



GRATITUDE GAZETTE

Eastern Area of Missouri
Conference Area 38
Winter, 2003

Keep coming back, I think it's helping

Last summer was the 25th anniversary of the Gratitude Gazette; it's been serving AA longer than most of us. But not all of us. I should have done an anniversary issue but I didn't.

We're starting another rotation, in which we'll likely have discussions we've had in other rotations, and spend valuable time solving problems that have been solved before. Will we add anything new? Why aren't the newcomers better about asking the experienced folks? And why don't more of the experienced folks stick around to help?

I was sorry to hear of the passing of Leanna, who did stick around to help. She served as our Archivist for the last few years, after Blanche. They helped to show us the importance of archives, and to instill a grateful respect for the people on whose shoulders we now stand.

With all that in mind, here's an issue written in other rotations.

- Editor

E.T., Phone Home *(Spring, '01)*

We're three months into the rotation, but it's never too late to update your group info with GSO. They'll be printing the annual AA Directories soon, used by many for phone numbers and meetings on the road. Also, GSR's will want to be on the mailing list for Box 459, the bi-monthly news of the latest issues, events, and experience. Change forms and new-group forms are available from GSO, the www.aa.org website, your DCM, or Frank at the Area Office. Word is that GSO is using our Area as a model for other Areas wishing to computerize their registration efforts. (A paid employee makes a difference!) Once you register, you should have your GSR packet in about six weeks.

From Our Delegate *(Summer, '85)*

Concept I of our Twelve Concepts for World Service says, "The AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world service -- those special elements of over-all service activity which make it possible for our Society to function as a whole..."

What's this mean in terms of the importance of a GSR? To me, this means that a GSR is, in reality, speaking for the conscience of his or her group.

Groups, themselves, hold final authority a lot of times through the GSR who takes the time to represent their group at District or Area level.

I've noticed (and a lot of others have, too) that at our Area Assemblies, a lot of people disappear before or during our Business Meeting. This leaves just a handful of representatives to carry out the business at hand, and narrows the voting.

How many times have I gone to District meetings and heard a GSR bring up an idea late in the meeting which was accepted by the District and put to productive use in carrying AA's message of recovery. I believe, at the Area level, we need to let GSR's know who runs this service structure. It's not supposed to be the "bleeding deacons" who can shout the loudest or longest; the Area officers; DCM's or Standing Committees... it's the Groups, themselves, through their GSR's!

You GSR's -- you are the most important participants at Assemblies -- through your groups, 12th-Step work becomes available and is carried out at group level. We need you to survive. We need your ideas, your voice, and your vote.

You may say something that will keep us from making a mistake... something may come to your mind that the rest of us may not be seeing. Most importantly, each one of you make up that body you are a part of, instead of apart from! The final responsibility lies with you.

Archives *(Spring, '83)*

Are we really grateful for having meetings available to us?

In the late 1930's and 1940 before the first AA group was established in Missouri, people living here had nowhere to go to learn about AA except by writing to The Alcoholic Foundation (now General Service Office) headquartered in New York City. One of the first inquiries concerning AA was received in 1939 from a doctor in Laredo, MO. He was instrumental in getting a group of people together to discuss their common problem. Although this was not considered a formal group at that time, it was perhaps the planting of the seed of Alcoholics Anonymous in Missouri. There were then about 500 members of AA throughout the country.

In 1939, a man from Columbia, MO wrote the Foundation asking how he could receive a copy of the Big Book as he had just read about it in *Liberty* magazine. This letter was promptly answered and the man received a copy of the Big Book.

In 1940, a man from St. Louis wrote asking that someone visit him and he thought someone would come to see him. The Foundation wrote back stating that as yet there were no groups in Missouri but that many had maintained sobriety by reading the Big Book and corresponding regularly with The Foundation. They added that there was then a group meeting in Rockville, IL. At this time there was a total of about 1,000 AA's.

These and many other actual letters are in the Archives of the Eastern Missouri Area. Stop and think the next time you attend a meeting. Do you sometimes make excuses for not attending? Maybe time off is in order, to express our gratitude to those who have gone before us and made possible meetings throughout our state and in our vicinity. - Blanche K., Archivist

Name The Newsletter *(Summer, '81)*

Listed below are names that have been suggested for the Missouri Eastern Area Bulletin. Look them over and take your choice. If time permits, a vote will be taken at the June assembly. Should this not be the case, clip the below, indicate your choice, and mail it to the editor no later than Oct. 1.

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Gratitude Gazette | <input type="checkbox"/> On the Beam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Eastern Missouri Echo | <input type="checkbox"/> The Rest of the Story |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Serenity Sentinel | <input type="checkbox"/> Missouri Comes of Age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Service Sentinel | <input type="checkbox"/> Missouri Coffee Call |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WIN (With It Now) | <input type="checkbox"/> One Day at a Time |

"Plugged In" to AA *(Winter, '97)*

When I first became the General Service Representative of my homegroup, attended my first assembly, and began to read the AA Service Manual, I was overwhelmed with information about how AA groups work. I heard how the structure of the group is important to the structure of the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous. With or without some rigid structure, I had always loved my home group. There was a genuine love and service evident to us all. The spirit of AA filled our meeting every week.

We never really had the structure that some groups do. The idea of a group structure was not too popular with some of the members. "Keep it simple," people would say, and, "every group should have the least possible organization." I didn't know what the 'right' thing to do was. I enjoyed being involved in district service. I couldn't understand why the group seemed so disinterested in the legacy of service. Some of the older members seemed opposed to changing the 'purity' of the group by reading my reports or asking for group members to attend service workshops and meetings. I took a great deal of this to heart. The controversy was felt deep within me as I pondered my own actions. Was I trying to add some useless part of AA into the group, or was I just facing the brunt of the alcoholics' 'love for change'?

I couldn't understand why the group seemed so disinterested in the legacy of service. Some of the older members seemed opposed to changing the 'purity' of the group by reading my reports or asking for group members to attend service workshops and meetings.

The importance of maintaining personal recovery is always paramount in service work. We must remember we are carrying the message, instead of the disease. I had been pressuring myself for quite some time to figure out a solution to my group dilemma. One day while meditating, as our basic text promised, the answer came. My answer was that it wasn't my decision. I couldn't simply fix things. I should present my concerns to the group and let the group decide what course to take.

I had heard about group inventories through reading material sent out through the intergroup. I shared my concerns with the group and proposed that we take a look at ourselves. The group agreed. We followed a general format found in the AA Group pamphlet. The theme was in line with the Fifth Tradition: "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Things didn't change at once, but they certainly did change. After two years of working with my group to suit its own needs, our group conscience meetings have the support of a majority of the group members. The level of participation in the group has increased so that almost everyone has something to do. We are involved at the district and area level in several activities aimed at helping the alcoholic find the way to recover in our program. Almost all of our group members are involved in carrying the message into some type of institution or another, be it a prison, treatment center, or school. Our group structure has increased from two overworked members to a full structure of hard-working alcoholics. Though still in its early stages, our group service structure seems to be focused on service, rather than just filling the positions. The fruits of our action is the satisfaction of knowing we are part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem. I can truthfully say, it's because we got out of ourselves at the group level and 'plugged in' to Alcoholics Anonymous!

Anatomy of a GSR *(Winter, '93)*

Scream? Holler? Cry? Quit? Most GSR's want to do all of these at some point in their two-year term. But most of the time, a GSR tries to learn, listen, share, and lead.

There are basically three places where a GSR acts as a trusted servant. The first is in the group conscience of your home group. This is most important because it is here where every member of Alcoholics Anonymous has a voice in the affairs of our fellowship. It is the GSR's responsibility to bring to the group current information on activities at the other levels of the service structure. And it is the GSR's responsibility to take the conscience of the group to the district and area. The GSR is the link between the group and the rest of AA.

Every group belongs to a district which usually holds monthly meetings. The primary purpose of the district is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous within its geographical limits. The GSR's represent their groups at these meetings and collectively decide how this can best be done. A GSR is endowed with the "Right of Decision" by Concept III and can act on behalf of his/her group.

The third place where a GSR participates is at the area assembly. The GSR's from the eastern half of our state assemble four times a year with the same primary purpose: How to best carry the message within the Eastern Area. (Each area has a delegate who then carries the conscience of the area to the annual General Service Conference.)

You may be thinking, "What an order! I can't go through with it!" Being your group's GSR is a tall order, but you learn as you go. From my own experience, here are a few suggestions to ease the way. First, ask a lot of question! There are many people with service experience who are more than willing to share with you. "What are you talking about?" is not a dumb question.

The second way to learn your job is to read, read, and read. There is a lot of printed material around -- make use of it. We have many pamphlets on AA service topics. Try to read the AA Service Manual (a little bit at a time). Attend service workshops. Become acquainted with the Twelve Concepts for World Service. And most importantly, learn the Twelve Traditions (at least read them in the 12 & 12). Last but not least, frequently ask for the guidance of your Higher Power, who has the ultimate authority in AA.

No one expects a new GSR to know all there is to know by the first district meeting. You learn gradually with experience. And just when most people in service positions think they've got the hang of it, it's time to rotate out. If you are patient and open-minded, you will serve your group and AA well. You will learn a lot about Alcoholics Anonymous and, in the process, acquire more tolerance than you ever thought possible. Good luck and have fun!!

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"They [GSR's] learn everything they can about the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts and are familiar with this manual, the books *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *AA Comes of Age, Twelve Concepts for World Service*, and the pamphlets "The AA Group," "AA Tradition – How It Developed," "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated," and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated."

- The AA Service Manual

Voices of Gratitude (Gazette)

(Fall, '80)

"Once again, we are looking forward to another two years of Service with new officers, DCM's, and GSR's. Our election is the beginning of a new position for many of us. New people take office January 1, 1981. This brings questions, anxiety, and apprehension about ourselves and our program as well. Why not have workshops in each of the 18 districts put on by the outgoing DCM's and GSR's, sharing their experience gained in the past two years of Service in their district activities? Let's help our new people, in whatever position, start their term of office better informed than we were when we started out... Let's not assume that we, or anyone else, know all about AA. None of us do. AA is a continual learning process." - Paul C., past delegate

(Fall, '94)

"Trusting our Trusted Servants is crucial to the fulfillment of rotation. A working knowledge of the Traditions and the Concepts is important not only for the trusted servant, but also the AA members who must place their trust in these trusted servants. Too often the distrust which occurs takes place due to ignorance of what leadership is, the job to be done, and the balance of responsibility and authority which must go hand in hand." - Ginny J., delegate

(Winter, '83)

Our three Legacies are Recovery, Unity, and Service. And in that order. You can't have one without the others. Some of us join AA and don't drink anymore. Others join AA and get sober and happy through service (at any level)! - Paul C., past delegate

(Fall, '94)

"When someone accepts a service assignment in AA they make a commitment to do the best they can for the good of AA. The sacrifice here is to quiet ones self-ego and pride so the unity of AA will guarantee its future." - Bob H., GSR

Remembering Our Past (Winter, '93)

There is some difference of opinion among the oldtimers as to whether Columbia or Jefferson City had the first AA group outside of St. Louis. We have correspondence in our Archives concerning a physician in Columbia who wrote The Alcoholic Foundation, now the General Service Board, in 1941 stating that he was meeting with alcoholics and working with them. There was also a loner in Jefferson City registered with The Alcoholic Foundation in 1941 and several people in Jefferson City had banded together and registered as a Red Star Group. The Alcoholic Foundation at that time registered Loners as Green Stars and beginners as Red Stars. We are certain that there were people carrying the message as far back as 1941 in both Columbia and Jefferson City.

The Columbia physician wrote to Bill Wilson describing his discouragement with the people he was working with who were having slips. Bill wrote back:

"The other night my wife and I were looking over an old list of alcoholics we had contacted. Of the first 75 we then failed with, more than 50% are in the groups today. Many of them turned up years later after we had first talked to them admitting that they had not really wanted to stop at the time. In other words, Old John Barleycorn finally sold them a bill of goods. Realizing they were sick of a fatal and progressive disease, they finally came around of their own accord and took the medicine."

We do know that the first group from Columbia to register with GSO did so in April 1942 with 5 members and that first meeting was held in the old Elvira Building.

- *Golden Moments of Reflection*, p. 11.

First Impressions - Area Assembly (Winter, '02)

"It was in January so they were talking about the budget and money. And the budget and money. But I wasn't afraid of it, the arguing. I don't like crowds, but this was a chance to meet people with good sobriety and to hear what they had to say. I really liked listening to the past Delegates at the end."

"My first assembly was in a church with tables and chairs. They were arguing about money. There was an old treasurer laying down the law. I only had 1½ years of sobriety, but all that arguing didn't chase me away. I was amazed that so many people cared so much about AA and gave up a Saturday like that. I thought some of them were full of baloney, but I kept coming back because I fell in love with the people of AA. I still remember putting the chairs away that day."

(Winter, '93)

"One thing that stands out in my mind as far as suggestion for direction is concerned. That is our service attitude and posture. Anyone who is really involved in this work knows that there is a deadly serious side to it. Without our efforts and those of many like us, our fellowship and the entire movement of AA would surely waver and wander like a rudderless ship, eventually to founder. How we conduct ourselves before our home group and in other areas of AA is extremely important. If we display an attitude of indifference or otherwise demean our work, it harms the fellowship. We need to be well prepared and not apologetic when we give a report. Nor should we talk down to folks or seem preachy. If we are steady and well-informed, we will go a long way toward gaining their respect and perhaps their interest. Please remember that you are on a mission from God -- as you understand Him." - John V., delegate

(Fall, '78)

"We alcoholics are, or should be, the most grateful and thankful people going, and be willing to help others as we were helped, to give willingly of our time, to share what we now have. Caring, sharing, loving and giving of what we have achieved is the best way of showing others just how grateful we are. My true feelings of happiness and worthiness come alive when I know I am sharing a little bit of what was so freely given to me when I so desperately needed it. I cannot stress too strongly the importance of doing all we can to help lighten the load and brighten up the future of those less fortunate than ourselves. Just remember -- there was someone there to help us. So let us all share what we have." - Fay P., Institutional committee

(Summer, '87)

Recovery - Unity - Service - These are the three legacies that have been passed on to us and we must be responsible, keeping them alive so we, too, may pass them on to those who follow. Like a 3-legged stool will not stand on 2 legs, our beautiful program of recovery won't survive unless all 3 legacies continue to function. - Gardner J., area treasurer

(Spring, '83)

"One day enroute to an assembly my brakes went out in my car. I made a phone call to a group member who came and sent me on my way in his car, while he repaired my brakes! When I returned after the Assembly he wanted me to share the Assembly meeting with him... and I had new brakes with a bill for parts only." - Albert A., past delegate

(Fall, '80)

"To the new Delegate, whoever he or she may be, I pledge my support. If I can help in some small way to lighten the load, then I will have given back a measure of what the past Delegates and everyone in the program have given me.

"My love and prayers are with each of you." - Elma S., outgoing delegate

BULLETIN BOARD

JANUARY

Baden Group 460 Anniversary Banquet

Jan 18, 6pm. Holiday Inn Downtown,
Tickets \$30, 314-381-2633 for info.

Alano Potluck Dinner

Jan 25, 6-10pm. Immaculate Conception Hall, Maplewood
meat and drinks provided, open spkr mtg.

FEBRUARY

28th Annual NCO Sweetheart Dance

Feb 8, 6pm. St. Ann Community Center,
\$18, open spkr mtg and dinner/dance, 314-731-4854

CINCYPAA 2003

Feb 14, Kings Island Resort, Cincinnati, OH
cincypaa.org for info.

Little Rock AR Winter Holiday

Feb 14, Wyndham Riverfront Hotel, Little Rock AR
winter_holiday.com for info.

We Are Not A Glum Lot Meeting & Dance

Feb 15, 8pm, open spkr mtg/dance, \$5
St. Lucas Church, 7100 Morganford, St Louis

22nd Annual Five Corners Convention

Feb 21, Ramada Inn, Sikeston, free registration
573-471-4700 for room rates.

MARCH & BEYOND

Show Me State Round-Up

April 4-6, Sheraton Westport Plaza Tower
Tom N. 314-631-0552, Don T. 314-843-7783
DTUCKER359@aol.com or www.showmeroundup.org

Women's Luncheon

April 13, Renaissance St. Louis airport hotel
Registration 11:30, lunch 12:30 - Lisa C., 314-895-1702

Springtime in the Ozarks

Apr 17, Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs AR
Butch B. 479-253-2976

3rd International Men's Conference

Apr 25, Detroit MI, Bob M. 734-728-2330

District 3 Sponsorship Pot Luck Workshop

Apr 26, Marilyn H. (DCM-District 3)
St. Bartholomew Catholic Church, 8370 Latty Ave, Hazelwood
(three blocks east of Hanley Rd just south of I-270)

Annual Nat'l Debate on the Finer Points of AA Literature

May 31, Molly's Homestyle Diner, Bracken Flats
Guest Speaker: Robin B., Senior Editor, *AA Grapevine*
Stilts T., 573-443-0434 for info

"The service sponsor begins by encouraging the member to become active in their home group – coffee, literature, cleanup, attending business meetings or intergroup meetings, etc.... Eventually, the service sponsor encourages the individual member interested in this form of service to attend district meetings and to read about the history and structure of AA."

- The AA Group pamphlet

Budget Background *(Winter, '97)*

The budget is an estimate of what the Eastern Area of Missouri will spend in one year. The area's year for accounting purposes begins on April 1 and ends on March 31. According to our Eastern Area Procedures Manual, the treasurer is charged with preparing an annual budget for the area. This budget is to be presented at the January assembly and voted on at the March assembly. The budget consists of four major items:

- There are expenses that stay about the same every year. These are expenses for the Delegate to attend the General Service Conference in New York, rent for the area office, and cost of the assemblies. These three items take about one third of the area's annual expenses.
- Second, there are mileage reimbursements, food reimbursements, and lodging reimbursements* for the area officers and committee chairpersons. This accounts for the second third of the budget. (**Editor's note: there will be no two-day assembly in 2003, which will save us most of the lodging expense.*)
- Third, there is a cost of the area office employee, copying, postage, and committee expenses for telephone, literature, and printing. This is approximately the remaining third of the budget.
- Fourth, there are non-recurring expenses that the Assembly has approved... These items are added to the budget when necessary.

Chairman's Chatter *(Summer, '81)*

A discussion meeting I sat in the other night had gratitude as its topic. Nearly everyone mentioned how grateful they are to AA for the new life they now have. Many mentioned how grateful they are to have their families back, more money in their pocket, and some peace of mind and serenity. Mainly, they talked about the twelve promises on pages 83-84 of the "Big Book".

In my opinion, just being grateful to AA isn't enough. I believe that I have an obligation to see that AA is here when our grandchildren and great-grandchildren need it.

My sponsor told me if I wanted to keep my sobriety I would need to do whatever AA asked me to do. This meant emptying ash trays, cleaning up after meetings, unlocking and locking the doors, and making coffee. It also meant being a CSR or DCM if my group or district asked me to do so. When I took on these jobs, I had more responsibility and really had to get into action. I had to learn The Service Manual and try to follow it. It meant I had to sacrifice a few Saturdays and Sundays a year to attend business meetings. It meant I had to report to my group or district what went on at these meetings, and to listen to what they had to say about the proceedings.

All these things I gladly do. I feel if I shirk any of the responsibilities, I place my sobriety in jeopardy. I try to live by the code on the first page of The Service Manual which is: "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."

- Phil D., Area Chair