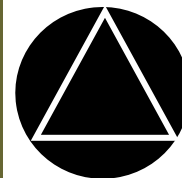


Gratitude Gazette



Guardian of AA: Our General Service Conference

EVERY AA WANTS TO MAKE SURE of his survival from alcoholism, and his own spiritual well-being afterward. This is just as it should be. He also wants to do what he can for the survival and well-being of his fellow alcoholics. Therefore he is bound to have a vital interest in the permanence and well-being of AA itself. In his AA group, every good member feels deeply about this. He knows, once the miracle of sobriety has been received, that Providence expects all of us to work and to grow--to do our part in maintaining our blessings in full force. A perpetual miracle--with no effort or responsibility on our part--simply isn't in the cards. We all understand that the price of both personal and group survival is willingness and sacrifice, vigilance and work.

What is so true for each member and for each group must also be true for AA as a whole. Yet many of us have never given this self-evident proposition the thought it deserves. We are apt to take it for granted that AA, as a whole, will go on forever--no special attention or contribution being required of us. Save an occasional glow of pride in AA's size and reach, it is possible that half of AA's members and groups still have little active concern for the total welfare. That isn't negligence on their part at all. They simply haven't seen the need.

There are two good reasons for this. One is that AA as a whole has never run into any trouble. The other is that, until recently, a small group of AA's old timers--acting as parents--have tended to the perils and problems of our whole society without consulting the membership very much about such matters.

Never have we had a problem that cut clear across us. The public admires us, our friends love us. Religion and medicine are in our corner. Nobody has seriously exploited us. We have avoided public controversy. The world's political strife hasn't touched us. We haven't had even one full-sized family quarrel. While members and groups have had just about all the woe there is, AA as a whole has never had any. This is the miracle of our twenty-three years of existence. No wonder so many truly believe that nothing can ever happen to AA itself!

...It was in 1937 when Dr. Bob and I first began to see what we must do. We knew there would have to be an AA text of principles and methods. Other old timers agreed. By 1939, with lots of help, we had published the "big books" *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This ended all doubt about AA's methods. The 300,000 "big books" today in circulation constitute the platform of recovery upon which our whole fellowship stands.

From the beginning, Dr. Bob and I found that we needed special help ourselves. Therefore we called upon certain dedicated non-alcoholics to give us a lift. With these men, we formed a trusteeship for Alcoholics Anonymous. It was created 'way back in 1938 and we called it The Alcoholic Foundation (since renamed The General Service Board of AA). In 1940, our trustees acquired the AA book, assumed full responsibility for AA's general funds, its world service office, its magazine and its public relations. To this body of trustees--alcoholic and non-alcoholic--must go most of the credit for making our world Headquarters what it now is...

During the year 1948 we workers at AA's Headquarters got a terrific jolt. Dr. Bob was stricken with a consuming and slowly fatal malady. This created a severe crisis in our affairs because it made us face up to the fact that the old time parents of our society weren't going to last forever. We were filled with foreboding as we realized how insecure were the existing links between our Headquarters and the vast sprawling fellowship that it served. There was, of course, our small Board of Trustees. But not one AA in a thousand could name half of them. At the Headquarters office, there were Bobbie, Ann and Charlotte. There was Dr. Bob and myself. We few were just about the *only links* to world-wide AA!

...Meanwhile thousands of our members went serenely about their business. They knew little or nothing about AA's over-all problems. They vaguely supposed that God, with maybe a slight assist from Dr. Bob and me, would go right on handling them. Thus they were completely ignorant of the actual state of our affairs, and of the awful potential there was for an ultimate collapse.. It was a racking dilemma. Somehow AA as such--AA as a whole--would have to take over the full responsibility. Without doubt the groups would have to elect numerous delegates and send them to New York each year, where they could sit with and guide the trustees. Only by so doing could AA assume effective direction of its own policy and business.

...For me, these are questions no longer. The history of AA shows that whenever a great need arises, that need is always met. In this respect, I'm quite sure that our history will go on repeating itself. Indeed, I can have no doubt whatever. For these all-compelling reasons, my friends, the future belongs to you. Embrace these new responsibilities eagerly, fear naught, and the Grace of God will surely be yours.

Bill W.

A LETTER FROM OUR AREA CHAIR

We welcome our special guest Bill N. – an A.A. World Services Non-Trustee Director – to our October Assembly. He has spent many years in general service, and we are pleased that he will be sharing his wide and varied service experience with us.

Next month – November – is Gratitude Month. A phrase that we have heard many times, “Service is gratitude in action,” brings to mind our individual motivations and benefits from service participation.

Dr. Bob cites his reasons for doing service – listed on page 181 of the *Big Book*:

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.

This essentially echoes our involvement with service today. We start out in service and stay in service for reasons that are meaningful to us: “my sponsor got me started in service,” “I want to give back,” “service keeps me sober,” etc. After most of us experience the rewards and benefits of service, we like it – we stay attracted – we find something that takes us outside of ourselves. After awhile we seem to automatically know that this is our purpose, as Dr. Bob said: “love and service.” We carry the message – service to others – out of love rather than from fear or a sense of obligation.

AA changes us fundamentally. In “The Doctor's Opinion” in the *Big Book* preface, Dr. Silkworth writes about the radical spiritual and psychic changes we experience. We move from self-absorption to looking outward; this finds expression in service to others.

Our service experience starts to take on a life of its own. We do it because that is what we do. As spiritual teachings throughout the ages say, what we practice molds us. We practice love and service. When aligned spiritually, we seem to automatically do the appropriate thing – an effortless action without force. Spiritual fitness seems to build upon service, and service, in turn, builds upon spirituality. Many of our Trusted Servants have taken on seemingly Herculean tasks in general service. It has been said we are provided with “energy with grace.”

We do the work at hand – what the situation requires. We serve when there are no evident rewards: no fame, no admiration, and, perhaps, no acknowledgement and no thanks. We serve because service becomes our natural thing to do; it becomes a part of us – our being. We are grateful.

In love and service,
Marge D., Chair Area 38

AREA ARCHIVES

- The Area Archives Committee has started collecting material from Groups, Districts and the Area workshops.
- The Archives office is open the 1st Wed of the month from 1-6 PM
- The Archives Committee is having work sessions on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10-Noon.
- Contact Info:
archives@eamo.org
314-644-1130
14 Sunnen Dr.,
Suite 144, St. Louis

CONGRATULATIONS GO OUT TO THE SMICYPAA COMMITTEE FOR WINNING THE BID!

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA IS COMING TO ST. LOUIS IN 2012!

Host Committee Elections are being held on Saturday Oct. 15th at 1pm, 1135 Macklind Ave.

For more information go to www.smicypaa.org or www.icypaahost.org or

email go@smicypaa.org

Our Third Legacy in A.A. is "Service." While the term "service" in Alcoholics Anonymous can refer to everything ranging from making a twelfth step call to sponsorship to chairing meetings or making coffee, the Twelve Concepts deal more specifically with our General Service Structure and AA's World Services provided by GSO and our two Corporate Boards. The Twelve Concepts for World Service written by Bill W. in 1962, are an interpretation of our World Service Structure and serve as guideposts for our various service entities, much the same as our Twelve Traditions serve as guideposts for the groups. Bill felt that Concepts 3, 5, 9 & 12 dealt primarily with spiritual principles, while the remaining concepts addressed the relationship of the service entities and how they could function together most effectively.

Concept III: "To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.—the Conference, the General Service Board and its corporations, staffs, committees and executives—with a traditional "Right of Decision." The spiritual principle embodied here is "Trust." This is a commodity which comes hard to us alcoholics; if we can't trust ourselves, how can we possibly trust others, who so often let us down—even our comrades in arms? This becomes even more difficult when our egos come into play. However, when the light of trust enters the scene, we willingly endow our trusted servants and service entities with the right to decide how they will apply their authority. Our servants are to be informed, but not instructed. Ultimately, we allow them to vote their conscience based on their best judgment and knowledge at the time, trusting they will act in the best interest of A.A. As Bill W. states, "Conference Delegates are primarily world servants of A.A. as a whole, [and] only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective areas." (Service Manual, Concepts, pg. 15)

In Concept V we are granted a traditional "Right of Appeal," emphasizing A.A.'s insistence that the minority opinion be heard throughout the service structure. As Bill points out, this right "is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority." (The Twelve Concepts Illustrated) Throughout the conference I witnessed the Right of Appeal in action, as all views were expressed and heard, with special care to hear the minority opinion and re-open debate if necessary. I was truly assured that once we voted on a recommendation, the conference had indeed reached an informed group conscience, and our actions reflected substantial unanimity for the good of AA.

Concept IX addresses the ever vital need for good service leadership, appointing the trustees to carry the torch for World Service leadership that our founders once held. **Concept X** states that "Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined." And **Concept XI** exerts that "The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants" in order

Concept XII, which among all the others is unique. Taken from Article 12 of the Conference Charter, it has been referred to as AA's "Bill of Rights", and is considered by many to be the Spiritual Foundation of AA's World Services. It essentially summarizes and embodies all of the previous concepts, much the same as Step 12 embodies all previous steps. Here we are encouraged, above all, to practice prudence in its broadest sense: taking care to keep the conference from becoming the seat of perilous wealth, power or unqualified authority; to examine our attitude towards money and its necessity to carry the message; that all decisions be reached by substantial unanimity; that no conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; and that the conference always remain democratic in thought and action.

By following the Twelve Concepts personally in our various service positions and collectively in our World Service affairs, our fellowship is assured that we can effectively carry AA's message of hope to the still-suffering alcoholic throughout our service structure—from top to bottom—while maintaining a spirit of love, trust, cooperation and unity.

Excerpts from a presentation at Central Services "Three Legacies" event, August 20, 2011

By Laura V., Delegate Panel 61 Area 38

Literati

"We change ourselves, gradually, day to day. We help other alcoholics. And by helping we stay sober, sane and happy."

"I loved how alcohol affected me."

"Every time I promised something, I couldn't follow up with action. Sometimes I was sincerely going to change my ways and I couldn't."

"I was terrified when I went to my first AA meeting.

"Sobriety to me is not just quitting drinking but changing my attitudes. The Twelve Steps of AA are making me useful to others. Now I have a sense of purpose in life."

"Here were all the cliques I couldn't fit into in one room, and everyone fit together. I felt for the first time that I might fit in, and that these people wanted me to be there."

The Gratitude Gazette is published quarterly by the Eastern Area of Missouri of Alcoholics Anonymous. Opinions expressed herein are those of the author and not AA as a whole. AA has not endorsed the materials contained.

Editor, Gratitude Gazette c/o Eastern Area Office 14 Sunnen Dr., Suite 144, St. Louis, MO. 63143

www.eamo.org

Recently, while I was attending my first Area Assembly, the District Committee Member approached me with a big smile on his face. He suggested to me that my home group should feel very special. Why? I asked. He told me that my group was one of the few in our area to be selected to respond to the upcoming AA Membership Survey. Not having a clue about what he was talking about, I told him I could hardly contain my excitement. He kind'a reminded me of my sponsor when he said: "Don't worry about it. Just follow the instructions."

About 2 weeks later, I received a mailing from the Area Chairperson containing blank 2011 AA Membership Survey forms and how to conduct the survey procedures from the General Services Office of AA – New York City.

The survey was taken in early August by attendees at approximately 700 group meetings in the United States and Canada and, apparently, that suffices for the General Service's "statistic geeks" to be a statistically significant sampling representative of the entire membership in AA. It was prefaced with the reasons for the survey: informing AA members of the characteristics of their Fellowship, identifying trends in membership characteristics, providing information about AA to the professional community, and informing the general public. It was emphasized that the information from the questionnaire will not be used by AA for any follow-up studies of its' members.

The survey instrument itself was 1 page with 16 questions covering such variables as: age, sex, domestic status, race, dates re: first coming to AA, last drink, how long it took to get a sponsor, sponsor status now, home group status, frequencies of meeting attendance, most influential "entities" in decision to come to first AA meeting, employment status, treatment or counseling history prior to and after coming to AA, and whether or not a doctor and/or another health professional was or is involved in or knowledgeable about one's AA membership.

All 16 fellow members of my home group that were in attendance at the first August meeting completed the questionnaire. I returned the results in the next day's mail to the Area Chairperson and thought to myself: "OK, that's done. My side of the street is clean now on this prestigious GSR assignment." Out of curiosity, though, I dug through my AA files and spent a few minutes reviewing the 2007 AA Membership Survey. At the time of the last survey, there were 113,000 groups throughout the world! More than 8,000 AA members participated in the survey which has been conducted every 3 years since 1968 by the General Services Office.

As I researched a bit more. I found that the survey is just one pamphlet in the library of AA General Service Conference approved literature. It takes its' place in the entire library along 8 books (can you name 2 of them?), 3 booklets, 51 pamphlets (yes, the survey is one of 51 pamphlets), 17 service literature guideline documents, 22 audiovisual mediums, a directory, 2 reports, and 7 GSO bulletins. Whew! Are we really supposed to do 90/90, get a sponsor, pray a lot, not drink and drug, and READ THE LITERATURE, too? My next thought was rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followedOf course, while I'm sure we're all sitting on the edge of our chairs waiting for the results of the survey, as far as surveys and inventories go, the most provocative observation that I have about my experience with the 2011 AA Membership Survey thus far is –, it kind'a points out that we've still got a lot to learn about ourselves (and plenty to be done) individually and, especially as Groups.

Thanks for allowing me to share.
Tom K—GSR for Group 248

Activities Around the Area (for people who would not usually mix)

10/01/11 - 5:30pm Oct-Soberfest 8343 Gravois, Affton, Salem Lutheran Church

10/02/11 - 1pm District 1 Unity Celebration—Diversity Workshop & Potluck, 1210 Locust St, Christ Cathedral

10/7-10/09/11 - Southwest Regional Forum, Wichita, KS - Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center

10/22/11 - 10am 12 Stepping in 2011, Districts 41, 42, 43, & 51, 1320 Lockwood Ave, Webster Grove Christian Church

11/19/11 - 6pm Unity (Alano) Banquet 9801 Natural Bridge, Renaissance St Louis Airport

12/10/11 - 6pm 14th Annual Spiritual Gathering, St Francis Borgia School, Washington, MO

2/25/11 - 10:30am Area Inventory, Dardenne Presbyterian Church, 7400 Hwy N., Dardenne Prairie, MO , 63368

FOR HALLOWEEN FUN CHECK OUT THE PACIFIC FACILITY ON OCT. 29TH @ 9PM OR THE FALL CLASSIC EVENT AT ST. JAMES THE GREATER IN DOGTOWN @ 7PM.



"Whose life has become unmanageable?"