

MARGENSER

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

Delegates Corner: Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action

Tom R, Area 29 Delegate

Friends... The theme of the 59th General Service Conference is, "Our Commitment to Carry A.A.'s Message – Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action." The Conference will be held April 26 – May 2, 2009 at the Crowne Plaza Times Square in New York City. An historic note is that this will be the last year for the Conference at this location, as the Conference will be moving to the Rye Town Hilton in Rye, NY in 2010.

Too often I hear that people perceive general service in Alcoholics Anonymous as political, or being the politics of A.A. From my own experience in the Conference process, nothing could be further from the truth. Our *A.A. Service Manual* describes the delegate's role at the General Service Conference: "As voting members of the Conference, delegates bring to its deliberations the experiences and viewpoints of their own areas. Yet they are not representatives of their own areas in the usual political sense; after hearing all points of view and becoming fully informed during Conference discussion, they vote in the best interest of A.A. as a whole." (p S45) Further, "The Conference comes closer to 'government' than anything else in A.A., but as Bill W. put it in the first edition of this manual: *'Of course it cannot be too often said*

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Spirit of Rotation

Nancy B, Area 29 Alternate Delegate

The following is a workshop presentation I was asked to give on "The Spirit of Rotation". I have to chuckle at the opportunities God gives me to take a closer look at myself. My sponsor uses an expression I can relate to... "We teach best what we most need to learn."

My first service job, after set-up person at my home group, was Intergroup Representative. My sponsor at the time, who was secretary of Intergroup, handed me her notebook at one monthly meeting and asked me to take the minutes for her the next month. I had that job for two years. I didn't understand that secretary was an elected position, and apparently my sponsor didn't either. I later became chairperson of my home group and allowed the members of my group to continue re-electing me for about four years.

Up until a few years ago, the "spirit of rotation" was somewhat foreign to me. Oh, I had an idea what it was, but like so many things in AA, I didn't think it applied to me in most cases. I wanted to hang on to most of my service jobs because I liked doing the work, or I didn't think anyone else would want to do the job I was doing, or I didn't think anyone could do the job as well as I could. Of course, I didn't ask anyone else to do the job, and I certainly didn't walk away from a job so that someone else would have the opportunity to try.

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Thank You, Elder Statesmen

Holly W, As Bill Sees It, Arnold, MD

I love service, even when it is frustrating, even when I disagree, even when I feel like quitting, I can't help it, I just love it. My love of service is a result of our elder statesmen (including women; of course), whose enthusiasm for service has had an infectious effect on me. Especially when I am frustrated or feel like quitting; it is their experience, strength, and hope that keeps me going. The 12 Concepts, which many people have never heard of outside of service, play a very important part in my sobriety both in and outside of AA, and I never would have even heard of them had it not been for the elder statesmen's enthusiasm for all aspects of AA. I have also recently had experiences with bleeding deacons, and the difference actually seems pretty clear to me. Elder statesmen inspire, and bleeding deacons drive away. Fortunately, in my sobriety, the elder statesmen far outnumber the bleeding deacons, and for that I am so grateful. It is the experiences shared by our elder statesmen, who have been through the bruises I now experience in my service work, that help me realize I am not alone nor unique in my bruises, that it has all happened before.

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MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and facilitate communication among AA members, groups, districts, and intergroups within the Maryland General Service Area. The MARGENSER aims to be instrumental in carrying the AA message. This quarterly newsletter seeks to publish AA-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength, and hope. Material will be reviewed by the MARGENSER committee chairperson or by a member of the committee. Nothing published in the MARGENSER should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or AA policy. Finally, publication shall not constitute endorsement by the newsletter itself, Area 29, intergroups, districts, local groups, or AA as a whole.

Waking Up

Maureen S, Conscious Contact Grp., Crownsville

I wrote an article for the Grapevine Magazine entitled "Staying Teachable" when I was about nine years sober. The article was about waking up to the realization that there would always be more for me to learn about recovery. Very early in my sobriety, I fanaticized that by my Tenth anniversary I might possibly achieve AA "guru" status. I would then be able talk glowingly at meetings about how I had worked the steps and "had it all together". At some point that bubble burst and when I realized that my character defects were still with me and that the quick personality change I Had hoped for was not forthcoming. I did not want to stagnate and I sensed that I needed to get moving again in the program. So, I plunged back into the steps as if my life depended on it - for it did.

Before AA I thought that the spiritual path was direct and difficult but with hard work and sacrifice sainthood/perfection was achievable. I read Bill Wilson's caution "that it was progress we seek and not perfection" but I thought maybe there were old-timers who actually had achieved perfection and maybe when I had double digit sobriety I might as well. At some point I read Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* and his words "the road to sainthood lies through adulthood" caught my attention. The insight here for me was that spirituality was about growing up and not "arriving at some idealized state of perfection." The idea of seeking growth for its own sake was a spiritual awakening for me.

I began to look at the steps differently, not as separate entities once done and over, but as pathways for ongoing exploration in learning more about myself, others, the world, and God. As my goal became spiritual growth rather than spiritual perfection I was better able to accept myself and consequently my judgment of others lessened. I began to look forward to new insights and awareness, to relax, and enjoy the journey of growing up. I did, however, have to give up thoughts of eventual guruhood because I was and am still a work in progress and if I ever decide I have reached a perfected state it probably means that I have not.

The wisdom of the Twelve Steps guides us through the process of growing up and becoming adults. Growing up is messy work, more like a crazy dance than a straight line and at times as mysterious as a maze. Active addiction stunts our emotional and spiritual growth because our behavior continually violates our value system and we are plagued by guilt and shame and we stop growing. In the first three steps we learn about honesty, hope, and trust. Steps Four through Nine teach values of truth, humility, forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation. In Step Ten we practice being accountable for our words

and actions. Step Eleven is about vulnerability and developing an ongoing relationship with the God of our understanding. In Step Twelve we learn about love without a price tag. Through the steps we learn to live true to our values and free from the remorse that perpetuated the vicious cycle.

The wisdom of all spiritual traditions teaches that spirituality is a journey, not a destination. Sobriety is a dynamic process not a static condition, much like a spiral which continues to deepen and widen with time. If we choose it growth has no end. New insights about the steps can fuel us with new awareness about our lives, our relationships, and our sense of God which in turn bring us back to the steps with new understandings. As we dedicate ourselves to our spiritual practices of prayer and meditation our conscious contact with God deepens and our gratitude grows. Every meeting, sharing our lives with others, reflecting on our daily readings, all of our experiences can raise our awareness of that "Great Reality within" mindful that each moment is a sacred gift to be lived and appreciated bringing with it opportunities for more growth.

Twenty five years have passed since writing that article and I am more convinced than ever that joyful sobriety is based on waking up and staying teachable. I am grateful to this program as it continues to lead and feed me. I am reminded of Buddha's teaching about keeping a "beginners mind" and Jesus' words to become "like little children". If we remain open and receptive we will continue to grow and we will experience the wonder of ongoing newness of life as we delve ever deeper into the Twelve Steps. ▲

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Dawn H, DCM District 42

How many times have I heard in the rooms about moments of truth involving mirrors? Too numerous to count, I suppose. I remember mine. I had been lying to AA for about 6 months as I continued to indulge in old ways. More importantly, I had been lying to myself, and I did not even acknowledge that that was a problem. You see, at that point, I was not worth it, so I did not care a whit about what I did to me. I had a laundry list of things you had done to me, but the things I had done were as inconsequential as I was.

I remember standing in front of that mirror in the middle of the night and looking at myself, messed up again. I remember saying, "You are a liar, a cheat and a thief, and I don't want to be you anymore." No truer words had ever passed my lips. It was the end. It took me another few weeks to admit all of this to my sponsor, who, it turned out, had known all along what I had been doing. She let the pain

be the touchstone; it was, and is, her favorite saying.

Recently, I had another occasion to gaze into a mirror of a different sort. I was honored recently to participate in District 31's production of Snow White and the Seven Character Defects. I played the evil queen, Snow White's stepmother, a real witch! I think I got the part because of my cackle, but some say I was type cast. I don't harbor resentments as much as I used to..... Just as in the familiar fairy tale, I asked Mirror repeatedly who was the fairest one of all. My faithful Mirror always answered the same way for she was just as dishonest as the day is long, and a people pleaser to boot. One day, though, she told the truth, and it was her position that Snow White was the fairest in the land. And just as I would have done had that scenario played out prior to my entry into the fellowship of AA, I set out to destroy Snow White by making her just like me.

The cast of the play consisted entirely of AA members, of varying lengths of sobriety. The common thread was a desire to be of service, and perhaps to have a little fun doing so. We rehearsed every Sunday afternoon from early November until the show in early February, an entire football season! We even rehearsed on Super Bowl Sunday. Friends asked me why I volunteered for such a thing. I replied, "To stay sober." That wasn't even the half of it, but I did not feel the need to explain.

You see, the audience of AA members already knew why we did what we did: to be of service, to show the newcomer that it is indeed possible to have fun and not drink, and to stay sober and happily and usefully whole ourselves. We spent many hours together and grew quite close. When someone had to miss a rehearsal because of a prior commitment, it wasn't just a pain that someone had to read their lines; rather, that person was missed for their contributions to the whole. Just as when a member of my home group misses the meeting, the meeting has a different flavor than it has when all are present. And the rehearsals would have been much smoother had we ever gotten through the entire play without at least one character dissolving into fits of laughter. I thought many times of the man who taught me the most about the value of laughter and how to be a good friend, and I know he was watching from above every Sunday and on the night of the play, laughing uncontrollably, for we are not a glum lot.

There was another, less obvious, benefit of appearing in this production that did not become apparent until after the play was over. In "Working with Others", we learn about it: "... to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 89)

We, the cast of Snow White, together for so

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Beyond the Home Group

Jim T, Area 29 Archives Chair

Looking back over my early years of sobriety, I'm amazed at the opportunities this fellowship offers all of us for spiritual growth, yet I couldn't see and wasn't looking for at the time. As I struggled with my motives for coming back, they have gradually shifted from what I could take from the fellowship to what I could bring into it, acquired only through the sincere self searching that comes from the application of the 12 Steps of AA.

As the monotony of going to the same meetings over and over again grew, and the "pink cloud" stage began diminishing, where was I to turn? I'm happy to tell you that the service structure Bill W. developed was available, and is still there for all us to grab hold of. I'm thankful for that. It can help us avoid complacency in our sobriety and opportunities for us to get out of our comfort zones.

I can feel through my own past experiences as a G.S.R., Corrections and Treatment Chair, D.C.M. for District 36, and now the Archives Chair for Area 29 the personal growth as I passed from one level of service to the next. With each position it meant making a little deeper sacrifice each time (with no expectations) for the common good of Alcoholics Anonymous. This was something I thought I couldn't attain or maintain in early sobriety.

I'm learning that when sincerely applied in my life, the guiding principles behind the 12 Steps helps me to keep at bay the first thought of the first drink, character defects and other obsessions. I must also sacrifice my natural desires for money, material well being, prestige, and romance. Going further, applying the 12 Traditions in my life allows me to take those sacrifices a little deeper. In exchange I get some joy, peace of mind, happiness, gratitude, understanding and a little bit of wisdom plus the ability to open myself up for more commitments to serve society and Alcoholics Anonymous in whatever capacity God and other people have in store for me.

Again, I thank God, the MGS Board, especially Linda J. for seeing in me what I could not see in myself, and for the financial support of the Area 29 groups for taking a chance and trusting me with your history. It's a valuable treasure of not only material, and experience, but a spiritual legacy that needs to be preserved for all of us and those to come. I could never have experienced this and what's to come if I hadn't stepped out "beyond the home group". ☺

(Delegates Corner) continued from page 1...

that while the Conference can issue orders to the General Service Office, it can never mandate or govern the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves. The Conference represents us, but cannot rule us." (p S51)

I can not often say enough about how un-political our General Service Conference is, along with the year round process in which we are involved to prepare for it. Between mid February and early April, all A.A. members will have the opportunity to participate in our six Regional Panels, reviewing and discussing the Final Agenda Items for the Conference. Our goals are to become fully informed on everything which will be discussed at the Conference, discuss the pros and cons of each item, and inform our delegate. At our Area 29 Mini Conference on April 3 – 5, our Regional Panels will report back to the fellowship and to the delegate and open the floor to discussion. With the sharing of knowledge, experience and viewpoints from our fellowship, I will carry this information to the 59th General Service Conference and share with other delegates. Without a private agenda, a driven set of mandates or set of instructions on how to vote, we share, we listen and we vote in the best interest of A.A. as a whole in an informed group conscience. As I return from the Conference I am responsible for reporting on what happened – what I saw, what I heard, what I shared, and what was felt. And the process continues.

Included in the list of Final Agenda Items for the 59th General Service Conference is an item submitted by Area 29, for the Conference Committee on Report and Charter. The item suggests simplifying language in the A.A. Service Manual, and was a suggestion from A.A. members in one of last year's Regional Panels. It's exciting not only to watch, but to be a part of the process that we are all experiencing, to watch an Agenda Item come to fruition, and follow it through the Conference.

Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action is certainly what we experience in Area 29 General Service. I am looking forward to attending as many of our Regional Panel meetings as possible, our Area 29 Mini Conference and hearing the sharing of experience from our fellowship. And I do not believe there are political agendas, mandates or power driven directors in our fellowship, rather people who love Alcoholics Anonymous. ☺

(Elder Statesmen) continued from page 1...

There are also elder statesmen in my local groups, not necessarily involved in service work but with long time sobriety and valuable experiences to share. I'm sure we've all experienced them- the ones who start speaking and we sit up in our chair to listen- the ones who say "I" and not "you". I perk up when they start sharing, because I know that I always hear something that I need to when they speak. We had a very dear elder statesman pass away in my local area recently, and he is missed very much. His enthusiasm for AA was truly infectious. When he spoke his love and gratitude for AA was clear. I once asked him a question about AA and at the next meeting he had an entire packet of information from the Grapevine archives for me. I will always remember his service, dedication, and valuable contribution to our group, and I know many others were touched by his sobriety and gratitude in action as well.

The effect of a bleeding deacon is very sad. I have seen people revved up for service denied the opportunity to serve, which seems to be such a waste. I can see why many people leave service with a bad taste in their mouth, claiming that General Service (or even an Intergroup) is all politics. I feel so fortunate to be surrounded by those elder statesmen with twenty or so years who still love AA despite the difficulties they have faced in AA service and in sobriety in general. The lessons they have learned are passed on in their experience, strength, and hope. They inspire on many levels, whether it be sharing with the area or taking the time to share one on one.

So I want to thank our elder statesmen. I want to thank you for your enthusiasm, and ensuring that AA will live on because you passed it on. You set an example that motivates. I know that our elder statesmen are not perfect, that they also have character defects, but they are willing to share even those experiences with their character defects that are not so pretty, which assures me that even though I am not perfect I can keep trying and that's okay. As long as I keep trying, learning, and keep an open mind, I hope to carry on the message the way our elder statesmen have passed it along to me. I am so grateful to have such wonderful people in my life and part of my sobriety. Thank you, elder statesmen. ☺

Mrs. Marty Mann- Part 2

(10/15/1904–7/22/1980)

Ron M. (BYOL Easton)

For medical treatment Marty was sent to London by ambulance where she was given large amounts of heroin for pain. She is quoted as saying that she loved it but told others not to try it. She spent six months in the hospital undergoing numerous operations and procedures some of which did not produce satisfactory results and had to be repeated in the United States. Besides the hospital medications she was allowed to have a small amount of liquor but soon parlayed that into a large supply. The usual hospital container of water was replaced by pitchers of whiskey. She then spent a period of recovery in Scotland.

She finally was able to return to the United States aboard the Queen Mary in December 1936. By the fall of 1937, Marty had become a classic low-bottom drunk. Soon after, Marty was offered and she accepted an offer to be examined by Dr. Robert Kennedy who was head of Bellevue Hospital's neurology department in New York City where she was admitted and stayed for about six months. Shortly after, she was interviewed by Dr. Harry Tiebout and admitted to Blythewood, an exclusive private psychiatric treatment center in Greenwich Connecticut as a pro bono patient of Dr. Tiebout and a charity patient of the facility.

One day in early 1939, Dr. Tiebout presented Marty with a manuscript of a new book about to be published. The first page of the book had the words ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. Tiebout advised Marty that it was about a group of people like her, what they did and how they got well. Marty was relieved to find out that she was not crazy but had an illness called alcoholism. As she continued to read she was upset to find a lot of reference to "GOD" and as a confirmed atheist the whole idea offended her. In addition the whole book referred to men with a passing reference to a woman named Florence. Sharing her displeasure with Tiebout she was told to continue to read the book, which she did, and eventually she found some acceptable phrases and information.

For a number of weeks Tiebout pushed

Marty to go to New York. She continually refused until Tuesday, April 11 1939, while visiting Tiebout he called Bill Wilson and told him she would be there at seven o'clock. He told her to catch the five o'clock train to New York and go to the address on the card where she would be taken to a meeting. She was met and escorted to 182 Clinton Street. Entering the room she panicked and ran to an upstairs bedroom where she remained crying until Lois Wilson followed her and told her that everyone was waiting for her downstairs. She was immediately the center of attention and freely discussed her drinking history. She could finish their sentences and they could finish hers. She had found a home.

The major factor in Marty's acceptance by the men was Bill Wilson's attitude. They became friends and seemed to be cut from the same cloth being visionary and entrepreneurial. Bill became Marty's AA sponsor and later heard her fifth step. Marty inquired why there were no women. She was told about Florence, who was around for a while and later moved to Washington DC, drank again and died before Marty's first year anniversary. There was also a woman named Mary Campbell who would have been the woman with the longest sobriety but relapsed in 1944. Thereafter she stayed sober until her death in the early 1990s. Marty was to leave Blythewood after about 15 months and take up residence in and around New York where she could participate in the AA meetings. She bore a special burden since she was the one called upon to 12 Step other women. The AA men thought she was wasting her time, saying, "Women aren't alcoholics." Her lack of success led her to agree with the men and felt that possibly she was a freak. Things, however, were to take a positive turn.

A few days before leaving Blythewood another woman was admitted that had been a previous patient. Nona Wyman was in dire straights and was immediately confined. Because her doctor did not think AA was helpful he did not allow Marty to visit her friend. Shortly after her arrival, however, she escaped and went to New York. Marty was called for help; Nona was found and brought into the

rooms of AA. Nona was Marty's first successful 12 Step call. From then on things seemed to start moving along quite well. Slowly at first, but picking up speed. Bill, Lois, Marty and others started to make trips to the newly formed AA meetings around Akron and Cleveland and other locations. Marty was pleased to find other women along the way and was quick to make many new friends.

-- To Be Continued --

Leadership in A.A.— Ever a Vital Need

Ray T., DCM, District 31

Bill Wilson wrote in Concept Nine, "Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety." What is leadership? One definition is "any act by an individual member, on the behalf of a group, with the intent to get the group to better meet its goals."¹ Another states that "leadership means working with and through people by providing them with a vision of the future which is meaningful to them and motivating."²

In our literature, leadership also shows up in Tradition Two – "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern".

As Bill wrote in Concept Nine, "Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow." But where should we look to find leaders? First, in the February 1990 issue of the A.A. Grapevine, Bill is quoted as saying "every *sponsor* is a leader." He further writes, "What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example—these qualities of leadership can make all the difference between life and death." So sponsors are usually a member's first introduction

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SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO...

In accordance with the 7th Tradition and abiding by the group conscience of your home group, you may send contributions in support of Area 29 to:

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 2683
Salisbury, MD 21802

Who's Been Messing With My Subscription?

Larry H, MARGENSER Chair

I'm sorry to report that the MARGENSER mailing list has recently had an in-depth review of addresses.

This was brought about by new changes in the post office regulations which now require that we pay postage for all returned mail. In the first month this regulation was in effect, we had 175 copies of the 2008 4th Quarter MARGENSER returned. To eliminate future expense for returned mail, the entire list of 1036 addresses were compared to the postal service zip code +4 program. Needless to say this was a fairly lengthy project.

First, we took a batch of returned items to the post office to determine the meaning of the return codes. Then we removed the one hundred seventy-five names from the returned mail... deceased, addressee not known, vacant locations, etc. Finally, we ran the comparison on zip code +4 and removed any addresses that the postal computer program said was "probably non-deliverable" or "no such address." Where zip codes and the four numbers following did not match our address information, we entered the postal information.

I was surprised at the large number of incorrect entries on our list. This would indicate we're not getting change of address information from our subscribers. Keep us in mind when you move.... Let us know so we can change your address or discontinue your service.

So... if this review and purging of mailing information has resulted in your MARGENSER not being delivered this month, hopefully you've picked up a copy and now know what has taken place. To reinstate your subscription, fill out the "Mailing Update Form" or leave a message on the MARGENSER website at MARGENSER@marylandaa.org

Sorry for the inconvenience, but I do believe we needed this to be done to keep our information current and keep expenses down on returned mail.

Have you ever wondered where the MARGENSERS are sent each quarter? See the table below which shows the states and quantities that are mailed based on our corrected information. ▲

# of copies	States	Total
1 copy each	AK, AL, AZ, CA, CT, ME, SC, VT, WI,	9
2 copies each	DC, RI	4
3 copies each	NJ	3
4 copies	NC, NY, WV	12
9 copies	DE	9
14 copies	VA	14
21 copies	PA	21
876 copies	MD	876
		948

Is the MARGENSER going to the person intended?

If you are receiving this newsletter and don't know how you got it or don't want it, please fill out the "Mailing Update Form" on the last page and return it to us so we can discontinue the mailing.

If you are anticipating a move to a new location, please notify us of your new address as soon as possible.

Thank you

(Leadership in AA) continued from page 4...

to A.A. leadership.

What's the next step? Tradition Two and Concept Nine each give us a clue. We have "trusted servants" and "good service leaders"; so Bill Wilson suggests we begin looking for our leaders with those performing service. And, I believe, not just any service but General Service, service that reaches out beyond their home group, beyond their sponsees, to the general fellowship.

Bill, in his 1959 Grapevine article, which is now included with Concept Nine, explores what qualifications a leader in Alcoholics Anonymous should have. One qualification is the ability to "put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job." Another is "give and take" – the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction." Lastly a leader should have *vision*. "Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future."

Another way that I like to say this is the ability to see both the forest *and* the trees. When I got into General Service and began to get fully involved, for me it was like being in a hot-air balloon, looking around and seeing pieces of the Fellowship; other groups, GSRs, Area

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THE MARGENSER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The Margenser Committee welcomes submissions. We are here to serve you. Submissions should be no more than 750 words and about service or recovery. Please include your first name, last initial and home group. Email all correspondence to Margenser@marylandAA.org or mail to Maryland General Services, P.O. Box 2683, Salisbury, MD 21802. The submission deadline for the next issue is May 1, 2009.

Spirit of Rotation continued from page 1...

Until the last few years, my service work was done at the local level; my home group and Intergroup. Members were not standing in line to volunteer for service positions which gave me the wonderful opportunity to form resentments and profess to be upset that I HAD to take on a service commitment or continue in a position I had already held for a period of time. The reality is that I was hanging on and justifying what I was doing to cover up my inability to move on and give someone else an opportunity to stay sober...so much for spirituality. I know today that the resentments I was forming and the justifications I used, put me in a position to be hurt, or worse, put me in a position that could have been detrimental to my sobriety.

I have had the honor and privilege to serve in District 20 as GSR and DCM, and in Area 29 as Host Committee Chair, Area Secretary and now Alternate Delegate. These are two year service positions...period. Knowing that I have a short amount of time to learn about, and contribute to these positions has been the catalyst to spur me on to do as much as I can in this short period of time. I am blessed with new friends in sobriety, outside my home group and district, who have served in these positions and are more than willing to share their experiences and expertise if I ask. I have availed myself of a sponsor who not only lives the twelve steps and twelve traditions of this program, but has also served in most every service position. She has been a wealth of information for me on the Steps, Traditions and Concepts. She has gently nudged me outside my comfort zone and pulled me back when I appear to be over-committing or hanging on. She reminds me that it is better to do one or two things well, than many things half way.

As I have rotated out of service positions (sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly) I have been able to watch members rotate in and see them contribute their experiences and knowledge; offering fresh ideas to the positions I have vacated. Others certainly DO have much to offer. There certainly ARE new ideas and new ways of doing things. And there is much for me to learn in new jobs so that I do not become complacent, apathetic or stagnant.

Tradition Two reminds us "that our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." A 1985 Grapevine article says it all:

"Embedded in this tradition is the principle of rotation of trusted servants. [There are those] who fail to grasp the great spiritual and practical value of rotation. By limiting the time an individual may serve in a specific position,

- We avoid 'empire building', 'vested interests', or any of those phrases that signify bureaucracies.
- We are able to attract a larger number of people into service, and new areas of service are constantly opening up.
- Fresh approaches are encouraged; new ideas are inevitable. We can guarantee enthusiasm from these newer members.
- The spiritual benefits of rotation begin with the fact that rotation is an exercise in humility. It makes us realize that while we have a proprietary interest in the Fellowship, none of us has proprietary right to any specific service position.
- Rotation is a catalyst for personal growth, a chance to learn again to surrender, with grace, to the wishes of the Fellowship. It symbolizes the Twelfth Tradition's reminder to "place principles before personalities."

The following is from a December 1999 Grapevine article... "All of us trusted servants will rotate from the jobs we are doing, and other people will come in to take our places. One door closes and another one always opens if we are spiritually on track, keeping our recovery programs strong and practicing the principles of love and service in all our affairs. Rotation allows us to grow in God's grace as we move on to other opportunities and permit others to share in the joys of service in Alcoholics Anonymous. It prevents us from becoming the experts that we once thought we were and from being so entrenched in a job that we get stale and unenthusiastic. Problems based on personalities are prevented; no power or prestige gets built up; no individual gets taken advantage of and imposed upon; and the great blessings of giving service are shared by more and more members.

Stepping out of an AA office that you love

very much can be a real step forward in growth--a step into the humility which is the spiritual essence of anonymity. Spiritual anonymity in AA means that we forego personal prestige for any AA work that we do in order to help other alcoholics. Rotation helps to bring us spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame. With no AA status at stake, we have complete freedom to serve as we are needed, and we don't have to compete for any titles or praise."

I have a long way to go, and the more I learn the less I know. But I think I can now gladly rotate from any service opportunities I am privileged to be offered; giving others the same opportunities for growth that I have been given. In this way, I can continue to grow in usefulness to my higher power and to the fellowship I serve. ▲

(Mirror, Mirror) continued from page 2...

many Sundays, actually miss each other on Sunday afternoons now. To overcome this, we went skating together last Sunday. This week, a member of the cast is celebrating his anniversary, and a number of us will be there. Next week, a member of the cast is appearing in a play at a local theater, and a number of us are attending together on the same night to support her and her husband, who helped so much with our play. Later that weekend, a member of the cast is moving, and a number of us are showing up to help her out. The following weekend, another cast member celebrates, and you will find us there in the fellowship of the spirit. Like the stone tossed in a pond, this little play has rippled on and become a gift to many! Tears well in my eyes as I write this, tears of gratitude for the wondrous love that abounds in AA in so many ways, places, and hearts. Who knew? It is an experience I would have missed if I had not been taught to show up for my life.

Years ago, I did not like what and who I saw in the mirror. The Mirror herself is now a good friend. She is a reflection of AA, as am I. That only happened as the direct result of working the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the resulting spiritual awakening that leads me, on a daily basis, to seek out ways to be of service to God and my fellow man. I did not bargain for this when I came to my first meeting of

continued on page 7...

REACHING OUT TO THE "DARK DISTRICTS"

Many of our neighbors do not actively participate in Area 29, nor are their voices heard within AA as a whole. We encourage you to reach out to those districts without active GSRs or DCMs, sharing your experience of service beyond the home group and carrying the message one-on-one. Area 29 welcomes your ideas on how we can best do this and offers our support.

(Mirror, Mirror) continued from page 6...

Alcoholics Anonymous, no not at all. I knew nothing of friendship and love and laughter, let alone service. It seems my whole attitude and outlook upon life has changed, just like the book said it would. It said that would happen if I worked for it, but if what happened to me over the last few months of Sundays was work, then, like any good alcoholic, I want more, much more! The love in the room on the night of the play was palpable, which is good news. The better news is that that love continues as we pass it on amongst ourselves and continue to spread it around to those near us. What an honor. What a privilege. What a gift! ▲

(Leadership in AA) continued from page 5...

Committees, etc., e.g., the trees. But as the air filled in the balloon and it rose, I began to see the entire A.A. landscape open up. I could see how the groups fit together, where they fit into districts and Intergroups and Areas, and how the whole of A.A. was interdependent. A.A. could not function without the groups and the groups could not function without the whole of A.A.

How do we go about finding leaders in A.A.? I don't believe we have to look for them; they will make themselves known. We just have to be able to recognize them and the talents they bring to the Fellowship. But we can't recognize them if they aren't seen.

My suggestion to the DCMs: the Service Manual states that aside from being the principal link between their group and A.A. as a whole, a GSR attends district meetings and Area Assemblies. Each DCM needs to ensure that the GSRs in their district are aware of when an Area Assembly is and encourage full attendance by their GSRs. When long travel distances are involved, suggest car-pooling. Maryland General Service holds five Area Assemblies each year. It is a small thing for most of us to set aside five Saturdays a year to keep informed about what Maryland General Service is doing. When I was a GSR, I learned a great deal about what other districts and groups were doing by attending Area Assemblies and was able to bring that information back to my own home group and improve my group's

ability to "carry the message".

A September 1997 Grapevine article delved into the personal aspects of leadership in A.A. It suggested, for example, that we as prospective leaders take a personal inventory:

- What are our motives in wishing to take a leading role?
- How much sobriety do we have? And he's talking about emotional sobriety, not merely years.
- Have I learned to deal with my ego?
- How much do I know of the Traditions? The Concepts?
- Do I have skills or talents that can benefit A.A.?

In his words, "If I want to stand for election as a leader, I ought to take an honest and humble inventory of my true talents versus the talents demanded by such a service position.... I must remember: enthusiasm is no substitute for talent or skills."

Before I close, let me quote from Daily Reflections, January 24: "When I use what I have, I find there is more available to me than I realized before."

In closing: DCMs, get your GSRs to attend Assemblies. Give us an opportunity to grow by giving them an opportunity to see their potential. Let's plant the seed and see which of our GSRs will take root, grow, and blossom into our leaders of tomorrow. ▲

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE 2009 CALENDAR

Area Assembly Meeting	March 21	District 17 – Finzel, Maryland
Area 29 Mini-Conference	April 3-5	Holiday Inn; 7900 Washington Blvd., Columbia/Jessup, MD
General Service Conference	April 25-May 2	New York, NY
Area Assembly Meeting (Delegate's Report Back and Day of Sharing)	May 30	Unknown @ Present
Area 29 State Convention	June 18-21	Sheraton Four Seasons Hagerstown, MD
Northeast Regional Forum	June 26-28	Somerset, New Jersey
Area Committee	July 18	Lexington Park, MD
Area Assembly	August 22	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee (Budget)	September 19	Crofton, MD
Area Assembly (Election)	October 17	Annapolis, MD
Area 29 Fall Conference	October 29-November 1	Carousel Hotel, Ocean City, MD
Area Assembly (Budget and Rotation of Officers)	December 12	Unknown @ Present

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