

History of the A.A. Birthday Plan

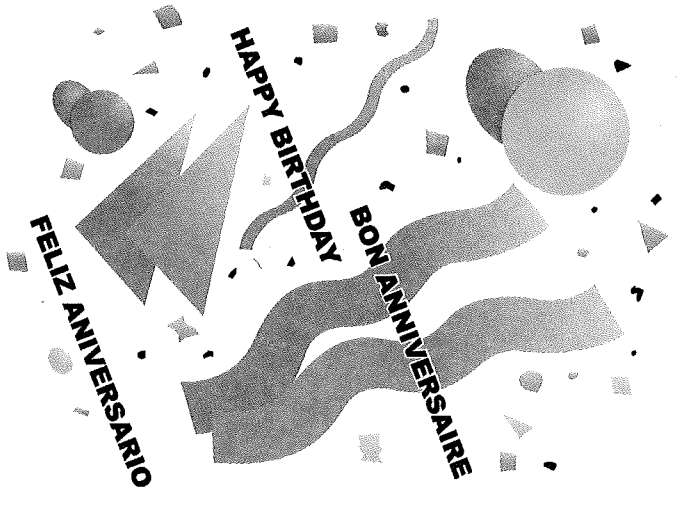
The birthday Plan began back in Oklahoma City in 1954. While attending a state meeting Ab A., then a delegate (Panel 3) from Tulsa, Oklahoma, was “inspired” by fellow A. A. Ted R., who suggested that members might like to commemorate their sobriety by “giving it all the way” on their A. A. birthdays. “The idea,” Ab explained, “is that you talk about this in your own group. However the group doesn’t vote on whether to accept the plan – that’s an individual, voluntary thing.” Ab was especially mindful of old-timers “who are no longer active. If we can get these people to make their birthday contribution, it is a habit they won’t forget – one that will remind them about the most important day of their lives.”

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Ab and his friends, the results were spectacular. The Birthday Plan took hold quickly in Oklahoma, where contributions to G.S.O. nearly doubled the first year. The plan spread across the U. S. and Canada and today is followed by A. A.’s worldwide. When Ab died in 1956, The August issue of the fledgling A.A. Exchange Bulletin (forerunner of Box 4-5-9) noted in an obituary, “From the Oklahoma City Intergroup came this message: “We all feel there could be no nicer way to leave “Footprints in the sands of time” than Ab’s in his tireless work on the Birthday Plan, and [we] enclose a check for \$110.’ “

Were Ab with us today, he doubtless would be pleased to know the Birthday Plan is flourishing still. He might also urge A.A.’s on to greater effort, saying as he did, just months before his death, at the state assembly in Great Bend, Kansas, “I want you to remember how this inspiration came to me...by talking to older members, and to new ones too. They want to do something. They want to be a part of this fellowship. They feel when they make a little investment that they are a part of it. And they are!”

California’s Mike H., of Ventura is high on both participation and gratitude. “In March he says, ‘I celebrate my 25th anniversary at a meeting. Afterward a young fellow came up and said, “You’ve been sober longer than I have been alive.’ I was tickled I’d stuck around A. A. long enough to have someone say that to me. As I said that night- and others, too, because there are always new ears to hear – “this is not a celebration of my birthday. It is a celebration of the power of A.A. to keep a drunk sober.’ “Mike notes that he celebrates every anniversary by contributing a dollar for each sober year to G. S. O.: “It’s a way of saying, “Thank you for another year of my life.’ “

Groups as well as individuals observe the Birthday Plan. Some groups collect contributions from members on a voluntary basis throughout the year or until the number of dollars matches the members’ total years of sobriety. On the particular group’s birthday, the money collected is sent to G. S. O.



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