

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

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"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."

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

A Word From Our Delegate

After a grueling, exciting, and absolutely awesome time at the 63rd General Service Conference, it is really great to be back home. A very special "Thank You" to Jamie B. our Area Chairperson. Her presence as usual, was a great source of encouragement, emotional and spiritual support.

Arriving on Saturday afternoon, Jamie and I had the privilege of attending a Meet and Greet, hosted by the General Service Office Staff, followed by three meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was a real treat and so very exciting to see old friends, and to make the acquaintance of new friends.

When conference began to open on Sunday Morning, nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced as I stepped through the doors into what I believe is the largest ballroom I have ever seen. A most spectacular sight, tables set in classroom style and draped with beautiful blue coverings. As I stood there in awe, gazing over the room, there it was, way up front, hanging from the ceiling across a long row of tables on a dais that seemed to stretch across the entire width of the room....."the banner" printed on gold silk-like fabric, it read: **63rd General Service Conference**. WOW!! I said to myself, I am really here, which was later confirmed when I heard my name during the Roll Call. There are no words that can describe to you how I felt at that moment. I will say however, that I only remember feeling that way once before in my sober life and that was at my very first International Convention – 1995 in San Diego, California.

The Chairman of the Board, Ward Ewing, gave the welcome and literally set the atmosphere of the conference with a big smile an equally big "Hi, how ya'll doing", and then went on to define the word ya'll. As the room exploded in laughter, I began to feel more at ease and an enhanced sense of inclusiveness. Although there were many, many such moments of levity and humor during the conference, our purpose for being there was never in jeopardy.

Despite all the warm fuzzy feelings that I was experiencing, one thing still haunted me — the "dreaded timer". Where was it? Maybe they won't use it. But then at the Sunday night banquet, there it was, they were using it, and it was flashing green, yellow, and red. Oh boy, I was scheduled to give my Area Highlights on Monday night, 2 minutes. I could only hope that the Force would be with me, and it was, the buzzer didn't get me, yea! And that "dreaded timer" didn't even get me when I went to the microphone to share. Yea, yea!

My assignment was to the Literature Committee and I was curious to see how our committee system worked with eight people from different parts of the United States and Canada. Additionally, because we are one of those areas that have an annual Mini-Conference, I was well aware that the voting session can sometimes be long and intense, I was very excited and curious to see our committee system work with 131 voting members from all parts of the United States and Canada participating. It only took a few moments for me to realize that it works just fine, and in fact, I had the honor of being party to a group of people who really walk it as I do....*our common welfare must come first*....

The voting sessions were co-chaired by the Chairman of the Board and the General Manager of the General Service Office. Yet, to my surprise, points of order and corrections were made from the floor. I realized that it was because I had forgotten one of the basic principles of our fellowship....*progress not perfection*....Also, the chairs strictly followed what was written with no surprises and no changes.

As the week rolled along, and meeting and mingling continued, I felt a great sense of belonging, acceptance, and love. Only in Alcoholics Anonymous can such a diverse group come together with such humility, respect and gratitude. There were no prideful discussions of one's occupation or status in life. Just truly amazing to share with judges, attorneys, flight attendants, landscapers, clergy, law enforcement, educators, etc., and be able to feel absolutely comfortable doing so.

On the flight home, I was still riding that pink cloud and it occurred to me that it was not so much as who was at the conference that help to make it such a rewarding experience, rather it was who I did not see at the conference. I did not see Ego, Arrogance, Sarcasm, or Pomposity there. Finally, the Chairman of the Board, being a southern gentleman didn't rest until he extracted from me my middle name, and began to address me by my first and middle name whenever our paths crossed. **God, I love Alcoholics Anonymous.**

Thank you for the privilege to be of service. Yours In Loving Service, Ola P.



WHY DO WE NEED AN AREA?

Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence.

Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer —ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself [to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and] to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital [and jail] cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

But what does all this have to do with Area 54, or any area for that matter? Why do we need this extra layer of bureaucracy?

In its simplest terms, the **AREA** is the bridge between the individual AA group members and the trustees of the AA General Service Board.

Until 1950, these overall services were the sole function of a few oldtime A.A.s, several nonalcoholic friends, Doctor Bob, and [Bill]. For all the years of A.A.s infancy, [we] oldtimers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our elected **DELEGATE** performs the continuation of the work of our founders, Bill and Dr. Bob. Imagine 2 million individual AAs trying to run the headquarters.

Almost none among us are so situated as to make a sole vocation of this work. But our delegate and officers give almost all their spare time to service work without thought of compensation for their labors. These trusted servants are doing the work that many of us don't have time for, and their work deserves to be supported financially.

How is our support of these vital services any different than our personal 12th Step work? When you get that call in the middle of the night to call on a sick alcoholic in need of our help, we don't refer them to the GSO in NYC. We get up and dress, get in our car, and head for the drunk. We notice on the way that our gas tank registers EMPTY. We stop for gas and continue our mission of mercy. Our service work is supported by that little bit of gas money that we expend on our 12th Step call. Our individual 12th Step work is supported by our own self-support. We don't expect to be compensated by Central Office. "A.A. in action calls for sacrifice of much time and [a] little money."

But when it comes to travelling all over the state of Ohio and the region, well, we all know how much gasoline costs. Imagine if you had to absorb those costs out of your own pocket. Only the wealthiest individuals could afford to stand for area office. Not a very democratic idea, is it?

At each level of service, the sorts of things that need support vary substantially. 12th Step work ought always be carried face-to-face, one alcoholic talking to another. The **DISTRICT** helps the delegate cover the area, which would be impossible for the delegate alone on a group-by-group basis. A local **CENTRAL OFFICE—or—INTERGROUP** provides meeting directories, stocks literature for purchase, and coordinates local calls for help and speakers for the general public. The **AREA**, besides being the communication bridge from groups to the trustees, provides services in a broader geographic area, filling in where there are no central offices, and serving as a forum for shared experience, strength, and hope between intergroups, districts, groups, and individual AAs. We do this by providing workshops, assemblies, sharing sessions, and the annual mini-conference. And, finally, our national headquarters publishes our literature and handles overall public relations while providing the myriad of services that we have asked for over the years. Quoting our service manual again:

Our present array of services may look like big business to some. But when we think of the size and reach of A.A. today, that isn't true at all. In 1945, for example, we had one paid worker to every 98 groups; in 2012, with services still further expanded, one G.S.O. worker served approximately 850 groups in the U.S. and Canada. Today, the Office serves well over 2 million members in over 100,000 groups worldwide.

It all comes back to the **GROUP** and I hope that you all will take this information back to your home group and share it with them fearlessly and repeatedly if necessary. Concept One reminds us that "The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship" and not in the trustees or the GSO staff. With that authority, comes an equal responsibility, resting chiefly with our groups. By assuming our spiritual responsibility every time we pass the basket, each of us participates in ensuring the present and future unity of AA-as-a-whole, worldwide.

~Your editor, Jeff

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



Alternate Delegate's Report

Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life and gave me new direction. I am grateful to both the program and the Fellowship. Gratitude is an action word. If I am grateful then I am active in Alcoholics Anonymous. Our text says that we are to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and our fellow man. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. Service is the key.

I knew nothing about being of service when I entered the rooms of AA. It was all about me and what you could do for me. The 12 Steps have been the key to both my recovery and the development of my relationship with God, which now compels me to be of service. The text states that "Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his point of view the way he established his relationship with God." **It is a Spiritual program.**

How can I be of service to both God (Higher Power / God of My Understanding) and my fellow man? I was told to just do the next right thing. Love

and obedience are the keys. I have heard that "you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving". When we become obedient, we have freedom. Because of this we become productive citizens in our community and Alcoholic Anonymous.

Because of our gratitude we give our time, talent and money. We help the new man/woman who comes to AA. We are active in our home group: setting up the meeting, making the coffee, buying the refreshments, getting the literature, chairing the meeting, placing our contribution in the basket and cleaning up after the meeting. Helping out at the local Inter-Group/Central Office. We get into General Service by becoming our group's General Service Representative (GSR). We attend District meetings, Area Assembly meetings and join Area Committees. We become active in Alcoholics Anonymous. The journey begins, our **Action shows our Gratitude.**

Calvin L.
Alternate Delegate

Area Officer and Committee Reports

Treasurer Comments...

Thank you to all the groups and individuals who have send contributions to Area 54.

Your Thank You letters should be "in the mail" very soon. If you would like to help stuff envelopes, etc. Just let me know. I always can use another pair of hands.

The Area Events schedule has the 2nd Quarter Reporting due for the July Assembly. This will include operating expenses and income as well as contributions from groups by districts.

Thank you to Cleveland Multi-District for asking me to share information on Self-Support.

Thanks to Unity Day for the opportunity to share "How We Contribute" and to share the suggestion of \$2 in the basket. This particular suggestion is at least 20 years old for sure. In 1962, a Hershey Bar was a Nickel and now it is at least a Dollar. A bottle of Coca-Cola was a Quarter and now the same size is \$2 or more. *[See the graphic on page 7 of this issue. You can obtain an electronic copy in several formats by contacting the editor of this newsletter.]*

Make your groups stronger by supporting them. This will strengthen your sobriety with the gratitude you have that the doors are open at these groups for you and the new person.

How grateful are we?

Thanks for your continued love and support. With love and service, Susan Robinson, Area 54 Treasurer, Panel 63.



Reports, Cont'd

While on the Journey...life shows up

My how the time flies when you are having fun. I have heard that statement a many of times. However, it really seems to fit right here and now. It has been about six months in this general service journey and I am having a fine time. What am I doing? I am learning about how AA works at the area and state level. I am witnessing the joy that some "longtime" general service servants have because we have a east-central regional trustee from the state of Ohio, which hasn't happened for our state in a long time . I am gaining ideas on how money and spirituality mixes in AA. (They go together very well, so dig two bucks out your pocket and put them in the basket). I am also learning the important of meeting deadlines (I do not always make them, but I am learning). Lately, it seems like the God of my understanding has provide me opportunities to grow spiritually, to gain patience and tolerance, and to lean on him. I really like having my life kind of mapped out, know where I am going, and how I am going to get there and general service work is fitting in very well. My sponsor said I am finally becoming more organized and that's a good thing. Nevertheless, just recently a "monkey wrench" was thrown into my life. I became agitated, and for a few seconds thought, "This mess again?" I reached out to my support group and the recurring

theme was "God doesn't close doors, and not leave open a window" or "You haven't been brought this far...".The one that stood out the most was this statement, "If you profess to trust him, then TRUST him and let him do is job." These are wise words for me to reflect on and live by. Therefore, this latest "life action" might actually be "another journey" about to begin in my professional career. Ultimately, whatever happens, I need to remember that I trust him. He is in the driver seat...He knows what direction I need to be headed in..Mary B. said it best, "Sugar, remember the Serenity Prayer. It works" ...

Until the next time, In Love and Service

Shyrl B.

Panel 63/Area 54 Recording Secretary

Hello to all in Area 54: The more I learn about alcoholics anonymous, the more I learn about myself and how to live life on life's terms and not mine! It's like putting on a "New Pair of Glasses" (written by Chuck C.) I've learned that if I choose to think positive and maintain a positive attitude, it will become easier to accept life as it is dealt to me. This means that I actually have a choice in how I respond to situations. For me this must

be a daily choice. I realize that with a positive attitude I can see the bright side of life, I can become more optimistic; it gives me more happiness, more energy, which enables me to have more inner power and strength. This in turn allows me to have more faith in myself to achieve goals I thought I could never achieve or was afraid to even attempt them. Remember though I said this was like putting on a "New Pair of Glasses", and new behaviors are like the new glasses, In order to turn the mind toward the positive, some inner work is required, since attitude and thoughts do not change overnight. I must practice them in order to become comfortable with them. I can only do this One Day at A Time. So for me positive thinking and having a positive attitude are my "New Pair of Glasses" that I am putting on each and every day. My goal is to keep them on all day long. Being a trusted servant in Alcoholics Anonymous is one way of helping me achieve this goal. I love this program!

Yours in Service Always,
Jamie B
Area 54 Chairperson



Step Eight inside Tradition Eight inside Concept Eight

“Making a list and checking in twice ...”

It was a nice line for a song about Christmas and children; but it is serious business in our recovery program!

Let us look at Step Eight (8). For those who have never made a list or perhaps never added to their original list those whom they had harmed, their inventories are incomplete. Have we never been at fault in our personal relationships since that first attempt at righting the wrongs in our lives? A Step Ten might make corrections, but the names on the list need to grow with every attempt at righting the wrongs we make. It will behoove us from time to time to look at the list for it might contain valuable insights as to our holding on to some serious handicaps. While Step Eight rarely stirs up much discussion, Tradition Eight is perhaps as equally misunderstood.

What is a “service center;” will the meaning change depending on the service being asked for? Who actually hires these employees? What will be their compensation, but most importantly who determines the “nonprofessional” nature of A.A.? We need to understand the similarities in the step and the tradition. The step determines the people who, at some point in our past, present, or future, we allowed or are allowing some sort of control over our lives. The tradition holds the same key. Those in the Fellowship we employ to do our services enjoy that same control over the entity they serve. Our GSRs are given some control over the groups; the DCMs are given a similar control over the GSRs. The area officers are given that same control as well.

Is the area a service center? By definition, it does provide a service to the membership. Who or what part of our service structure can employ others to serve the area? Can the “Service Manual” be ignored?

Who is best suited to work out these details? Should we acquiesce to the General Service Conference or Board of Trustees to tell us what we should or shouldn't do? Perhaps the area should

abolish the assembly and let “old-timers” do all our service work. It would save time, talent, and resources if we did this. We might even consider voting by e-mail thus eliminating any need to have assemblies. Are these thoughts fatuous (vacantly silly) or should they be considered for discussion at our assemblies? As an old-timer, I hope we never become that insane.

“Who hires, are the only ones who can fire!”

When working through my amends, it soon became apparent the mending of the relationships gave me tremendous freedom; not only from my own destructive behavior, but freedom from the control I had allowed others to have over me. If God is to own me, then no others can! In hiring God, I fired each of those I had employed to run my life. Thus Step Eight and Tradition Eight revealed the ‘gods’ I kept around, allowing my ego to be in control of my life and not a recovery based on “spiritual principles.”

The spiritual principles which my sponsor O'Brian and those in my home group taught me, allowing a new freedom, did not come easy. When our district needed to create committees to serve our district or our area needed to create committees to serve the area, who would we elect? I soon learned that those that elect or hire people to serve us in Alcoholics Anonymous, needed to know more. More about ourselves and of those we wished to hire. What soon became apparent was this -- our character was revealed more than those of whom we wished to hire. It is neither by accident nor by design, that Bill wrote in Tradition Eight the ancient words:

“Freely ye have received, freely give.”

Last issue, when addressing Tradition Seven, my comments were directed toward those who hired the servant. Was the character of those doing the hiring one of guilt; first for not doing their fair share, thus allowing others to receive monies because they chose not to serve? This issue we are addressing the servant; are they receiving monies for services rendered more than is their due, and does this correlate with the above quote? What is fair? In learning about the fairness of our Fellowship, we need to go back to the list we created in Step Eight and

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Step Eight inside Tradition Eight inside Concept Eight

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the mistakes we have made in being servants to and for A.A. But nothing serves us more wisely than seeing and accepting the mistakes we have made and been partner to in area affairs.

I've heard the rumors; a disdain, in regards for past delegates speaking at assemblies. I will not speak for any other past delegate, but as for this past delegate, I pray the time is near when GSR's and DCM's go to the mike and demand the floor be given back to them.

Please allow for some history on this issue: When, as a young GSR in 1963, I remember our assemblies were very orderly; our work was accomplished with quick dispatch. After exciting discussions, we voted, and everything went smoothly. The secretary took notes and with the addition of a recording machine the minutes were made simpler and accepted with little discussion. The area chairperson sat with the seated delegate at the front of the room taking questions from the GSRs and DCMs. If the chair or delegate felt further information was required they might call on a past delegate or someone else for help. This system worked very well until in the early 1980s when a delegate decided they did not need the input from the GSRs or DCMs and changed the process. The process changed when a serving Trustee advised our delegate to ignore the area and do whatever they wanted to do. We have never recovered from that gross misconduct by the Trustee or the Delegate. Both the Trustee and Delegate bragged about their conduct to me personally. This brings me to Concept Eight.

This concept, more than any other, demands that the groups, through their elected GSRs, control the entire service structure of our fellowship! To understand this principle we need to understand how the General Service Conference and corporate boards operate. The Conference should have oversight with respect to the Board of Trustees.

There are twenty-one elected members seated on the General Service Board [the Board of Trustees]. This number should always be kept to that number

as best as possible. The board from time to time operates with a smaller number and this smaller number changes the complexion of the board. This happens by not replacing a deceased member or a member who resigned. They control the makeup of the two other corporate boards, A.A. World Services [AAWS] and the A.A. Grapevine. They also control the directors, General Manager, and staff of the General Service Office. With this much control given the Board of Trustees it was evident to the framers of our service structure that, as the people who controlled us in Step Eight, and the people we elected to serve our groups, districts, and area's in Tradition Eight, we needed to have a safeguard over the Board with regard to Concept Eight. The only control we have today is the power of the purse. I wrote about that in the last issue, but let me expand on Concept Eight.

“(a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principle planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs.” They are the principle planners, but not the only planners. This leads us to:

“(b) But with respect to our separate incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustee is mainly that of full stock ownership and custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.”

I submit the relationship between the Board of Trustees and the General Service Conference now is no different than the relationship between the area chairperson and delegate, with respect to the GSRs and DCMs, after the trustee told our delegate NOT to listen or respect those the delegate served. “Custodial oversight” is not ownership of our principles, just our properties, our computers, and our desks.

Yes, the GSRs and the DCMs are given little if no respect, but forgive an old curmudgeon, you will not be given that respect until you demand the full attention of our seated delegate to serve you, the GSR and you, the DCM.

We are not having an election shortly but perhaps we can stop for a moment and ask ourselves three ques-

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Step Eight inside Tradition Eight inside Concept Eight

(Continued from page 6)

tions:

Have I made a list of the people I have harmed? If yes, do any of these people still play the role of god in my life?

With respect to knowing the people who serve us; are they principled, and do they earn the wages they receive?

Do you know how well your delegate and area chairperson has served you; with respect to making you aware of unprincipled people serving you at all levels of service.

I hope you choose wisely; you are putting your life and the lives of our children in their hands. O'Brian taught me self-respect by respecting me

enough to explain where I was wrong, how I could correct these wrongs, and then offering the same somewhere else in life. You will rarely hear me correct someone publicly, but I have been known to discuss our area and our affairs with some past delegates and other area officers. These people respect me, and I them; but do not believe for one moment I respect everyone who has served our area. If you respect them ALL, boy, do you need to start a list, and perhaps start it with me.

Your past servants offer you an insight into all areas of service. Thank them sometime.

ELD
Ishpeming, MI
Area 74

Self-Support

YEAR: 1962



VS



VS



VS



VS



VS



Next time you're at a meeting, try putting \$2.00 in the Basket. At your Home Group, try giving \$5.00 to keep it strong and FULLY self-supporting!

RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our AA experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, as He may speak in 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, GSR's 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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