the Grapevine in order to understand AA. These are busy people, and they don’t often have time to attend open meetings. But for only \$18.00 a year and about 45 minutes of reading time every month, they can get, at their leisure, a picture of AA as it is lived today.” A similar picture is also available on the web: [www.aa-grapevine.org](http://www.aa-grapevine.org).

### A Touchstone of the Past

Much of AA’s history was played out in the Grapevine. As a result, early issues and Grapevine books are a rich resource for those who want to learn more about the origins of the program, the Conference, or the Concepts. Members and historians can look up the first version of the Traditions, or they can learn what early AAs thought about discussing problems of addiction or money, or explore how much (and how little) AA has changed by requesting past issues of the Grapevine or by going to the AA Grapevine Digital Archive at AA Grapevine Online! at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

### Magazines Patterned After the Grapevine

Quite a few AA entities in other countries have used the Grapevine as the prototype for their own AA magazines. Often, these efforts start off relying heavily on the Grapevine for translated articles and for artwork, cartoons, and jokes. Then, as the individual publications mature and develop material of their own, their reliance on the Grapevine diminishes, and their own unique AA personalities begin to shine through. About two dozen AA magazines are now published around the world, including Scotland’s *Roundabout*, Mexico’s *Plenitud*, South Africa’s *Regmaker*, French Canada’s *La Vigne*, Japan’s *Box 916*, and Russia’s *Alcoholic*.



## Chapter Five

# The AA Grapevine, Inc.

### *The AA Grapevine, Inc., and the General Service Structure*

The Grapevine was incorporated as one of two independent publishing divisions of the Alcoholic Foundation in 1946. In 1971 it was reincorporated as one of the two operating arms of the General Service Board; the other is AA World Services, Inc. (see the chart on page 20).

The primary business of the AA Grapevine, Inc. is to publish the AA Grapevine magazine and La Viña. In addition, it produces anthologies and audioCDs of articles from the magazines. AA World Services, Inc. publishes the Big Book and other Conference-approved and service literature. It also has oversight of the General Service Office, which is a resource to groups throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The Grapevine and AAWS are organizationally entirely separate, with their own boards of directors, offices, and financial operations. However, both paid and volunteer personnel have a close but informal working relationship and regularly meet to exchange ideas. Each has its own office at 475 Riverside Drive, in New York City.

### **Why Are the Two Corporations Separate?**

Bill W. addressed this question in his essay on Concept XI in *Twelve Concepts for World Service*:

*Every new generation of workers will raise certain questions about these two corporate questions: "Why can't both of them be consolidated into the General Service Board?" Or, "Why can't the Grapevine be merged into AA World Services, Inc., thus placing all active Headquarters operations under a single management?" These questions have already been discussed under previous Con-*

*cepts. We have concluded that the General Service Board is an unsuitable vehicle for an operating corporation; that because the Grapevine is such a dissimilar operation, and because we ought not concentrate too much money and executive authority in a single entity, there should be no merger of AA World Services and The AA Grapevine. Upon these points we seem well agreed — at least, as of now.*

*But this question has some other variations. It will often be asked, "If it is desirable to separately incorporate dissimilar enterprises, why then shouldn't the AA Publishing division of AA World Services be separately incorporated and managed by a board of directors specially skilled in book and booklet publishing?" Offhand, this looks logical.*

*Today, however, AA Publishing is mostly a business operation. Unlike a commercial publisher, we do not have to ensure the selection, writing, and publication of a lot of new books each year. Most of our AA books are already written, and it is probable that not many more will be published. Of course, we shall issue new pamphlets now and then, and revisions of older material occasionally are desirable. But this relatively small amount of creative publishing work can be handled easily by the Literature Committee. Hence the operation of the AA publishing division of AA World Services, Inc., is now mostly a matter of printing, distribution, accounting, and finance. For management purposes there is therefore no present need for a separate corporation; it is only required that the books of AA World Services, Inc., show a separate accounting for its AA Publishing division. Only in the highly unlikely event of a large and protracted entry into the new book business would we really ever need a separate corporate management."*

Another question will be this: "Why don't we merge AA publishing with The AA Grapevine, so placing all of our literature under a unified management?" The answer here is based on the complete dissimilarity of the two enterprises. The Grapevine has to produce a brand-new quality product every month, on the dot. By contrast, AA publishing success largely depends upon what has already been written.

In the Grapevine the paramount activity is therefore the creative. The Grapevine requires several paid staff members and the constant aid of a large number of specialized volunteers without whose help it could not operate. Why, then, should we load up these people with a lot more straight business activity? Obviously we should not.

Another question is posed, "Why should AA World Services, Inc., not take over all the Grapevine's accounting, finances, promotion and distribution? Would not such a consolidation of financing, employees and routine business be more efficient and economical? Would not this relieve the Grapevine of all business headaches?"

This plan, too, looks reasonable at first glance. Nevertheless the chances are it would work poorly. It has serious structural defects. It would violate the basic good-management principle that whoever has the responsibility for a given task must also have the needed authority, funds, personnel and equipment to carry it out. The AA Grapevine, Inc. unquestionably holds full responsibility for its own solvency, promotion, policy, and the management of its circulation. It is supposed to have four business directors, expert in these phases of magazine operation. The Conference and the General Service Board will always hold them accountable. If, therefore, any large part of the Grapevine business functions are transferred to a completely different corporate management over which the Grapevine has no authority, what then? This certainly would be a double-headed management and a source of continuous conflict. The Grapevine would become virtually impotent.

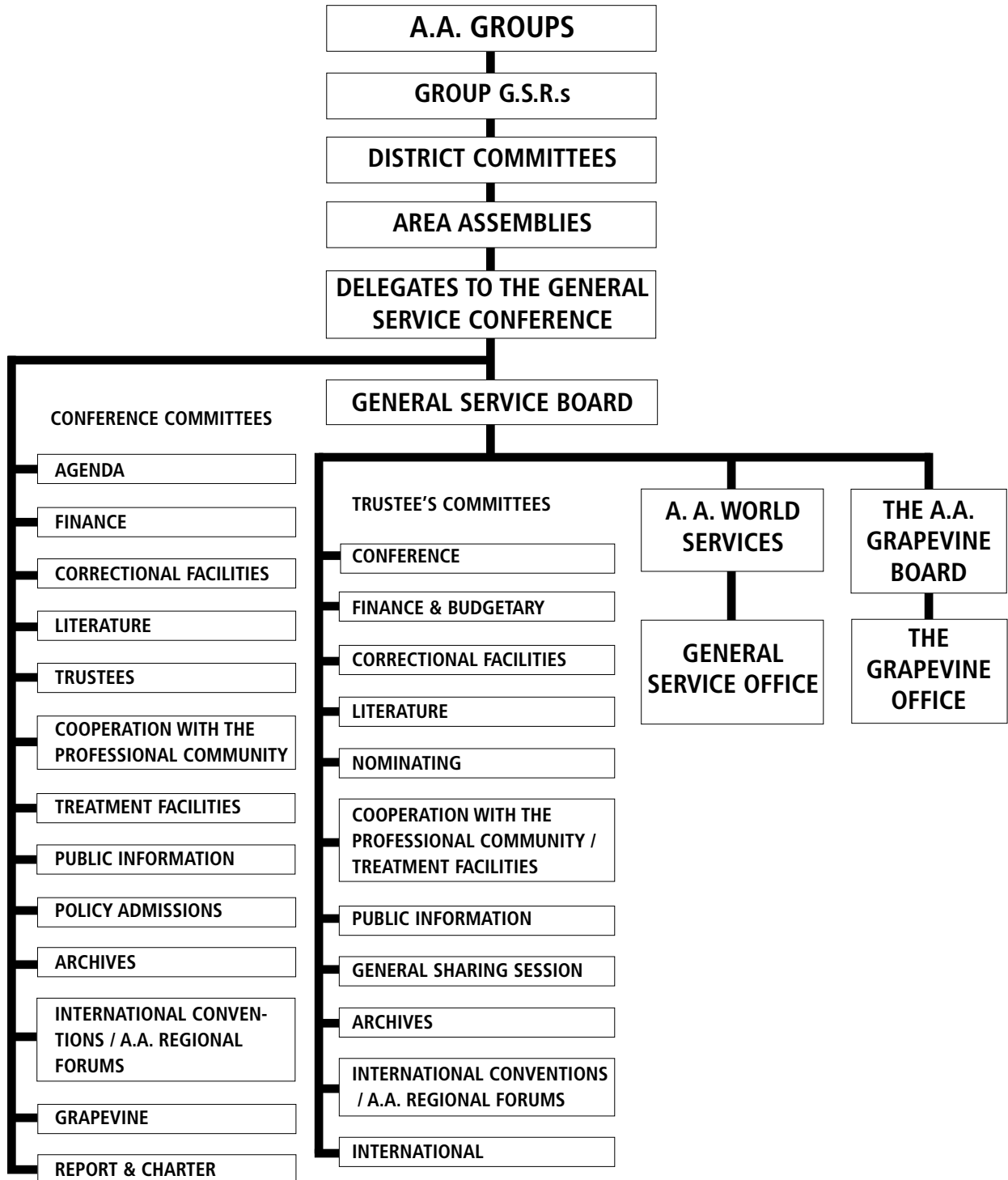
Such a situation also would tend to demoralize the editor, his staff, and the Editorial Board. This group now [in 1962] has a representation of three directors on the Grapevine Board. In such a corporate body it is now possible to reconcile the editorial desire for excellence in the magazine with the financial realities of the Grapevine situation. But if the business function of the Grapevine was transferred to AA World Services, Inc., the status and influence of the Grapevine editorial people would be reduced to almost nothing. World Service directors would be mostly interested in business efficiency and solvency, while the Grapevine editorial representatives would still be looking for quality and magazine improvements. There would be no practical way of reconciling these differences. The business directors of AA World Services, Inc., would dominate the editorial workers and therefore the editorial policy. The editorial group would find that they had become a mere committee, taking directions from AA World Services. "Who pays the piper calls the tune" would become the actual working arrangement. Having so split the management of the Grapevine in halves and having abandoned the principle of "Participation," it is doubtful if we could make this setup work at all, especially with all those volunteers. We might save some money, but we probably could not save the magazine.

Joint arrangements between The AA Grapevine and AA World Services for routine operations (such as billing, mailing, etc.) are not necessarily precluded. To a lesser degree, the same kind of frictions described above can be expected to develop unless there is the clearest possible understanding of "who controls what and when."

### **Are the Grapevine and La Viña Conference-Approved?**

This is the question most often asked about the Grapevine's magazines. General Service Conference approval is a lengthy review process. Conference-approved literature represents the widest possible consensus of experience of the Fellowship to ensure its adherence to Traditions and sound AA principles. The process can

*The General Service Conference Structure (U.S. and Canada)*



take years for longer projects, with several stages of committee evaluation along the way. Ultimately, the General Service Conference as a whole must approve the final product before it can be published with the “Conference-approved” seal.

Since the Grapevine comes out twelve times a year, and the Conference meets only once a year, the magazine would never be published if it had to go through the Conference review process. Thus, no individual issue is considered “Conference-approved.” In addition, the Grapevine by charter must, as Bill W. put it, “be free to print articles expressing the widest differences of opinion on all topics of a strictly AA nature.” They are not intended to be endorsements of AA policy.

At the same time, the Conference has always supported the concept of the Grapevine and encouraged its distribution at meetings and other AA gatherings. (See page 59) In 1986, a Conference Advisory Action specifically addressed the issue of Conference approval of the Grapevine directly with the following statement:

“Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through the Conference-approval process, the Conference recognizes the Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

The Conference has been equally supportive of La Viña. In 1995, it recommended that the Grapevine begin publishing a Spanish-language magazine on an experimental basis, and then gave the continuation of La Viña whole-hearted approval in 2001.

And of course the Grapevine is part of the Conference itself. Grapevine staff members and directors are voting members of the Conference. A Conference Committee on the Grapevine was formed in 1954, and any Grapevine matter of importance to the Fellowship as a whole is brought to the Conference through that committee. The Conference Charter recognizes the Grapevine’s place in the general service structure and guarantees the right of the Grapevine editor to accept or reject material for publication.

More information about the Grapevine, the General Service Conference, and the Grapevine Conference Committee can be found in the AA Service Manual.

## **The Grapevine Corporate Board**

The Grapevine Corporate Board oversees the business affairs of the corporation. While it doesn’t intervene in the day-to-day functioning of the office, it is ultimately responsible for seeing that the Grapevine and La Viña operate in the best interests of the Fellowship.

The major responsibility of the Corporate Board is, of course, the fiscal health of the corporation. In contrast to AA World Services, the Grapevine does not (by charter cannot) accept group contributions. It is self-supporting entirely through sales of the magazine and related materials. Any donations that may be received are kept in a special fund that is never used for operating expenses. Called the Carry the Message account, this fund is designated to provide subscriptions for AA members who cannot afford them – for example, AAs in correctional programs. The Grapevine’s finances and annual budget, like those of AA World Services, are reviewed by the trustees’ Finance Committee, and every year, cash in excess of current operating needs is transferred to and invested with the General Service Board Reserve Fund.

The Grapevine is obligated to keep in the General Service Board Reserve Fund enough money to cover its liability for unfulfilled subscriptions. This means that if the Grapevine were suddenly to fold, there would be enough money to refund all subscribers the cost of issues they paid for but had not yet received. In lean years, the corporation can borrow from those funds to meet operating needs.

### **Composition of the Board**

The Corporate Board has nine directors. Five of the directors serve as trustees on the General Service Board: one Class “A” nonalcoholic trustee, two general service trustees, and two regional or at-large trustees. The remaining four directors consist of three nontrustee directors selected for their business and publishing expertise, and the executive editor as a nonrotating member.

The chairman of the Corporate Board is always a trustee, and the chairmanship rotates each year between a general service trustee and a regional trustee. Directors are elected each year and may serve four consecutive one-year terms, with two exceptions: regional

trustees serve for two years, and nontrustee directors who are elected trustees may serve four additional years in that capacity.

All directors are voting members of the General Service Conference, which meets for one week in April, and serve on two trustees' committees. The Grapevine Corporate Board meets quarterly and holds an additional planning meeting each quarter.

### **The Editorial Advisory Board**

Formerly called the Editorial Board, the Editorial Advisory Board is an informal body comprised of AA members with a minimum of four years sobriety, who are writers, editors, graphic artists, and professionals in the publishing and communications fields, along with members of the Grapevine editorial staff and the art director. Members serve for three years. Grapevine staff members do not rotate. The Board meets six times a year to discuss a wide range of practical issues facing the magazine: editorial content, magazine format, and the development of the website and Grapevine items.

The idea of creating an Editorial Board was first discussed by the Grapevine Corporate Board in October 1953, but it was not until September 1958 that the Editorial Board became a reality. In its early years, the Board helped ease the workload of the overburdened volunteer editor. Board members wrote many of the articles, read and copyedited submissions, helped plan future issues, and assisted with layout and artwork. The Editorial Board became, in Bill W.'s words, "the chief guarantor of the magazine's quality and editorial continuity."

However, with the eventual hiring of a paid editorial staff who could work full-time, the role of the Editorial Board changed. It ceased being involved in hands-on production and evolved into a nonvoting advisory body, which functions as a sounding board for editorial decision-making.

In the last few years the activities of the Board have included: helping evaluate the articles used in new audiocassettes and a new booklet; creating scenarios for the Victor E. cartoon strip; discussing whether or not to publish certain controversial articles in light of the magazine's chief goals; and helping to reassess the design of

the magazine and its website. Members of this board continue to write articles, identify potential Editorial Advisory Board members, suggest ways to enrich the Grapevine's website, and help select articles for Grapevine anthologies and recordings.



### **The Grapevine Office**

In June 1944, the Grapevine office consisted of a half dozen volunteers working out of an apartment. In 1945, the Grapevine hired its first paid employee — a combination typist, clerk, secretary, and circulation supervisor — for \$40 a month (it was not until 1962 that it became possible to pay an editor). Today, the corporation has fourteen employees working in modern offices on the tenth floor of 475 Riverside Drive in New York City. (Tours of the Grapevine and the General Service Office, which is on the eleventh floor, are available during any working day.)

### **The Management Team**

As chief executive of AA Grapevine, Inc., the executive editor has oversight responsibility for the Grapevine and La Viña operations and reports directly to the Grapevine Corporate Board. Other members of the management team include the controller, managing editor, and the editor of La Viña. The Grapevine's managing editor is responsible for all editorial and production functions on the Grapevine, in concert with the senior editor (also a member of AA), and an associate editor. The director of internet operations, another member of AA, oversees the development of the website, the digital archives, and special projects. The editor of La Viña reports to the executive editor and bears responsibility for the editing and production of the magazine, for developing La Viña items, and overseeing La Viña representatives. The editor of La Viña is an AA member as well.

### **The Duties of the Editors**

Unlike staff positions at the General Service Office, which rotate regularly, the editors' jobs are more specialized and cannot be rotated. The editors represent the magazines at regional forums and, when invited, at other events. The executive editor also serves on the Grapevine Corporate Board and is a voting member of the General Service Conference, as are the managing and senior editors.

Together, the Grapevine editors evaluate all material for publication in the Grapevine, select the content of each issue, stay in touch with those who write for the magazines, and work with the art director in designing the issue. They also meet with the Editorial Advisory Board six times a year to discuss the format, content, and direction of the magazine and to consider, from a creative point of view, the development of future books, CDs, and other items suggested by the Fellowship, or plan special features for the magazine. At present, the editor of La Viña has sole responsibility for evaluating and selecting material for La Viña; however, a freelance editor assists in the editing and proofreading of the magazine and a freelance art editor designs it and gets the magazine ready for the printer.

### **Financial Management**

The controller, who reports to the executive editor, manages all business aspects of the corporation, with the assistance of two bookkeepers. The controller has responsibility for budget and financial planning as well as the smooth running of all business operations. This department also keeps track of all incoming and outgoing funds and prepares the financial reports required by the Corporate Board, the General Service Board, and the Grapevine's outside auditor.

### **Customer Service, Shipping, and Office Management**

Other key personnel include the office manager, the customer service coordinator, and members of the customer service and shipping departments. The liaison between the Grapevine office and the fulfillment house, the customer service coordinator looks for ways to make

order fulfillment more efficient. The office manager supervises the customer service and shipping staffs and the GvR/RLV coordinator, oversees daily office administration, and serves as an administrative assistant to the executive editor. The chief resource for Grapevine and La Viña reps, the bilingual GvR/RLV coordinator answers the reps' questions and makes sure they have the material they need. The in-house shipping department is kept busy mailing letters, special orders of books, CDs, and other Grapevine items, along with materials for the Board and conventions. The magazine and bulk orders are distributed by outside mailing houses.

### **Contact Information**

For matters concerning Grapevine corporate policy  
Executive Editor ee@aagrapevine.org

Editorial content of specific Grapevine issues  
Managing Editor managingeditor@aagrapevine.org

Grapevine manuscript submissions and queries, general correspondence, and Calendar of Events  
Associate Editor gveditorial@aagrapevine.org

La Viña manuscript submissions and queries, art, correspondence, Calendar of events  
La Viña Editor EditorLV@aagrapevine.org

Illustrations, cartoons, and photos  
Art Director arteditor@aagrapevine.org

GvR/RLV materials and GvR Coordinator questions  
gvrc@aagrapevine.org

Website and Digital Archives, and reprint permissions  
Director of Internet Operations  
special projects@aagrapevine.org

Subscriptions, Orders, Billing, Customer Service and Shipping  
jeff@aagrapevine.org





## **Part Two:**

# **A Workbook for Grapevine and La Viña Representatives**

### *How the GvR and RLV Programs Began*

*In the early years, it was mostly up to individual enthusiasts to carry the word about the Grapevine, though there have been Grapevine representatives, or GvRs, at the group level since the early fifties. By 1977, there were 286 group GvRs, or one GvR for every 66 groups. In order to increase the ratio of GvRs to groups in the United States and Canada, that year the General Service Conference recommended: “that delegates be responsible for establishing area Grapevine committees, using the area and district structure to achieve the goal of a Grapevine representative in every group.”*

*Conference Actions in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1984, and 1987 have encouraged delegates to work through the service structure. The 1985 Conference recommended that Grapevine committees work with Public Information and other service committees to increase the use of the Grapevine as a tool for carrying the AA message.*

*When the Grapevine began publishing La Viña in 1996, many GvRs took it upon themselves to let the Fellowship know about AA’s Spanish-language magazine. Soon the magazine had its own advocates, known as “representantes de La Viña,” or RLVs. Today, virtually all 93 delegate areas have Grapevine committees. The group GvR/RLV program has grown to more than 8,000 GvRs and more than 325 La Viña reps.*

## Chapter Six

# Group Grapevine and La Viña Reps

GvRs and RLVs act as advocates for the Grapevine and La Viña at the group level, alerting their groups to the use of the magazines as recovery tools. It is, many say, the best service job they've ever had. Originally GvRs focused on the Grapevine, and RLVs on La Viña. But as awareness of the needs of Spanish-speaking AAs throughout the United States has grown, some reps have begun to work with both magazines and refer to themselves as GvR/RLVs.

### What Do GvRs and RLVs Do?

#### Group GvRs and RLVs:

- make sure that copies of the magazines are available and displayed at meetings
- announce the arrival of each new issue
- share about articles in the magazines
- encourage individual subscriptions
- encourage the group to buy subscriptions in the group's name

In addition, a GvR or RLV may:

- stock Grapevine items on the literature table
- announce the publication of new items
- encourage members to submit articles and humor pieces
- initiate efforts to donate subscriptions to public and school libraries, hospitals, prisons, doctors' offices, churches, or to the place where the group meets

- suggest a Grapevine or La Viña topic meeting for the group
- encourage the use of Grapevine or La Viña subscriptions as gifts
- announce special features on the Grapevine website
- refer members to the Digital Archive for articles about AA history or discussion topics

The GvR may receive the magazine on behalf of the group, or ask the group to relegate this job to another member. Some GvRs also order back issues to give away. Making Grapevine and La Viña order forms available or posting them on the bulletin board can be part of the job as well.

#### *in their own words*

##### **What It's Like**

*Getting involved in service with La Viña was a gift I received from my group. I began by distributing the complimentary copies I got and I had many headaches getting my fellow members interested in the magazine. Luckily, I was able to get some subscriptions and that's how my service began.*

*Today the magazine practically sells itself and people come to me asking for subscriptions. Two years ago, I began working at the district level. Previously we had no La Viña committee in my district. Today I am happy to be the district committee chairman for La Viña. I am about to finish my two-year period of service and am grateful to my fellow AAs for giving me the opportunity to serve. Because of their love and trust, I feel like a true leader in AA.*

*RLV, El Centro, California*

## Suggestions for Group Grapevine and La Viña Reps

### Ways to Encourage the Group to Subscribe

Most GvRs and RLVs simply describe how other groups use the Grapevine or La Viña to carry the message of AA. Groups may use the magazine in one or more of the following ways:

- give an issue to the newcomer
- use a topic from the magazine for a discussion meeting
- begin a meeting by reading an article
- give a magazine instead of a card at anniversaries (“It costs less than a commercial greeting card,” one GvR said, “and carries the message of recovery.”)
- share back issues
- use the magazines or Grapevine items as door prizes and raffles at special events (Some groups say this adds a little suspense to the event and carries the message at the same time.)

### *in their own words*

#### **One GvR reports:**

*We try to make a practice of giving first-timers one or two recent copies of the Grapevine, and write several members' phone numbers inside. This gives them the Twelve Steps and Traditions, the Serenity Prayer, some humor, and a lot of valuable information, and it's a little more personal and a lot more interesting than a matchbook or business card.*

### “The New Issue Is Here!”

#### Ways to Announce the New Issue

To announce the arrival of a new issue, some GvRs and RLVs describe the highlights of that month's magazine or read a title or two from the table of contents. Others like to read:

- the opening paragraph of an article
- the Quotation of the Month
- a short letter or part of a letter
- a joke from Ham on Wry

### **Tip**

#### **A Typical GvR/RLV Pitch**

“My name is Mary S., I'm an alcoholic, and I'm your Grapevine and La Viña representative. The new Grapevines are in. They're up here on the literature table. It looks like a good issue: I especially like the interview with Dr. Bob's son, Smitty. In it, Smitty talks about what it was like having Bill W. and a stream of drunks live in his house. He also provides a closer look at our co-founder, commenting on his love of cars, his tattoo, and his sly sense of humor.

#### **How Reps Encourage Individuals to Subscribe**

After describing the contents of the magazine, some GvR/RLVs mention the advantage of having an individual subscription: the convenience of having one's own copy arrive in the mail every month and the assurance of having an instant meeting whenever needed. To make it easy, some reps provide envelopes addressed to the Grapevine along with order forms.

*in their own words*

### **Four Ways the Grapevine Contributes to My Sobriety**

*I was given the gift of sobriety at a time and a place where there weren't any AA meetings. My sponsor, another Loner, gave me her Big Book, and handed me an order form for the Grapevine. The pamphlets were interesting, the Big Book didn't make any sense, and the Grapevine seemed like it was written just for me. It was just a bunch of people taking about sobriety.*

*While my use of AA literature has grown, and the Big Book has come to make a little more sense, my use of the Grapevine as an ongoing tool for my growth in sobriety has continued. Today, there are four basic reasons why I use the Grapevine:*

*1. My subscription to the Grapevine is a commitment to sobriety. . . . It serves as a monthly reminder to me of what I am (an alcoholic), what I should be doing (growing), and how I can do it (by sharing). . . .*

*2. By reading the articles each month, I get to share the experience, strength, and hope of many people — not just a select few who happen to go to the same meetings I do. In the beginning, without the support of an AA group in the area, the Grapevine was my meeting. Today, the Grapevine continues to give me new ideas and new insights into sobriety.*

*3. The third reason for reading the Grapevine is that I don't have to wait for a meeting. The meeting is carried to me once a month, and I can participate in it at any time or in any place that I want. If I want a meeting at 3:00 A.M. or while backpacking in Glacier Park or while sitting in my own bathroom, I can have one. All I have to do is pick up the Grapevine and read.*

*4. The Grapevine enhances the meetings I attend. . . . It's one way of associating our little group with the AA Fellowship as a whole.*

*Doc, Kalispell, Montana*

### **Ideas for Setting Up Displays**

This can be as simple as putting a stack of magazines and a few Grapevine items on a table or creating a poster highlighting one of the stories in the current issue. Contact the Grapevine office for the free materials listed on page 51. For further ideas, see Chapter 9 and the GrapeNet at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

*in their own words*

### **A Real Eye-Catcher**

#### **From a GvR in Muncie, Indiana:**

*A month ago I found about 100 back issues of the Grapevine in the basement of our Alano Club, spanning the years 1974 to 1990. I took them home to sort and clean and then returned them to the club, placing them on a large table in the center of our meeting room. At every meeting we announced that members could take/read/return them. It started slowly, but now many are eager for more. Recently I put a bunch of the magazines in large clips on the wall near the door, and this display is a real eye-catcher. All that anyone has to do is pull down the desired copy and away they go."*



Posters can also come in handy at groups. One GvR created this poster for district and group use.

## How Reps Answer Questions About

### Grapevine and La Viña Subscriptions

Group members with questions about their subscriptions often turn to the GvR or RLV. The GvR and RLV Handbooks, sent to every new representative, have the information needed to answer most of them. However, if problems persist, please urge the subscriber to contact the Grapevine's bilingual customer service department at once.

Here is the contact information:

**Phone:** 212-870-3404

**Fax:** 212-870-3301

**E-mail:** [gvcirculation@aagrapevine.org](mailto:gvcirculation@aagrapevine.org)

**Address:** 475 Riverside Drive,  
New York, NY 10115

*Or you can help them fill out the Problem Resolution Form on the following page: 33*

## If You Are New: Getting Started

### Registration Is Easy

1. Send in your name, address, the group name and e-mail address, and group service number (available from the group's GSR). If you are a district GvR/RLV, send in the district number and e-mail address.
2. Also send in the name of the former GvR/RLV.  
(All names and addresses are kept confidential.)

**Note:** It's important to give the group name as it appears in the AA Directory (available through the group's GSR) and the city or state where the group is located. In this way, when the GvR/RLV rotates, communications don't get lost. In addition, let the Grapevine office know if you are a GvR for more than one group to avoid duplicate mailings.

## What You Will Receive

New GvRs are sent a Grapevine Representative Kit, which includes: "Who Writes the Grapevine?" flyer; a catalog and order form; and subscription forms, flyers about new Grapevine items, a list of complimentary materials for Grapevine displays, and a password to the Grapevine bulletin board, where GvRs exchange information online at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org)

Because La Viña is a relatively new publication, RLVs get five complimentary copies of the magazine along with the complimentary materials listed on page 51.

## Keeping Information Up-to-Date Is Crucial

We want to keep GvRs and RLVs up-to-date on what is happening at the Grapevine, so it's extremely important that the Grapevine be advised of any changes (rotations, resignations) of group GvRs, district GvRs, and area GvRs.

## If Your Group Wants a GvR/RLV and Doesn't Have One

The procedure for acquiring a GvR or RLV is simple. First, submit the idea to your group at a business meeting, reading aloud the description of what a group GvR does in this workbook or in The AA Grapevine pamphlet published by AAWS. GvRs may be chosen from volunteers or through elections. Larger groups may ask the group's alternate GSR to serve as GvR/RLV. Most groups set a minimum sobriety requirement for GvRs — say, six months or one year. Once the GvR/RLV is selected, follow the instructions for new reps above. The new GvR or RLV will receive an information kit — and your group will be on its way.





## ***Why Be a Grapevine or La Viña Representative?***

### ***Why should an AA member become a GvR/RLV? What are the benefits?***

Service in AA is a time-honored way to maintain and enhance sobriety. In that light, being a GvR or RLV is just one of many avenues available to AAs. But some think that representing the Grapevine or La Viña offers some special advantages.

1. The GvR/RLV performs a service for AA members — bringing them the international monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous and La Viña.
2. The GvR/RLV performs a service for the magazines, linking them to members of the Fellowship who might not otherwise read or even be aware of them.
3. The GvR/RLV is engaged in practical hands-on work. The basic responsibility is to work at the group level, giving information about the Grapevine and La Viña to members, sharing stories from each issue, and encouraging use of each magazine as a tool of recovery.
4. The GvR/RLV is engaged in active Twelfth Step work. The magazines' stories, readable style, and pocket size are particularly useful to beginners in AA.
5. The GvR/RLV becomes more aware of AA history. The Grapevine has been an important part of AA since the Fellowship was nine years old. Learning about the magazine is a good way to learn about AA history as well.
6. The GvR/RLV has a chance to be involved in wider circles of service. In many areas, GvRs meet with district Grapevine representatives and area chairpersons to swap ideas, problems, and solutions. GvRs may also attend regional forums and area assemblies.
7. The GvR/RLV is encouraged to read the magazine every month — an advantage all by itself! Each issue is a mix of inspiration, personal stories, history, humor, diverse opinions, reporting, and good solid AA tools, all rolled into one resource. For sixty years, it has helped thousands of AAs stay sober, carry the message, and keep connected to AA principles and practices.

## Chapter Seven

# District Reps and Area Chairs

District Grapevine and La Viña reps and area chairs are active parts of AA's general service structure. Here is an overview of the services they provide.

### *The District GvR/RLV*

#### What District GvRs/RLVs Do

The district GvR and/or RLV serves as the link between group GvRs/RLVs and the area service structure. The district representative also has the practical goal of encouraging every group to have a Grapevine and/or La Viña rep.

##### **District Reps:**

- Keep an up-to-date list of group GvRs/RLVs in the district
- Encourage groups in the district to elect or appoint a GvR/RLV via phone, e-mail, mail, or personal visits
- Chair the district Grapevine/La Viña committee
- Stay in contact with all GvRs/RLVs in the district and share ideas with them
- Hold meetings for GvRs/RLVs in the district
- Make sure that GvRs/RLVs have magazine flyers and order forms
- Keep the area Grapevine/La Viña chair up to date on progress in the district
- Send the new GvR/RLV's name, address, and group to the Grapevine office, if the rep hasn't already done so

In keeping with Tradition Four, it is up to the district to decide how to organize the district Grapevine committee and what to call it. Some districts have separate committees, one for Grapevine and another for La Viña. Others have a single GvR/RLV district committee.

#### *in their own words*

#### **Report from the Chair of a La Viña Committee**

*When I began participating in service several years ago, La Viña did not exist. I was encouraged to attend Spanish-speaking assemblies — events which take place outside AA's general service structure, but where many ideas and projects important to Hispanics in the U.S. and Canada first appear. It was in these assemblies that the need to have the Grapevine publish at least one story in Spanish was first articulated. The request was then taken to the delegates and made its way to the General Service Conference, where it was approved.*

*For many years, Spanish-speaking districts in Texas had their own Grapevine committees, which motivated members to send submissions in Spanish. Then in 1996, La Viña began to be published, and we began stressing La Viña in our meetings. Eventually, the name of the committee was changed from Grapevine to La Viña district committee. Over two years ago, I became the RLV for my home group. Aside from promoting subscriptions and getting people to submit their stories and photographs, I was encouraged to attend the district committee meetings. At one of these meetings, I was elected alternate chair of the La Viña committee and later I became the committee chairman.*

*(continued on next page)*

*Our La Viña district committee meets every Tuesday at 8 p.m. We discuss how to improve La Viña's presence in Spanish-speaking groups in our district. Our goal is to have each group have its own RLV. We work in teams and take turns visiting different groups to talk about La Viña and encourage members to contribute their stories and art, to give us pictures of their meeting places to send to the magazine, and to subscribe to our "meeting in print." Lately, we also have been reading the magazine in our meetings and encouraging our committee members to send their stories.*

*Francisco G., Houston, Texas*

## **Suggestions from District GvRs and RLVs**

### **Visit Groups**

Some district Grapevine and La Viña reps visit groups, usually after contacting the group secretary or chair. One district GvR describes what she does on such a visit:

“When I get to the AA meeting, I set up a display of the magazine and our Grapevine items under a sign which says “Tools of Recovery.” At the end of the meeting, I give a short talk about the history of the Grapevine, describe the magazine itself, and explain how the Grapevine can be used for Twelfth Stepping.

Then I get to the main purpose of my visit — to see to it that the group is informed about the many advantages of having a group GvR: ensuring that the group has a supply of magazines and other tools for recovery (thus improving its Twelfth Step power), having contact with the Grapevine office, offering chances for service, and strengthening the group's connection with the service structure of AA.”

### **Organize Special Grapevine Events**

Many district GvR/RLV committees set up Grapevine and La Viña displays at district meetings and make sure the magazines are included in district workshops or Share-a-Days, monthly intergroup speakers' meetings, and yearly banquets. These events are described in the following chapter.

### **Hold Meetings for Group GvRs and RLVs**

Most committees meet at regularly scheduled district meetings. To welcome new GvRs/RLVs, one district chair had her committee make “Welcome Aboard” kits with information about the GvR's/RLV's duties, a registration form (with a stamped and addressed envelope) to send to the Grapevine office, and subscription forms. Another district GvR had the Grapevine committee make up folders of information about the magazine and reprints of popular Grapevine articles to give to group GvRs at the monthly general service meeting.

One district GvR regularly holds informal, idea-swapping brunches at a local restaurant for the twenty-five GvRs in his district.

### **The Area AA Grapevine Chairperson**

The area Grapevine chairperson is a part of the AA service structure. In most areas, the job is similar to that of the chairperson of any other standing committee. Area chairs may be elected or appointed, depending on the area's practice. In some areas, the area Grapevine chair is drawn from the existing service structure: the outgoing delegate automatically becomes the area Grapevine chairperson, for example, or another officer, such as the alternate delegate, doubles as the area chairperson. Area autonomy prevails as to whether chairpersons have a vote at the area assembly.

In areas that are geographically large, area chairpersons may have co-chairs to cover the territory. The AA member who chairs the Grapevine committee in a large area explained: “My first job was to choose a secretary and a co-chair from the nine district committee members (DCMs) on my committee. I live in the southern

part of the area, and my co-chair lives in the northern part. So if something comes up closer to where he lives, he can lead a workshop or do a Grapevine presentation. Otherwise, I'd have to make a seven- or eight-hour round-trip journey to get to an event, or stay overnight and have the added expense of lodgings. Besides, this way more people get a chance to participate."

### The Area Grapevine Chair's Basic Duties

Once district GvRs/RLVs are in place and an area Grapevine committee has been established, the area chair:

- creates enthusiasm for the Grapevine and La Viña in the area.
- holds Grapevine/La Viña committee meetings.
- meets with district GvRs/RLVs to exchange ideas on how to encourage groups to elect GvR/RLVs and how to help new GvRs/RLVs.
- keeps an ongoing list of GvRs/RLVs and keeps the Grapevine office up-to-date on their addresses.
- leads Grapevine workshops or holds other special events.
- makes sure that the Grapevine and La Viña are included in the planning of workshops and presentations for area events.
- sets up displays, sells subscriptions, keeps a supply of Grapevine items on hand for sale.

### Suggestions from Area Grapevine Chairs

#### Give Committee Members Clear Direction

One area chair reported: "When I was elected alternate delegate and therefore area Grapevine chairperson, the area Grapevine committee was a raggedy bunch, to say the least. Our committee meetings were generally a sharing of experi-

ence by the few in attendance. During our first quarterly Grapevine meeting, our committee decided that part of the problem was a lack of direction and seemingly nothing to do. So through discussion and voting and with the approval of the area as a whole, we took on the job of displaying and selling Grapevine literature and printed material along with The AA Service Manual and pertinent service pamphlets at area events.

"Each quarter we met, our committee grew. We now have six enthusiastic district GvRs, and some not so enthusiastic. The average attendance at committee meetings has been twenty-five, which includes a few interested AAs as well as district and group GvRs. Our area Grapevine committee has now come of age. We have adopted guidelines for the area, district, and group GvR. We also adopted the suggestion that all group alternate GSRs have the job of GvR/RLV."

#### Guide Group GvRs/RLVs

"The quarterly assembly is where it all happens. When I'm there, I go over everything, because I think one of the main goals of the area chairperson and the district GvRs/RLVs is education of the group GvRs/RLVs," declared one area chair. "I always explain the GvR/RLV job by telling people the benefits they're going to get out of it—as I have gotten—not the service they're giving. This seems to work."

#### Create Regional Directors

"In my area, I have proposed that we use the same tack that DCMs in large groups use, and that is to create regional directors to help out the area Grapevine chairperson. We need a minimum of three directors, but preferably four. This would mean that with the chairperson, we'd have five people assisting twenty district GvRs. It seems to me that really spirited work can be accomplished. And we'd be using our greatest resource — people. There's a side benefit, too. Come next election, we'll have at least four knowledgeable candidates for area Grapevine chairperson. Wouldn't it be refreshing to be able to choose from at least four experienced people instead of coaxing someone — anyone — to take the job?"

— an area Grapevine chairperson,  
Eastern Missouri

## Invite General Service Reps on Board

*"We have the greatest opportunity to reach all GSRs in the state at the fall assembly, so the first thing we do is have an eye-catching Grapevine and La Viña booth. But the most important thing is the distribution of information by the Grapevine committee to all GSRs in their district.*

*"We're each allowed five minutes to promote the spirit and purpose of the Grapevine and La Viña. There will be follow-ups at future GSR meetings, to continue the interest and to get reading the magazines to become a good AA habit."*

## Spread the Word with Memos and Reports

Written reports allow participants to reread and reconsider what they've heard. They are also a good opportunity to include additional information about the magazines that isn't necessarily appropriate in a speech — facts, figures, history, and so forth. District GvRs or area Grapevine chairpersons also use regular or sporadic memoranda (including faxes, e-mail, and, in some areas, websites) to keep participants interested and up to date.

Some distribute copies of "Why Be a Grapevine or La Viña Representative?" (see page 34) at area and district assemblies.

## Distribute Display Kits

Some area Grapevine chairs make display kits available to AA groups on a temporary basis. Kits include back issues of the magazine, posters, the facsimile edition of the first Grapevine, and other materials.

### **At-A-Glance: US and Canada (2003)**

Registered groups: 1,700

Spanish-speaking intergroups and central offices: 61

Estimated Spanish-speaking AA members: 20,400

Number of areas that have Spanish districts:  
30 out of 93.

Number of Spanish-speaking districts: 91

## If You Are New: Getting Started

### New District GvRs/RLVs

Send in your name, address, the district and area numbers and the district e-mail address, if there is one. Also send in the name of the former district GvR/RLV. Or register online at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

### New Area Grapevine Chairs

Send in your name, address, and area. Many areas send the names and addresses of all area officers — including the Grapevine area chairperson — on the form that GSO provides. There may be a delay in the Grapevine's receiving this information, so please register directly with the Grapevine office so that you receive materials promptly. 🐦

### **What You Will Receive**

District and area chairs will receive all the materials listed on page 32, along with a monthly letter from the executive editor to keep them up to date on Grapevine events. Every quarter, they will also receive a poster of the magazine's cover.

*by Bill*

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"The Grapevine is a monthly vision of worldwide thought, feeling, and activity of our whole Fellowship."



## GvR Registration Form

Name of GvR: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (      ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name \_\_\_\_\_

Area \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

Group Service Number: \_\_\_\_\_

(available from your group's General Service Rep)

Group Location \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: GvR Coordinator, PO Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-1980.  
Or fax to 212-870-3301. You can also register on-line at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

## Chapter Eight

# Special GvR and RLV Activities and Events

GvRs and RLVs have developed a number of innovative ways to spread the word about the Grapevine and La Viña and to create enthusiasm for using them to carry the message of AA. Here is a sample — all based on actual GvR/RLV activities, which can be adapted for either magazine. We hope you'll find a few of them useful to your district, area, or group.

### 1. Start a Grapevine or La Viña Meeting or a Meeting Based on The Language of the Heart

Groups report that there are many advantages to having discussion meetings based on the AA Grapevine or La Viña, or on the stories included in Grapevine books, CDs, or tapes. The magazines keep the discussion centered on solid AA sharing and the principles of AA. Says one member: "The most attractive thing about these meetings is that they use a theme or idea of someone outside the group, which is like having a new visitor at every meeting."

#### Formats vary

Many groups pass the magazine around and members take turns reading a story before sharing. Others use a quote, the theme of a special section, or one of the questions in the Discussion Topics section of the magazine as a springboard for sharing. Some listen to a story on CD or tape and talk about that. At Language of the Heart meetings, the chair often reads a few paragraphs, which members reflect on, or the group might read an entire article out loud.

#### *in their own words*

#### **One Grapevine Group's Story**

*Deluged by newcomers, the ratio of people with under a year of sobriety to those with over a year became nearly fifteen to one at our group. Meeting discussions began to revolve more and more around the disease. The Steps, Big Book, Traditions and recovery were no longer being stressed. Fear, people-pleasing, irresponsibility, and "not wanting to make a fuss" permitted a once-solid AA meeting to hit rock bottom. Many regular attendees left, a lot of old-timers sat around doing little more than moaning and groaning, and group unity dissolved.*

*Finally, in hope of resolving the situation, a business meeting was called. One member suggested we use the AA Grapevine as the central theme for the meeting. Light bulbs went off in most of the heads in the room. Using the Grapevine would provide a singular topic each week, recovery based on AA experience, strength, and hope, and a positive atmosphere.*

*But how do you have a Grapevine meeting without the magazine? After saving our nickels and dimes, fifteen subscriptions were ordered. (A member's Best of the Grapevine book provided meeting topics until the magazines arrived.)*

*Strong leadership provided the meeting with direction, and chairpersons adhered to a structured format. At first, some individuals reacted negatively when politely asked to stick to the Grapevine article, but most really enjoyed the new format. After tense months of transition, positive changes resulted. Tempers subsided, sanity returned, and both participation and attendance flourished.*

## ***Ten Reasons to Start a Grapevine Meeting***

1. You'll be introducing people to a great recovery tool.
2. You'll never have trouble finding a speaker again — the magazine is full of them.
3. Remember Steps Four and Eight? Good things happen when alcoholics write things down.
4. With stories from all over the world, you'll be freed of the bondage of geography.
5. You can focus on the Traditions or the Steps, old-timers or young people, what's wrong with AA or what's right with it . . . even Victor E.
6. A lot of really good writers are alcoholics, and some of them are in AA.
7. With the Best of the Grapevine volumes and a new magazine every month, you'll never run out of material.
8. If you like Bill W. in the "Twelve and Twelve," you'll love him in The Language of the Heart. It gives you a chance to read the articles Bill W. wrote for the Grapevine.
9. Things at your regular meeting getting a little dull? Read a story from the "Love, Sex, and Sobriety" issue.
10. Most of the articles are very timely. The rest are timeless.

*AA Grapevine, June 2003*

### **The Language of the Heart: One Group's Story**

*Our group added a Language of the Heart meeting to our meetings focusing on the Big Book, "Twelve and Twelve," and Living Sober. However, we felt that some of Bill's writings on AA service and AA history might confuse the person just coming in the door, so the group's steering committee got together and chose twenty-seven of the most pertinent articles to use in a weekly rotation. To remind us of what was going on in AA at the time Bill wrote each article, we start the meeting with the leader reading the appropriate introductory material from the book before reading the article itself. This is followed by a discussion that goes around the table so that everyone gets a chance to share what they think about the reading.*

### **Kings of the Road to Recovery**

One GvR started a Grapevine meeting at a truck stop:

*The purpose of the meeting is to give AA members who run the big rigs across the country a chance to get to a meeting on the road. Since the Grapevine is one of my favorite things in AA, and since I happened to have bought a lot of Grapevine tapes, the idea of a Grapevine meeting seemed like a natural. And I liked the idea of having additional Grapevine tapes available for the truckers to listen to as they push their eighteen-wheelers along — a meeting to help ease those miles of lonely road.*

## **2. Spread the Word in Local AA Newsletters or Websites**

**N**ewsletters — either general AA newsletters or Grapevine ones — are a great way to get the word out about the Grapevine and La Viña. One, for example, runs a "Grapevine Corner" in every issue. And the advent of area websites has opened up even more ways to carry the message to the Fellowship.

### **What Can Go in a Newsletter or an Area Website?**

GvRs and RLVs say they get copy from various sources:

- Stories from current issues, the Grapevine website, Grapevine books and pamphlets and the Digital Archive
- Announcements of upcoming local Grapevine and La Viña events
- "Coming Attractions" from each issue
- News about the Grapevine website and new Grapevine items
- Brief excerpts of Grapevine history
- Discussion topics
- Quotes of the month
- Reprints of useful literature like the Traditions Checklist
- A list of "lost" GvRs/RLVs to prompt GvRs to keep their registration up-to-date
- Articles by GvRs, RLVs, and the area chair

Some newsletters reproduce Grapevine and La Viña subscription forms. And in an AA newsletter in Montana, the area Grapevine chairperson has run a survey "to find out how effectively they are passing along what a great magazine it is."

### 3. Encourage Groups to Give Subscriptions to Those in Need

Donating gift subscriptions is often the most effective way to reach AAs and potential AAs in institutions. Here are some institutions that might be grateful to get them:

- Jails, police departments, prisons, “drunk tanks,” holding facilities, juvenile correctional programs
- Libraries: public and private, junior high and high school, college, university, vocational school
- Counselors’ offices in schools
- Community centers
- Hospitals, clinics, VA hospitals
- Doctors’ and dentists’ offices
- Detox units, treatment and rehabilitation facilities
- Senior citizen centers and residences
- Youth shelters
- Homeless shelters and soup kitchens
- Churches, synagogues, retreat centers

“It can help to ‘think local,’” one GvR adds. There may be a place right in your neighborhood in need of an AA meeting in print. A sample letter that could be sent to such an institution can be found below. In many areas, district and area Grapevine committee members work together and coordinate campaigns like the one above; they are eager to work with new GvRs and share their experience.

#### Sample Letter to Libraries and Other Institutions

Dear Ms. or Sir:

Enclosed you will find recent issues of the AA Grapevine, the monthly international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, and La Viña, AA’s Spanish-language magazine. Widely known in AA as a “meeting in print,” these magazines emphasize first-person accounts of AA experiences with alcoholism, recovery, and service. Like AA meetings themselves, the Grapevine and La Viña are tools to help the recovering alcoholic stay sober.

We hope that after you’ve reviewed the magazines, you will want to have them available for your readers. If this is the case, an AA member or group will be happy to sponsor a subscription for you, making it possible to add the magazines to your periodicals collection at no cost to the library.

If you decide you’d like to receive the Grapevine or La Viña, please let us know and we’ll enter a subscription in your name. The magazine will begin arriving in four to six weeks, and you will receive the name of a contact person at the sponsoring group who can help you if you have any problems with your subscription. The contact person also can be used as a resource should your library want additional information about Alcoholics Anonymous. In keeping with our Tradition of anonymity, we respectfully request that this person’s name not be made public.

#### You Can Count On Us

To help the inmates in their area, one area committee instituted the Count-On-Us Project, a campaign asking groups to contribute Grapevine subscriptions to area correctional programs. “Our goal was twenty-two subscriptions — and we wound up with ninety-one!” the chair reported. The project began with a letter to the district

committee members (DCMs) asking for their support in encouraging groups to participate. Each DCM was also sent copies of a letter like the one below to give to groups, along with forms to sign up for the project. A similar letter could be sent to groups interested in sponsoring subscriptions to other institutions, as well.

AAs in Midsouthern California began an area-wide Adopt-a-Group program, which offered groups an opportunity to support AA groups in Russia by subscribing to the Grapevine for them. The program was so successful that some groups extended it by sending additional AA literature and establishing pen-pal relationships. Now, Russia has its own AA magazine. In a similar vein, an English-speaking group in Maryland bought a gift subscription to La Viña for a Spanish-language AA group that was just getting started.

### **Sample Letter to Groups**

*Dear Friends:*

*One of the basics of our recovery program is the knowledge that to keep sobriety we must give it away. Now I'm asking your group to share with those not so fortunate. Will you sponsor an AA Grapevine subscription to a correctional facility? Fellow AAs in prison can't get to the meetings of their choice whenever they feel the need. AA literature keeps them on the path of sobriety between meetings, and the AA Grapevine and La Viña — with their emphasis on direct, first-person accounts of sobriety as it is lived today — are always well-received and looked forward to. If your group will send me the price of a one- or two-year subscription, the Count-On-Us Project will see to it that an institution in your area receives a gift subscription in your group's name. Each institution needs many copies. Please contribute if you can, to help bring the Fellowship to men and women in prison.*

## **4. Pass It On: Share Back Issues**

**B**ecause most of the stories in the Grapevine and La Viña are timeless, giving away back issues can be another effective and economical way to carry the message — one which the Grapevine Committee encouraged at the 1990 General Service Conference:

*In an effort to help area treatment facilities, correctional facilities, public information, and cooperation with the professional community committees carry the AA message, the committee suggested that when available the Grapevine periodically distribute back issues through the delegate for the use of these committees.*

Today, many groups and committees purchase packs of back issues from the Grapevine for use in prisons. Others collect back issues to use as sample copies for new members, hospitals, institutions, and the military. In another area, GvRs and RLVs put back issues in reading rooms of the men's and women's prisons, in city and county jails, treatment clinics, and VA hospitals. A GvR in Japan began a Grapevine lending library for English-speaking AAs in Tokyo. Called the Grapevine Exchange Library, it contained 290 back issues for borrowing and 220 for exchange. In addition, it donated over 160 back issues to treatment and correctional facilities. Area archives are glad to receive back issues as well.

## **5. Work with Other AA Service Committees**

**A** 1985 Conference Action recommended that "Grapevine committees seek ways to work with Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Correctional Facilities, Treatment Facilities, and other service committees, with the aim of increasing the use of the Grapevine as a tool in carrying the message."

These committees can be terrific resources, as they

are familiar with the local institutions that need AA support and with the people one needs to contact to donate subscriptions or back issues. In turn, GvRs and RLVs have been able to provide committees with information about the magazines and to suggest ways they can be used in Twelfth Step work.

Here are a few of the projects that Grapevine and other service committees have developed by working together:

### **Treatment Facilities Committees**

Grapevine and treatment facilities committees have worked together in several areas to provide Grapevine and La Viña subscriptions to alcoholics newly discharged from treatment.

### **Public Information Committees (PI)**

Members of the Grapevine and PI committees in one area set up programs encouraging groups to contact high schools and to offer one-year subscriptions of the magazines. (See page 43 for a sample letter for libraries, schools, and other institutions.)

### **Hospitals and Institutions Committees (H & I)**

One district Grapevine committee distributed back issues to emergency rooms in ten hospitals in its county after contacting each hospital by phone to explain the purpose of the project, with the help of H & I committee members.

### **Correctional Facilities Committees (CF)**

In addition to helping GvRs and RLVs with campaigns to send Grapevine and La Viña subscriptions to people in correctional programs, several committees have held “Send a Book to Jail” dances. They collect AA literature as an admission fee, and donate it to area and intergroup correctional facilities committees, who then pass it along to jails and prisons. The donated literature always includes a large number of Grapevine and La Viña back issues.

## **Central Offices or Intergroups**

Occasionally, Grapevine and literature committees are invited to participate in the monthly meetings and quarterly booking exchanges at their local intergroup.

## **6. Include the Grapevine and La Viña at AA Events**

As part of the AA service structure, the magazines do need to be represented at area and district general service events. Regional or state gatherings, conventions, roundups, all-city or all-state meetings, district and area assemblies, and group or state anniversary celebrations are excellent places to let the Fellowship know about the magazines as well.

### **Ways to Highlight the Magazines at Events**

#### ***Create Displays and Posters***

Setting up Grapevine and La Viña tables and displays is a good place to start. Stocked with current and back issues of the magazines, books, CDs, audiocassettes, and other Grapevine items, the displays introduce members to a full array of Grapevine publications. Posters about the current issue or tied to the theme of the event bring the magazines to the immediate attention of members. One GvR showed what a year of the magazine looked like by pasting a collage of Grapevine covers on heavy cardboard. Another came up with the idea of using hinges to create a poster that could be folded and stored in between gatherings. *The following page of photographs shows many creative ideas for displays and events related to the Grapevine magazine.*





An enterprising area chair in Florida made a life-sized, plywood Victor E. that welcomes members to the Grapevine and La Viña table. It proved so popular that the GvR/RLVs in the area take turns toting it to events all over the state.



The GvRs in the area take turns wearing this costume.



The same area came up with its own logo and name -- The Grapenut.

Using colorful posters like this, committees recruit members with attraction rather than promotion; being part of the GvR bunch is fun.



Displays show the fellowship the array of La Viña and Grapevine literature available in English and Spanish.



This display acknowledges new subscriptions by adding "grapes" to a vine.

**Most displays also contain the following handouts and give-aways**

- Subscription forms
- Back issues
- Guidelines for contributing to the magazines
- The GvR/RLV "Job Description"
- Ten Reasons to Start a Grapevine Meeting
- Is the Grapevine Conference-approved?

**Tip**

**Quick Tip: Displays**

**Highlights of Grapevine History.** One Grapevine chair had a set of magazines dating from 1956 bound and added to a traveling Grapevine display to give people a sense of what early Grapevines were like.

**Conference Approval.** Another chair put a poster listing in large type all the General Service Conference recommendations and Advisory Actions concerning the Grapevine. It was a fast, graphic way to present significant Grapevine history.

**Special Topics Kits.** Still another wrapped groups of Grapevine items addressing special themes in plastic bags. A package for the home group, for instance, contained the Slogans, the Serenity Prayer, a back issue, and The Home Group book. A special bag for beginners contained a current issue, a "Not for Newcomers Only" audiocassette tape, and the Preamble.

**Conduct Workshops**

AA Grapevine and La Viña workshops can be held at almost any AA event. They are almost always on the agenda at regional forums, and many areas and districts now make the magazines one of the topics to be discussed at service workshops, inviting someone knowledgeable about the Grapevine to give a presentation.

Formats for workshops vary. Here are a few samples:

**Sample Workshop #1:  
An Introduction to the Magazine**

The moderator opens the workshop with an introduction to one or both of the magazines, highlighting the circulation of the magazines, the fact that they are AA's international journals, the kinds of stories they contain, and how groups use them. The editorial Statement of Purpose can be read to close the presentation. Then, to get the discussion rolling, the moderator may ask a few questions:

- How has the AA Grapevine helped your sobriety?
- Does the Grapevine really speak for AA as a whole?
- What kinds of articles are most useful to you? Least useful? What do you read first?
- How do you respond when someone says, "My group won't display the Grapevine because it's not Conference-approved?"
- Have you ever wanted to write an article for one of the magazines? Well, maybe the time has come! How do you go about it?
- What can you do to let AAs in your area know about La Viña?

## Tip

### Quick Tip: Workshops

#### Basic resources to have on hand:

- This Workbook
- Guidelines for Contributing to the Grapevine or La Viña
- Facsimile edition of the first Grapevine
- Current copies of the magazines

#### Sample Workshop #2: How to Spread the Word

*I conducted our first Grapevine workshop and it was a great success. We had forty-one in attendance (a record). Everyone got a packet that was put together along the lines of the Grapevine Representative Kit, and included the Traditions Checklist. We covered the history of the magazine and a GvR's responsibilities, made a pitch for district GvRs, and described the importance of forming an area committee. The area co-chair did a great book review of *The Language of the Heart*.*

*Then we broke into three groups, each on a separate "solution search" for answers to the following questions:*

- *How can we conduct better workshops?*
- *How can we encourage participation in the Grapevine?*
- *How can we better cooperate with committees such as public information, cooperation with the professional community, and institutions?*

*From this brainstorming, we came up with a list of innovative suggestions.*

*— Grapevine Chair, Georgia*

#### Recruiting GvRs/RLVs: An All-Day Workshop

**Breaking the Ice.** A local treatment center provided the facility, and funds were donated by a local district for coffee and cake (the latter designed as the cover of a Grapevine). Information packets — put together from complimentary material sent to us by the Grapevine office — were handed out by greeters as participants arrived. The packets included a special cartoon drawn up by a local member for a caption contest. Captions submitted by participants were voted on and the top three winners were awarded Grapevine subscriptions for their efforts.

**Spotlight on Service.** The workshop opened with our chairperson talking about what the Grapevine meant to him and how he had gotten involved with this form of service work. Then our area chairperson spent a few minutes talking about his job and answering questions from the audience.

**Skits and Panels.** At intervals throughout the workshop, enthusiastic members acted out skits adapted from Victor E. cartoons. There was also a panel discussion on certain aspects of the magazine: humor, article selection and publication, history. Questions from the audience were fielded by the panel. Grapevine audios and other related items were covered in another presentation.

**Dance, Dance, Dance.** The grand finale of the day was the whole committee dressed as the California Raisins and dancing to "Heard It Through the Grapevine."

#### How the AA Grapevine Office Can Help

Anyone needing help or suggestions in setting up a Grapevine or La Viña workshop or other Grapevine event may write, call, or e-mail the Grapevine office. A staff member will be happy to make suggestions. Grapevine and La Viña staff members are also available as speakers for AA events, whether they are strictly Grapevine events or other AA functions. Staff members can give presentations on the Grapevine or La Viña, tell their AA stories, and help out in other ways. It is un-

derstood that when such invitations are extended, the staff person's expenses are paid by the committee that issued the invitation.

Please contact the GvR/RLV Coordinator: Telephone 212-870-3018

E-mail: [gvrca@agrapevine.org](mailto:gvrca@agrapevine.org)

## 7. Organize a Grape-a-Thon, La Viña Week, and Other Special Events

### Grape-a-Thons

A Grape-a-Thon is a day-long series of discussion meetings on the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, group problems, spirituality, and other topics of concern to AAs based on articles from the Grapevine. The idea for the marathon came from a Grapevine area chair in Colorado. The first Grapevine-a-Thon took place in Denver, Colorado, on January 4, 1986. Here's a report from one of the participants:

#### *in their own words*

#### **The First Grape-a-Thon in Our Galaxy**

*What on earth (or any other planet, for that matter) is a Grape-a-Thon? Our Grape-a-Thon was a collection of workshops on the Traditions and service, with the focus on what AAs have shared in the Grapevine on these subjects. How was this done? We went through fifteen years' worth of back issues of the Grapevine at the Denver central office to find articles about each topic.\* We assigned two chairpersons for each topic to double the attendance, emphasize principles before personalities, and provide backup. Each chairperson was given a stack of Grapevine articles on their topic and asked to prepare for the Grape-a-Thon by reading them.*

*Copies of individual articles were also given to several hundred AAs who expressed interest in one of the topics. We took special pains to seek out AAs*

*who were known to have very different opinions on each topic in order to encourage lively discussion. The chairpersons were given a list of these AAs and were asked to call on them first, a technique which had helped to make two previous workshops interesting and informative.*

*We decorated the church basement with lots of plastic grapes and stuffed animals holding up The Best of the Grapevine and other Grapevine items and hung crazy cartoons illustrating some of the discussion topics on the walls.*

*One room was used for workshops on treatment centers, cooperation with the professional community, public information, AA history, and AA in prisons. Another was used for workshops on the Traditions and Concepts. The main room was set aside for workshops on young people and long-timers, being clean and sober (i.e., Should your group give you a cake if you have been smoking grass?), and serving your group, which was co-chaired by our area delegate and the manager of our central office. There were also two "generic" AA meetings in the main room to provide breathers. Most of the day, people had three topics to choose from at any given time.*

*At the end of the day, a troupe called the Grape Nuts Flakes put on a skit — a take-off on Hamlet called "Grapelet,"\*\* by William Shakesbeer. Lots of laughs! This was followed by three speakers: a long-timer who has written many articles for the Grapevine, our area chairman, and a director on the Grapevine Board, who wore a purple dress she'd made for the occasion.*

*\*The Digital Archive will streamline this work in the future. See page 9 for more information.*

*\*\* The script is available from the Grapevine office.*

## Grapevine or La Viña Week

South Florida has organized an annual Grapevine Week and Roundup, consisting of Grapevine writers' workshops in English and Spanish conducted by district GvRs. The flyer announcing the workshops noted: "Bring your pencils and paper. This is your chance to write that article that you always wanted to send in." The week culminated in a Grapevine Roundup featuring an open speakers meeting, a square dance, a hayride, a bonfire, and a barbecue, with free Grapevines for all and a prize of a year's subscription for the best-dressed cowpoke and cowgirl. The area Grapevine chairperson reported:

### *in their own words*

*Our primary purpose — to improve awareness of the Grapevine in our district — was achieved. Plus, everyone had a great time.*

*The writers' workshop attracted over fifty people, and several articles already have been submitted to the Grapevine. As a result of these workshops, a weekly writers' AA meeting was established. In addition, regular discussion meetings devoted entirely to AA Grapevine readings and discussions have increased fifty percent in our district.*

*Our secondary purpose was to generate sufficient income to be self-supporting through our own sales, and in that we were successful. Our net income from the event will provide us with close to sufficient funds to cover our annual gift certificate and Grapevine newsletter expenses throughout the next year.*

## Grapevine and La Viña Awareness Month

This event was launched when an area assembly voted to designate one month a year as "Grapevine Month" and the idea has since been tried in other areas. Throughout the month, special efforts were made to encourage subscriptions to the Grapevine and La Viña and to encourage groups that don't have one to elect a

GvR/RLV. Group officers were asked to help increase awareness of the magazine.

An area chair in New Hampshire enlisted the help of all group GSRs with the following letter:

### *in their own words*

*October is the first annual Grapevine Awareness Month in New Hampshire, and we need your help. For those of you familiar with our meeting in print, you know its value. For those members who are not familiar with it, let me take a moment to highlight the place of the Grapevine in AA history:*

- *first published exactly nine years after AA was formed.*
- *played an instrumental role in the development of the Traditions.*
- *Preamble written by Grapevine's first editor.*

*The Grapevine Committee needs your help in promoting the effectiveness of AA's monthly international journal. Please encourage members of your group to consider becoming the Grapevine representative from your group, writing an article, and much more. The Grapevine is ideal for group raffles and discussion meetings. If you or your group don't have a subscription, and you can afford it, please consider this worthwhile investment. Thank you.*



## Chapter Nine

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# Resources for Grapevine and La Viña Representatives

### *From the AA Grapevine*

#### **GrapeNet on the Internet**

If you have access to the Internet, check out the special area for Grapevine and La Viña reps on the Grapevine website, [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org). It has been expanded to include an interactive bulletin board where GvRs and RLVs may ask questions and share ideas with other group, district, and area reps. To protect the users' anonymity, the bulletin board can only be entered with a password, which GvRs/RLVs receive when they register with the Grapevine office.

No password is needed for the many other features in the GvR area of the website. Created to support Grapevine and La Viña service work, the site now allows GvRs and RLVs to register online and access a list of all 93 areas in the service structure. It also offers a downloadable version of this workbook, a link to the complete Grapevine catalog, and order forms for Grapevine and La Viña items as well as subscriptions. In addition, there are several articles to help GvRs and RLVs address frequently asked questions, including “Is the Grapevine Conference Approved?”; “Do You Know Who Your Grapevine Rep Is?”; and “We Heard It Through the Grapevine,” which shows the Preamble, the Slogans, and other tools of sobriety introduced to the Fellowship in the pages of the Grapevine. These flyers can be downloaded and distributed at committee meetings, assemblies, and anywhere else people are interested in learning more about AA's two meetings in print.

### **Free Materials for AA Grapevine Displays**

- *Why Should I Be a Grapevine Representative?* flyer
- Guidelines for Contributing to the Grapevine
- catalogs
- subscription order forms and cards
- gift subscription order forms

### **Free Materials for La Viña Displays**

- Breve historia de La Viña (A brief history of La Viña)
- Pautas para colaborar con La Viña/Política editorial (Guidelines for Contributing to La Viña/Editorial Policy)
- ¿Tiene su grupo un RLV?—Formulario para registrar a un RLV (does your group have an RLV? — RLV Registration Form)
- Manual del RLV (RLV Handbook)
- doce maneras de usar La Viña para asegurar y fortalecer tu sobriedad (Twelve ways of using La Viña to Ensure and Strengthen Your Sobriety)
- formulario de suscripción a La Viña (La Viña Subscription Form)
- formulario de pedidos por ejemplar (By-the-issue Order Form)

### **Important Contact Information**

#### **GvR/RLV Coordinator**

The Grapevine, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1040

New York, NY 10015

[gvr@agrapevine.org](mailto:gvr@agrapevine.org)

Telephone (212) 870-3018

Fax (212) 870-3301

Customer Service (212) 870-3404

### **From AA World Services**

A General Service Conference-approved pamphlet about the Grapevine and La Viña and their place in the AA service structure is available from the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. The title of the pamphlet is “The AA Grapevine and La Viña: Our Meetings in Print.” In addition, *The A.A. Service Manual* contains a helpful chapter on the Grapevine, and Bill W. gives a brief account of the magazine’s history in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*.

(Please note: The Grapevine and the General Service Office are separate corporations, with their own separate sets of records. So it’s important that the Grapevine receive GvR/RLV information directly to avoid delays.)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q. Who Writes the Grapevine and La Viña?**

A. AA members — like those in your home group — write the articles that appear in the magazines. To encourage prospective writers, some GvRs and RLVs make Guidelines for Contributing to the Grapevine or La Viña available at meetings.

Some GvRs and RLVs like to tell AA members that there are at least four good reasons to write for the magazines:

1. Writing a Grapevine or La Viña article is a form

of Twelfth Step work: Its purpose is to carry the message. An article written today may wind up in a pack of back issues sent to a prison or hospital or school library, and in this way will reach out to a still-suffering alcoholic in the future. Grapevine articles carry the message not once, but every time the magazine is opened and read, for as many years as that issue circulates in AA.

2. It isn’t necessary to be a professional writer, or even to have written anything before, in order to submit to the magazines. Personal AA experience, strength, and hope are more important than polished prose. You don’t have to be a subscriber, either.

3. To be an accurate mirror of the Fellowship and an effective “forum for debate,” each magazine needs to hear from as broad a spectrum of AA members as possible.

4. The magazines do not commission paid articles. Like meetings, they depend on stories freely given by members of the Fellowship and good friends of AA.

#### **Q. What Is the Editorial Policy of the Grapevine and La Viña?**

A. The Grapevine and La Viña serve many different types of people all over the country and the world, people whose practice of the AA principles may take many different forms. With that in mind, the basic editorial goal of the magazines is to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship, as seen in the experiences of individual members.

Anything that actually happens in the Fellowship will be considered for publication in the Grapevine or La Viña, as long as it is within the Traditions and is constructive rather than merely critical. Neither magazine wants to neglect the hard questions or present them in a contentious manner, but simply to view issues through the eyes of individuals. As a “mirror of the Fellowship,” the magazines do not wish to ignore the tensions sometimes generated by those “sentenced to AA,” the changes brought about by such issues as the pervasiveness of treatment programs, the difficulties caused by drug addicts attending AA meetings, or the seeming generation gap between older and younger members. There will always be a healthy tension between readers

who criticize the magazines for publishing “controversial” articles and those who call them “boring” or full of “sweetness and light.”

**Q. Are the Grapevine and La Viña Conference-Approved?**

A. Both magazines have the full support of the General Service Conference. AA groups voted to adopt the Grapevine as the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous almost ten years before the Conference was fully established. More information about the magazines’ place in AA can be found in the Digital Archive or Chapter 5 of this workbook.

**Q. How Are the Magazines Supported Financially?**

A. The AA Service Manual explains that “financially, the Grapevine is supported entirely by revenues from sales of the magazine and special items.” The Grapevine does not solicit contributions; any that are received are put aside in a special “Carry the Message” fund which provides subscriptions for inmates or other AAs who can’t afford the cost. The Manual goes on to say that “Grapevine finances are reviewed by the trustees’ Finance Committee, and on an annual basis cash in excess of current operating needs is transferred to and invested with the General Service Board Reserve Fund.”

Because it is a new magazine, the circulation of La Viña is still small and the magazine is not yet self-supporting. So, as stated above, the 2001 General Service Conference voted to support La Viña as a service to the Fellowship. 

*by Bill*

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"The Grapevine is a magic carpet on which each of you can ride to the more distant reaches and watch new brothers and sisters emerge from darkness into light."

# Appendices

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## I. *How the AA Grapevine Began*

## II. *The Origin of the Traditions and Other Landmark Publications*

## II. *Grapevine Items: Additional Publications of The AA Grapevine, Inc.*

## IV. *Sample Presentations*

## V. *Advisory Actions About the Grapevine*

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### *Appendix I*

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#### *How the AA Grapevine Began*

##### **“Go To It!”**

In the spring of 1944, six members of AA — four women and two men — got together in an apartment in New York City and considered the idea of publishing a local AA newsletter. A newsletter was exactly what was needed in those early days of AA, when the Fellowship was only nine years old and still finding its way. There was plenty of news to report. There had been a dramatic increase in membership from 2,000 to 8,000 after Jack Alexander’s article about AA appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941. New groups were being formed, new meeting formats were being tried out, and new ways of twelfth-stepping were being debated. AAs were talking about how to practice the Steps (the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* hadn’t been written yet), groups were struggling to stay in existence, and recovering drunks were struggling to stay sober.

What was needed, the six decided, was a way to open up lines of communication among AA’s far-flung mem-

bership. As one of the original editorial staff later recalled, “It’s hard to remember that in 1944 AAs themselves had little opportunity of communicating with each other outside of their own small groups; that an AA group in Arkansas had little idea of how an AA group in Ohio or New Jersey conducted its meetings; that many AA groups were so small and anonymous they couldn’t be found by traveling AAs who had not taken the precaution of getting names and addresses from the Central Office [now called the General Service Office]; that there were no AA publications beyond the Big Book and one or two pamphlets.”

Inspired by the local AA newsletters that had sprung up across the country, particularly one put out by the Cleveland Group in Ohio, the editors conceived a newsletter that would cover the activities of AA groups in the New York metropolitan area. The publication would clear up what some felt was “a lack of understanding” among groups, and bring news of the Fellowship to AA men and women serving in the armed forces.

The editors wanted the go-ahead from AA co-founder Bill W. So one day in April 1944, one editor, Lois K., made her way to Bill and Lois’s home in Bedford Hills, New York. “Bill,” she asked, “how about a magazine for the groups around New York?” As the story goes, Bill, who was sprawled out in front of his cobblestone fireplace, turned to face her: “What, exactly, is on your mind, Sister Lois?”

“Harmony between groups,” explained Lois, “through knowledge and understanding.”

“Go to it,” he told her, with characteristic enthusiasm, “and blessings on you!”

##### **The First Issue**

The six volunteers (whom Bill affectionately dubbed the “six ink-stained wretches”) worked long hours and hard. On the evening of May 22, they met in a small Manhattan apartment to inspect Volume 1, Number 1 of the new eight-page, large format newsletter. It was called the *Grapevine* and cost a total of \$187.10 to design, print, and mail. Of the 1,200 copies printed, many were sent free of charge to AAs in the U.S. and Canadian armed forces, and to each of the approximately 300 groups reg-

istered with the Central Office. The first issue claimed 165 subscribers. Sixteen months later, that number had climbed to 3,500.

At the heart of the early Grapevines, then as now, were first-person stories. For several years, these took the form of informal letters and commissioned articles. There were also news and notes on current happenings at the Central Office. Because World War II was still very much in progress, an entire page was devoted to the letters received from AA servicemen and women called “Mail Call for All AAs in the Armed Forces.” Another feature, “Along the Metropolitan Circuit,” described meetings in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the suburbs in New Jersey and New York. The explosion of new meetings — from Alaska to Arkansas, from Ireland to Australia — was reported with particular excitement: “70 New Groups in Two Months!” read the headlines, or “33 New Groups Added in Less than a Month.”

In an effort to serve the rising number of AA groups, another section, entitled “Do You Know . . .,” offered advice for both groups and newly sober individuals. Articles like “How to Use the Closed Meeting,” the “AA Telephone Technique,” and “How to Spot the Danger Signals” passed on the shared experience of the early members. Monthly columns, with titles like “Time on Your Hands” and “The Pleasures of Reading,” suggested what to do with the hours readers once spent drinking. Also mindful of the dangers of complacency, a writer in the September 1944 issue urged that special groups be formed for AAs’ “older members” — old-timers who had been sober one or two months!

### Articles by AAs and Others

In addition to AA news, there was an eclectic mix of pieces written expressly for the Grapevine by nonAA writers. These included such literary lights as journalist Fulton Oursler, humorist S. J. Perelman, novelist Charles Jackson, and essayist Philip Wylie. Articles by Jack Alexander, the Reverend Samuel Shoemaker, Sister Ignatia, Dr. Harry Tiebout, Bernard Smith, Lois W., and other friends of the Fellowship were published as well. There were also articles on alcoholism education and research, book reviews of everything from murder mys-

teries to Hindu psychology, excerpts from published books, reprints from magazines and newspapers, notices of radio programs covering alcoholism or AA, and articles by relatives of AA members relating what AA meant to them. Cartoons and drawings made their appearance in the third issue. A humor column — “Barleycorn” — was added in the second year. No poetry was published (though plenty was received!); the editors confessed to “an incurable allergy” to it. A series of editorials on the Steps began in the sixth issue and ran for several years.

### ***The Grapevine, the FBI, and Box 1980***

*Have you ever noticed that the words “Box 1980” appear on every cover of the magazine, as well as in the title of its letters section and on most Grapevine mail? Box 1980 is, in fact, the Grapevine’s official name — the name by which it is registered with the U.S. Postal Service. There’s a story behind this.*

*Prior to 1974, the Grapevine was mailed to subscribers in unmarked envelopes, which afforded anonymity to the recipients and allowed the Grapevine to take advantage of periodical postal rates. However, in 1974 postal regulations were changed and it became necessary for the full name of the publication to appear both on the cover of the magazine itself and on the outside of the mailing envelope — a move with severe implications for the principle and practice of anonymity.*

*When the Grapevine began, it was called simply “the Grapevine.” But one day in 1946, a call came in to the Grapevine office from the FBI. It turned out a group of former FBI agents put out a newsletter called “The Grapevine,” and they said they’d take legal action if the AA publication didn’t change its name. The AAs sought to work out a friendly compromise, so our “Grapevine” officially became “The AA Grapevine.”*

*This event back in 1946 affected the Grapevine*

*(continued on next page)*

nearly thirty years later. The magazine was now forced by the new postal regulations either to pay higher rates, or in order to keep periodical rates, to print the full name of the magazine on the outside of the mailing envelope — thereby threatening the anonymity of subscribers. But a creative solution was found: change the official name of the publication to something other than “the AA Grapevine.” Since PO Box 1980 had long been part of the Grapevine’s mailing address and was familiar to subscribers, the name “Box 1980” was duly registered with the Post Office and now appears on the cover of the magazine and all official mail. (By the way, this box number was assigned by the Post Office and has nothing to do with the year 1980.)

The words “Box 1980,” then, represent a cherished principle at the very heart of our Fellowship — the Tradition of anonymity.

### **Burning Issues: Women, Old-Timers, and Cross-Addiction**

The early Grapevines also discussed such things as the place of women in AA, problems of old-timers (those with a month or more!), returning veterans, and whether or not to applaud a speaker. Issues that still concern contemporary AAs were often addressed — for example, cross-addiction. The third issue carried a letter requesting a special “hophead’s corner” for alcoholics also recovering from narcotics addiction. There were subsequent articles on the “sleeping pill menace” and what to do about pill problems when twelfth-stepping. Bill’s article, “Those Goof Balls,” was published in the November 1945 issue.

### **Autonomy, Diversity, and Our Primary Purpose**

By the fourth issue, the magazine began printing this description of itself under the masthead:

*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 alco-*

*holics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of AA as a whole.*

The Grapevine was in fact appealing to “alcoholics everywhere,” and it quickly caught on around the United States. In 1945, the membership was asked by the Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation (now the General Service Board of AA) whether the Grapevine should become the national magazine of AA; the answer was a resounding “yes.”

The Grapevine reached another important milestone when Bill and the trustees began to discuss what its formal relationship to the groups and the General Service Board should be. As Bill imagined it, the magazine would be a nonprofit corporation, connected to the Alcoholic Foundation but financially self-supporting and editorially independent. Laying out some basic tenets of how the magazine should operate in a March 1946 letter to the lawyer who was drafting the papers of incorporation, Bill stressed the importance of the Grapevine’s independence and suggested the following:

- the Grapevine should be the voice of the Fellowship;
- the trustees of the Grapevine should be able to suggest and advise — but not command;
- no individual or single group should ever dominate the magazine; and
- the Grapevine should print articles expressing the widest differences of opinion on all AA topics.

Bill also suggested that the Grapevine should not publish any pieces on politics or religion, should not carry outside advertising, and should not engage in propaganda concerning outside causes. In other words, the primary purpose of the magazine — like that of individual members — was to carry the AA message to alcoholics and to practice the AA principles in all its affairs. With this in mind, the Grapevine was incorporated as one of two publishing divisions of the Alcoholic

Foundation in 1946, and was reincorporated in 1971 as one of the two operating arms of the General Service Board. The spirit of these guidelines — autonomy, diversity, and our primary purpose — continues to be central to the Grapevine to this day.

### Bill W.'s Role

Officially, Bill was the Grapevine's "senior editorial advisor." Unofficially, he was its mentor, spiritual guide, chief booster — and a major contributor. Early on, Bill saw in the Grapevine a way to communicate effectively and rapidly with the Fellowship as a whole. Over the years, he wrote more than 150 articles for the magazine, setting forth his hopes, fears, and practical ideas about the Fellowship. In the forties, as AA struggled to find its place in the larger society, the Grapevine became an important source of information on the vital issues of anonymity, membership, professionalism, public relations, and singleness of purpose. As AA groups tried to clarify the basic principles that would guide them, Bill W. hammered out his thoughts in the pages of the Grapevine. He recognized the necessity to preserve the "powerful unity" of AA in the face of "ever pressing questions of leadership, money, and authority." In subsequent articles, Bill examined individual Traditions — for example, the principles behind the "safe use of money" in the Fellowship (Tradition Seven), good public relations policy (Tradition Eleven), and the practical and spiritual aspects of anonymity (Tradition Twelve).

### The Traditions and the Preamble

In August 1945, in response to these pressing questions, Bill began writing a series of Grapevine articles reflecting on group experience. Then in the April 1946 issue, he wrote the "Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition," laying out the framework of what would become the Traditions. In subsequent issues, he wrote more than thirty additional articles about the Traditions before 1952, when he published the series of essays in the Grapevine now found in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

As interest grew in the new Fellowship, the Grapevine editors decided to write a brief definition to

make the nature of Alcoholics Anonymous clear to both members and nonalcoholics. Thus, the AA Preamble — setting forth in two concise paragraphs what AA is and is not — made its first appearance in the June 1947 issue. It was written by the first editor of the Grapevine, using portions of the Foreword to the first edition of the Big Book. The Preamble was quickly adopted, and today it is an integral part of the format of many AA meetings.

(For more on the history of the Preamble and Traditions, see Appendix II.)

### The Jellinek Chart and the National Council

AAs were also able to make a valuable contribution to science through the Grapevine, when a questionnaire identifying different phases of alcoholism was published in the April 1945 issue. Over one hundred readers responded. Eager to help alcoholics recognize early warning signs of the disease and spare them years of its excruciating effects, Grapevine editors asked E.M. Jellinek, head of the Yale School of Alcohol Studies and one of AA's most enduring friends, to analyze the data. It proved to be the springboard for his famous studies of the phases of alcoholism and the chart that has helped scores of professionals better understand and diagnose the disease.

The alliance between Dr. Jellinek and one of the Grapevine editors (Marty M., one of the original ink-stained wretches) resulted in the formation of a national health organization on alcoholism — the National Council on Alcoholism, which the Grapevine reported in 1945. Dedicated to educating the public and professionals about alcoholism in a way that AA, adhering to its Traditions of anonymity and attraction, does not, the Council, now known as the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, has made tremendous strides against the disease of alcoholism, engaging in activities such as public education, research, and affiliation with medical and other resources.





## A New Look

In 1948, the Grapevine changed its format from a newsletter to its present digest size. As a digest, the magazine was so anonymous that for several years it didn't even print the title on the cover: only the date of the issue appeared, superimposed on a cluster of grapes.

As the Grapevine gained readers, it gained contributors as well, and it was able to trust its pages more and more to the voices of recovering alcoholics. It gradually abandoned book reviews and reprints and general-interest articles, and reduced the number of articles written by nonalcoholics.

## AA History in the Making

The Grapevine was also the source of many of the stories and articles that have been useful to the Fellowship over the years. More than a dozen stories in the Second, Third, and Fourth editions of the Big Book were first published in the Grapevine, as were the stories in *AA in Prison: Inmate to Inmate* and many quotations in *As Bill Sees It*. It has provided articles for several AA pamphlets including "Problems Other Than Alcohol" and the "Traditions Checklist." The December 1950 article, "Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need," became the core of the essay on Concept IX: "Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety."

Later issues of the Grapevine reported on the birth of the General Service Structure and the growth of the Fellowship worldwide. In the December 1950 issue, Bill

and Dr. Bob issued a call for their successors (as it happened, in the same issue that contained the sad tidings of Dr. Bob's death). They suggested that the AA membership as a whole should take over the leadership of the Fellowship through a General Service Conference. In effect, groups should assume responsibility for the management and continuity of the Fellowship, by sending representatives to an annual Conference to meet with the trustees and staff of AAWS and the Grapevine. Over the next five years, while experimental Conferences were held, the Grapevine kept AAs up to date on their progress. After 1955, when the Conference became the permanent embodiment of AA service, the magazine began reporting on each annual Conference. And in May, June, and July 1955, the magazine published three essays that would eventually comprise the original version of the history section of *The AA Service Manual*. The controversial plan to increase the ratio of alcoholics to nonalcoholics on the General Service Board of Trustees was discussed in the magazine in 1966, and voted into being that year by the 16th Conference.

The Grapevine has tracked important developments at AA World Services ever since, reporting on the publication of the Third and Fourth editions of the Big Book, World Service Meetings, and the development of AA service centers in countries around the world. The magazine has also celebrated special AA occasions, reporting on conventions. In the case of AA's 25th anniversary, the Grapevine published *AA Today*, an anthology of articles by AAs and such prominent supporters as Reinhold Niebuhr, Aldous Huxley, and Carl Jung.

The history of the Grapevine is the history of the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous — from its early struggles for survival to the worldwide Fellowship it is today, undergoing the struggles associated with success and growth.



## Appendix II

### *The Origin of the Traditions and Other Landmark Publications*

#### **The Twelve Traditions (1950)**

Bill began writing a series of articles about the early AA groups' experiences in the August 1945 Grapevine, laying out the framework of what would become the Traditions. These "Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition," as Bill called them in his historic April 1946 article, were not invented by him, but "forged on the anvil of experience" — the experience of groups often started by members with only a few months' sobriety, frequently torn apart by dissension or diverted by members mingling AA recovery principles with other doctrines. Still, they were struggling to stay sober, and letters flooded into AA's central office begging for advice, or even demanding expulsion of members who wouldn't do things the way the letter-writers thought they should.

Once the "Suggested Points" were published, discussion waged hot and heavy both in local groups and in the pages of the Grapevine for the next four years: Should we drop anonymity? they wondered. Should we accept substantial sums of money left to us in wills? What should be done about clubhouses? Should we have rules for membership, and if so, which ones? Then in 1950, at the First International AA Conference in Cleveland, the official twelve points were adopted by acclamation as the Twelve Traditions.

*The Twelve Traditions are the distillate of our experience of living and working together; the platform upon which we expect to stand in unity for so long as God may need us. . . . I held the pen that wrote the words, but the words are yours because they are but a mirror that reflects the experiences we have had over the years.*

*Bill W., First International Convention of AA,  
Cleveland, Ohio, April 1950*

### **A Timeline of Traditions Articles and Books**

"Modesty: One Plank for Good Public Relations"  
(August 1945, Grapevine)

"Rules Dangerous but Unity Vital"  
(September 1945, Grapevine)

"Our Anonymity Is Both Inspiration and Safety"  
(March 1946, Grapevine)

"Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition"  
(April 1946, Grapevine)

"Who Is a Member of Alcoholics Anonymous?"  
(August 1946, Grapevine)

"Clubs in AA" (April 1947, Grapevine)

The Twelve Traditions pamphlet (1947, AAWS)

First series of articles on all 12 Traditions  
(December 1947-November 1948, Grapevine)

Short form of Traditions written (1949)

Traditions confirmed by acclamation at  
First International Convention (1950)

Second series on all 12 Traditions  
(April 1952-April 1953, Grapevine); reprinted in  
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (1953, AAWS)

"Why Alcoholics Anonymous Is Anonymous"  
(January 1955, Grapevine)

Selected Grapevine articles collected in  
AA Tradition: How It Developed pamphlet  
(1955, AAWS)

Cartoons for The Twelve Traditions Illustrated  
(1971, AAWS) first appeared in the Grapevine  
June 1964 - June 1967.

## The Preamble\* (1947)

The Preamble was introduced to the Fellowship and the public at large in the June 1947 issue of the Grapevine. In those days, the Grapevine was often the first introduction to AA for many alcoholics and nonalcoholics, and the Grapevine editors felt that a brief definition of what AA is and is not might be helpful. The result was the AA Preamble, written by the first editor of the Grapevine, Tom Y., and based on the Foreword to the First Edition of the Big Book. Originally called “the AA definition,” the Preamble was quickly adopted by the Fellowship. Today, it is an integral part of the format of many AA meetings and is printed on all Conference-approved literature. It is also an important part of the material prepared for the public.

However, the Preamble seen at most meetings today is not exactly like the one first published in 1947. The original version differed in two ways: 1) It stated that “the only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking,” and 2) its description of self-support consisted only of the brief phrase “AA has no dues or fees.”

People often ask why the word “honest” was deleted. At the 1958 General Service Conference, a delegate questioned the words “honest desire to stop drinking,” since the word “honest” does not appear in the Third Tradition. In the discussion that followed, most Conference members felt that as AA matured, it had become almost impossible to determine what constituted an honest desire to stop drinking. They were also concerned that people interested in the AA program could be confused by the phrase. The Conference voted that the phrase be dropped from the Preamble. That summer, the General Service Board ratified their decision, and the Preamble has read simply “a desire to stop drinking” ever since.

At the same time, the phrase “AA has no dues or fees” was clarified and revised to read: “There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.”

*\*When it is reprinted, the Preamble should carry the following credit line: Copyright © by The AA Grapevine, Inc.*

## Foreword to the First Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous

*“We are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no dues or fees whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.”*

## The Serenity Prayer

After seeing the Serenity Prayer in a newspaper in 1942, Bill W. and the early AAs had it printed on cards and began including it in all AA correspondence. By publishing it in early issues, the Grapevine helped usher the prayer into general use. The January 1950 issue ran Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr's account of the origin of the Serenity Prayer, and his part in its authorship. The prayer has been a regular part of the magazine's format since July 1967.

## Man on the Bed (1955)

Originally entitled *Came to Believe*, this oil painting of two early AAs carrying the message was first reproduced in the Grapevine as a center spread in the December 1955 issue. It accompanied Bill W.'s Christmas message of gratitude for the gift of sobriety. It proved so popular that single reproductions were made available. In 1973, the book *Came to Believe* was published and to avoid confusion, Grapevine editors changed the name of the reproduction.

The artist, Robert M., was a volunteer illustrator for the Grapevine. In May 1956, he presented the painting to co-founder Bill W., who wrote back:

*Dear Robert:*

*Beautifully framed, your representation of the Man on the Bed hangs in my studio at Bedford Hills. It is a wonderful thing to have; I don't see how it could have been better done. The whole*

heart and essence of AA can be seen just looking at it. . . . Please know that to my great thanks, Lois adds hers.

Ever yours,  
Bill W.

### Five AA Slogans (1956-1957)

AA members mention the use of “First Things First” and other helpful sayings in the Grapevine as early as the June 1945 issue. However, they didn’t find a permanent place in many AAs’ kit of recovery tools until the Grapevine ran a series on all five slogans — “First Things First,” “There But for the Grace of God,” “Easy Does It,” “Think, Think, Think,” and “Live and Let Live” — between September 1956 and February 1957. Each of those issues featured a hand-lettered slogan on the inside back cover and an essay about it inside.

The Grapevine has published numerous articles on the slogans since then, and these, along with the articles mentioned here, can be found in the AA Grapevine Digital Archive.

### Responsibility Declaration (1965)

The Responsibility Declaration was written for the 1965 International Convention in Toronto by Al S., editor of the Grapevine from 1948-1952 and General Service trustee. Box 459 ran this account of its origins, based on an interview with Al, in the October/November 1975 issue:

“A statement was wanted that would be emotionally gripping to AAs without imposing any musts,” Al recalled. “I tried my hand at a flock of them, using ‘we,’ but none came off. Not even Bill or Dr. Bob,” he pointed out, “had ever tried to impose any pledge on all AAs!”

Then it came to Al: “Share your personal experience; say ‘I’; then it becomes a matter of personal choice. It talks about responsibility without institutionalizing it.”

Bill W. expanded on the theme in an essay called “Responsibility Is Our Theme” for the July 1965 Grapevine. It became a regular feature of the Grapevine shortly after.



### Grapevine Stories Reprinted in the Big Book, Third Edition, 1976

*Those Golden Years*  
*Lifesaving Words*  
*A Teen-Ager’s Decisions*  
*Any Day Was Washday*  
*Calculating the Costs*  
*Growing up All Over Again*  
*Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict (Reprinted in the Fourth Edition as “Acceptance Was the Answer”)*  
*A Five-Time Loser Wins*  
*Join the Tribe!*  
*Belle of the Bar*  
*Another Chance (also in the Fourth Edition)*  
*AA Taught Him to Handle Sobriety (also in the Fourth Edition)*

### Grapevine Stories Selected for the Big Book, Fourth Edition, 2001

*Building a New Life*  
*A Vision of Recovery*

### Interviews with Authors of Big Book Articles

“Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict,”  
Dr. Paul O., June 1994  
“Stars Don’t Fall,”  
Felicia M., August 1995  
“AA Taught Him to Handle Sobriety,”  
Bob P., September 1995  
“Physician, Heal Thyself,”  
Dr. Earl M., October 1995  
“The Independent Blonde,”  
Nancy F., March 1996

### Grapevine Articles written by Dr. Bob

*On Cultivating Tolerance* July 1944  
*The Fundamentals — in Retrospect*  
September 1948  
*Your Third Legacy (with Bill W.)* December 1950

## Appendix III

### **Grapevine Items: Additional Publications of The AA Grapevine, Inc.**

#### **What Are Grapevine Items?**

The AA Grapevine, Inc., began publishing additional material related to the magazine in the early 1950s. The majority of these publications are collections of articles reproduced in different formats — books, audio CDs, and tapes. Grapevine items also include reproductions of significant documents, such as the Preamble, that were originally published in the Grapevine or that have a close historical connection with the magazine.

Grapevine items serve several purposes. First, they carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to more people by making Grapevine materials available in different formats. There are audio versions of the Grapevine for AAs who have trouble reading, for instance, and a thread-bound collection of articles for AAs in prison. Second, Grapevine items make historic documents such as the articles Bill W. wrote for the Grapevine and background on the origins of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts more widely available. And third, these materials are a source of income for the AA Grapevine, Inc., and help the corporation achieve its goal of being self-supporting. (Unlike AAWS, the Grapevine receives no financial support for its operating expenses from AA members or groups.)

#### **Books**

##### **The Language of the Heart: Bill W.'s Grapevine Writings (El Lenguaje del Corazón)**

*410 pages; indexed. Available in hardcover and softcover. Also available in Spanish*

A collection of the 150 articles that AA's co-founder Bill W. wrote for the Grapevine, between 1944 and 1970.

##### **Best of the Grapevine, Volumes I, II, and III**

*Softcover; illustrated. Vol. I, 288 pages; Vol. II, 287 pages; Vol. III, 326 pages*

Selected from the first fifty-five years of Grapevine publication, these anthologies include such historic articles as "Slips and Human Nature," by Dr. Silkworth; "On Cultivating Tolerance," by Dr. Bob; "A Slob's Guide to Spiritual Growth"; (Volume 1) "Was My Leg Being Pulled?" by Jack Alexander; "The Fundamentals — In Retrospect," by Dr. Bob; "I Don't Go to Meetings Anymore"; and "A Visit to the Soviet Union" (Volume 2) and stories about the beginnings of AA in several countries (Volume III).

##### **The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA**

*Softcover; 128 pages*

The thirty-four articles in this anthology are about the AA home group, one of the most important tools of sobriety.

##### **The Best of Bill**

*Pocket-sized, 88 pages; available in hardcover and softcover.*

Six frequently requested articles written by Bill W. for the Grapevine on the themes of faith, fear, honesty, humility, love, and anonymity: "God As We Understand Him"; "This Matter of Fear"; "This Matter of Honesty," "Humility for Today," "The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety," "Why Alcoholics Anonymous Is Anonymous."

##### **AA Around the World: Adventures in Recovery**

*Softcover; 165 pages*

Eleven stories, written by AA members, recount the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in several new countries and document the universal ability of alcoholics to get and stay sober.

##### **Thank You for Sharing: Sixty Years of Letters to the AA Grapevine**

*Softcover; 200 pages*

This selection of letters from readers records the ongoing conversation of AA members over six decades about the great questions that concern the Fellowship, as well as practical concerns and spiritual insights.

##### **Spiritual Awakenings: Journeys of the Spirit from the Pages of the AA Grapevine**

*Softcover; indexed; 230 pages*

Focusing on the journeys of the spirit that many AAs take on the way from alcoholism to recovery, these stories recount AAs' return to the abandoned faith of their youth; their discovery of an entirely new Higher Power; their integration of personal philosophies with the principles of the Steps and Traditions; and the practical ways they practice their spiritual values in their everyday lives.

## **How Grapevine Items Are Developed**

1. Ideas come from AA members, service areas, GV Editorial Advisory Board, staff, or Board members.
2. GV Corporate Board discusses these ideas and forwards a list of suggestions to GV Conference Committee.
3. Conference Committee on the Grapevine selects items to be produced the following year or later.
4. The Committee's choice is reported to the full Conference and published in the Final Conference Report under "Additional Committee Considerations."
5. The Committee's recommendation goes to the GV Board for development and final approval.
6. During the year between the recommendation and final implementation, input is sought from the Fellowship as a whole.
7. One year later, if responses from the Fellowship are positive, a new publication related to the magazine comes off press.

*Process established in 1992 by a  
Conference Advisory Action, and amended in 2002*

## **Audio Compact Disks and Audio Cassette Tapes**

### **Classic Grapevine: Timeless Articles from the Pages of the Grapevine - CDs**

*Volumes I, II, and III Approx. 75 minutes each*

Articles by Dr. Bob, Bill W., and other AA members and friends, read by professional actors who are AA members. Selected from Classic Tapes #1, 2, and 3, which are still available.

### **Pathways to Spirituality - CD**

*Approx. 75 minutes*

"The Secret of Serenity," "Making a Beginning," and other Grapevine articles.

### **Not for Newcomers Only - CD**

*Approx. 75 minutes*

Members share how they use the basic principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to deal with their everyday problems.

### **Partners on the Journey - CD**

*Approx. 75 minutes*

Stories about how members old and new help one another in recovery, from the two-volume audio cassette Sponsorship (still available).

## **Audio Cassettes**

### **Youth Enjoying Sobriety**

Today's young members share their stories.

### **Old-Timer's Corner**

How AA has helped alcoholics in all stages of life.

### **What We Were Like**

Pioneers share stories about the early days of the Fellowship.

### **History Lights the Way**

Grapevine articles about the beginnings of AA.

### **Back to Basics, Volumes I and II**

The importance of a home group, anonymity, and other fundamental AA tools.

### **Around the Tables: Character Defects**

### **Around the Tables: Attitudes**

AAs talk about coping with anger, resentment, fear, and other problems in sobriety.

### **Our Experience Has Taught Us**

### **Practice These Principles**

The Twelve Traditions — how they grew and how they work in AA groups and in the lives of their members.

### **Les Sons de la Sobriete (French)**

Selected Grapevine articles on a variety of AA topics translated into French.

## Signs and Other Items of Special Interest

### The AA Preamble (Preámbulo de AA)

5-1/4" x 7-1/4" Posterboard with colorful trim. Also available in Spanish.

### The Serenity Prayer (La Oración de la Serenidad)

Reproduction of hand-lettered sign. Also available in Spanish. 5-1/4" x 7-1/4" Reproduction of hand-lettered sign, three colors, suitable for framing.

This prayer first appeared in the January 1950 Grapevine and has been a touchstone of AA ever since.

### The Slogans (Lemas)

Reproductions of original hand-lettered signs. 9" x 12", three colors, suitable for framing. Also available in Spanish.

A packaged set of the hand-lettered versions as they first appeared in the Grapevine between 1956 and early 1957.

### Man on the Bed

12-1/8" x 9" Full-color glossy print.

Reproduction of an oil painting published in the December 1956 issue, restored to its original color in 2003.

### Traditions Checklist

#### (Un Chequeo de las Tradiciones)

Four-page flyer. Also available in Spanish.

A list of questions intended to help AA members reflect on their understanding of the Traditions, published in the Grapevine from November 1969 to September 1971.

### Co-Founders' Memorial Issues

Facsimile editions of the January 1951 and March 1971 Grapevines; a two-issue set in a protective sleeve, celebrating the lives of Dr. Bob and Bill W.

### Facsimile of First Grapevine

Eight-page newsletter format of June 1944 Grapevine.

### Back Issue 50-Packs

Because Grapevine articles are timeless, back issues are often used as sample copies for new members, hospitals, institutions, and the military, or placed in reading rooms of prisons, jails, and treatment clinics. Packs contain 50 assorted back issues.

## Annual Publications

### Wall Calendar

Full color, 8-1/2" x 11"

The Grapevine's annual Wall Calendar features full-color photographs contributed by AA members all over the world, and quotations from the magazine.

### Pocket Planner

Vinyl cover; pocket-sized

A month-at-a-glance companion to the Wall Calendar.

Books, subscriptions and other items can be ordered online at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org), by phone at (212) 870-3410, by fax (212) 870-3310 or by mail: PO Box 1980, Marion, Ohio 43306-8080



## Appendix IV

### Sample Presentation

#### The Traditions Make Us What We Are (April 1989)

(Presentation by a Grapevine staff member)

For a magazine — any magazine — to be well into its forty-fifth [now, sixtieth] year of continuous publication is no small feat. As the saying goes, it's a jungle out there, and many a good magazine can find itself shipwrecked on some pretty treacherous shoals.

Whether they survive or not, most magazines are essentially the same. They are a blend of visual and written images. They aim to get your attention and to transmit a certain message. The dictionary that I use has a few definitions of the word "magazine" — one is pretty standard: "a periodical containing miscellaneous pieces (as articles, stories, poems), often illustrated." Yet a second definition serves to highlight what a magazine could possibly become: "a room in which powder or other explosives are kept in a fort or ship"!

There are two essential ingredients for any magazine. First and foremost, readers — a magazine isn't much good if it just lies around on the table. Second, a magazine must have contributors to provide the material for

the readers to read or the gazers to gaze upon.

When the Grapevine was first started back in 1944, the Traditions had not yet been written. However, the experiences upon which the Traditions were eventually built were very much in evidence: egos ran wild, power drivers grabbed headlines, money was solicited in the name of sobriety for all. Out of this hodgepodge of human emotion emerged a set of principles which were duly shaped and polished by our founders into a set of guidelines for us all. And the Grapevine, which first carried the newly formalized Traditions to the general membership of AA through a series of articles authored by Bill W., was an immediate recipient of the wisdom they contained.

While the Grapevine has always had most of the same expenses of conventional magazines, on the income side it has had very few of the corresponding conventional sources of revenue. Foremost on this list is the fact that the Grapevine does not promote itself and accepts no advertising. This would be absolute suicide for any commercial magazine. Who in their right mind would ignore the powerful revenue derived from advertising dollars? Yet the Grapevine has been doing it for sixty years. The Grapevine also has no opinion on outside issues, making no political (or other) endorsements. And even if we could, and “our candidate” won, we wouldn’t be able to accept any political kickbacks because we’re instructed by Tradition Seven to decline any outside contributions. We don’t even get to take sides or tell anybody else where to go, regardless of our personal convictions. And because of AA’s anonymity Traditions, with their emphasis on humility, we can’t even pump up circulation with a few “inside scoops” on well-known personalities who may just have gone into or gotten out of treatment. And, most importantly perhaps, the Grapevine can’t bank on the big names of some contributors. In fact, we can’t even pay them. So, instead of “Ebenezer Folderol, author of the acclaimed new best-selling novel,” we have articles written by such AA notables as “G.Q., from Canada,” or “Anonymous, U.S.A.” No, unlike any other magazine with this much longevity that I am aware of, in terms of conventional publishing procedures, the Grapevine’s hands are really tied —

and for that we are most grateful.

There aren’t very many magazines these days that are entirely reader written and reader supported. And there aren’t many magazines where reader interest is the only consideration driving the editorial direction of the magazine. For the Grapevine, the readers and the writers are one and the same — members and friends of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Grapevine isn’t a well-oiled money-making machine. In fact, we are really just a nonprofit corporation whose only requirement for membership is the desire to break even. Though we are not a group in the true sense of the word, we do have the wisdom of the Fifth Tradition to guide us: “Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” This is what we’re trying to do with the magazine — and in this realm, the realm of speaking heart to heart, the conventional tools of the publishing world have very little relevance at all.

In my private life as a sober alcoholic and a member of AA, I am well convinced of the need for taking action. I recall, long before I went to work at the Grapevine, reading a little piece in the humor pages that went: “Pray for potatoes, but grab a hoe.” It made absolute sense to me then, and still does now. However, I am equally convinced of the importance of *not* taking the first drink — and the extraordinary spiritual benefit which can derive from that simple act. In fact, *not* drinking is the very center of my sobriety, the taproot from which all action can eventually flow. For the Grapevine, I feel it to be similar.

The conventional tools of promotion, competition, advertising, big money and big names — the tools so vital to the publishing world, the elements without which so many good magazines would suffer and die — these are the very things the Traditions encourage us to do without. Clearly, it is because of AA’s Twelve Traditions — those principles born of the trial-and-error experience of many, many alcoholics — rather than in spite of them, that we have been enabled as a magazine to flourish and grow, meanwhile avoiding that second definition of magazine: “a room in which powder or other explosives are kept.”

## Appendix V

### *Advisory Actions About the Grapevine*

Over the years, the Conference has encouraged the Fellowship's use of the Grapevine and La Viña in numerous Advisory Actions. For example, in the years noted below, the Conference recommended that:

**1959** State and area conferences be encouraged to have local Grapevine representatives in attendance to encourage subscriptions to groups, and that the Grapevine office prepare material to be made available for these representatives, to be used as display material.

**1968** The Grapevine, being the voice of individual AA members, continue to publish the opinions of AA members, provided, however, that the Grapevine does not add its editorial endorsement to articles, and that it states that the opinions expressed therein are not necessarily those of the Grapevine.

**1969** AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc., with the primary purpose of the Fellowship foremost in mind, study their efforts in each other's behalf and extend to each other the fullest cooperation in making the Fellowship aware of the tools of AA. That all delegates consider it a part of their responsibility to inform the Fellowship about the Grapevine as a tool of sobriety, either through their own efforts or by recruiting others.

**1974** Delegates [be asked] to carry back to their areas a proposal that groups institute the practice of giving birthday or anniversary gift subscriptions, with which the Grapevine staff would mail appropriate greeting cards.

**1975** Delegates communicate with the publishers of AA newsletters in their areas, urging them to use Grapevine blurbs, discussion topics, or other notices in the Grapevine regularly in their newsletters.

**1979** Grapevine representatives recommend to their groups that they sponsor subscriptions for institutions, treatment facilities, and professionals being "sponsored."

**1980** Groups make every effort to introduce newcomers to the Grapevine as one of our best tools in sobriety.

**1987** Delegates focus their efforts on the district service structure as a means of reaching individual groups, in order to make every group aware of the value of the Grapevine as a recovery tool; and that delegates and area Grapevine chairpersons be encouraged to invite Grapevine staff personnel to attend local, area, and regional conventions, forums, and AA gatherings.

**1988** The Grapevine proceed with publication of Bill W.'s collected Grapevine writings, with brief factual introductory material; and that, in order to encourage full participation, the Grapevine consider establishing a Grapevine awareness month and areas continue to hold Grapevine workshops, Grape-a-thons, and Grapevine meetings.

**1991** Because of an expressed need, the Grapevine commence as soon as possible to include at least one article in Spanish in each month's issue.

**1995** Based on an expressed need, a Spanish edition of the Grapevine be produced . . . and that if, after five (5) years, the Spanish edition of the magazine is determined to be no longer feasible, publication be discontinued.

**1997** The manuscript providing basic information on the AA Grapevine magazine and its place in Alcoholics Anonymous be produced as a pamphlet.

**2001** La Viña continue to be published by the AA Grapevine and supported by the General Service Board as a service to the Fellowship.



## Glossary

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**Area** A geographical division within a state or province. Some states or provinces have only one area; in heavily AA-populated places, there may be two, three, or more areas in the state or province. For example, Illinois is divided into three areas: Chicago, Northern Illinois, Southern Illinois.

**Area Grapevine Chairperson** Sets up a Grapevine committee and coordinates Grapevine activities at the area level; establishes district GvRs where needed; acts as a resource for all district GvRs within the area; plans workshops, gives talks, etc., on the Grapevine; often, but not always, an area officer.

**Assembly** A meeting of GSRs, district committee members, and area officers to discuss area affairs and, every other year, to elect a delegate and committee officers.

**Delegate** Man or woman elected at the assembly to represent the area at the annual meeting of the General Service Conference, and to bring back to the area the results of the Conference meeting.

**District** Division of groups within an area, represented by a district committee member.

**District GvR** Grapevine representative at the district level. Serves as a link between group GvRs and the district and area structure.

**District Committee Member (DCM)** An experienced GSR elected by the other GSRs to represent the groups of their district in area committee meetings and to coordinate service activities in the district.

**General Service Conference** 1) The structure involving committee members, GSRs, and delegates in an area; 2) the annual meeting of Conference delegates each April in New York.

**GSR** General Service Representative. Elected to represent his or her group at the area level. GSRs vote for the district committee member and for the delegate and other officers at the area level.

**GvR** Grapevine representative.

**Grapevine Items** Formerly called “special items.” These materials — books, tapes, reprints, etc. — are spin-offs from the magazine.

**Region** A geographic grouping of several states or provinces from which a regional trustee is elected to serve on the General Service Board.

**RLV** La Viña representative

(Some of the definitions above were adapted from *The AA Service Manual*, 1992-1993 Edition.)

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