



GRATITUDE GAZETTE

EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI CONFERENCE AREA 38

WINTER 2005

WELCOME NEW TRUSTED SERVANTS!!!

Let's take a moment to welcome our new Trusted Servants for the 2005-2006 term. If you're an old-timer at this, ask the folks at your table if anyone is here for his or her 1st Assembly, and if so make them welcome. Ask if they have any questions, invite them to join you at lunch, share, just like someone shared with you the first time you came here to learn more about service. After all, service is what this is all about. So welcome one and all. We hope you learn from and enjoy the next 2 years.

The Editor

CHAIRPERSONS' CHATTER

A Sense of the Room

At each of our four assemblies every year, we put roughly 200 people together in a big room for a few hours and ask them to collectively manage a \$30,000-a-year service effort involving hundreds of AA workers all over Eastern Missouri. It's a difficult proposition, but experience has taught us a few helpful principles.

The assembly is where we hear the voice of the area conscience, and it's good at setting direction, drawing big lines, and answering "yes" or "no" to clear, specific questions. But it's usually not good at research, design, detail work, or "separating the specks from the pepper". Those things we entrust to a person or committee, asking them to come back with a result that we can generally approve or disapprove as a group.

Since assembly time is so precious, we try hard to focus on what's important. If we get the important questions right, it's okay that we sometimes get a less-important question wrong, or table a question for later. Similarly, it's not practical to take every issue back to the groups. Concept Two says that's the reason we have a service structure, and Concept Three says GSR's sometimes make decisions on behalf of their groups. So we try to cover the most important issues, make a reasonable assessment in the time available, and vote as we think our Group would have us vote.

We use things like "Parliamentary procedure" and our Area Procedures Manual to help us in our work, but we try not to

get bogged down in procedure. For instance, the pamphlet "The AA Group" suggests that no formal motion should be made until people have a clear sense of the room. Remember that a motion, good or bad, holds the assembly hostage until it's been addressed. It's often much better if someone simply asks a question, or if the chair simply requests an informal show of hands. When a sense of the room emerges, then a motion should be made - carefully! It should be clear and specific, and not include anything that hasn't been discussed.

Our individual recovery depends on principles like willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness, and as a group our survival depends on things like unity, inclusiveness, common focus, humility. We try hard to trust each other (why not?) and a much Higher Power. We'll each have a great opportunity to practice all these very spiritual and practical principles at our Winter assembly as we discuss the future of our Missouri State Convention. Welcome to another exciting rotation. I'm grateful to be part of the important work we do together.

Jim F., Area Chair

THE 3RD LEGACY OF WHAT?!?!

So here we are at the Eastern Area Assembly, and after all our time in AA, we're starting to get bombarded with new lingo. District, Area, Delegate, Conference, PI, CPC, BTG, 3rd Legacy – what's it all about?

The 3rd Legacy of AA is Service – our General Service work, our General Service structure, and the 12 Concepts for World Service. It's how we come together as a fellowship, choose our leaders, communicate, manage our international affairs, and carry our lifesaving message to the world around us.

Prior to 1955, despite having our legacies of Recovery and Unity, AA in the organizational sense behaved more as a monarchy. We were still dependent upon our co-founders as symbolic leaders and the voice of the fellowship. Groups from one city to another often had fundamental differences in philosophy and approach, and chaos and infighting was the result. It was like McDonald's having a

different recipe for a Big Mac in every city. People didn't know what to expect, and this reflected poorly on AA as a whole.

Bill W. knew that AA as a whole had to find a way to govern itself as stated in Tradition 2: by a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Bill also knew that the network of old timers that held the reins of the local AA communities wouldn't be around forever. We needed a way to come together as one group conscience and to effectively act as one voice, completely independent of our founders.

The 3rd Legacy was engineered through discussion with other old timers and with the lawyer Bernard Smith, who served as non-alcoholic trustee. It started as a way for AA to elect and maintain a representative body of "Trusted Servants" to represent the groups in matters that affect AA as a whole, and to make sure that the trustees who manage AA's world service affairs have a group conscience upon which to rely in cases of great importance or uncertainty. This democratic cooperation between local servants and our trustees would keep a clear line of communication among the AA groups throughout the US and Canada – and help protect our fellowship from itself.

Today, many AA members are unaware of the service work that goes on within our service structure. We as individual AA members haven't had to stop and worry about whether AA will survive once our older members pass on, as some members perhaps worried back in 1950. The General Service work defined by our 3rd Legacy is usually not the most important subject on the local AA group agenda. While that may appear to be a drawback, trusting in our system and our trusted servants can allow the groups to do our most important work: to carry our message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Anonymous Contributor

BRIDGE THE GAP COMMITTEE

Bridge the Gap started as a temporary contact program initiated in the Eastern Area in the early 1980's to help alcoholics coming out of an alcoholic treatment center to make the transition from that center into the AA program. The program was originally coordinated through the Treatment Committee.

Over time, as treatment facilities started to close at a rapid rate, the need for the work performed by the Treatment Committee extended into other areas besides the traditional alcoholic treatment center. The Treatment Committee was being stretched in many different directions and finally found it necessary to reassess its scope as it ventured into other areas such as nursing homes, mental health institutions and half-way houses. As the number of participating facilities increased, it became necessary for the Treatment Committee to look at the situation and establish a better way to organize itself to ensure optimum performance.

At about the same time, presentations were being given to Missouri State Corrections and parole boards by the AA Corrections Committee and Public Communications Committee chairs, Ben C and Dave B. They were told that a large number of inmates would be released soon. Bridge The Gap was mentioned as a way to help the released offenders get to AA.

Considering both of these developments, in early 2002, it was determined that this might be the right time for Bridge the Gap to become its own standing committee at the area level with its sole focus on trying to reach the alcoholic being released from a rehabilitation facility.

In order for Bridge The Gap to become its own Standing Committee, the area procedures manual had to be changed. It was necessary for a motion to be approved by an ad hoc committee, the Area Structures and Procedures Committee, and submitted to the Assembly. This was completed in the spring of 2004. At the 2004 summer assembly, after a period of discussion, a written ballot was taken and the motion gained the two-third majority vote need to establish Bridge the Gap as a Standing Committee at the area level.

This is a great opportunity for AA to extend its hand to the still suffering alcoholic.

Mike B. Chair BTG Committee

OUR EXPECTATIONS

As usual, it's our expectations that don't get met. My structured service "career" has not been an exception. Of course, I knew from my studies that it was part and parcel of Step 12 and that it would be a key in my sobriety and spiritual quest. However, and as usual, the results far exceeded my expectations.

This is where degrees mean so much. I expected to have a better understanding of the service structure, expand my friends and fellowship, sharpen up my Traditions, Concepts, Legacies and Warranties skills, have an opportunity to allow the helping hand to always be there for the still suffering alcoholic, share the message of hope in Alcoholics Anonymous to Professionals, suffering alcoholics, newly recovering alcoholics, Treatment associates, and Corrections/Probation Parole professionals. The cooperation between committees is an amazing and powerful part of our fellowship.

When I was given the opportunity to be the Chairman of the Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee (besides not being sure WHAT that was or did), I asked for direction from the Delegate, Former Delegates, GSO CPC desk, Assembly Chairman, former

CPC Chairmen and several experienced service workers (AKA: Service Sponsor). Naturally, their advice and suggestions were direct and yet gave the committee great latitude in our direction and focus. Even with that advice and experience, I was pleasantly surprised (shocked actually) at the acceptance of Alcoholics Anonymous in the professional community. It was obvious that those who have gone before have successfully passed along the message of hope, sobriety, spirituality and recovery. May our loving Director ever give us the direction to do His will. Our position is to merely follow that direction.

I learned early that communication and cooperation of our committees is essential at all levels, between the Committee and the Delegate, GSO and the Assembly Chairman. We cooperate in efforts rather than compete – seek direction, and accept praise and criticism. We share ideas and conceptual programs. Each and every aspect of our program will come to bear on our committee.

The Professional community (Doctors, lawyers, law enforcement, probation, medical professionals, etc) have readily accepted our message and wanted to learn more about how to involve their clients who may be in trouble. Their interests and ours in A.A. are very much the same, to help the suffering alcoholic. Most Professionals will readily admit that their knowledge of recovery and of Alcoholics Anonymous is limited, at best. After an experienced member has exposed them to our loving program, their attitude truly becomes one of cooperation. They become friends of Alcoholics Anonymous and want to direct directionless alcoholics to meetings, sponsors, literature and service to the community and Alcoholics Anonymous.

The rewards of sobriety have been magnificent – the rewards of service fulfill our need and desire to be of maximum service to our fellow man and the still suffering alcoholic.

Dave B. Chair CPC Committee

WHY DO THEY KEEP COMING BACK?

Every time I see the names of the Past Delegates listed in the address list distributed at the Area Assembly, I wonder, why do these folks keep coming back? Surely they have done more than their fair share of service, as have many of the others who come back year after year, even though they hold no active service position and have no vote on any issue being considered at the Assembly.

So, I asked them! What follows is a synopsis of their thoughts and comments. Not verbatim but just a Sense of the Room as it were:

The first three Past Delegates I spoke to pointed me to the same spot. Pages 180 and 181 of Dr. Bob's story in

the Big Book. Dr. Bob indicates there, that he spends a great deal of time passing on what he learned to others who want and need it badly. He says he does it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.

These thoughts proved to be common threads running throughout my conversation with three other Past Delegates. Duty, pleasure, debt and insurance. Not everyone used the same words or placed equal emphasis on all the threads, but it was uncanny how the same thoughts appeared and re-appeared in the story each person told me. Some other thoughts that were given to me are set forth below:

“I want people to know there are no Kings and Queens in A.A. If you are an alcoholic, God can use you, regardless of your level of education or wealth, or your status in life in general. God has a job he wants you to do. Out of all the people in the world, he chose you, a drunk that no one else would have anything to do with. A complete failure has been turned into God's messenger of hope. Through our trusted servants, I have been shown that God is alive and well and expressing himself through the enthusiasm and wisdom of our GSR's, DCM's and committee members and Chairs.”

Another wrote: “Being in service to others in A.A. is the realization of the commitment that I made eighteen years ago to my sponsor, and the God of my growing understanding when I accepted this program as a way of life. It is the application of the Twelfth Step on a daily basis. It is the Third Legacy in action. Due to this continued practice; I have developed a deepening faith in the ability of one alcoholic, sharing with another, to affect real and permanent change.

On a personal level, I have discovered that from the first time that I reached out to another as a greeter in my home group, my problems lessened. The unsolvable became bearable. Fear fell by the wayside. Those higher goals that I aspired to came into light. The quality of my life improved because I was no longer living in the problem. Today, I know that I am responsible. I can be responsible today. I have a message to give to others. To instill in the newcomer the shared fact that *'you don't have to live like that any more.'* brings hope to a soul who previously had none. A grateful heart is a thankful heart. And, a thankful heart cannot take a drink.”

One last contact talked about all the service workers who had preceded him, including Bill W. (whom he had the pleasure of meeting), and how their examples of basic 12th Step work had helped him grow and develop. This Past Delegate talked about how we often hear someone say that they have their drinking problem taken care of but they are still working on their living problems. Service work helps him stay focused on that.

Thanks to all the Delegates who provided their thoughts for this article and for all they continue to provide to we who follow in service.

The Editor

We are happy to receive ideas on topics for articles or finished articles themselves. We can't promise to print everything we receive but will give everything fair consideration if it involves our service legacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, January 15, 2004, noon, District Eight Workshop, "Singleness of Purpose—The Cornerstone of AA" Co-Hosted by: The Sikeston Serenity Group and The Triangle Group Workshop:1:00-4:00pm; 1022 Linn Street; (Just north of Malone Ave. next door to Enterprise Leasing), Lunch & Coffee provided by District 8, For more information or directions contact: George P., 573-481-9796 or Laura V., 573-471-6631

Jan 22, Dist 2, A Closer Look into Relapse and How to Best Help the Newcomer, 8:30PM

Feb 12, 6-10PM, Alano Pot Luck Valentine, 7240 Anna, Maplewood, Immaculate Conception Church, babysitting during meeting only.

Feb. 19th, Saturday, 7:00 pm 2005 SPIRITUAL HOMECOMING: Historical and Program preview. Volunteer sign-up. Special performance by the *SOBER SWEETIES*. Fellowship and refreshments. Parkway United Church of Christ, 2840 N. Ballas Rd. Contact: committee@stl2005.org or 314 368-7739

Feb 25&26, 24th Annual Five Corners Convention, Sikeston, MO., Raudment Inn (I-55 & hwy 62) 573-471-4700, special room rates (\$55). FREE registration.

April 2, 2005 9AM, AREA ASSEMBLY, Holiday Inn, Wentzville, Mo.

June 18, 2005 9AM, AREA ASSEMBLY, Holiday Inn, Wentzville, Mo.

August 19-21, 2005; for more info see the [State Convention Committee's page](#) Missouri State Convention 2005

November 25-27, 2005 Spiritual Homecoming. www.stl2005.org **Volunteers needed.**

ENJOY YOUR TWO YEAR SERVICE COMMITMENT. IT'S A GREAT WAY TO LEARN AND GROW IN YOUR SOBRIETY.