

MARGENSER

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

Roots

Ron M., Area 29 Delegate

My day of infamy was January 11, 1973. That is the day I walked into the detoxification building that was to be my temporary home. From that day forward I have not felt a need or an urge to drink alcoholic beverages. From time to time I have wondered just how this happened when and how it did. One of the answers that comes to mind is that Alcoholics Anonymous presented itself when needed to save my life. Just where did it originally come from and how did it get to that location in Maryland when I needed it? That journey of divine intervention started in Akron, Ohio when Bill W. brought the message to Bob S. It is well documented that after their first encounter, Bill eventually came home to New York and took the next step in his journey. One of the earliest recruits was Fitz M. from southern Maryland. His date of sobriety was November 1936. Fitz is memorialized in our fabulous and well known "Big Book." His story, "Our Southern Friend," tells us that Fitz became aware of a movement emerging in New York that offered a cure for alcoholism. So he travelled there, met with Bill, and subsequently got and stayed sober until his death in 1944. Fitz is credited with being an avid carrier of the message of AA in the Maryland and Washington D.C. areas. One of his recruits was Jim B., whose story, "The Vicious Cycle," appears in the second and subsequent editions of the "Big Book." Jim, who also hailed from Southern Maryland in an area named Cumberstone, and Fitz were boyhood friends. Jim passed away in California in September 1974. These

two pioneers and friends are both buried, along with Jim's wife Rosa, in the cemetery of Christ Episcopal Church in Owensville where Fitz's father served as pastor.

Jim B. was a travelling man, and in his sojourns became affiliated with Hank P., another of the earliest members of the program, who started a small company selling polish. He hired Jim to travel around as a salesman. Jim headed north from Owensville, Maryland and while selling the polish, carried the message of AA. He is credited with planting the seed in Baltimore, MD, and continuing on to Philadelphia where he was instrumental in initiating the effort in a number of hospitals.

My introduction to AA was in Anne Arundel and Prince Georges Counties. I initially lived in Bowie, Maryland and subsequently moved to Davidsonville. My entry to rehabilitation was at Fort Meade as I was on military active duty at the time. My first home group, at Sacred Heart Church in Bowie, was started as a result of members primarily from the Washington D.C. area and eventually new members from the Baltimore area. From Bowie, MD, the message was carried to Crofton, MD, where it met up with efforts from the Annapolis, MD area, all of which could easily be traced back to the efforts of both Fitz M. and Jim B. Myself and numerous others from this geographic area can easily define and credit our sobriety, and yes our lives, to those early pioneers. AA flourishes in Maryland and Washington D.C. because of these two men. Thanks Fitz and Jim. ☺

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.

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Making Sense of Dollars

Kurt W., Area 29 Treasurer

Yea! We made it through 2014, and have embarked upon another exciting year.

For me this has been an extremely rewarding year. In my first year as Treasurer for Maryland General Service (Area 29) we made it through 2014 with no bounced checks and in compliance with all IRS reporting requirements, while hopefully not getting in the way of the vital service work performed in the Area. I would be remiss if I did not express my heartfelt thanks to all who have helped along the way, particularly the other Area 29 Officers, the Past Treasurers, and all the Committee Chairs and AA members who have provided support, counsel, suggestions and well-documented expense vouchers. A special thanks goes out to Cindy M., a member of our fellowship who helped with some administrative tasks and supported me regarding the time commitments, and my daughter as well who graciously made a number of trips to the Post Office to pick up contributions on several occasions when I was out of town. All of these people helped keep me afloat and fulfill my service commitment to all of Area 29.

As of this writing, a draft of the 2014 year-end Financial Report has been prepared and circulated for review. It will be submitted to the Area Committee for approval at our first meeting of the year on February 14,

2015. What a truly fitting coincidence with Valentine's Day. While the final numbers have not yet been approved, I can report at this time that the generous contributions from the groups in Area 29 kept pace with the expenses in 2014. Nearly 400 groups were able to make contributions. On behalf of Area 29 and the trusted servants supported by such contributions let me take this opportunity to say **"Thank You!"**

What will 2015 bring? While neither I nor anyone else can say with certainty there are some truisms in life. Tax season will be upon us soon enough and the time and effort required to make sure we remain compliant will need to be spent.

Alcoholics will get drunk. Some will reach out for help, either voluntarily or due to coercion. As long as we remain diligent and supportive, the hand of AA will be there to help them, and in by doing so help ourselves.

What are my service goals and plans for the coming year? By the time this article is published my home group will have had our semi-annual business meeting. Hopefully, I will have the opportunity to rotate into a new service position within the group. The Maryland General Service Bylaws contains specific responsibilities for the Treasurer position. I will do my best to meet those responsibilities. The Maryland General Service Handbook

also contains a treasure trove of documented experience regarding what has worked in the past for Treasurers. I intend to follow in their footsteps, while perhaps occasionally blazing my own trail. In short, as Treasurer, I hope to be a good custodian of the MGS funds, ensure IRS reporting requirements are complied with, pay the bills and requested reimbursements in a timely manner, and do so in a manner that will help support AA's vital 12th Step work.

If there is anything I can do, either in my role as Treasurer or just as a sober member of AA, to help anyone either individually or at the group or district level, please feel free to get in touch with me. If after reading this article you have any questions, comments, or constructive suggestions in regards to my role and performance as Area 29 Treasurer, please let me know. I am even up to having a philosophical exchange regarding money and spirituality in AA. I always enjoy getting tangled up in such discussions. As your trusted servant and for whatever the reason, I can best be reached by email at Treasurer@marylandaa.org.

Thank you all for the continued opportunity to serve. And I hope that all members of AA will find their appropriate niche in service. The rewards, at least for me, have always exceeded the effort I have invested. ☺

A True Fellowship

Don B., Area 29 Secretary

We often hear Alcoholics Anonymous referred to as a "fellowship," or even as "the Fellowship." In his essay on Tradition Nine in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, AA co-founder Bill W. describes Alcoholics Anonymous as "a society without organization, animated only by the spirit of service - a true fellowship." The noun "fellowship" is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a

friendly relationship among people," "the relationship of people who share interests or feelings," "a group of people who have similar interests," "companionship," "company," "association," "community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience," and "a company of equals or friends." But a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous goes far beyond those descriptions. So

what do we really mean when we use this term?

Well, we have a common experience, our sufferings from the disease of alcoholism, as a starting point. Whether a person's tale is strenuous, comic or tragic, our spirits resonate with stories of other alcoholics and the symptoms, challenges, manifestations,

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and consequences of our physical, mental, and spiritual malady. That is why we often tell each other about our drinking careers - the beginnings, the escapades, and the costly effects of our drunkenness - for identification purposes. Only alcoholics are interested in hearing about how other alcoholics drank. What we used to be like is a key component of our capacity to relate to each other on multiple levels. But our drinking histories end up being the least important part of what makes the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous so resilient.

Much more important is the fact that we have found a common solution. As the Big Book states on page 17, "We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism." Our Twelve Steps bring us recovery, our Twelve Traditions give us unity, and our Twelve Concepts guide us in our efforts to help other alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety. Sponsorship, meetings, home groups, spirituality, humility, gratitude, and continuous action are but a few aspects of the AA way of life which replaces

the lying, cheating, stealing, terror, frustration, bewilderment, or despair, we endured as denizens of King Alcohol's mad realm. When practiced one day at a time, our Twelve Steps enable us to become happily and usefully whole. Much of our time and effort is spent willingly and eagerly passing on this legacy to others. Thanks to the AA program, what we are like now can become the polar opposite of our active alcoholic selves.

What happened? Each of us has had some form of Divine intervention that brought a psychic change, a spiritual awakening, a vast change of feeling and outlook, an awareness of a Power greater than ourselves. Whether it happens suddenly or slowly, we are reborn. Our spiritual experience is ours alone, yet it has something in common with what happens to every other sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous. As described in Step Twelve, "When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of

consciousness and being. . ." (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 106-7)

What happened is the most important aspect of our stories. As the Big Book puts it, "Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 29) And, "When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 77) Also, "We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 85) Finally, "Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 93) When we follow these clear-cut directions, we can realize what Bill W. wrote in his essay on Concept I, "Therefore we believe that we see in our Fellowship a spiritualized society characterized by enough enlightenment, enough responsibility and enough love of man and God to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions." (*Twelve Concepts for World Service*, pp. 6-7) Who will you welcome into the AA Fellowship today? ♣

No Trick All Treat

Bill H., Area 29 Alternate Delegate

On October 31, 2014, a three day celebration of AA and love unfolded at Hunt Valley, Maryland. This convention was just another in a string of traditional events sponsored by Maryland General Services, Area 29 of Alcoholics Anonymous on the weekend of Halloween. But it wasn't just another convention. It was something special.

My name is Bill H. I have attended over 25 State and fall conventions since I have gotten sober. Each convention takes on its own personality. Last year, I had the honor to be appointed Chairperson for the Fall 2013 convention, which was held in Hagerstown. I

was lucky to have a great committee and in turn, the main goal of carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic was achieved. I then turned the reigns of the convention over to my young co-chairperson.

From the inaugural planning meeting for the Fall 2014 convention, it was obvious that this endeavor was going to be different. The first and most controversial idea was to move the location to Hunt Valley Maryland. The upfront and overall costs for the new facility would need to be matched with a significant increase in the number of people attending the conference.

I was dead set against the move for several apparently noble reasons such as tradition, fiscal responsibility and unchartered waters. The main reason was good old fashioned fear. I forgot about my faith in a higher power and AA as a whole.

The decision to go Hunt Valley came to a vote at an Assembly meeting and failed on the first two votes but passed on the third.

In January 2014, a change was made in the chairperson of the Fall convention and some of the original committee members stepped down for various

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reasons. The new chairperson quickly formed a functioning committee. The main ideas of the original committee stayed intact. The convention would be in Hunt Valley, it would be 3 days and there were some optional payment plans that included a \$ 20.00 Saturday pass. The speakers were already set and the workshops were rounding into good shape.

The new committee came together and passed the word all over area 29 and areas nearby us such as Virginia, New Jersey, D.C., West Virginia, New York and so on. The entire state was targeted over and over again.

Halloween finally approached and there were still many unknowns and uncertainties. We dropped the ice cream socials due to fiscal restraints. We lost a few sweet tooth's with that move.

Here is the best part. To me, the fall convention was a resounding success. Close to 800 people attended the event.

There were great speakers, workshops, Alcahons and al-anon participation (outstanding job). There were 2 dances, a Halloween contest, open mike, children activities and on and on. The committee was able to return a good portion of the seed money to Area 29. We also learned some lessons that would help assure more fiscal responsibility next year, if we choose to return to Hunt Valley.

So what was so special about this particular convention? Everyone did their part to ensure success from the first committee, the final committee, the Chair of MGS, the chairs of the various committees and last but not least, the people who attended. There was an enthusiasm and love present that has been lacking in some of the past endeavors. Everything came together and just fit like a glove. There were many people there who I haven't seen at a convention in years. There were people from Virginia, West Virginia, D.C, Delaware, New Jersey (north and

South whoo hoo), New York, the Carolinas, and Texas. There were people from Cumberland, Frederick, Hagerstown, Annapolis, Columbia, Easton, Ocean City, Southern Maryland, Baltimore and many more cities, towns and municipalities in Area 29.

The attendees did more than just show up. They threw themselves into the weekend and made the convention a part of their AA life. Don't get me wrong. The convention was not perfect. There were a few bumps in the road along the way, but thankfully God's hand was guiding many a person that weekend.

I am proud of every one who had a part in making this happen. I am glad that I can eat crow and tip my hat to all involved. Keep up the good work. If you were there, you will understand this letter. If you were not, take the time to attend the conventions offered by MGS, namely the State and Fall conventions. Your life can too be changed. ☺

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE AREA 29 2015 CALENDAR

4 Sundays
2/22, 3/1, 3/8, & 3/15
12 noon – 4 pm

D28 Big Book Study
Presented by Dan M. &
Rachel S.

Upper Chesapeake Hospital
500 Upper Chesapeake Drive
Bel Air, MD

Saturday
February 28, 2015
10:30 am – 2:30 pm

D32 Workshop
"Recovery, Unity & Service –
The Foundation for Our Future"

The Atlantic Club
11827 Ocean Gateway
Ocean City, MD

Saturday
February 28, 2015
12 noon – 3:30 pm

D42 Workshop
"Writing a 4th Step Inventory
as Outlined in the Big Book

South Shore Recovery Club
Crownsville, MD
workshops@mdaadistrict42.org

Saturday
March 21, 2015
9:00 am

Area 29 Assembly

TBA (check website)

Saturday
April 11, 2015
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Area 29 Mini Conference

St. Martin's-in-the-Field
375 Benfield Road
Severna Park, MD 21446

An Antidote for Complacency – How Well Are We Doing?

Arnold R., Area 29 Past Delegate, Panel 46

The Twelfth Step is the greatest promise in the AA program. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps" offers the new person the hope needed to work our other 11 Steps. We "tried to carry this message" (success is not mentioned or measured by head count) gives long-timers the gratitude to appreciate their own personal miracle and the spiritual growth needed to stay recovering from our disease. Our goal is to carry this message to the next suffering alcoholic; sometimes that's a new member and sometimes that could be a long-timer. We all need the continuing grace this process provides to live happy, sober and free. It is only in so doing that we can relive, again and again, the original experience of our own recovery, each time with greater appreciation and understanding.

In "practicing these principles in all our affairs," we utilize, improve, become more comfortable with, and live, these spiritual principles - the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts. I believe that my life mission should include efforts to incorporate all of these 36 principles into my daily living.

- o To continue (as in Step Ten)
- o To seek (as in Step Eleven)
- o To have that spiritual awakening (guaranteed in Step Twelve).

Complacency is insidious. The more experienced members of our fellowship share that once started, it progresses as rapidly as alcoholism itself. I have witnessed the havoc complacency brings once it gets a foothold in any member. I have sometimes found myself on a different route than the one prescribed in our literature.

AA is not a parking garage where we get sober, find a comfortable spot, relax and idle, waving encouragement to the occasional passer by, offering a little fellowship, while avoiding sharing the uncomfortable facts about our shared disease, fearing the opinions of others, while stuck in our own section and level.

Perhaps I sometimes forget that we have a primary purpose, as a Fellowship and as individuals, to help one another. I have too often spent time listening to someone who is just like me, lying to himself, telling us what he thinks, instead of us telling him what he is really thinking, that his disease is brewing, just as it did in all of us.

The Twelve Steps point the way to an ever richer personal sobriety. They are intended to be practiced principally by individuals, but they should also have a bearing on group thought and action. Should we not "practice these principles in all our (group) affairs?"

The Twelve Traditions, while they have certain implications for the individual, apply with special emphasis to the group and to AA as a whole. Their proper application is essential to the success and growth of AA and indirectly of the alcoholic who still suffers.

Like an individual, a group has abilities and limitations; an overall attitude that may or may not be healthy; and a drive that may be strong or wavering. A group can become smug and lazy or can increase in vigor and spirit. It can succeed, do a so-so job, or fail, as some have.

To fulfill its responsibility and achieve success a group should practice those Steps and apply those Traditions which are obvious guides to group endeavor. For example, just as

periodic inventory is essential to personal growth, so also is group inventory vital to maximal group success as an antidote for complacency.

Periodically a group should ask itself, "How are we doing?" The question can be rephrased in many ways:

1. (a) Are we experiencing normal growth for a group our size and for the population density of our area?
- (b) Are we receiving a cross-section of our population, male and female, or are we receiving only men or only women?
- (c) The 11th Tradition states "our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion...." Do we construe this as meaning we are relieved of all active effort; that there is no meaning in the 5th Tradition which declares, "Each group has but one primary purpose...to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers?" Have we reflected on the meaning of the words "to carry?" Do they mean to sit back and wait for the phone to ring? Is that the way Bill and Dr. Bob received the first hundred?
- (d) Do we have the best meeting place available, taking into account all relevant factors? Do we remain because of necessity, choice, or inertia with no one undertaking the task of finding someplace better?
- (e) Do we maintain an adequate supply of literature and do we keep it on a table near the door where members and visitors can see it both on arriving and leaving?

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2. (a) How effective is our sponsorship system? Do our sponsors have a real sense of responsibility? Do we see that each new member has a sponsor, or at least someone responsible for making sure they are attending meetings regularly. Do we ever analyze the reason for failure in our sponsorship efforts? Or do we excuse ourselves by saying, "He/She isn't ready for it?" How can we be so sure? Would another sponsor possibly have succeeded? Did we really do our best?
- (b) Are we failing to see the scared newcomer arrive then slip out of our open meeting, perhaps never to return? Do we welcome newer members and strangers, or do we hang together in impenetrable cliques?
3. (a) Do we lend support in proportion to our means to our Intergroup office and to General Service Office?
- (b) Do we make efforts to interest everyone in subscribing to the

- Grapevine, our meeting in print?
 - (c) Do we encourage members to write Grapevine articles, so that the group can make a creative contribution to AA as a whole?
 4. Do we select our officers with care? Should not the group take this responsibility seriously and give the appropriate thought to the selection of the best possible servants that the group could have?
- Do we regard group leadership as a chore to unload on some unfortunate member not present at the election, or as an honor, challenge, and a unique opportunity to do 12th Step work of a high order?

In addition to these 4 questions above, there are numerous others which can be asked by any group that wishes to take an inventory that is both searching and fearless. Groups in different stages of development will ask different questions. In rare instances, a group of long standing, like some individuals, may have to start at the beginning. . .with the First Step. . .admit that our group life has become unmanageable. Then what?

Naturally, the second Step.

Complacency and smugness can be shaken if we take a fearless and thorough inventory our individual and group lives. We cannot sit idly, resting on our laurels, because the surface has barely been scratched towards our collective capacities of being of maximum service to God and our fellows.

We were told when we first came into AA that this is a program of action. Action should not cease with sobriety, it should instead continue at an accelerated pace.

To avoid complacency, we may have to ask ourselves some very basic questions: Who started this movement? Who wrote the Big Book? Who hired the hall? Who ran the newspaper ad? Who paid for the phone? Who published the pamphlets and the Grapevine? And above all, who answered the letters that came in by the thousands? Did we? No, we were not around, however, someone did these things, someone kept the doors open, someone rendered these services--and AA and a new life became available to us, when we became ready.

Can we do less? We think not. 🗳️

Group Autonomy and AA as a Whole

David R., Area 29 Registrar

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole. Tradition 4 – Short Form

I belong to the best home group...that meets on Harford Road in Baltimore at 8:30 PM Friday. It's effective not because it stands apart but because it's part of something much bigger – and better – than itself. We who once were young are now long-timers. The group has met every single week for 32 years because it's always been

connected to, and made a positive impact upon, AA as a whole.

We celebrate the group anniversary on the third Friday in May. Each member speaks about the value of the group to their sobriety. They report being welcomed as newcomers and how the group's inventory process, self-support, and singleness of purpose make it the best group for them. My sharing always includes a "Thank You" to other groups nearby that showed us how to follow those

Traditions and why it's important.

The early history is well known among us. Four newly sober people, aware of ICYPAA and the Young People's group in West Baltimore, decided to start a group. There was no resentment or schism involved. A review of the Intergroup Directory confirmed that there were no other meetings nearby at the same time. Attendance elsewhere was not diminished by our arrival. The first speakers were old-timers, sponsors, and

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elder statesmen and women who encouraged the effort. We were new blood.

The AA Group pamphlet provides structure and similar encouragement. Tradition Four is essential to a group's survival. Autonomy does not mean standing alone. If there are few members they double up on service commitments. Representation at Intergroup is no less important than coffee-making. A group Treasurer, once a coffee pot is obtained and rent paid, contributes to that Intergroup, their District, Area, and AA World Services. Those service committees provide wherewithal for new groups to start up. Participation is a demonstration of gratitude for services rendered.

To withhold that participation

would undermine the fellowship that sustains us. A committed General Service Representative attending Area Assemblies is the group's link to AA as a whole. The GSR taps into the shared experience found there, bringing it back for consideration as the group makes its own decisions in light of its own circumstances. Like the individual member, however, the group has more in common with its fellow travelers than sets it apart. As steps are worked and sober lives lived the GSR brings something valuable to the Assembly too. That perspective, an informed group conscience represented by one vote, makes for better decision making down the service triangle.

The most concrete example of this give and take involving group humility was Area 29's recommendation

against signing DWI court slips. Many of our members came to AA with slips in hand. Our GSR was in the minority in the Area vote. He brought back from that Assembly both the result of the vote and a call for substantial unanimity. We easily decided to follow the recommendation because our common welfare should come first.

If your group is the best home group, prove it by sharing it. Please don't trigger a negative effect on AA as a whole. Don't stand alone under the mistaken idea that "autonomous" means isolated. We had enough of that when we were drunk. Insist that your group be involved at all levels of service. Show us how it's done. Show us what you've got. Help us, and we'll help you. ♣

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, PO Box 13457, Baltimore, MD 21203. The submission deadline for the next issue is April 20, 2015.

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.

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 13457
Baltimore, MD 21203

MARGENSER

P.O. Box 13457
Baltimore, MD 21203



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Baltimore, MD 21203