

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

October, November, December 2015

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXIV, Issue 4

"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."

A.A. Co-Founder, Bill W., February 1961, From: "The Shape of Things to Come"; *I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A.*, © A. A. Grapevine, Reprinted with permission

A Word From Our Delegate

In the Fellowship we are all generally acquainted with the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as they are a necessity to recovery. We come to realize that sobriety is more than just putting the cork in the bottle. The 12 Steps provide us with a Spiritual Awakening which the "Spiritual Experience" section of the Appendices of our book Alcoholics Anonymous states, "brings about a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism". The 12 Steps are almost always read at meetings and are talked about in lead and discussion meetings. The 12 Steps are frequently a topic of discussion before and after meetings.

We are less acquainted with the 12 Traditions though they are principles paramount to our unity. In the forward of the *12 Steps and 12 Traditions* it states "A.A.'s Twelve Traditions apply to the life of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows". The 12 Traditions are about Unity, Self-Support and Anonymity. In addition the practical application of these Principles should bring about a certain amount of humility. The Twelve Traditions are usually read at meetings. They are sometimes the topic of discussion at meetings and sometimes mentioned in leads. For some reason less emphasis is placed on the 12 Traditions as compared to the 12 Steps. Perhaps it is because they are not very prominent in the first 164 pages of our Big Book. The 12 and 12 states "We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have."

We are hardly acquainted with the 12 Concepts of World Service which are the principles which Bill states "will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years that lie ahead". The Twelve Concepts guide us in regards to General Service, which involves all of A.A. The A.A. Groups, Group G.S.R.s, Districts, D.C.M.s, Area Assemblies, Delegates, Panel and Committee members, the General Service Conference, the General Service Board, Conference and Trustee Committees and the A.A. World Services and Grapevine Boards all use the 12 Concepts. These principles are essential to our whole organization. They are our life blood yet the 12 Concepts are rarely read at meetings. They are rarely the topic for discussion or talked about in Leads.

Amazingly the first concept states: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship... A.A. belongs to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. We have been given the structure and principles to guide us in this endeavor. Sadly few of our Groups and members are involved in the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. There is no voice for the Group without involvement. Involvement begins with a Group Service Representative (G.S.R.).

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Calvin L.,
Delegate P65/A54

WE STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

The 12th century theologian and author John of Salisbury used a version of this phrase in a treatise on logic in 1159. Translations of this difficult Latin book are quite variable but the gist of what Salisbury said is:

We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours."

The phrase may even pre-date John of Salisbury, who was known to have adapted and refined the work of others.

I'm reminded of this phrase as I reflect on the influence of those who came before me, before us. Let's remember those, like Joyce K., who kept the lights on and paved the way for others through their guidance, mentoring, and who bothered to spend a little of their valuable time passing along much of what they learned to the likes of you and me.

Bob M. shares a remembrance of Joyce K., past delegate Panel 37, who passed away this summer. We go to Bob when we need an accurate answer and a historic perspective. He's our "Go to guy". This wasn't always the case. He learned from those before him.

Let's remember that wherever we go, in or out of the rooms, we are a living example of the Steps and Fellowship of AA. Am I setting a good example of recovery, unity, AND service for the new member? Am I bringing along a newer member and teaching them about all parts of AA through our example and through direct action.

"The graveyards are full of people the world could not do without."

- Elbert Hubbard

I am not so indispensable that AA won't go on after I'm gone. However, do I owe anything to the next newcomer? Do I really think that AA will prosper and grow if I don't take some small part now to ensure its healthy future? It may be like a pebble in a pond, but the ripples extending outward from our small actions can have an effect beyond our earthly remains. We can ensure the future functioning of AA by mentoring a few others as freely as we were encouraged and guided by the 'oldtimers' who came before us. Andy T. used to needle me "Who's in your pipeline—who are you bringing along behind

JOYCE I. KORNER, age 72, of Lady Lake, FL and formerly of Cleveland, OH passed away July 29, 2015 at home.

Daughter of Edward and Irene Korner. She worked at Vocational Guidance Services and retired in 2010 after 40 years of service. She was 36 years sober with AA. Joyce is survived by her loving partner of 32 years, Lois Fischer; three sisters and two brothers; and her kitties, Muffi and Mikki. Joyce enjoyed camping, playing cards, yard work and helping others. She will be greatly missed. Joyce served as the Panel 37 delegate from Area 54.

Recollections from a past delegate:

Prior to Joyce we handwrote addresses onto our mailings. This was not so bad when it was 250 groups, but Joyce as Area Secretary got a Cleveland District Office Secretary's List and registered all the groups that were not registered with General Service—whether they wanted to be or not. She said she didn't know any better at the time. Joyce was an operations manager and put the addresses on her mainframe so they could print address labels. This was our first automation. She was also an advocate in the purchase of an Apple IIe—our area's first computer.

Joyce started the NE Ohio Recorder and named past delegate John T. (The "T" stands for Trouble) B. as its first editor. John balked at continuing after the first year and so she asked Pat G, a guy I'd worked with professionally, if he could do it. In good AA style Pat said, "No I cannot; but Bob McK. could." And so I went from GSR to Area Newsletter editor for a few years. From her I got the cram course in General Service, such as "No its called an International Convention, not a World Conference" for example.

Joyce wrote the first job descriptions for area officers and compiling all the existing motions from area assemblies past—precursors to our area guidelines. She served the East Central Region as its Secretary—elected 1992. **Joyce was not just a mentor, she was an example to follow.**

Bob McK.

you?" That pipeline of service sponsorship for me included Joyce and Bob and Andy whether I knew it or not. It reaches back to the founders and old-timers who crafted this life-saving program. Who is in YOUR recovery/unity/service pipeline?

~Your editor, Jeff

We welcome your service-related contributions, comments, and questions. Send topic ideas or loving appraisals to:
newsletter@area54.org



Area Officer Reports

ALTERNATE DELEGATE

The Oxford American Dictionary defines humility as “a modest or low view of one’s own importance.” When we talk about humility as a spiritual principle, we’re talking about developing an honest, accurate and objective view of our importance in the universe.

According to Confucius, humility is the solid foundation of all virtues. Most of the world’s religions value humility above other qualities. Being humble means that I am (or should be) able to accept my own limitations and weaknesses. It also means that I have a realistic understanding of my own strengths. I need to develop at least some degree of humility. If I fail to do so, I will be faced with a barrier to my progress in growing.

Practicing humility makes us teachable, and therefore wiser. It makes us better listeners and therefore more valuable friends. It allows us to examine ourselves and our personal traits without shame or judgment. It helps us get to know ourselves like never before.

The key to wisdom is to be teachable, to realize that I do not know everything, that many things I believe to be true may be false, and that I have much to learn from others. Below are some of the things I must learn to do in order to be humble and practice humility on a daily basis.

1. Appreciate the talents and qualities of others.
2. Stop comparing myself to others. While competition can be healthy and stimulating, it’s nearly impossible to be humble when we’re constantly striving to be the “best” or trying to be better than others. Instead, try looking at myself more. Remember, the ultimate goal isn’t to be better than anyone else; it’s to be better than the person you used to be. Focus on the positive attributes of others instead of always looking for their flaws.
3. Don’t be afraid to defer to others’ judgment. Although it is ultimately up to me to decide if I was right or wrong, it is a whole different thing to acknowledge that I make mistakes and that I’m not always right (wow!). Somewhat more challenging however, is the ability to acknowledge that in many cases other people — even people who disagree with me — may be right.
4. Seek guidance from written texts. Read inspiring biographies, memoirs, nonfiction and fiction on how to improve my life or whatever it is that makes me be more humble and appreciate the insight that others have to offer.

5. Apologize. If I’ve made a mistake, then confess and admit that I’m wrong. Even though saying I am sorry to someone else is painful, I’ll have to get over my pride and tell another person that I am sorry for the harm I’ve done. Don’t be a repeat offender. Apologizing about something does not give me a license to do it again.
6. Listen more than you talk. This is another great way of appreciating others more and being more humble. Ask questions to show that you understand what the person is talking about. Don’t just wait for the person to stop talking so that you can start talking. Remember, if you’re busy thinking about what you want to say, then you’ll have a harder time focusing on what they are saying.
7. Admit always that there are things that I cannot do, and may never be able to do.

I must loosen my expectations. No matter how good I am at making plans or predicting outcomes, no matter how strong my belief is that something should be a certain way, life will often produce results I didn’t expect or did not want. When I hold tight to expectations, I become easily frustrated, disappointed, angry and humiliated. When I take myself and my expectations less seriously, I can more easily handle what life hands me and move out of my Higher Power’s way as I am guided on my unique life journey. It takes effort to be humble!

Yours In Love, Service & Gratitude,
Jamie B., Alternate Delegate

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AREA CHAIRPERSON

As the summer activities wrap up and the intensity of fall approaches, Area 54 gets into full swing with the Assemblies on the third Sundays in September and October at 2pm in Brunswick and the Gratitude Sunday on the 4th Sunday in November in Akron at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 1361 W. Market St. I hope all DCM’s and GSR’s will come and share you victories and your struggles with us at the Assemblies. As a side note, we do not meet in December but will see you on the 3rd Sunday in January at 2pm in Brunswick. [The yearly meetings can be found on area54.org and click on the Area Events Schedule on the right under Publications.]

The bosses of AA are the members in the groups and the GSR is representing the bosses of AA. At our Assemblies, the issues and concerns and news of AA throughout the US and Cana-

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Area Officer Reports

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da is shared by our Delegate. This is called informing the fellowship. The GSR and DCM share what is happening in their groups or meetings.

Our Standing Committee Chairs let us know what is happening with our outreach to Corrections and Treatment facilities and Group Services will let us know the where the traveling GSR Schools are going to be. The other Committees bring us up to date with their activities. The Grapevine Literature and Literature will be sold at the October Assembly and at Gratitude Sunday. Is there a new book or cd from Grapevine you need and a pamphlet you need, take advantage of these opportunities. This is "one stop" shopping.

Area 54 is awesome in its effort to serve all of Northeast Ohio. It has many groups that do not have district or multi-district meetings. If you are a member of a group you and your GSR, if you have one, please come to the Assembly meetings and share your thoughts. When you are there you can check with the Registrar and make sure your Group Contact information is correct and let the Registrar know who the GSR is. Introduce yourself to the Panel members (officers sitting in front of the room, I am one of them).

If you are a GSR, be sure to get a General Service Manual sometimes referred to as the "Secret" Service Manual. This book was written by Bill W when our founders realized that they would not live forever. Bill had always handled all the questions of AAs. This manual gives us information in detail on what each group and their representative should be doing and all the job description of all service positions. Also it has the 12 Concepts that are our corporate guidelines.

I, as your Area Chairperson, am asked to help the DCM's and all Chairs. I would be honored to talk to you or come to your group or DCM meetings or talk to the bosses of AA and listen to your concerns and share what I have experienced.

I am having terrific active time in AA and for that, I thank you.

Susan R., Area Chair

MAILING SECRETARY

On Saturday afternoon, I was talking with Jorgana from Cincinnati about the Convention. She asked where I was from, and I told her Akron. She wanted to know about Dr. Bob's House, Intergruop, St. Thomas Hospital, and the Mayflower

Hotel. While we were talking, a young man entered the room and asked if we were connected with A.A. We said yes, and he proceeded to tell us that this had to be God working for him.

He went on to tell us that he had just completed 30 days of treatment and had been home only four days. He had gone golfing and when he had gotten home, his wife had accused him of drinking, because this is what had always happened in the past. They had gotten in a heated argument and he had left the home Friday night. He had come here and was reminiscing because this was the hotel where he had proposed to his wife.

On Saturday afternoon in the hotel hot tub, he was telling someone what was going on in his life, and they suggested that he come up and talk to someone at the A.A. Convention because they thought the people at the Convention might be able to help him. And so here he was.

Since Jorgana was from Cincinnati, she was able to locate two local men who were able to sit down and talk with the gentleman. They spent at least an hour and a half with him. They then asked him to return that same Saturday evening to attend the meeting and hear the lead speaker.

At the meeting, we had a Sobriety Count Down, and our visitor was the youngest person there, with 34 days of sobriety. He was given a Big Book and was asked to speak from the podium. He gave a brief review of what had happened this weekend, and that he felt that his Higher Power had helped him find this connection and these friends in A.A.

He left the meeting with a Big Book and a list of names and telephone numbers for people in the Cincinnati area who will be more than glad to help him in his journey. This just proves that opportunities to help the "still suffering" can happen anywhere, anytime – even at a state convention!

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

Ron O., Mailing Secretary
Area 54, Panel 65

Expanded Content (12 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>

East Central Regional Forum

Milwaukee, Wisconsin – November 13-15, 2015

Dear Friends,

You are cordially invited to the East Central Regional Forum to be held the weekend of November 13-15, 2015 at the Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel, located at 16401 South 13th Street, Milwaukee WI 53221. Telephone Number: 414.764.5300. Representatives of the General Service Board and members of the General Service Office and Grapevine staff will be present at the Forum to share experience, respond to questions and hear suggestions. It will be a weekend of lively participation for all concerned.

Registration begins at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, November 13, 2015. The Orientation for First-time Attendees is at 6:45 p.m. and the opening session starts at 7:00 p.m. on Friday. The Forum closes promptly at noon on Sunday, November 15, 2015. There is no registration fee for the Forum. There will be simultaneous translation available from English to Spanish. We want all A.A. members to be able to participate regardless of language.

Forum Registration: You may register for the Regional Forum by filing out the Forum Registration Form and mailing it to G.S.O. or you can register online at: www.aa.org. All persons registering online must include their full name and postal address. Online Forum registrations must be received at G.S.O. before **November 9, 2015** in order to be processed. If you miss the deadline, we welcome on-site registration. It is not necessary to call G.S.O. to pre-register but your advance registration greatly helps our planning.

Hotel Reservations at the Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel can be made by one of the following methods:

By phone: 877.227.6963 no later than **October 14, 2015**. Please use Group Code: **ECR** to get the special room rate.

By internet please go to http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/regional-and-local-forums follow the link by clicking on "Online Hotel Reservation"

In order to get the special room rate, be sure to register for your hotel accommodation no later than October 14, 2015. If you have any questions about this Regional Forum, feel free to email: regional-forums@aa.org

We are looking forward to seeing you in Milwaukee.

Let's Go Green!

Area 54 General Service is inviting you to Go Green! Get your Area flyers, information, and an EXPANDED web-only version of the Northeast Ohio Recorder. All the information that comes to your USPS mailbox now can come to your inbox.

The NE OH Recorder you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of the last issue of NEOHR was 14 pages packed with experience, strength, and hope.

Let Jim S., your Area 54 Mailing Secretary, know that you would like to save a tree or three (and save the area some \$Green\$) with a message at mailingsecretary@area54.org

Please note: if you do nothing, you will still get your Area mail by USPS and by email (if we have your email address) as you always have.

The Foundation for Our Future

Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity, and Service: The Foundation for Our Future

65th General Service Conference Keynote Address

The theme of our Conference this year is “Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity, and Service: The Foundation for Our Future.” And there is indeed much to celebrate. Eighty years ago, two men met in Akron, Ohio: one struggling to maintain a precarious sobriety, and one firmly in the grip of this terrible disease. From that inauspicious beginning emerged a Fellowship and a program that now counts among its membership over 1.4 million in the United States and Canada alone, with an additional nearly three quarters of a million worldwide. From our program’s simple beginnings, countless lives have been saved, families restored, and reparations made. Much to celebrate indeed!

We frequently say that “this is a simple program for complicated people.” At its simplest, the program would have only a single principle: “Don’t drink”. But over the years, we have found it necessary to craft a total of three dozen principles – twelve to aid us in our recovery, twelve to help preserve our Fellowship, and twelve to assist us in carrying the message to those who still suffer.

We consider AA to have been “founded” in June of 1935 when Dr. Bob is said to have taken his last drink. But it was not until 1939, that the nature of the program in general, and its Twelve Steps in particular, were published in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* – a book that later became known affectionately as “The Big Book”.

The Steps, of course, were the logical set of principles to be developed first. Recovery was certainly the sole focus in those early days. But this formative period was also fraught with controversy. Debates ensued over issues such as money, membership, public relations, authority, governance, and anonymity, to name just a few. And it soon became apparent to Bill that if our Fellowship were to survive, some additional principles were needed. In April 1946, Bill published “Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition” in the Grapevine. These twelve new principles – now known as the Twelve Traditions – were formally adopted at the International Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio

in 1950. Three years later, the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, brought our first 24 spiritual principles together under one cover.

Around the time that the foundations for our Legacies of Recovery and Unity were being established, our General Service structure was beginning to emerge. Bill spent several years working on the final set of principles that would ultimately guide us in our service around the globe, and at the 1962 General Service Conference, the Twelve Concepts for World Service were unanimously accepted.

And so a little over a half a century ago, AA’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service - along with the twelve principles underlying each one - were firmly established. Alcoholics Anonymous sat upon a solid, three-legged structure – indestructible for all time. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, so far, nothing. Oh, we certainly debate from time to time the interpretation of our principles. And we certainly question from time to time the relevance of some of them in today’s world. And we actually have mechanisms in place through which we can even change them should we so choose. But to date, these thirty six principles have remained the bedrock of our movement. So, should we assume that this will always be the case? Should we assume that these principles will continue to form a foundation for our future?

I would submit that today, Alcoholics Anonymous is facing challenges of a nature and a magnitude that could not even have been imagined eighty years ago. In the interest of time, I will name only a few:

Singleness of Purpose: The epidemic of drug abuse that is evident today was not nearly of this magnitude when AA’s principles were first being crafted. It is my belief that while our principle of singleness of purpose is as important today as it was in the beginning, it is now being challenged to a greater extent than ever before. The so-called “pure alcoholic” is a vanishing breed. How do we best counsel the multi-addicted in how to consider their “problems other than alcohol” while in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous? We want to honor our principles, but we do not wish to shut the door on any who need us.

Social Media: The relatively recent availability and widespread use of social networks and social me-

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The Foundation for Our Future

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dia have placed new challenges on our principle of anonymity at the public level. When this principle was first being crafted, the concern was for the individual who purposefully stepped into a public forum and declared him or herself to be a member of our Fellowship. Today the potential for even an accidental anonymity break is enormous. Ever-changing privacy controls, hasty photo posting, and links to a network of so-called “friends” all conspire to diminish the control that we have over what we share and with whom. And yet, these new modes of communication have extraordinary potential for helping us connect with one another and for carrying our message of hope to those still suffering.

Diversity of Membership: While AA is no longer the collection of white males that it was in the beginning, our membership does not yet reflect the diversity of society at large. If we believe that the disease of alcoholism does not acknowledge the boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, economics, education, disability, or sexual orientation, then we have much to do in terms of making our program attractive to those who are underrepresented in our rooms. Having said that, however, are we willing to invest the effort, the resources, and the open-mindedness necessary to create a welcoming, safe, and nurturing environment for everyone? If the only requirement for membership is simply a desire to stop drinking, then what are the impediments

that are keeping so many who need us from not coming in?



Diversity in Service: If our general membership is not reflective of society as a whole in terms of diversity, our trusted servants seem even further removed in this regard. In 1967, Eastern Pennsylvania sent Louis R. to the General Service Conference. Lou was the first African American Delegate to participate in service at this level. It is said that Bill W. shed tears when he first greeted Lou. That historic moment opened the door to at least greater racial diversity within our service structure. But how far have we come in the intervening years? As far as we should? As far as we can? I invite you to simply look around.

Size of Our Membership: In its formative years, Alcoholics Anonymous experienced an explosive growth in membership. Some recent estimates, however, suggest that we have reached essentially a steady state. Our Membership Survey also suggests that the average age within our Fellowship is increasing. Are these trends due to alcoholism itself being on the decline? Is it because today’s youth are no longer vulnerable to our common malady? I invite you to pick up a newspaper and simply take a look at what’s going on within our society. We need to explore new strategies and new modes of communication to help keep our message alive and relevant, while still respecting the principle of “attraction rather than promotion”.

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NOTE THE DATE

October 18 Area Assembly	GV Lit sales 2:00 pm
November 7 — Columbus, OH Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting	11:00 am
November 13-15 — Milwaukee, WI East Central Regional Forum, hosted by GSO and Area 75 (S. Wisconsin)	
November 22 Gratitude Sunday	GV Lit sales Akron
January 17 Area Assembly	GV Lit sales 2:00 pm
February 21 Workshop—Potluck	2:00 pm
March 20 Area Assembly	2:00 pm

Unless otherwise noted, Area Assemblies & Workshops are held at The 12 Step Recovery Club, 1480 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH, (on  about 1/4 mile south of Route .

Phone: (330) 273-7216



RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our A.A. experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, expressed through our group conscience, is our sole authority. World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy. Our meetings are informative and educational. They are held so that the Committee Members, GSRs and all interested members may be better equipped to carry the message of World Service back to their home groups and individual members, thus giving a better understanding to our purpose, our hopes, and our work.

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 Visit us at <http://www.area54.org>

The Foundation for Our Future

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The Decline of Print: Alcoholics Anonymous manages two publishing corporations: AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. Both concerns grew up in the print world. Today's readers are migrating away from the printed word and toward electronic and audio media. Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook, and Apple's iBooks are rapidly replacing the printed page for both books and magazines. And audio publishers such as Audible are migrating us from the eye to the ear. Alcoholics Anonymous must cope effectively with these trends if we are going to continue to carry our message through our literature as well as through our "Meeting in Print".

Technology Polarization: Early in our evolution, while virtually everyone had access to the US Postal Service, not everyone had a telephone. Today, we take for granted that there is a land line in most homes, and there is a mobile device in many pockets and purses. There is a television set in most homes. There is also a computer in many homes with access to the Internet. But "many" and "most" are not equivalent to "all". As we think about new technologies and social networks and emerging modes of publication, let us be mindful of the risk of creating two Fellowships: those with access and those without. Communication via email, texting, social media, and methods that will be invented next month are exciting and powerful. But let us not assume that all of our Fellowship enjoys such access. If it is truly the case that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking, we must not risk excluding a subset of our members from our communication network simply because of a technological divide.

International Structures: Alcoholics Anonymous is no longer merely a few groups in Akron and a few groups in New York. It is a global phenomenon. And while the United States and Canada are not the "bosses" of AA, we are frequently looked to for guidance and example. Some countries are currently struggling with the question of just who AA is within their borders – countries in which multiple service structures are beginning to emerge. How do we interact with our friends who are currently struggling with these situations? How do we help in these developments while still respecting our principle of autonomy of AA entities? And finally ...

Litigation: We live in a litigious society. In the world at large, everyone seems to be suing everyone else over anything and everything. Alcoholics Anonymous is not immune to this phenomenon. Our Traditions say that "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole." Does that mean that we have no collective, spiritual responsibility for fostering the well-being of our members within these rooms or for promoting the understanding that, even while in the rooms, we are still obligated to adhere to the laws of society as a whole?

And so I repeat: While our thirty-six spiritual principles have stood us in good stead for the eight decades of our existence, are they sufficient foundation for our future in light of this myriad of challenges that lay before us? You will not find the definitive answer to this question nor the definitive solution to any of the issues cited above in the short week ahead. But you will touch on many of these issues, and the conversations can certainly begin. And as you do think about these issues and talk about them and struggle to make decisions about them, I would remind you of Bill's words from a July 1965 Grapevine article entitled, "Responsibility Is Our Theme". Recognizing what a central role fear plays in the life of an alcoholic, Bill wrote:

In the fear of accumulated wealth and bureaucracy, we should not discover an alibi for failure to pay AA's legitimate service expenses. For fear of controversy, our leadership should not go timid when lively debate and forthright action is a necessity. And for fear of accumulating prestige and power, we should never fail to endow our trusted leaders with proper authority to act for us. Let us never fear needed change.

We frequently say to you at the close of each General Service Conference, "You are now a part of AA's history". I would submit that you are also a part of AA's future.

Respectfully Submitted

J. Gary L.
Northeast Regional Trustee

The Warranties: Maturity in the Fellowship

Good afternoon, I want to thank my Area 56, panel 64 Delegate Garwood F. for suggesting my participation in this International Convention and Eva S. on behalf of our General Service Board for the loving invitation to participate in this particular program. I'm an alcoholic named Mark E., sober since October 18, 1980, past Delegate for Area 56 panel 62, current Ohio State Archivist, current East Central Regional Historian, and, most importantly, member of the Mason Monday Night Step Study in Mason, Ohio.

If you have never seen the Warranties it is probably true that you have missed either Chapter 7 of the AA Service Manual, the Conference Charter, the Bylaws of the General Service Board or the Twelve Concepts for World Service. The Warranties are published in those four places and are even included in Appendix 6 of the fourth edition of our Big Book. They are that important.

I do enjoy the title of this session "The Warranties: Maturity in the Fellowship" and I think a more appropriate title might have been something such as "The Warranties: Keeping us children from corrupting the Program". I look at The Warranties as something like our AA Bill of Rights. They are sometimes also known as Concept 12 since Concept 12 is where the Warranties appear in the Twelve Concepts for World Service. More than that, while most of the Conference Charter, the Bylaws of the General Service Board and the other eleven Concepts may be changed if necessary, by the General Service Conference, the Warranties are protected in much the same manner as are our Steps and Traditions. These rights or warranties may only be changed with the consent of three quarters of all of the responding registered AA groups in the world. Now, the Twelve Concepts deal with, in general, how we run the business of Alcoholics Anonymous. Since the rest of the Concepts address how we take care of those business activities and since Alcoholics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship - not a traditional business, the Twelfth Concept is here to help us understand that we have very specific limits on the Conference and our Board of Trustees. Bill wrote that The Warranties are primarily to assure that the Conference complies with the spirit of the Twelve Traditions, and beyond that I see at least some of these concepts active in all levels of AA Service.

Warranty one tells us "The Conference shall nev-

er become the seat of perilous wealth or power". Now I'm not sure why Bill made the first pledge, but I suspect that simply observing how most of the world operates, we are to avoid career or perpetual leaders as well as avoiding special interests funding of our services. If you are thinking that this is covered in the Traditions, well yes, but just to be sure Bill loved to close potential loop holes for alcoholics such as myself to use to my advantage. Traditions 2, 6, 7 and 12 contribute to protecting this same ideal, and we do even more to assure this warranty. The Conference has limited the amount of money any single individual may contribute to the operation of the General Service Board to a relatively minimal amount in relation to our annual budget. Further, we do not accept any outside contributions. Area delegates are absolutely limited to a single two year term of service. The area delegates makeup more than two thirds of the total voting members of the General Service Conference. Our 14 class B (alcoholic) Trustees are absolutely limited to 4 successive one year terms, and they make up two thirds of the voting members of our General Service Board. Yes, our Class A Trustees may serve two consecutive three year terms, and some even are asked to serve a third 3 year term. Our Chairman is limited to no more than four successive one year terms. All of these protections assure that no one individual will become a "professional" leader, and in my experience as a delegate from Area 56, a single two year term gave me just enough time to become totally comfortable with how the Conference works at about the same time my second year of service ended. Another way to look at this is an incident from a couple of years ago in Ohio while discussing the possible need to change the short version of Tradition eleven. One member mentioned that after we discussed the issue, "They would change it". I had to make it clear that WE would be the ones to change these things, not "they" because of the protections given to us by the twelfth Concept. The Conference is not a seat of wealth or power, the wealth and power of A. A. belongs to the groups, and the Conference is there to serve the groups.

Warranty Two tells us that "Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle." Fortunately, our relative stinginess and our refusal to accept large sums from our more generous members combined with our insistence that only AA members may provide our financial support, we have been and continue to be, close to financial insolvency. Yes, we have sufficient operating funds and yes we have a prudent reserve, but we don't have

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nor can we afford opulent offices, company cars, corporate jets or even the latest techno gadgets. I think that the generally frugal nature of our Fellowship's membership simply makes this warranty work. Oh, and this is where we get our prudent reserve idea that even has filtered UP to my home group. For our General Service Board, the target amount for our prudent reserve is equal to between nine and twelve months of operating expenses. Not years and years, nor just a few weeks – but a prudent and reasonable policy. This is not to say that we don't pay our way or pay our necessary employees a reasonable salary, but we are not extravagant. Since A. A. depends on contributions from members and groups, putting aside a reasonable amount of savings to keep our services going if contributions drop off for a short while is a good idea. We can't and won't ask the government to bail us out if times get tight. Actually, we often hear when a group, Intergroup office, area, district or even GSO needs money; we always seem to dig in our own pockets to remedy the problem.

Warranty Three tells us that "None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others." This warranty deals directly with the Conference but it follows the promise of Tradition two where we are reminded that our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. Talk about unqualified. I am reminded about one item I shared at my second Conference where we (the second year Delegates) were sharing our suggestions for success at the Conference with the first year delegates. I offered the comforting statement that all of us second year delegates had all of six days more of Conference experiences than the new delegates had. So clearly, we were not qualified to have any authority over anyone. More than that, this helps us understand that even our Chairman of the Board or any Trustee or even staff members who also serve at the Conference are simply other equal members. I served as the Chairman of Report and Charter for my second year and my vote counted no more than any other member of the committee or the Conference. My great wisdom and vast experience carried no more weight than any other member of the Conference, and I had no control over how the members of my committee or region voted on any issue. The same is true for all other members of the Conference. One person who regularly at-

tends my home group is fond of saying "there are no bosses in AA, and if there were bosses, he would not be here."

Warranty Four tells us "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." So, did you ever wonder where substantial unanimity came from? Warranty four is the answer and this again has some roots in Tradition 2 where we attempt to reach a decision with the direction of our Higher Power. Unanimity is a wonderful concept in A. A. and it is much more than majority rule, the idea is to get as close as possible to everyone agreeing on an action. We use tools such as asking for and listening to the minority opinion on all votes. If we can't get two thirds agreement on an issue, then we do not move on. We typically define substantial unanimity as at least a two thirds majority, and even some occasions where at least three quarters majority is desired. Sure, there are some items that get unanimous approval, but more often than not, there is some dissention. This dissention leads us to listen to the minority, so we do ask for minority opinions in all votes, followed by the possibility of a re-vote. Bill wrote that our desire for substantial unanimity is a "safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority." I was recently dismayed when I read that our General Service Board changed the procedure for selecting a general manager when they wrote in part "If substantial unanimity cannot be achieved after substantial discussion and reflection, the Chair of the General Service Board may call for a vote by simple majority." We have a Third Legacy Procedure where we to "go the hat" to make the selection if substantial unanimity cannot be achieved. I have seen the hat work in many levels of service up and including the selection of Regional Trustees – I still wonder why our Board had made this decision, when they continue to use and recently reaffirmed that our Third Legacy procedure will be used to select the Chairman of the Board.

Warranty Five tells us "That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy." Again, I think of Ken (the guy I mentioned earlier who is glad there are no bosses in AA) and his constant reminder that I can't tell him to do anything and that I can't keep him out. Now, maybe some corollary similar to this may be found in the long form of Tradition 3, and I can assure you that Ken does not know much, if anything, about the Warranties, yet he knows (maybe intuitively) that we can do nothing that might be personally punitive – like throwing him out of AA. No

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finer, no restraints, no punishments. We cannot single out a member because of his beliefs, or lack of beliefs. Just as important, we follow the suggestion of Traditions 11 and 12 where we refrain from any public controversy. Our General Service Office and many intergroup offices receive telephone calls, letters and emails almost every day for the "AA position" on a whole variety of public issues. Public anonymity breaks by some celebrity followed by some behavior attracting attention gets no comment from AA. A state deciding to legalize an intoxicant will get no comment from AA. A successful athlete giving public credit to AA and his sponsor gets no comment from AA. We simply avoid any public or private involvement in outside issues. The Conference has to be quite careful in the wording in our various pamphlets and books to assure that no controversy is stirred by our written materials or our actions. We have "God as you understand Him" and we just don't join into any further definition. We let the reader and the member decide on their own, and we avoid directing them in any decision. Warranty 5 even reaffirms how we treat those who try AA, go out and try other solutions and then come back to try again. We continue to welcome them back, and the last thing we want to do is to treat them as some sort of second class member – we just don't do that. AA just doesn't sue individuals or businesses. When I started my journey in AA, the sobriety tokens looked pretty much as they do today except on the rear, there was an "AA" embossed in the center. Now the rear center is blank. Why, well we had a registered trademark of the Circle and Triangle, as well as a registered trademark for "AA". The various companies that produced the sobriety tokens (Private businesses, not AA) were violating our trademarks. We could take them to court, but we decided to drop the circle and triangle trademark, and they stopped printing AA on the center rear of the tokens. We avoided a public controversy.

Warranty Six, the last warranty; tell us "That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit." In the normal format which Bill W tended to use, the last warranty is similar in tone as that which we see in the twelfth step and the twelfth tradition. Yes, the Conference makes decisions

for the Fellowship, and yes, some decisions are not always accepted by every member, but the action is still not that of a government. My home group reads the 12 and 12. My copy is from 1980 and it does not have the Introduction which was added in 2003. That's OK, it's just fun when we read that part of the book, I just sit there and listen – which was something I did in early recovery – just sit and listen that is. If we were a government, we would or could, state that everyone must use the current version of every publication to avoid any confusion. We have no dues or fees, and there is no way the Conference can invoke such a requirement. There is no "AA Police" although there are times when it might be a good idea. As a Delegate, I was asked to make this group stop this or that or to tell a group or individual how to do AA right. I was even sent notes from the General Service Office to visit a member who was producing a web site and videos which were close to violating our copyrights and trademarks, let alone breaking his anonymity at the public level. I served as a Delegate and a trusted servant, not a cop. All I could do is to remind all of our steps, traditions and concepts, share a few pamphlets and other appropriate service materials and then turn the results over to God as I understand him. Mutual respect and love is the hope and goal of how we operate. One last story might help you understand how different we are in the way we behave. It was late in week at the 63rd Conference, and we were debating a heated subject. Any member wishing to address the issue goes to the microphone and has two minutes to share their thoughts. The debate had become quite heated and unpleasant words with personal denunciations were flying all over the room. My fellow delegate from Ohio was at the microphone, introduced himself and then asked that the remainder of his two minutes be used by us all to silently reflect on why we are there and what we are there to do for the fellowship. The room went silent, the timer rang the bell at the end of his two minutes, and the discussion continued in a civil and loving fashion. We were again acting for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, not as a government. The Conference is a spiritual entity, and we mortals gladly returned to serving you and those to come.

Thank you for your presence and attention. I hope I have said something which will help you to be a better citizen in our life saving Fellowship.

Presented by Mark E., Area 56, at the 80th A.A. Anniversary International Convention, Atlanta, July 2015.