

# MARGENSER

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

**44th Annual Maryland State Convention  
June 12 - 15, 2014  
Clarion Hotel and Hager Hall Conference Center  
Hagerstown, Maryland  
Hotel Reservation Deadline - May 12, 2014**

*Nancy B., 2014 Maryland State Convention Chairperson*

It is time once again for the annual Area 29 Maryland General Service State Convention which will take place June 12 - 15 at The Clarion Hotel and Hager Hall Conference Center in Hagerstown, MD.

This year will mark the 44th anniversary of this event which was first held at the end of July 1971 at the Venice Hotel in Hagerstown, MD. Although the convention moved from Hagerstown to the Eastern Shore and back for several years, with one year held in Towson, it has remained in Hagerstown continuously since 1981.

The convention is a 4 day event, Thursday through Sunday, and continues to enjoy attendance from all over the state of Maryland plus neighboring Washington, DC, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Delaware. We even have attendees (who are not our guest speakers) who come from much farther away.

Those who join us will enjoy a weekend of Fun, Fellowship, awesome Speakers, Alcahons, Workshops, Entertainment, Ice Cream Socials, AA History and Meditation.

The cost for this full weekend is \$27.00 for mailed pre-registrations postmarked by June 1st. Registrations received online, by mail after June 1st, or at the door, are \$29.00.

We often encounter the question at the registration desk, "Why do we have to pay for an AA event? I thought AA was free." We offer the following answer to this question:

There are many AA conferences and conventions held around the world. One of the most common misconceptions of these gatherings is that they are AA meetings and since there are no dues or fees for AA membership, there should be no fees to attend. Conventions and conferences are special events – not regular meetings. They require months of planning, preparation, and money to put on. Since most events are held in hotels or conference centers, there is a charge for those facilities. Other expenses include travel and lodging for speakers, printing of flyers, schedules and programs, postage, supplies, entertainment and COFFEE!! A large event requires a substantial amount of money.

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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.

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The convention is self-supporting. No group monies are used to pay for the event. The cost of the event is paid through registration fees. No baskets are passed. If there is a hospitality room, donations may be encouraged to pay for any coffee or food. The ideal of any committee is to break even. Therefore, the registration fee is nominal compared to a weekend worth of entertainment anywhere else. Attendance is voluntary and as responsible AA members, we now "pay our own way."

We are trying some new ideas for the State Convention this year and hope that you will join us for the experience.

- We will be moving the Alcathons out of the hotel and back into the convention center to be closer to other activities, but still isolated for a quiet meeting. A badge is required for all events, including Alcathons.

- We enjoy the participation of Al Anon each year. We are moving their room to the front of the convention center and look forward to them join-

ing us in the MGS Room again this year to display and sell Al Anon literature.

- We are looking forward to Comedy Night on Friday after the evening speaker and being entertained by Jack F. and his entourage of puppets. Jack first appeared at the State Convention in 1984 with his puppet Victor E. Join us for a very funny and interactive recovery show!

- Patty Reese will bring acoustic Blues Rock & Soul to the stage on Saturday night. You can check out her music at [www.pattyreese.com](http://www.pattyreese.com) and come see her live at the convention!

Consider taking advantage of the full experience this year by joining us for meals. Below are a few sample menus, which you can read in their entirety on the flyer:

- **\$20.00 "Build Your Own Pasta" buffet Friday night** – awesome!

- **\$11.00 Saturday Picnic Lunch** served outside (hopefully-weather permitting!) Grilled Barbecue Chicken, Corn Cobbettes, Homemade Baked Beans and Cornbread with Honey Butter followed by Ambrosia with

Marshmallows

- **\$27.00 Saturday Night Banquet** – Enjoy a Buffet featuring a Carving Station of Roast Beef with Tiger Aioli and Horseradish, Chilean Salmon with spicy Teriyaki Sauce and Chicken Picatta with Lemon Caper Cream Sauce followed by a Chocolate Oreo Triple Stack (decadent!).

We look forward to feeding, entertaining, educating and attracting you. "...this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it." And be sure to sign up at the registration desk or soda bar to do some service work over the weekend.

Look for the neon green flyers in your home group, your district, the Area or print one from the Maryland General Service website at [www.marylandaa.org](http://www.marylandaa.org). Remember to pre-register by June 1st and reserve your hotel room by May 12th. If you reserve your room online, it will not count toward our room block, so please call The Clarion Hotel at 301-733-5100. If they tell you they are sold out, contact the convention committee right away at [stateconvention@marylandaa.org](mailto:stateconvention@marylandaa.org) 📍

## Where Were the Women?

Ron M., Area 29 Delegate

It is fairly common knowledge that when our text book was being completed and readied for publication in 1939, there was quite a discussion regarding the selection of a title. In New York, a number of suggestions were put forward, some of which were: *The B.W. Movement*; *By Bill W.*; *A Nameless Bunch of Drunks*; *The Way Out*; and of course *Alcoholics Anonymous*. There were reportedly over 100 titles under consideration. Eventually, the title *Alcoholics Anonymous* was well on its way to being the final selection, when unexpectedly the Akron, Ohio contingent made its voice heard. By a considerable majority, Akron had selected *The Way Out*.

From this impasse Bill decided to contact Fitz M. in Maryland, and asked him to visit the Library of Congress to determine how many books were titled

*Alcoholics Anonymous* and how many were titled *The Way Out*. This investigation revealed that there were twelve books titled *The Way Out*, and no one wanted to be the thirteenth, so the title *Alcoholics Anonymous* was selected.

All of this occurred just prior to going to press with the final product. It is unclear from my research if there were any women involved in this decision process. There was however a story in the first edition titled "A Feminine Victory" in which a woman states that she was the only "lady" alcoholic in that particular section. Her name was Florence R. It is further reported that Florence R. was 12 stepped by Fitz W. Her story also appears in the book titled *Experience, Strength, and Hope*.

Although Florence R. was the only woman in the first edition of

*Alcoholics*, the title page of the book states, "The Story of How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism." Two years later, in 1941, that title page in the second printing was changed to read "How More Than Two Thousand Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism." The third printing reads "Six Thousand Men and Women," with the numbers continuing to change through all sixteen printings until it finally read "Many Thousands of Men and Women." It would appear that Florence R., apparently the first female member of AA, was somewhat overlooked in the first printing. Her membership was the first of thousands of women in the years to come.

According to records in the Washington DC Area Intergroup

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(Where Were the Women?) continued from page 2... archives, Florence R. died in April 1943. Burial was reportedly in a cemetery in Prince George's County, Maryland. Although the actual cemetery was identified the burial site remained elusive until a search was conducted for Florence K., her married name, and that proved successful. Her gravesite is now marked with a gravestone

donated by members of the local intergroup.

Some unverified correspondence written by Fitz M. to Bill W. states that in 1939 Florence had fallen in love with "a hellion 15 years younger who feeds her beer."

Although it would appear that Florence did not ultimately remain sober, she was certainly one of the

earliest members, and quite possibly participated in the discussions regarding the title of what we now call our "Big Book." In any event it is obvious that within the first two years of the book being printed, women were making a strong appearance and are now involved in every aspect of AA.▲

## What Is Bridging the Gap?

Pat S., Area 29 Treatment Facilities Chair

Bridging the Gap (BTG) is an Alcoholics Anonymous program that has been active for many years. This is unique Twelve Step work. AA members volunteer to become Temporary Contacts (TCs). TCs work with newcomers who are being discharged from treatment settings and help them bridge the gap to AA in the local community. The TC makes direct personal contact with the newcomer while he/she is still at the treatment facility—either by visiting the facility, attending a meeting together or whatever contact is thought necessary.

The TCs and newcomers make

every effort to attend at least one meeting together on the day of the client's release from treatment.

Therefore, for at least two weeks, the TC will help the newcomer to attend a variety of meetings, introducing him/her to other AAs, especially members who might have similar backgrounds or interests. The TC familiarizes newcomers with AA books, pamphlets, a schedule of meetings, the Intergroup, etc. The TC should help the newcomer understand what AA is, especially the Twelve Step program of recovery, and also what AA is not. In addition, the TC should explain sponsorship to the newcomer,

and the importance of obtaining a sponsor without delay. The TC is not their sponsor.

It is suggested that a TC be an active AA member enjoying a comfortable and stable sobriety, with at least one year since their last drink, have worked or be actively working the steps, and have a sponsor.

Tradition Five states: "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." If you are interested in becoming a Temporary Contact or Local Coordinator, please go to our website at [treatmentfacilities@marylandaa.org](mailto:treatmentfacilities@marylandaa.org) for more information. ▲

## AA Unity—Love and Tolerance of Others

Arnold R., Area 29 Past Delegate

When I complained to my first sponsor about a man in our home group that I did not like, he explained to me that we might not like everyone in AA but we must love and tolerate them because they, like us, were seeking release from alcoholism. He went on to tell me that I would be surprised at what these individuals who annoyed me might teach me. He was right. This man said something that has stuck with me throughout my years in the program and it was in reference to the people who can't seem to get AA and continue to slip in and out of the program. His comment was simple, and since that time I have heard it often, "Don't quit before the miracle." I have applied that

axiom to sponsorship, to service work, as well as to my professional and personal life. Anytime things get tough I remember that I shouldn't quit before the miracle. This man, who is now deceased, never was a person I wanted to be close friends with and I can't say I ever really liked him, but I did develop a loving tolerance toward him. This experience helped me learn to keep a more open mind to the sharing of others. It is amazing that those who irritate the most sometimes provide the clearest recovery insight. This attitude of acceptance of others has helped me contribute to the unity of my home group and to any other AA group in which I participate.

In *AA Comes of Age* (p. 79) Bill Wilson

tells how our friends the psychiatrists had begun to warn: "This fellowship of alcoholics is emotional dynamite. Its neurotic content can blow it to bits." How have we avoided that catastrophe?

Upon arrival to AA many of us came as egomaniacs with inferiority complexes as well as lugging the baggage of all the other negative emotional attributes of alcoholism. There are those of us who contribute to disunity because we "know what is best for AA." We take a stand on some issue that most disagree with and cling to that position, refusing to open our minds no matter what. In the course of this interaction, much disunity can be

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created.

The solution to this strife, of course, is always in the unity assured by our Twelve Traditions. When Bill wrote the Twelve Traditions, he knew the alcoholic personality and he judiciously provided for our neuroses. He provided for AA membership being extended to any who have a problem with alcohol and the only requirement for membership, a desire to stop drinking with God as the ultimate authority in any group interaction. In other words, absolutely anyone has a right to membership and no one is an authority. Tradition Twelve, with its spiritual anonymity and self-sacrifice for the good of all, is the epitome of love and tolerance. The concept of principles before personalities guarantees the setting aside of alcoholic behaviors and the development of a deep concern for others and the group welfare.

In a 1944 Grapevine article, Dr. Bob says that, "Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in educational advantages, and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own." He continues this vein of thought with "Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important—in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search whether it be scientific or

spiritual."

The spiritual love for another alcoholic allows me to avoid hurting others by remembering Bill's words in Step 10, from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (p. 91): "Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. This carries a top priority rating. When we speak or act hastily or rashly, the ability to be fair-minded and tolerant evaporates on the spot. . . We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious power-driven argument. Our first job is to sidestep the traps. When we are tempted by the bait, we should train ourselves to step back and think. For we can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic."

I want to always honestly examine my own motives. Do I have a personal agenda or is a character defect running wild? Again in Step 10, Bill talks about personal motives: "But in other instances only the closest scrutiny will reveal what our true motives were. There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and has justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn't."

Again from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (p. 129), "The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our Society has." In my home group or any other AA group in which I participate, I need to keep the concept of unity uppermost in my mind and remember that sometimes what I want takes second place to what a group or board decides. Difference of opinion is inevitable but consensus and, hopefully, unanimity must ultimately be attained for the good of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The men I sponsor, the participants in

meetings I attend and my fellow workers at the office all deserve love and tolerance. On Page 84 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* this principle is stated, "Love and tolerance of others is our code." For me this requires personal inventory and immediate amends. It is also the frame of mind in which I view the words and actions of others.

My first sponsor, who is now deceased, was a powerful role model for devoted service to the Fellowship he loved and for the manner in which he loved fellow AA's. From my vantage point of observing his actions, Wayne's love of AA spilled over into everything that he did in life. His humble joy in service to others was an inspiration to many. I was the lucky recipient of his love and enthusiasm for our glorious fellowship. In one of my last conversations with Wayne when we knew he was very seriously ill, I asked him what we could do to help. He said, "Just love me." In the final analysis that is all any AA member can do for another.

Earlier I referenced psychiatrists' concern that the emotional baggage we bring to AA could blow us to bits and I posed the question of why that hasn't happened. My opinion is that we have avoided this disaster through the love and tolerance we each develop as a result of the practice of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous. The loving heart that develops as we recover in the service of AA brings us tolerance and assures unity in Alcoholics Anonymous. A desire to give back for what I have freely received here overrides the character defects that would harm the Fellowship if I were to give them free rein. I forget to be petty, envious or critical when I am helping another man, read-

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## MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE AREA 29 2014 CALENDAR

June 11, 2014	District 42 Dinner and a Movie, Video Tour of AA's Headquarters and Grapevine Publishing, FREE FOOD, 6:30 p.m.	Gambrills MD
June 12 – 15, 2014	44th Annual Maryland State Convention	Hagerstown, MD
June 21, 2014	District 41 Picnic, Old National Pike District Park Noon – 6 p.m.	Area 29
July 19, 2014	Committee Meeting; Hosted by District 4	Towson, MD
August 16, 2014	Area 29 Assembly; Hosted by District 11	Cecil County, MD

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ing the background for a meeting or carrying out a committee assignment. I find myself in a state of spiritual grace with my heart filled with love for AA and the deepest gratitude for the life I have. I believe these are some of the many reasons AA has survived. There is nothing wrong with the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. It does not need to be fixed. We, the members, may need to be fixed, but AA the way Dr. Bob and Bill envisioned it is just fine.

My current sponsor, Harold, points out to me that in the final analysis, it is not so much what education or expertise I have as a trusted servant. If my heart is not filled with love and good will for other AA members, what I may have to give to the fellowship in the way of experience, education and expertise will be negated if there is a shortage of love in my heart and tolerance in my head. When I experience the joy of service, it is a direct result of a loving heart and that to my way of thinking is the most important quality

any of us can bring to the table.

Our code of love and tolerance of others assures sobriety for individuals in AA or at least guarantees the opportunity for sobriety while protecting and preserving the Fellowship from our character defects. Respect for each other, a by-product of tolerance, and the acceptance generated by love for each other provide cornerstones of stability that have withstood the many tests of our alcoholic behaviors over seventy-eight years.

May it always be so! ♣

## Our Beloved Big Book

Don B., Area 29 Secretary

Those of us who have seen or perhaps even possess our very own copy of the 75th Anniversary Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous can easily understand why our founding members lovingly referred to it as the "Big Book." The re-release of this historical artifact by AA World Services, Inc. on April 10, 2014, exactly 75 years to the day from the original publication date in 1939, has already become a wildly popular act of love and service to the AA fellowship. Well over half of the 250,000 volumes printed for the release date have already been purchased, and additional print runs will most surely be required before sales are discontinued at the conclusion of the International Convention in Atlanta in July 2015. Countless alcoholics have recovered thanks to the message contained within the pages of our beloved Big Book, and many of us owe our very lives to the revolutionary movement inspired by this enduring publication.

Just how the Big Book came to be in the first place is a miraculous story. Visionaries among the first few dozen sober members of the fellowship lobbied for missionaries, a chain of hospitals, and a book to memorialize the techniques that have led to so many spectacular recoveries. When donors for these projects could not be found, the nameless bunch of drunks settled for just the book. Even then, copies sat in a warehouse until the now sober, but still destitute, drunks could afford to pay their printer bill. Ultimately, stock in the publishing

company was sold at \$25 per share in \$5 monthly increments to the recovered drunks themselves in order to fund the project. They thought that the thick, oversized paper, wide margins, and gaudy, eye-catching dust jacket could help convince drinkers that they were getting their money's worth. From this book was born the very name of our society.

Yet sales and publicity were painfully slow until investigative journalist Jack Alexander set out to expose the fellowship as a scam, but instead discovered an amazing saga of changed lives. He documented his findings with a glowing report in the Saturday Evening Post on March 1, 1941. A second printing was required later that month, and by the end of 1941, the fellowship had quadrupled its membership to 8,000. Yet there were significant adjustments in the second printing of the book; the overall size was reduced, the red cotton weave binding and gold writing on the cover were replaced, The Doctor's Opinion was moved from page 1 to the Roman numeral pages and Bill's Story placed on page 1, Appendices I and II were added, the wording of Step 12 was amended, and several of the personal stories were replaced, among other changes. Still, the Big Book as a nickname and the phenomenon of Alcoholics Anonymous as a movement were here to stay.

The way the 75th anniversary printing came into existence is no less inspirational. In late 2012, a sober AA member in Northern New Jersey received explicit

guidance during a meditation session that A.A.W.S. should publish a commemorative 75th Anniversary Edition of the first edition, first printing of Alcoholics Anonymous in April 2014 as an exact facsimile of the original with the exception of copyright information identifying it as a reprint. Working through the Area 44 Literature Committee and Conference Delegate, letters were drafted and the matter was quickly placed on the Agenda of the 63rd Annual General Service Conference in 2013. The floor debate on whether to publish the book lasted for hours, but the matter failed to gather the required 2/3 majority to qualify as a Conference Advisory Action. When the minority was allowed to speak, a trustee who had initially opposed the reprint gave a stirring endorsement of the project, and when a re-vote was taken, substantial unanimity in support of the publication was achieved.

"Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one man with this book in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th edition, pp. 162-163) According to the head of the A.A.W.S. publications department, the materials used to construct these books would justify a list price of \$49.95 in the commercial book market; our price is only \$12.00 per book plus shipping. Volume discounts and reduced or free shipping can bring even further price reductions. Alcoholics still like to get a good deal. ♣

## Experience from a New DCM in a Re-Lit District

Michael W., DCM - District 19

I'm in my fourth year of sobriety and my second year of general service work. I was the GSR for the Hopkins group during 2013 and became the DCM for District 19 at the beginning of this year. I've held service positions at my home group, volunteered at the Baltimore Intergroup office, and chaired meetings whenever asked, including institutional commitments. I have a sponsor and I sponsor several men. I do this work out of gratitude for the gift of sobriety that was so freely given to me and a sense of duty to carry the message. In return, I've had the joy of watching others recover, making a host of friends, and feeling the fellowship grow around me. All of this helps me stay sober.

I became a GSR when District 19 (formerly Districts 13 and 19) was in the process of being re-lit. It was a very exciting time. Under the leadership of then DCM Laura G., and with help and encouragement from then Delegate Bob C., as well as David R., Arnold R., and Peggy R., we reached out to groups, established a monthly District meeting, and learned how to function as a group. As we grew, we began to talk about events that would provide needed service to our District and make our presence known. The end results were a Traditions/Concepts Workshop and a New Year's Eve alcahthon. Both events were well attended and well received. At the end of the year, we elected new District officers. In 2014, we plan to do another workshop, repeat the New Year's Eve alcahthon, add another event, and continue our outreach efforts. My service work at the district level has been very satisfying and I look forward to

continued growth.

It has taken me awhile to understand and appreciate general service work at the area level, and I've figured out why. When I became a GSR, I had never read, let alone studied, the AA Service Manual/Twelve Concepts or the Maryland General Service Area Assembly Handbook. I have only recently begun to do so in earnest. I tried to get by with what I learned at the orientation sessions and what I picked up during the Area Assemblies and Area Committee Meetings. Likewise, I simply showed up for those meetings, without studying the agenda, minutes, or other relevant materials beforehand. In short, I was not putting in the effort that the job deserves. No wonder that I've often been restless, irritable, and discontent at area meetings.

My participation in the recent Regional Panel Meetings and Mini-Conference has changed my attitude and approach towards general service work at the area level. At the last Area Committee Meeting, I was "volunteered" to be the Leader of consolidated Regional Panels 5 and 6. I had absolutely no idea what that meant. Since I still have a significant fear of failure, I read the description of the Regional Panels and the Panel Leader's duties and all of the background materials for our assigned agenda items. As a result, I had a good understanding of what was going on at our two panel meetings. We were blessed by the presence of many experienced trusted servants, including David R. (our mentor), Arnold R., Peggy R., Bill H., Kurt W., and Francis S. at both meetings and our delegate Ron M. at the second meeting. I learned a lot from our discus-

sions, not just about the assigned agenda items, but about the General Service Conference, the General Service Board, the General Service Office and so forth.

Then came the Mini-Conference. Andy M., our Panel's recording secretary, presented on Archives and Agenda, I presented on Corrections and Cooperation with the Professional Community. In preparation for the presentation, I read more, called several Panel participants for advice, and prepared a written summary of the Panel's discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for our delegate. When I presented, I felt a little nervous but well prepared. I listened with great interest to the excellent presentations by the other Regional Panels. By the end of the day, I felt that we had helped to prepare our Area Delegate for the upcoming General Service Conference. Because I did my job to the best of my ability, I felt like I had made a contribution, however small, to this endeavor. I left with a new sense of purpose and camaraderie.

So what have I learned? I should continue to study the AA Service Manual/Twelve Concepts and the Maryland General Service Area Assembly Handbook. I should take responsibility rather than avoid it. I should do my homework. I should seek to fulfill all my duties as a DCM, not just the ones that come easy. Half measures will avail me of nothing. If I want my general service work to contribute to my recovery, I have to do it with the same dedication and thoroughness as I do the Twelve Steps. I will get out of general service work what I put into it. ☺

## Losing Control

Doug C.

My name is Doug, and I'm an alcoholic. The very fact that I was guided to Alcoholics Anonymous allows me the ability to share my experience with anyone who is interested. That is one of the ways I've learned about myself, in AA meetings listening to other members sharing. I finally admitted that I was totally defeated by alcohol, and that my life was unmanageable. I didn't know at the time that I

was doing the 1st Step. Since March 25th, 2012, due to AA, to the Recovery Program, to my efforts, to the efforts of hundreds of other AA members, and to lots of patience, prayers and understanding, I have remained free of alcohol since that day, on a daily basis.

My last drink resulted in a basic 12 hour blackout. For years blackouts and I had been old and familiar pals. My drink-

ing always brought trouble at home, at work, and on the road. I was a salesman who traveled often for business, and most of my trips involved blackouts and scrambling to keep my job. I did not lose my job; God only knows why not. My ex-wife and two other significant women, and especially my son, all suffered greatly, physically and mentally, from my illness.

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*(Losing Control) continued from page 6...*

From an early age I needed to feel in control, of myself, my situation, and usually of others. When I drank, I lost all control. It was a release. It felt good. When I came to AA I had just been hospitalized for falling on my face, again. Alcohol was my leader for 30 years, and the spiral was always downwards, although I was never aware of it. I always thought I would learn to control my alcohol intake, that the depression would end, and life would be a continuous joy. It neither occurred to me that every day I was pouring large amounts of a depressant into me, nor that I had a progressive disease.

I began my alcohol education via the courts, counselors, forced AA, and eventually my mother's treatment center. Even after my mother's near death, I still managed to ignore the fact that I drank to excess, blacked out, and could barely wake in the morning. My solution was to take different drugs to control the alcohol. My friends didn't call me Doug, they called me Drug. Guess what happened? I still got drunk, but now I had a drug habit too. I ended up in the hospital and jail more times than I can count on my fingers.

After years of excuses, blackouts, violent tempers, debilitating hangovers, and suicidal tendencies, on the morning of March 25, 2012, coming out of a drunken stupor, it hit me, "I can't control the amount of alcohol I drink!" I've said it to myself a million times and I said it to others in jest and despair, but this time I heard it differently. That's how I remember it, for just a brief moment, that alcohol wasn't the problem, I was. It just was, and it just is. I have no explanation of why then or why me. I'm one of the lucky few.

My alcohol education from the past told me 90 meetings in 90 days. I know it's not in the book, but I believe it's one of the most successful ways to begin the program. I had started a new job in town, so I researched Frederick AA meetings. That Monday I sat in the Early Bird meeting, and the group began teaching me how to regain my sanity by telling me about their lives, by sharing like I'm trying to do now.

Most people in AA are responsible. I wanted to be responsible again. I try to be now, but I sometimes fail. Someone in AA will always remind me what my primary purpose should be at all times—to be sober. This brings me peace.

The next Saturday, my family held an intervention with a priest from Baltimore, Father Joe. They had me sign a document which stated if I drank I would go to a treatment center. The document also said that I would give them all of my money and stay with them every weekend. Now, that really felt like losing control! In addition, it stated that I would continue AA in Frederick, and that I would get in touch with Father Joe's

Frederick friend, Gene L. I contacted Gene that Monday and asked him to be my sponsor on Tuesday. I got involved, kept sober company, and did what was suggested on a daily basis. I even wrote resentment and gratitude lists!

My sponsor, who passed away this year, told me that I was ready to take certain steps. I had never really looked at the steps, never mind any attempt to understand them. But my sponsor did not take "No" for an answer! He was also patient and understanding. Gene watched me, he waited, then when he knew I was ready he told me to do it. Together, we grew in AA, and I now know from my own experience that sponsorship is a two-way street. Gene died sober, and his example lives on. He helped a lot of people just like me.

Today my sponsor is Father Joe. Life goes on, and gets better each day. I am responsibly trying to rebuild a relationship with my son. My relationship with all of my family has strengthened through my hard work with the AA steps. I have progressed positively in my job, I have a girlfriend, and life is pretty good.

I make time to work the AA program daily, including service work. Whether it is as simple as making coffee (I remember running down Market St. at 6 a.m. with Church keys in hand not wanting to let people down – now that was different!), or answering phones on Church Street, or as scary as leading my first meeting, or even scarier sharing in front of a young Mountain Manor group, I now know how lucky I am to be able to serve. For me sponsorship is the ultimate AA service work. I am truly humbled by what my HP reveals while I am helping others.

Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life, and still does. I now have sorted my needs from my wants. I am responsible today. I am having a ball, a day at a time. I thank all of my friends in the Fellowship, from all over the world, for all that I have.

I am not in control today, but I am sober!

"Let Go and Let God!" ▲

### 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

## 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](mailto:Margenser@marylandAA.org) or mail to Maryland General Services, PO Box 13457, Baltimore, MD 21203. The submission deadline for the next issue is July 20, 2014.

## 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.

# MARGENSER

P.O. Box 13457  
Baltimore, MD 21203



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