

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

April, May, June 2015

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXIV, Issue 2

"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

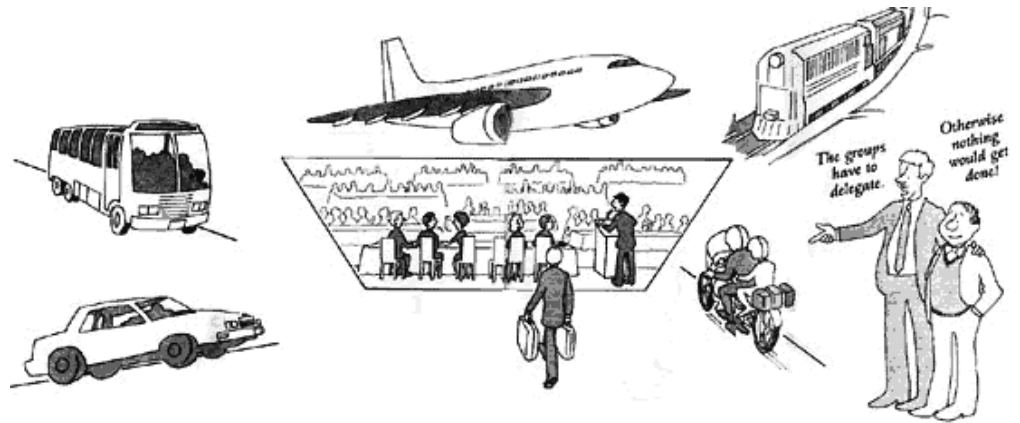
Three months into serving as your Delegate, and I have been on the move. The Area 54 budget was approved at the January Assembly. The next week there was the Mini Conference Planning meeting. In February, I attended the Conference of Delegates Past and Present. It is a great training session for new delegates and it allows you to meet and establish relationships with other delegates in the East Central Region. The only drawback is that it was held in Bay City, Michigan and the wind chill was 35 degrees below zero. I did not venture outside during that trip. Then we had another Mini Conference Planning Meeting.

In March, the Mini Conference endurance test begins. Each area in Ohio held its Mini Conference during the four weekends in March. The first weekend I traveled to Deer Creek in Mount Sterling, Ohio with three other panel members to attend the Area 53 Southeast

Ohio Mini Conference. The second weekend we traveled to Perrysburg, Ohio for the Area 55 Northwest Ohio Mini Conference. The third weekend we traveled to Dayton, Ohio for the Area 56 Southwest Ohio Mini Conference. I will be with you at our Area 54 Northeast Ohio Mini Conference the last weekend of March. I was able to receive the Conscience of all four Areas on Conference Agenda Items. However, my main concern is the Conscience of our own Area, which I will carry to the 65th General Service Conference in April. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

On my return we will be celebrating Unity day in May and I look forward to fellowshipping, breaking bread from different countries and celebrating our unity with you. I will also give my report from the 65th General Service Conference at this celebration. I hope to see you there.

Love and Service,
Calvin L., Panel 65 delegate,
Area 54 — Northeast Ohio



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OUR GROUP CONSCIENCE IN ACTION

In this issue of the *Northeast Ohio Recorder*, we focus on the well-informed group conscience.

Recently, a new group applied to one of our many central offices in Ohio to be listed in their directory. It was a 'specialty' group, focusing on a minority group within AA not previously identified within this jurisdiction. AA has many specialty groups—men's meetings, women's meetings, GLBT, adults only, doctors only, etc. Remember when a non-smoking group was considered a specialty group?

The question was raised at the intergroup level, "Should this meeting be listed?" Perhaps we have sliced and diced our special communities within AA to the point of depreciating our cherished unity within the fellowship. Is there an over-riding reason that this group feels they need special recognition? Should any specialty group be listed?

The debate went back and forth at this intergroup meeting I was privileged to witness. In the end, the officers and staff received a thorough discussion of the pros and cons which gave them a better sense of the informed group conscience of the area and, while some minds may remain closed, the greater group conscience is hopefully better informed as a result of open and respectful sharing.

If nothing else, those present got a good history lesson in the struggles that every 'minority' opinion faced in AA at one time. Whether black or white, gay or straight, young or old, Christian, atheist, or free-thinker - there is a place in AA for everyone. We don't all have to attend the exact same meetings. All who have a desire to stop drinking should, however, be welcomed in any meeting.

The weekend of March 27-29, General Service Representatives, District Committee Members, committee chairs, area officers, and interested AA members gathered

in Independence, OH for a weekend to discuss the pressing issues of AA today. Every year, the General Service Conference convenes for a week in New York City to discuss these same issues. The conference is made up of delegates from 93 areas in the US and Canada, trustees, directors, and staff members from GSO and the Grapevine magazine—totaling 133 people.

Our delegate, Calvin L., will be representing Northeast Ohio at this Conference the last week of April. Our annual mini-conference is an opportunity for Calvin to listen to the area conscience as he prepares to attend AA's annual business meeting. He also attended a training session for new delegates in Bay City, MI hosted by the East-Central Region's past delegates. He got a chance to meet and interact with the thirteen other delegates from our Region, eight of whom are first year delegates like him. During the month of March, the delegate and alternate delegate attended all four mini-conferences held across the state of Ohio on successive weekends. Northeast Ohio hosted the last of these informative gatherings. Results begin on page 6. —>

As a result of all these meetings, we hope that our delegate Calvin will arrive in New York as one of the best informed members of the conference. While he is not bound to vote the way our area voiced it's opinion on certain issues, these weekend gatherings are a "preview of coming attractions". These events not only give him a thorough debate of the issues, but also prepare him for the rigors of long days and nights of meetings and debate which constitute AA's biggest and longest group conscience meeting, 'populated with folks who REALLY LOVE group conscience meetings', to quote an old friend.

As demonstrated by the two examples above, AA works best when we have a well-informed group conscience. Knee-jerk reactions are avoided as we discover how best we can carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic, both in and out of the rooms.

~Your editor, Jeff

NOTE: There was not enough room in this issue to print all the talks from the Mini-Conference. Look for more in the next issue!

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



IN MEMORIUM
Mary E. Branche, age 84, passed away on February 3, 2015. Sober since February, 1976, she served as our Panel 39 delegate, attending the 1989 and 1990 General Service Conferences. Mary was the first African American female delegate for Northeast Ohio. She also served as our Alternate Delegate, 1985-1986. Mary was Director of Admissions for East Cleveland Straight Talk – a substance abuse treatment center for adolescents. In her free time she was active in many organizations and enjoyed volunteering with events including the Playhouse Square and The International Senior Games. Her legacy will live on through her four children and ten grandchildren and great grandchildren along with a host of AA friends.

Area Officer Reports

ALTERNATE DELEGATE

Service in AA constantly confirms, for me, that being a part of Alcoholics Anonymous has been and continues to be awareness as to what life is truly all about. "Service is the Key"

There are different levels to everything in life and service is another level of Alcoholics Anonymous. This level is allowing me to see how Alcoholics Anonymous actually works by observing how people in other districts, cities, and states practice the program.

Self-acceptance is another key for me that is vital to my ongoing recovery. If I am insecure with myself, or lack self-esteem, then positive growth would be complicated. The spiritual segment of our program assists me in overcoming my personal insecurities, thereby allowing me to use the spiritual principles offered to help me gain self-acceptance. By relinquishing myself over to the care of my Higher Power, I am able to achieve the strength and courage necessary to reclaim hope, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and the drive I need to battle the perils of the moment.

Acceptance does not mean allowing others to take advantage of you. It simply means that you look realistically at what has happened and allow yourself to see the positive opportunities that are most certainly there. Acceptance is an act of the will, and must occur if I am to continue in my recovery. By accepting my Higher Power's guidance and direction, I can attain the opportunity for positive, productive change and growth to take place.

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that **I am responsible**. Being active in service is one of the ways I am attempting to achieve this.

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

AREA CHAIR

My first months as Area 54 Chair have been busy. I attended the Area 53 Mini Conference and visited by good friends from over Ohio. I hope a District or Multi-District will step forward to host Gratitude Sunday. We need a bid at the April Assembly.

My goal is to listen to everyone and take all input into consideration before acting or responding. As some of us are implementing the Parliamentary Procedures in a somewhat shaky way, I don't want anyone to feel intimidated by them. I also hope our resident Parliamentarians will keep us on track. This meeting is here for each one of us to share our issues from our groups. Our meeting is hopefully the place where we get new ideas for new and old problems. Your opinions count and to be recognized by the Chair go to the microphone, state your name and service position only.

The Assemblies from March through October will include **Standing Committee Reports** and **District Commit-**

tee Reports. I hope all of us at the Assemblies will work hard to move our reporting and discussions along efficiently resulting in a smooth meeting.

As a Panel our position is to discuss and come to consensus. The welfare of the Area, following the guidelines in the Service Manual, the Concepts and the Area 54 Guidelines are our directive. Some of the Area 54 Guidelines need to be updated. The March Assembly will have voted on two changes for the Guidelines as of the printing of the NE Recorder. There may be other changes to be addressed. If you find Area 54 Guidelines that are out-of-date or wrong, please feel free to contact me or other members of the Panel.

With the cost of paper and postage, I encourage more folks to get the Recorder via email. This will include some having to print it out. On the other hand, you can email it on to those not receiving it. The electronic edition is a great way to get the information to a group without a GSR or even maybe to a group in a Dark District.

Part of my position as Area Chair is to work and assist the DCMs. I would like to encourage you to feel free to send me an email or to call if you think I can be of assistance. There is a Service Material Piece located at AA.org entitled "Sharing from DCM to a DCM."

Bill W. instructed us to listen to that lone voice in the back (of the room) going "wait a minute..." I have added to my goal list.

Love and Service,
Susan R, Panel 65, Area 54 Chair

AREA TREASURER

"A.A.'s far-flung Twelfth Step activities, carrying the message to the next sufferer, are the very lifeblood of our A.A. adventure. Without this vital activity, we would soon become anemic;

we would literally wither and die. Now where do A.A.'s services—worldwide, area, local—fit into our scheme of things? Why should we provide these functions with money? The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters [now the General Service Office] to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe. Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion—to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength—and that, under our Tradition of self-support; we are all going to foot the bill." —Bill W., October 1967 Grapevine

The above statement was taken from the A.A. Guidelines from G.S.O on Finance. Our co-founder Bill W. discussed the important of how it is our "collective obligation" to support our services. Therefore, you may wonder what service activities our self-support dollars is serving. According the 2014 Final Report of the

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Area Committee Reports

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General Service Conference these activities are as follows: the service work of the GSO office, publishing activities of A.A. World Services, A.A. Grapevine and LaVina, the Pension Plan and the Reserve Fund. All of these services are inter-connected or related. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. is the custodian of all contributed funds. The board's Finance and Budgetary Committee meets quarterly to review and approve GSO's budget and financial statements. Approximately 70% of GSO services funding comes from group contributions, the Birthday Plan, central office/district/area contributions, and excess funds of A.A. events or conferences. The balance is made up by profits from the sale of A.A. literature. Over the years, sales prices have increase over various publishing items to offset the declining contribution. The report also shares that actual dollar contributions continue their upward growth, but the bad news is that the proportion of contributing groups continues to be at an all-time low of about 42%. We as a fellowship need to truly embrace the Seventh Tradition of Self-Support.

Let's discuss some of the actual services that your GSO provides for our fellowship and why our self-support is so important. (A.A. members please check out their website, www.aa.org. There is a WEALTH of information about GSO and other World Services.) Besides the annual conference that is held in the spring for A.A. in the U.S. and Canada, each desk (committees) provides service to help A.A. as a whole. For example, the **Corrections Desk** responds to letters from inmates, coordinate correction materials and literature to area and district correction chairs. **Group Services/Web Services** revises and provides the A.A. guidelines and Service Materials, creates the DCM and GSR kits, respond to requests from local group, and Web services oversee the website. The **International Desk**, connect with A.A. around the world, responds to inquiries from professionals overseas where no service office exists and provides contacts for members relocating/traveling overseas, upon request. There other services that are provided; Gives office tours to visitors upon request, and provides visitor welcome packets. Additionally, GSO provides informational packets containing some A.A. literature in response to general inquiries for general information about A.A. The office also sets up an annual visit/tour for General Service Conference delegate visitors and guests during Conference week and large group visits and provides welcome / presentation meeting with refreshments (coffee, etc.). Provides local A.A. office information to anyone looking for A.A. meetings; provides group contact information to A.A. members where no local office exists for Twelfth Step purposes and when appropriate. AA and World Services provides does so much for our fellowship and it is time for **"us" the fellowship** to do our part by providing self-support to **all** of our entities including GSO/A.A.W.S.

The General Service Office (GSO) "... serves as a clearinghouse and exchange point for the wealth of A.A. experience accumulated over the years, coordinates a wide array of activities and services, and oversees the publication, all translations of, and distribution of A.A. Conference-approved literature

and service materials." – The A.A. Service Manual, page S77. In Love and Service, Shyrl B., Area Treasurer Panel 63/Area 54

RECORDING SECRETARY

This was my first opportunity to see a Mini Conference put on by a different AREA and my first time at this location. It was kind of awesome to see so many deer running all over as we entered the facility. We arrived Friday afternoon after a brief issue with traffic jam in downtown Columbus. I had dinner with Bob D and Susan R and while eating dinner we spotted a mother deer and her baby grazing just below the windows we were eating and after dinner we heard the ECR Trustee report, GSO report and the Friday night speaker.

On Saturday, I woke up to deer outside my window and we went straight into committee. They were split into two sessions, the first one beginning at 10 am to noon then we broke for lunch and the second one running from 1:30 to 4 pm. I was given the Literature [I] committee and we had three items to consider: the **first** one was the pamphlet "Inside A.A.; Understanding the Fellowship and It's Service Agencies" **P-18**; the **second** was to revise the pamphlet "You're A.A. General Service Office" **F6**; and the **third** was to revise the pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic" **P-32**. All three passed with great discussion and debate. The Saturday night banquet speaker was Racy J. from the GSO office and she had an awesome lead. I really enjoyed her lead and how grateful she is to the AA program and for all it has done for her.

Sunday morning started at 9 am straight into Committee reports and voting, all of our items in the Literature committee passed during the voting with much discussion and explanation and reconsiderations.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve you. Love and Service, Tina C., Area 54 Recording Secretary

MAILING SECRETARY

The last five months have been very rewarding to me. I have learned so much about my job as Mailing Secretary. I met with the US Post Office bulk mail staff ... they explained the rules on bulk mail. I found a presort company to print bar codes and addresses on envelopes. I also arranged for printer to print flyers. And finally, folding parties had to be arranged.

But I did not do all of this on my own. I HAD TO ASK FOR HELP from God, friends and strangers. Being an only child I have always had to do things myself. From youth into maturity, I never learned how to ask for help. Instead, due to supervisory positions I held, I always required or demanded the help I needed. The idea of asking for help never crossed my mind in my work or my personal life.

It was a humbling and rewarding experience to ask others-- friends as well as people I had never met before--how to do my job. To say, "Can you help me? I don't know where to start." And they took the time to show me. I had asked for help at the general service meetings to get the folding parties scheduled, and with their help, I have the whole year filled. The rewards I am receiving from the folding parties cannot be

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Area Committee Reports

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measured. I get to travel to other groups, meet new people, hear others' stories, and tell my own story.

We have one common goal and that is to help the alcoholic in and out of the rooms of AA. It is our responsibility to carry the message and what better way to keep all of our Area 54 groups informed than by mail. It is my pleasure to get that mail out to all of you—either via email or US Mail.

Ron Oaks, Mailing Secretary, Panel 65 Area 54

REPORT ON GSR WORKSHOP

On February 15th Area 54 put on its 4th annual GSR Workshop. Since the Group Service Chair, Ola P., was at the conference of "Conference of Delegates Past and Present," Diane K. stood in her place. About 75 attended. My worst nightmare came true when I learned the projector and screen for the power point presentation was not in house. Genny, Matt, and I did the best we would using the GSR Workbook. Luckily I had rearranged some of the workbook to match the presentation so all was not lost. I hope that those who attended learned a lot.

I want to thank the Area for allowing me to serve as Group Services Chair for the past two years. I now, officially, pass the baton to Ola P. and her committee members. Thank you. Submitted by Diane K.

LITERATURE

We are getting ready for this year's Mini-Conference. We have a wide variety of books and literature to be on sale. As of this time, \$193.00 of books and literature has been sold since January. Including nine commemorative edition of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. More has been ordered for the Mini-Conference to be displayed and purchased.

David W., Area 54 Literature Chair

CORRECTIONS

I am very honored to be the new Corrections Chairperson for NE Ohio. I will be very glad to serve you; this will be a big challenge to me. I will be tackling this full force. Hopefully talking to the different HR people in the next two years, we will have a good connection between us. I will be glad to see the different units & hope to get some of the units that is in the dark districts active. With me talking to them this way I will be able to get them active. Hope to see all of you at this year's mini-conference.

God Bless, Marilyn H.

Area 54 Corrections Chairman

PUBLIC INFORMATION

We're planning to invite area radio and television stations to air our Public Service Announcements (PSA). There have been very helpful in the past to send those who desire our help to our doors. I've gathered PSA information as well as lists of area stations and will be working with a couple AA members who work in media positions about

how best to approach their counterparts in station programming to get these aired. For example, the stations need to know that airing them at 2 am is actually a good time to reach those who are in need of our help.

Bob McK., Area 54 Public Information Chair

NAAAW

The National AA Archives Workshop (NAAAW) planning committee last met on March 1st at the Akron Intergroup Office. Our planning is proceeding nicely. We have chairs for all the committees. We'll be contacting all the Central Office/intergroups in the area about displays and participation. We have 18 registrants to date, still a long way from our September 24th start. The hotel did exercise their agreed upon option to raise the room rate \$10 to \$109 per night. We're investigating possible souvenirs. Bob McK. will fill in temporarily for Tim H. as program co-chair and start to lay out the many, many program suggestions submitted by co-chair Gail L. While Gail now lives in Florida, she has been attending by Skype or speaker phone. The next meeting will be held May 3rd at the Cleveland District Office. <http://www.naaaw.org> for more details.

Bob McK., 2015 NAAAW Chairperson

AREA 54 HOSPITALITY ROOM TO HOST IN ATLANTA

The Area 54 International Hospitality Room planning committee last met on March 1st at the Akron Intergroup Office, immediately following the NAAAW meeting. Co-chair Jay M, who now lives in Albuquerque NM attended via Skype. We have been given the Birch Room at the Omni Hotel immediately adjacent to the convention center where most events area held. Akron IG has agreed to support this and has funded it well. Jim B., their archivist, is the hotel contact and in charge of the room. The Akron IG News will print and distribute 2,000 copies of their newsletter. Bob McK. Will contact other area Central Offices/Intergroups about displays or other items they may wish to put in this 27' by 40' room. We will not be providing refreshments in part because we must get all items from the hotel at increased cost, e.g., ~\$4/cup of coffee. The hotel provides four 30" x 6' tables, an easel and ten chairs. We think we'll need another eight tables minimum and they say there's no charge for that. This room will be on the same floor as the East Central Regional Hospitality Room. We explored but declined to pursue the possibility of merging the two rooms. We made a list for attendees willing to help out in the room during the weekend and eight people signed up.

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Expanded Content (16 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>

Mini-Conference Voting Results

Archives

A. Review Archives Workbook. *The committee reviewed the Archives Workbook and took no action.*

Report & Charter

A. The A.A. Service Manual, 2015-2016

6. Consider request to add text regarding reactivating districts or groups to the section "Stimulating Interest in General Service", S23. *The committee recommended that text regarding reactivating districts or groups to the section Stimulating interest in General Service, S23 be added. Vote 55 in favor - 10 opposed.*

7. Consider draft text for a new section on "Regional Forums" to be added to Chapter 9 (The General Service Board) on page S71 before the "World Service Meeting" section. *The committee recommended that draft text for a new section on "Regional Forums" be added to Chapter 9 (The General Service Board) on page S71 before the "World Service Meeting" section. Vote 54 - 0*

8. Consider request to include a chart in the section "Working with Local Intergroups and Central Offices" on pages S41 – S42. *The committee recommended that a chart be included in the section "Working with Local Intergroups and Central Offices" on pages S41 – S42. Vote 57 - 6*

Cooperation with the Professional Community

A. Review contents of C.P.C. Kit and Workbook. *The committee reviewed the CPC Kit and Workbook and took no action.*

Corrections

A. Discuss the Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.). The committee discussed the Corrections Correspondence Service.

B. Discuss ways to engage members in Corrections service. The committee discussed ways to engage members in Corrections service and to make announcements at the Group level.

C. Review contents of Corrections Kit and Workbook. The committee reviewed the contents of Corrections Kit and Workbook and took no action.

Finance

A. Discuss a request to increase the maximum annual contribution that the General Service Board will accept from an A.A. member from \$3,000 to \$5,000. The committee recommended the request to increase the maximum annual contribution that the General Service Board will accept from an A.A. member from \$3,000 to \$5,000. Vote 73 - 5

B. Review suggested area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference. The committee reviewed the suggested area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference, and took no

action.

C. Discuss material from A.A.W.S. Self Support Committee. The committee discussed material from A.A.W.S. Self Support Committee.

V. Grapevine / Hispanic Liaison

D. Discuss ways to increase organization-wide support for Grapevine and La Viña such as: (1) How to recognize and support the International Journals of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grapevine and LaViña, as fully integrated parts of A.A. and its service structure, and (2) How to provide concrete support for Grapevine and La Viña throughout the Fellowship and service structure, including the use and purchase of Grapevine and La Viña Subscriptions, books and other items. *The committee discussed ways to increase organization-wide support for Grapevine and La Viña, and suggested a redesign of the Grapevine Pamphlet and include a flyer promoting the Grapevine and La Viña.*

F. Consider the list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2016 or later. *The committee considered the list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2016 or later, and recommended to print the Armed Forces book.*

The committee considered the "Voices of Early AA" and committed it for further study.

G. Review A.A. Grapevine Workbook. *The committee reviewed the A.A. Grapevine Workbook and took no action.*

Literature I

A. Consider the revised draft pamphlet "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and Its Service Agencies" with the new title "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services." *The committee recommended that the revised draft pamphlet "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and Its Service Agencies" with the new title "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services" be approved. Vote 61 - 0*

B. Consider the revised draft pamphlet "Your A.A. General Service Office." *The committee recommended that revised draft pamphlet "Your A.A. General Service Office" be approved. Vote 67-0*

C. Consider updating the pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic." *The committee recommended that pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic" be updated. Vote 70 - 0*

Literature II

D. Consider developing literature for the alcoholic with mental health issues. *The committee recommended to develop litera-*

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Mini-Conference

ture for the alcoholic with mental health issues. Vote 55-19
 E. Consider producing a book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with The Twelve Concepts for World Service. *The committee recommended that a book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with The Twelve Concepts for World Service, be produced.* Vote 50 - 16

F. Consider updating the pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman". *The committee recommended to update the pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman".* Vote 57 - 8

Public Information

A. Review 2014 annual report from the trustees' Public Information Committee regarding G.S.O.'s A.A. website.

The committee reviewed the 2014 annual report from the trustees' Public Information Committee regarding G.S.O.'s A.A. website and took no action.

C. Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

3. Review current video PSAs for relevance and usefulness. *The committee reviewed current video PSAs for relevance and usefulness, and recommended that we should retire both old PSAs: A Force of Nature, and Testimonials.* Vote 61 - 2

4. Consider production of new PSAs. *The committee considered production of new PSAs, and recommended that the Spanish language PSA, Tengo Esperanza, be produced in French and English.* Vote 63 - 0

D. Review the final draft of the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous 2014 Membership Survey." *The committee reviewed the final draft of the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous 2014 Membership Survey" and took no action.*

F. Review contents of P.I. Kit and Workbook. *The committee reviewed the contents of P.I. Kit and Workbook, and suggested that the pamphlet "Many Paths to Spirituality" (P-84) be added to the PI Kit and Workbook.*

Special Needs- Accessibilities

B. Review contents of Special Needs-Accessibilities Kit and Workbook. *The committee reviewed the contents of the Special Needs-Accessibilities Kit and Workbook and took no action.*

Treatment

A. Review contents of Treatment Committee Kit and Workbook. *The committee reviewed the contents of Treatment Committee Kit and Workbook and took no action.*

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Floor Action: Develop a pamphlet and directed to Newcomers related to the issue of 13th stepping.

Vote to consider: 14 - 49. Motion to reconsider: 29 - 35.

MORE TALKS FROM 40th MC IN JULY ISSUE!



NOTE THE DATE

May 2—Columbus, OH Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting	11:00 am
May 17 Unity Day—Delegate's Conf Report	Lit sales 2:00 pm
June 12-14 Founders' Day at University of Akron	GV sales Saturday only
June 21 Area Open House Picnic	TBA
July 2-5—Atlanta, GA 80th anniversary International Convention of A.A.	
July 19 Area Assembly	GV Lit sales 2:00 pm
August 7-9—Cincinnati, OH 59th Ohio State Convention	
August 16 DCM College	2:00 pm
September 20 Area Assembly	2:00 pm
September 24-27 — Independence, OH National A.A. Archives Workshop	
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 TBA

Unless otherwise noted, Area Assemblies & Workshops are held at The 12 Step Recovery Club, 1480 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH, (on 42 about 1/4 mile south of Route 303).

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.

Confidential Contact List

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Sponsorship in AA

This article is dedicated to the memory of Ernie Kurtz, AA's foremost historian, who was so pleased to include us WAAFTs as members of the Alcoholics Anonymous that he loved so dearly. He was a devoted friend to us and strove to include us as an integral part of AA's history.

By Thomas B.

Probably No Human Power

Here's another example that in my 43rd year of recovery in AA it's the obvious I so often miss! I must have heard, or read, "How It Works" at least 5,000 times, especially since it's ritualistically been read at most meetings I've attended the past 25 or so years. But, it's only been in the last several weeks that I've actually heard, or noticed, the (b), which states "That *probably* no human power could have relieved our alcoholism."

It doesn't say "definitely," or "certainly", or "absolutely". It says "probably" – it occurs to me, therefore, that a certain element of doubt and uncertainty has been an integral part of the AA suggested program of recovery from the earliest days of our Fellowship.

It strikes me that "human power" was in play when Bill was visited in November of 1934 by his childhood friend, Ebby, who was not drinking because he had joined the Oxford Group, telling Bill he was sober because, "I've got religion". Bill, simultaneously being joyous because that meant more booze for him, was baffled, "aghast" as he describes it in the Big Book, wondering if his friend's alcoholic insanity had morphed into religious insanity. Nevertheless, this was a crucial founding moment for what AA has since become during its almost 80 years of history – it was the result of the human power of one alcoholic sharing his story with another alcoholic.

Another critical founding moment, also animated by human power, occurred some six months later in May, when Bill, sober since his last admission at Towns Hospital, was most dejected, alone in Akron, devastated after a business deal fell through. He knew that in order for him to stay sober he had to talk to another alcoholic. He made several frantic phone calls from a pay phone in the Mayflower Hotel. Across the lobby from the pay-

phone was the bar from which he could hear music and laughter. Desperate, he got in contact with Henrietta Seiberling, who was able to connect him with Dr. Bob, another hopeless alcoholic. It was arranged for them to meet at the Seiberling estate Gatehouse on the afternoon of Mother's Day.

Dr. Bob and Bill met in the library off the living room of the Gatehouse. Bill leaned across a small table and told Dr. Bob that he had to talk to another alcoholic so that he would stay sober. In effect, as related by Ernest Kurtz on page 29 of *Not-God*, he said:

I called Henrietta because I needed another alcoholic. I needed you Bob, probably a lot more than you'll ever need me. So, thanks a lot for hearing me out. I know now that I'm not going to take a drink, and I'm grateful to you.

This especially captivated Dr. Bob's interest, hooked him, and instead of only staying for the 15 minutes he had intended, he ended up talking with Bill for some four hours that evening. After Bill told his story of alcoholic debauchery, Dr. Bob shared with Bill his story as well. Thus, for the second time the human power of alcoholics sharing their stories with each other occurred. As Ernest Kurtz sums it on page 35 of *Not-God*:

Wilson told hopelessness rather than preached conversion, and he told by using his own story, his own experience, the literal facts of his own life, rather than by offering abstract theory or even scientific facts.

Later, after Dr. Bob had recovered from his last binge and made his amends, Bill and Dr. Bob agreed they needed to help another alcoholic. A nurse at Akron Hospital introduced them to Bill D., a prominent Akron lawyer when sober, but also a raging drunk, who had been hospitalized numerous times. Dr. Bob paid for a private room in Akron Hospital, so that he and Bill could share the human power of their stories of stopping drinking

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with Bill D.

As related in *Not-God* on page 39, Bill D. excitedly told his wife after several visits, "If Bill and Bob can do it, I can do it. Maybe we can all do together what we could not do separately."

Thus, began the first group of drunks that would evolve into Alcoholics Anonymous. And so it continues down to the present day with AA groups meeting all over the world where AA members still share their stories of experience, strength and hope with each other, so they can stop drinking and recover. In other words, the human power of alcoholics sharing our stories with each other enables us, a day at a time, to recover.

The element of doubt expressed in (b) above was likewise continued in the evolution of the Twelve Traditions during the 1940s and 1950s. If the Steps explain "How It Works", the Traditions delineate why the AA program works. Tradition Two also includes an element of uncertainty. It does not read that AA's sole authority is a loving God as He does, or will, express Himself in our group conscience – rather, it reads, "a loving God as He *may* express Himself in our group conscience."

A group conscience, of course, is the consensus of the human beings, who are members of the AA group. It expresses the human power that evolves among the members of the group as they consider and decide how best to carry the message of recovery to alcoholics who attend their group meetings.

It's always been my belief that the primary essence of the recovery process in AA can be found in this dynamic of alcoholics sharing their stories of recovery with other members at AA meetings. When an alcoholic shares with other alcoholics her or his experience, strength and hope – in other words, the Good Orderly Direction of recovery – the human power of identification through our shared language of the heart enables AA members to help each other get and stay sober. Ernie Kurtz describes the process on page 204 of *Not-God*:

As program, AA teaches that the physical, mental and spiritual components of each alcoholic's life are mutually connected... But AA is also fellowship, and as such it teaches that it is with others rather than as individual that one treats self healthfully.

The first atheist in AA, Jim Burwell, describes in his story, "The Vicious Cycle", in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions of the Big Book the importance of his connection to the human power of the group:

I did like these new friends because, again, they were like me. They had also been periodic big shots who had goofed out repeatedly at the wrong time... for a long time the only Higher Power I could concede was the power of the group, but this was far more than I had ever recognized before, and it was at least a beginning. It was also an ending, for never since June 16, 1938, have I had to walk alone.

It's always been my belief that the stories in the back of the Big Book along with Bill's story in Chapter 1 are much more effective in demonstrating "How It Works" than the rest of the material in the first 164 pages.

Here's how Glen C., moderator of the [AA History Lovers](#) Group describes it:

"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now." It is in the reciting of them that we find ourselves contacting the spiritual power which can transform our lives. One can investigate early AA spiritual concepts and ideas, philosophy, sociological structures, and psychological theories, and analyze all of these at great length. But telling stories – and listening to them – is far more important and basic, because this is the way the message is really passed on, and the context in which the deepest spiritual insights are revealed.

At our convention in Santa Monica last November, I was struck by a comment Eric C. made. A 30

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year combat veteran of the U.S. Marines, he compared the camaraderie within an AA group to the *esprit de corps* he experienced with his Marine Corps units during service in three wars. Alcoholics, like soldiers in combat, survive largely due to the strength of the human power of our *esprit de corps*.

Theologians and ardent believers may speculate about the First Cause being some sort of deity – nevertheless, the agency of survival by alcoholics in recovery, like soldiers in combat, is the tangible, observable, experienced human connection, the human power of alcoholics with each other.

My experience of the human power of a group of people organized around a common goal or purpose is not limited only to AA. I have experienced similar dynamics resulting from the power of humans to successfully collaborate together to achieve common goals in other endeavors.

I played high school football in Jackson, Mississippi, for a small Catholic high school in the middle of the protestant Bible belt. Our teams were not only scant in the number of players compared to other teams we played, we were also considerably smaller – we were outweighed by an average of 25 to 30 pounds per man. Nevertheless, our coach, Bill Raphael, a legendary Mississippi high school coach, was able to inspire and motivate us to overachieve despite our limitations. At the end of each winning season, we would play a post-season bowl game in which he pitted us against teams ranked at least one or two classes above our level of competition. Coach Raphael was able to elicit from us a combined team effort of human power that resulted in us also winning three football bowl games.

Both in high school and college I was also actively involved in theatre productions, both acting and directing. As well, for ten years following college, I sought a career in the theatre, working in regional theaters and Off Broadway. After a long and arduous rehearsal period, when a theatre company gels into an effective ensemble per-

formance, the results, both for audiences, as well as for members of the company, can be magical, if not downright miraculous! The same phenomenon occurs from the human power of musicians or dancers in performance to deeply move themselves and those who experience them.

It's evident throughout the history of our species that the human power of a group of people dedicated to a common purpose is ubiquitous. I admire the notable quote by Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has".

From AA's earliest days the human power of sponsorship has been an integral part of AA's recovery program. The AA publication *Living Sober* on page 26 relates that, in the early days, hospitals in Akron and New York would admit alcoholics if a sober AA member would agree to sponsor them. Here's how *Living Sober* describes the early process of sponsorship:

The sponsor took the patient to the hospital, visited him or her regularly, was present when the patient was discharged, and took the patient home and then to the AA meeting. At the meeting, the sponsor introduced the newcomer to other happily non drinking alcoholics. All through the early months of recovery, the sponsor stood by, ready to answer questions, or to listen whenever needed.

Dr. Bob paid to move Bill D. to a private room for the talks he and Bill had with him.

Throughout his life, until he died in 1966, Bill always referred to Ebby as "Ebby, my sponsor", which he did in the Memorial Article to Ebby in the June, 1966 issue of *The Grapevine*. In his book, *Ebby, the Man Who Sponsored Bill W.*, Mel B. describes how Bill financially supported – in the parlance of today's recovery, enabled – Ebby all throughout his life, even when he was notoriously and obnoxiously drunk, which he often was.

Nevertheless, Bill continued not only to help support Ebby, he also paid for him to attend several AA

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Conventions. Ebby experienced his longest period of sobriety for seven years in Dallas, Texas. However, after the death of a girlfriend, he again relapsed. Bill continued to help him, arranging through the AA Board of Trustees for a stipend, so he could live the last two years of his life at McPike's Farm, near Ballston Spa, NY, one of the early "Drunk Farms" for alcoholics. Ebby died sober of a stroke March 21, 1966.

In a sense, Dr. Bob and Bill co-sponsored each other, developing a deep friendship, as they worked with alcoholics to establish AA along with other members from the first two AA groups in Akron and New York. This was during the period when the Big Book was written to spread their message of recovery to other alcoholics. They continued to sponsor each other while collaborating to guide AA's early evolution during the 1940s, when the Twelve Traditions were conceived up until Dr. Bob died on November 16, 1950.

The History of Sponsorship in AA

In February of 1939, the Works Publishing Company distributed 400 copies of the draft manuscript of what would become *Alcoholics Anonymous* to all the then recovering alcoholics in Akron and New York who had been involved in the collaborative writing project. Bill and Dr. Bob wanted to get final editorial sign-off from members for what would become the basic text of AA. To insure there were no obvious misstatements, they also sought editorial advice from prominent members in the medical and publishing fields, as well as eminent religious leaders. This effort resulted in three significant editorial revisions.

First, as Ernie Kurtz notes on page 75 of *Not-God*, a New Jersey psychiatrist, Dr. Howard, recommended that all declaratives, such as "you must" be changed to suggestions, such as "we have" or "we tried." He noted that alcoholics have always been preached to without much success, proposing that suggestions might be more

effective instead of finger-wagging directions.

Second, Bill, to accommodate Hank P. and Jim B., toned down to some degree the ardent religious tone of "How It Works" as described on page 167 of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, published in 1957:

In Step Two we decided to describe God as a "Power greater than ourselves." In Steps Three and Eleven we inserted the words "God as we understood Him." From Step Seven we deleted the expression "on our knees." And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: "Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a Program of Recovery." AA's Twelve Steps were to be suggestions only. Such were the final concessions to those of little faith or no faith; this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of belief or lack of belief.

A third significant editorial revision was to delete this outlandish direction at the end of the (a), (b) and (c): "If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away!"

And so, *Alcoholics Anonymous* was finally published on April 10, 1939. It was soon nicknamed the Big Book, since it was designed using thicker paper and larger margins than usual, so buyers would get their money's worth.

Nowhere in the first 164 pages of the Big Book is there specific mention of sponsorship. However, Chapter 7, "Working With Others", contains a number of suggestions and guidelines for helping alcoholics. Herein follows some of the language conceived by the first successfully sober folks in Akron and New York:

- * "Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately a lot of prejudice exists." (p. 89)
- * "If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that *he does not have to agree with your conception of God.*" (p. 93, emphasis in original)
- * "It is important for him to realize that your at-

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tempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him.” (p. 94)

- * “Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection... If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience.” (p. 95)

Nevertheless, the overall message of Chapter 7, “Working With Others” – also evident throughout much of the rest of the first 164 pages – is summed up on page 98: “Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust God and clean house.”

In 1940, the Akron No. 1 AA Group, also known as the King School group, published a pamphlet entitled, “A Manual for AA”. It was described as “a practical guide for new members and sponsors of new members of Alcoholics Anonymous”. Mostly written by Dr. Bob and other original members still closely affiliated with the Oxford Group, it is much more authoritative and declarative in style than the Big Book. It reintroduces some of the concepts deleted from the multilith copy of the Big Book, urging newcomers to follow the “rules” of AA. The primary rules are total abstinence and studying the Big Book so it “becomes your second Bible”. If not, the newcomer may relapse and thus lose membership in AA and any position within AA they may hold.

Like the Big Book, the pamphlet is directed primarily towards “real alcoholics”, those so-called low bottom drunks who have lost everything, those who suffer from “pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization”.

Much of it is devoted to qualifying the newcomer to insure that he is such a hardcore case, thereby ready to follow not only the Twelve Steps but also the Four Absolutes of the Oxford

Group. The newcomer is urged to devote no less than 100% effort – in other words, per Oxford Group parlance, newcomers are to be ‘Maximum.’

It’s emphasized that although women may also be alcoholic, this pamphlet is for men only. Further, it warns that when a woman is present, including family members, men alcoholics tend to lose their focus on sobriety, tending to slack off doing what’s necessary to maintain sobriety. In other words, they become less than “Maximum”. Sexist? Just a tad.

The sponsor is urged to assume full responsibility for the newcomer to include, if necessary, paying for his hospital stay. The sponsor is directed to “Encourage him to look up to you. Your responsibility never ends”.

It has a much more explicit tone of traditional Christian ideology than the Big Book was revised to reflect. In addition to the Big Book and the pamphlet, the sponsor is urged to ensure the newcomer has a copy of both the Bible and the *Upper Room*, a daily devotional magazine published by the United Methodist Church. The newcomer is exhorted:

There is the Bible you haven’t opened for years. Get acquainted with it. Read it with an open mind. You will find things that will amaze you. You will be convinced that certain passages were written with you in mind. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, VI and VII). Read St. Paul’s inspired essay on love (I Corinthians XIII). Read the Book of James. These readings are brief but so important.

The newcomer is encouraged to “read Alcoholics Anonymous and read it again so that It will become your second Bible”. The sponsor in addition to instructing the newcomer about the Twelve Steps and Four Absolutes, also directs him to start each day with a quiet period of contemplation for guidance and prayer, after reading the *Upper Room* or other devotional material.

The newcomer is mandated, “Keep these rules in mind. As long as you obey them you will be on firm ground. But the least deviation – and you are vulnerable. It is those who try to cut corners who find

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themselves back in their old drunken state”.

It is not surprising that Dr. Bob felt this way about sponsorship, after all at the end of his story in the Big Book he writes: “If you think you are an atheist, an agnostic, a skeptic, or have any form of intellectual pride which keeps you accepting what is in this book, I feel sorry for you... Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!”

The rapid growth of AA in Cleveland resulted in an AA Sponsorship Pamphlet written in 1944 by Clarence S., who had been sponsored by Dr. Bob. This pamphlet was directed to sponsors only, but reiterated much of the material found in Akron’s “A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous”. The notable exception was deletion of any references to the King James Bible or the *Upper Room*, which were Protestant publications, not appropriate for the many Catholics in Cleveland who sought recovery in AA.

Clarence S., following the 1937 example of early AA members in New York, separated AA meetings from the Oxford Group in 1939, since parish priests forbade Catholic alcoholics to attend what was clearly a Protestant Christian movement. Besides, as he informed Dr. Bob, “They use the wrong Bible”. Otherwise, it recommends a very directive approach to instructing the newcomer how to do the Twelve Steps and how to live in accordance with the Four Absolutes. It emphasizes the absolute necessity of belief in a Power greater than oneself that “is the heart of the AA plan”.

Clarence S. settled in Florida in the 1960s, where he became a 32-degree Mason and one of AA’s first and most popular circuit speakers, A Prophet in his Own Town, leading meetings and AA retreats throughout North America. After his third marriage in 1971 to Grace, an ardent Christian, he became quite religious, quoting the New Testament at meetings and retreats, according to his biographer Mitchell K. Sponsorship as promoted in Akron and Cleveland was a predominant theme of many of these retreats.

During the 70s, when I was getting sober in New York City, I remember Clarence being quite controversial within AA – some members wor-

shipped him as the cult leader of the one and only true AA, while others vehemently believed, myself included, that he was inappropriately imposing Christian religiosity on AA, thereby egregiously violating our professed tradition of being spiritual, not religious, in accordance with the AA Preamble, which states that “AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution...”.

The dogma reflected in these two documents and by Clarence S. form the core ideology of what Ernie Kurtz in *Not-God* describes on pages 301-302 as “Akron-style AA”. It also forms the basis of the growing movement within North America the past 30 to 40 years to reflect primarily, if not only, an evangelical, pietistic, Christian doctrine, as evidenced by the Back to the Basics and Simply AA brands of AA. It’s the impetus behind the delisting of atheist and agnostic AA groups.

In 1976, GSO published a pamphlet, Questions and Answers on Sponsorship, with revisions made by the General Service Conferences of 2004, 2005 and 2010. Herein follow some of the most pertinent guidelines discussed in the pamphlet as they differ from the Big Book, the Akron AA Manual, and the Cleveland pamphlet approach to sponsorship:

- * The sponsor and the sponsored meet as equals (p. 7)
- * Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal (p. 8)
- * There is no superior class or caste of sponsors in AA (p. 12)
- * Encourage newcomers to go to a variety of different meetings and to get a number of different viewpoints about AA and literature (p. 13)
- * Don’t impose personal views or beliefs or pretend to know all the answers (p. 14)
- * There is no best, or single, way to sponsor. Be flexible and tolerant of whatever helps a newcomer. People of many faiths, or no faith at all, can get sober in AA (p. 15)
- * Firmness is best tempered by sympathy and understanding (p. 16)
- * Sponsorship doesn’t mean forcing any specific interpretation of AA; many alcoholics maintain

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sobriety without personal belief (p. 21)

The GSO pamphlet on sponsorship offers a considerably more open, balanced and compassionate approach to helping others compared to the more doctrinaire views of the Big Book, Dr. Bob and Clarence S. It reflects a more humanitarian, egalitarian, benevolent view of how we in the AA Fellowship have evolved to help each other recover.

My Sponsor, Peter

We can see from this review of the history of sponsorship that there is a considerable range of different approaches and practices of sponsorship. Some take a very narrow, conservative view, trying to replicate how it was allegedly done by our earliest members in Akron, and others are much more progressive and non-directive in their approach.

In some groups I've attended certain people have reputations for being Big Book Nazis, whereas others have a much more loosey-goosey approach to sponsorship. One thing that especially puzzled me when I moved away from New York AA was when people would proudly refer not only to their sponsor, but to their grand-sponsor and great-grand-sponsor, etc. It took me a while to realize that what they were doing was tracing their lineage of sponsorship back to Clarence S., and thus directly to Dr. Bob. Many traditional, mainstream members of AA consider Dr. Bob to be, along with Clarence, the true and legitimate founders of AA, dismissing Bill and GSO as apostates.

To conclude this treatise, I want to relate my experience with sponsorship. In essence, I conclude that sponsorship is an endeavor which greatly enhances both the sponsor and the one sponsored. Both help and learn from each other.

Though I made several "half measures" with sponsorship during my first year of recovery to include one of the founders of Adult Children of Alcoholics, Tony A., who wrote "The Laundry List," I didn't deeply connect with a sponsor until

early in my second year of recovery right after I discovered my second wife having an affair. I chose Peter to be my sponsor because he was back solidly in AA after a horrid relapse upon discovering his wife having an affair. I didn't want to relapse!

Peter helped me to solidify my Higher Power as being AA, since he helped me accept that I could not stay sober without the Fellowship of other sober members in AA. He then suggested that I could make a decision to turn my will and life over to AA and the Fellowship, because I could tangibly experience that other members loved and cared for me. In short order, I finished a 4th Step, which I had been procrastinating about for several months, and soon thereafter shared a 5th Step with him.

Then we just stopped doing the Steps formally. Instead we deepened our friendship to include sharing a sober house on Fire Island for several summers. We spent hours discussing our spiritual pursuits. These included meditation, voluminous reading in the world's spiritual traditions, astrology, yoga, New Thought, several New Age gurus and authors to include Ram Dass, Alan Watts, Bubba Free John, Werner Erhard, Marianne Williamson, Gary Zukov, Matthew Fox, Stanislav Grof and Shatki Gawain. During the 80s we also both became very involved with A Course In Miracles. Yup, we were prime examples of our "woo-woo" baby-boomer generation.

Essentially, we shared our experience, strength and hope with each other as equals, as peers, enabling both of us to stay sober for many years. We also shared our rage, anger, resentments, despair and dismay about what we judged to be mostly a messed up world and society, filled with injustice, suffering, poverty, and never-ending war.

Often we laughed, deep, raucous belly laughs, one of the most spiritual behaviors, I believe, we humans can experience together. Perhaps our deep and frequent bouts of laughter together were the most precious gifts we shared.

For the last ten years of his life Peter drank, more or less successfully. We stayed in regular contact even after he and his wife relocated to South Africa, where he died in August of 2006 from an aortic an-

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Sponsorship in AA

An Open Letter

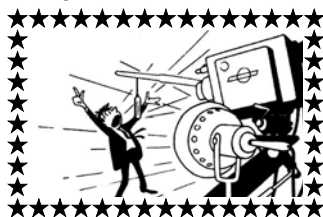
eurysm. He remained until the day he died full of humor, hope, wonder and curiosity. Though he could be very dark, archly cynical and sarcastic at times, he was also full of awe, wonder and mostly great gratitude. I never stopped learning from his wisdom and sardonic acceptance of life as it is, always being considerably more grateful than despondent.

Like Bill did with Ebby, I have never stopped referring to Peter as my sponsor. The son of a street hooker in upper Manhattan during the late 30s and 40s, he lived a rich and full life, both in recovery and after he drank again. He was my sponsor for 33 years to whom I shall always be grateful. His humor, knowledge, wisdom and light-hearted approach to life and living always inspire me.

It still does, since I periodically communicate with him. On my MacBook Air is a 154-page document entitled "Missive to Peter". In the mystery of the Kosmos – as the science of the recent blockbuster movie Interstellar hypothesizes – I magically believe he somehow hears me, and I also believe in some unknown, mysterious way he continues to commune with me. Hey, as an aging hippy baby-boomer I may have morphed into an agnostic atheist, but I'll always be somewhat "woo-woo"! Whenever I help others I remember with gratitude the memory and certainty of Peter's human power which sustains my recovery today in my 43rd year of sobriety in AA as much as it ever did.

As well, I am sustained in continuing recovery today by everyone who shares in the several AA meetings I attend each week, whether they are new to recovery, coming back from a relapse, or have been fortunate like myself to have years in the ever-evolving process of recovery. I am newly inspired by the infinite variety of stories I hear in AA meetings, which demonstrate the human power of our shared recovery.

Posted on AA Agnostica on February 22, 2015 by Roger C.
<http://aaagnostica.org/2015/02/22/sponsorship-in-aa>



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Bob McK., 2015 International Convention Area 54 Hospitality Committee.

An open letter to every A.A. in Ohio and across our world:

I feel compelled to talk to you about the most unpopular thing in all of AA. Something more dreaded than working your 4th Step or actually doing what your sponsor suggests. Yes, the dreaded thing called service work. It amazes me how a room gets quiet and people disappear when anyone mentions service work.

I keep hearing about how this is a program of action and yet I see inaction everywhere. I just don't comprehend this. This program has saved my life, and continues to keep me alive each and every day. So I ask you, are you truly grateful?

One old-timer challenged me years ago when he said to me, "You have worked the Steps...now what?" Are you really reaching out to help all those who cross your path? What about the more than 99% of the membership who I don't work the Steps with? Don't they matter?

I can quote mountains of literature telling me why I need to work with others or regurgitate the best wisdom old-timers continue to transmit to me verbally at meetings. But I am told I need to speak only from my own heart and experience. Judge me by my own actions, not my words. This is no frothy emotional appeal, but a call to arms.

My belief is that I have to have a service position of some sort in AA just to be a member in good standing and JUST TO STAY ALIVE. Is God truly my Employer? Do I really need to give the Gift of Sobriety away like it is Christmas 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, each and every day?

I refuse to be a space-heater in a meeting. I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE. Wherever I am. I refuse to be silent; hear my voice. Have I truly been reborn or continue to be among the walking dead, completely soulless like I was before I worked my Steps.

So, I ask YOU to think about something very serious, something so important, something that can save a life. The next time your group has elections, think about taking an AA job. Any job, whatever it might be whether it be chairing a meeting, making coffee, greeting, or representing your group at your Intergroup, District, or Area.

Don't take the position to look good, to fill out your AA resume, or because you want to please your sponsor, and most especially because you were out of the room when the elections were held and your friendly do-gooders voted you in as a joke. Take a position to change the world!

Please, please, please take service position, any position whatsoever, even a position that has never existed before in your group. Have fun with it! Get creative! Be honest and willing enough to do the work, though. Help someone stay sober. The lives you will be saving just might be mine or yours.

Raymond L., DCM District 25 (western Lakewood), Area 54
DOS: 4/4/93