

MARGENSER

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

Thank You

Nancy B, Panel 60 Delegate, Area 29

As I rotate from my current position as the Panel 60, Area 29 Delegate, I pause to reflect on how grateful I am for the many opportunities I have been given to grow and participate in service over the past two years.

- I have been privileged to serve at the 2010 and 2011 General Service Conferences, participating in what I like to call, the most informed group conscience in A.A.
- I have been able to write and present detailed reports at the Area Committees, Assemblies, Districts and Intergroups to make the fellowship aware of what is going on in the Area, at the General Service Conference, the General Service Office in New York, and A.A. worldwide. I hope you and your homegroup have been receiving these reports from your representatives. If not, please contact me or check the Maryland General Service website at www.marylandaa.org for copies of the reports.
- I have traveled to other areas to participate in service assemblies, forums, and delegate reunions.
- I have been able to participate in the Area 29 Regional Panels

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Anonymity in the Digital Age: The Big Question for 2012

Bob C, Area 29 Treasurer

The theme of the 2012 General Service Conference is, "Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age." To focus on how AA's Traditions apply to "New Media" or digital age issues, let's look at how fast things are changing, by comparing where we were five years ago to where we are now.

The AA/digital age landscape in 2006 can be assessed using a 2006 Margenser article that reported on an Intergroup Day of Sharing, titled "AA in a Changing World – Electronic Media and the Traditions." At that workshop, in his opening remarks, the then Area 29 Archivist reminded us of Bill W.'s assessment of anonymity as the most important Tradition because it is the great equalizer and ego-deflator, giving it immense spiritual and practical significance. The main principle applying to the workshop topic was Tradition 11, "Attraction, not promotion." We need to be available and able to be located without promoting or advertising

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Are We Going to Any Lengths?

Peggy R, Area 29, Past Delegate Panel 48

This question first makes me think of the principle of service expressed in Step Twelve and our primary purpose in Tradition Five. So immediately, this question asks me what my personal involvement is but then I must look outward to my homegroup, my Intergroup, my District, my Area and my fellowship as a whole.

As I consider this question, I need to be careful not to be negative about what is not being done (in my opinion) but rather I need to look for the opportunities to be of service in a cheerful and helpful manner. In all of this I must remember that I strive for "spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection". Viewed in that perspective, I can happily acknowledge there will always be something to do.

For me, it is also important to remember that this is a "we" question. Although I am a part of it, this is not about me. It is important that, as a member, I participate as fully as I can but also allow others to share and humbly accept that I can't possibly have all the answers.

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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.

Big Book Bits - Part 3

Ron M, *BYOL Easton*

A continuation of a series intending to present the history of the Big Book As always comments welcome at rule62-@live.com.

Everything was now moving along at a rapid pace and the next issue to address was the design and production of the dust cover. It turned out that one of the very early members from New York was an artist named Ray C. It is reported that he got sober and joined the fellowship in February 1938. His help was solicited and among others he submitted two designs. The two finalists turned out to be a contrast in design. The first is referred to as being blue in an Art Deco style. Although acceptable it was put aside in favor of what has become known as "The Circus Jacket" because of its loud circus colors. The first sixteen printings of the first edition utilized this eye catching cover at the suggestion of the printer so it would stand out on book store displays for sale purposes. Ray C's story appears in the 1st edition as "An Artist's Concept".

In spite of the close oversight and proof reading of numerous persons a typo appeared on page 234 of the 1st printing. The second and third lines from the bottom were printed twice but were corrected at the second printing.

Some very interesting changes to the book occurred between the 1st and 2nd printing. In chapter 5 when writing step twelve Bill originally wrote "Having had a spiritual "experience" as a result of these steps....." After publication a number of then members came to Bill stating that he may have had a "spiritual experience" but they did not and most likely would never have one. As a result the second printing reflects the change "Having had a spiritual "awakening" as a result of these steps....." which has continued to the present day. Also as a result of this change Appendix II came into being and has been included in every subsequent printing.

Other noteworthy points of interest concern the stories that were used in the original printings. In the first sixteen printings Jim B's story did not appear in spite of the fact he is credited, by Bill, for the phrase, "God as You Understand Him". As the final selections of stories was being made the sobriety of Jim B. was still in question and for that reason it was felt that it was inappropriate to include him. Of course Jim B. stayed sober and went on to be the founding father of A.A. in Baltimore and

Philadelphia. Another pioneer, Fitz M's story, from Anne Arundel County appears in all editions to date. He is credited with bringing the message to the Washington D.C. area. The first female story to appear in the book was that of Florence R. She hailed from Washington D.C. and disappeared from the scene shortly after the first few printings. She is of interest since she lived in the Washington D.C. Area. In the 1st edition her story is entitled "A Feminine Victory". A few years ago the A.A. community there embarked on a mission to find her grave. It was known that she had returned to drinking and passed away. Her grave was found and is currently maintained by volunteers.

Some other interesting facts emerge from the manuscript to the 1st Edition, 1st Printing are as follows:

The original manuscript reads: (bold indicates original)

Chapter 5, Step 3 – "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care **and direction** of God as we understand him".

Chapter 5, Step 6 – "Were entirely ready **willing that** to have God remove all these defects of character".

Chapter 5, Step 7 – "Humbly, **on our knees**, asked him to remove our shortcomings – **holding nothing back**".

Chapter 5, Step 8 – "Made a list of all persons **we** had harmed, and became willing to make **complete** amends to them all".

Chapter 5, step 12 – "Having had a spiritual **experience** awakening as a result of **this course of action** these steps, we tried to carry this message to **others, especially** alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Chapter 5, end of "How It Works" – "Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures, before and after, **have been designed to sell you** make clear three pertinent ideas:

a. That **you** we were **are alcoholic and cannot manage your own life** alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.

b. That probably no human power **can** could relieve **your** our alcoholism.

c. That God can **and will** could and would if He were sought.

And probably the most interesting quote that was deleted from the final version: If You are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to reread the book to this point or else throw it away. ☹

Maryland General Service and the Digital Age

Ray T

Recently Maryland General Service, Inc. (MGS) has hosted a series of workshops entitled "Anonymity in the Digital Age". The workshops have been very well received and are being requested by even more Districts. I believe this shows that there is an awareness by the Fellowship that we are living in an era that is undergoing significant changes in the way that technology interfaces with our lives and, especially, in the challenges that are being imposed on A.A.'s Traditions as they affect our individual lives. At the same time, A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine have begun several initiatives making use of the Internet and are evaluating even more uses of that medium. These include allowing online contributions, creating digital editions of many of its publications, and distribution via email of newsletters.

Maryland General Service, Inc. on the other hand has been reluctant to use the Internet for anything other than hosting an information website. There have been brief inquiries into ideas such as online convention and conference registration, posting Assembly minutes on its website, bulk email distribution of announcements and notices, etc. Usually, these are met with discussions such as "What's wrong with the way we do things now?", "What about my anonymity?", "I don't have an email address.", and many others. While these questions and other are legitimate, they don't address the real issue.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to guiding MGS into the digital age is people, or more precisely, the lack of enough people to do the work necessary to move into the digital era. And, ironically, it's less the need for technical talent as much as it is the need for "boots on the ground." This latter initiative can better be described as getting together people with ideas, ideas that need to be identified, defined, described, and only then developed. The last step, development, is really the only one that requires any technical expertise. The other steps require people that are familiar with a certain process and what it does and needs, how it does what it does, and how to evaluate any proposed digital solution for its effectiveness.

Here are some ideas where MGS can benefit from using the Internet:

1. Electronic distribution of meeting and event notices – current meeting notices are

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which are each made up of 6 to 10 districts. Here is where we (all members of the fellowship) have the opportunity to formulate possible items for the agenda of the annual General Service Conference to address issues, or needs of the fellowship to help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

- I have been given the opportunity to research the Traditions and Concepts to answer questions and address issues presented by DCMs, GSRs, Intergroup Chairs and members of the fellowship.
- I have been able to share my service experiences to encourage others to consider venturing down this path.
- I have been privileged to serve with wonderful, dedicated, self-sacrificing individuals in Area 29 and all over the U.S. and Canada who want nothing more than to stay sober by relying on their higher power, and serving this fellowship that is saving our lives.

I want to thank the Panel 60 Officers and Committee Leaders who are rotating in December, for their commitment and dedication to Maryland General Service and Area 29 over the past two years. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with you.

On October 22 the Area Assembly, comprised of area officers, committee leaders, DCMs and GSRs, came together to elect a new delegate and area officers to serve for the next two years beginning January 1, 2012. Please join me in welcoming the new, Panel 62, Area 29 Officers of Maryland General Service for 2012 and 2013:

Delegate	Bob C.
Alternate Delegate	Ron M.
Area Chairperson	Dawn H.
Area Secretary	Linda J.
Area Treasurer	David R.

Congratulations to each of you as you begin your new journey in service to Area 29. Thank you for your willingness to serve. ▲

(...Anonymity) continued from page 1...

ourselves. Often, attraction means alcoholics will be able to find us, and promotion means they always can find us (as in advertising). Attraction means maintaining anonymity while possibly causing a delay in availability. Strong sponsorship about digital anonymity is paramount.

After these general observations about the Traditions, the then North East Intergroup Public Information (PI) Chair and then Area 29 Webmaster led a panel discussion and Q/A sessions. Much discussion centered on internet anonymity with respect to names, addresses, phone numbers and hyperlinked e-mail addresses. Newsletters, e-mail and banner ads were discussed. Site design tools, server issues, the advantages of pdfs, sensitivity about transmission speed and browser format, limited use of "Reply All," keystroke-loggers and other spyware, pros and cons of firewalls, and confidential information memory storage were salient issues.

Finally, the importance of taking care not to let cyberspace make us more virtual to each other was stressed. Personal contact, face-to-face, is as important today as it was in 1935.

That much seems to have remained the same since 2006. Changes since then are much more about things we'd never dreamed about, than they are modifications of issues that we had back then. Among the new topics that we are dealing with today:

- Facebook and other social networking sites didn't even arise as a conversation topic in the 2006 Day of Sharing. Today, we can ask: In addition to the obvious issue of anonymity at the public level, if a Facebook page mentions both AA and outside issues such as "politics, alcohol reform or sectarian religion" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p 565), can that harm AA or the newcomer who's not yet here?
- Tweeting (Twitter) didn't exist in 2006. Consider the Traditions challenges and opportunities raised by this relatively new technology.

- The advent of smart phones and apps poses brand new questions concerning our Traditions – especially where AA and Grapevine copyrights are concerned.
- Anonymity in obituaries was not mentioned at the 2006 Day of Sharing. Since then, a statement recommending posthumous anonymity was added by Conference action to the pamphlet, "Understanding Anonymity."

But to be sure we don't miss out on vital opportunities to carry the message, let's consider the positive potential: "The internet is potentially the greatest unifying communications tool in history" (2011 GSC Report, p 23). This statement summarizes the opportunities afforded AA by the digital age. The internet is neither good nor bad; how we use it is what may be good or bad. On one hand, the greatest challenge posed to AA by the internet is its exponential ability to disclose personal information. The flip side is, through the same exponential characteristic, it may provide our greatest opportunity yet to reach the alcoholic who still suffers.

As an example of this "good/bad" duality, I've recently observed that e-mail at work, in service work and in personal life can be a great medium for information transfer but maybe not such a good one for conducting business. Yet, other internet media (such as chat rooms, Skype, and private forums like those used by the MGS Website and Intergroup Liaison Committees) may work well for finding a group conscience. The question is whether the digital tool improves participation while still providing high-quality, confidential communication.

Finally, when thinking of AA and the digital age, limiting the scope to Anonymity bypasses many other important and interesting Traditions issues. The insightful article, "Practicing our Traditions in a Digital Age," applies every one of our Twelve Traditions to challenges of the digital age (see the 2011 GSC Final Report, pp 22-23, free upon request from delegate@marylandaa.org). ▲

General Service Matters

Don B., Happy Risers Group, Ocean City, MD

Hi, I'm a grateful recovering alcoholic, and my problem is Don. Not my job, parents, ex-wives, children, sponsor, sponsees or home group. Me. So when, at my home group's monthly business meeting a week ago, I found out that the group did not have a current General Service Representative, I knew that I could not blame my concerns on anyone else's apathy or busyness.

When my home group offered the service position to me, I asked for a day to consider it. I ran the idea past my significant other, talked about it with my sponsor, prayed about it, and called Robin D., the District Committee Member for District 32 (Worcester County), to find out what was involved. The next morning, I requested a short group conscience meeting after our regular Monday Big Book study, and my home group elected me the new GSR by affirmation.

Five days later, I found myself in Frederick at my very first Area 29 Maryland General Service Assembly meeting. I filled out a Group Service Information Change form, received a free copy of the Maryland General Service Area Assembly Handbook, and purchased my very own copy of the 2010-2011 A.A. Service Manual. I was a grateful participant in the Third Legacy elections process by which a

loving God selected the Area 29 officers for the coming two years. One selection even went to the hat as the collective wisdom of all the A.A. groups in the Maryland General Service Area was expressed.

And I was thrilled to already know a few people at the Assembly besides my DCM, Robin. The DCM from Columbia in District 7, Terry, had just led a meeting I attended in Ocean City the previous Saturday evening. Harold, a past Delegate and Trustee from Annapolis, had led a meeting on the Concepts that I had chaired back in the 1990s. And Dawn, our new Area 29 Chairperson-elect from Gambrills, had visited my old home group for her very first meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. They and everyone else present clearly were interested in the welfare of A.A. as a whole rather than any self-serving concerns, so I felt right at home in the spirit of service and the fellowship of the spirit expressed throughout the day on October 22nd.

Now my responsibility is to take that spirit of service back to my district and my home group. I have put together a notebook called "A.A. General Service Matters," which I will make available to all the members and visitors to my home group. This notebook contains the Area 29 Handbook, the 2011 General Service Conference Final Report, the Area 29 calendar, the MARGENSER newsletter, the Election Assembly results, the Delegate Report, the Area
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It is a fine line that I walk trying to balance all the elements of my life today. The God of my understanding has graced me with great blessings and opportunities. I have been able to restore the trust of my family; I have the love of a wonderful husband; and the responsibility of a professional career. But I would have none of this had I not rediscovered God and found sobriety in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous by practicing and applying the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts in my life. So it is my daily quest to identify where and how to best demonstrate my recovery and my witness to the God that loves me. It is, at times, like doing a Fourth Step in that I have to be careful not to be too easy on myself but mindful of all my responsibilities; to look at my part without criticizing others. Sometimes I have to say, "No, I can't" but more often I have to take that call from a struggling member who calls during dinner or after I've gone to bed; or go out of my way to give someone a ride to a meeting; or to serve when I can and humbly rotate on when the time comes.

I have come to understand that no one person can fulfill all the jobs, positions, and services in AA and that I must come to depend on the participation of other members. This was a little tricky for me at first because I was very mistrustful of everyone; their intentions, their abilities, their commitment. As my recovery continued, I
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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, PO Box 20177, Baltimore, MD 21284-0177. The submission deadline for the next issue is February 17, 2012.

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.
PO Box 20177
Baltimore, MD 21284-0177

General Service and the 9th Tradition

Arnold R

'Great suffering and great love are A.A.'s only disciplinarians. We need no other.' This challenge of Tradition Nine as expressed on Page 174 of the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, to live by spiritual principles, has always held my interest. It was because of great suffering that I was driven to be open-minded enough to accept the love of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was from the other members doing twelve-step work that I could witness their love in action. The example of A.A. members gave me the courage to approach practicing the principles in all of my affairs. It wasn't until much later; that I realized there was a connection to a tradition.

It is impossible to contemplate that A.A., as such, ought never be organized but when we create service boards and committees directly responsible for those they serve, there are really no rules and no laws; services provided are dictated by the needs of others.

The opening line of Tradition 9, as reflected in the writings of Bill W. in *The Language of the Heart*, sets forth:

"The least possible organization, that is our universal idea. No fees, no dues or rules imposed on anybody."

This statement and definition of Tradition 9 would lead us to believe that A.A. was operating as an anarchy. We all know that is not true. The impossible contradiction works -- A.A. as a whole should never be organized at all but we proceeded to set up a Conference of recognized and identified designated areas in 1951 and proceeded to create boards and committees to assist in providing a service to alcoholics and A.A. groups worldwide.

It was explained to me early in my service experience that A.A. was the most unorganized, organized Fellowship that ever existed and so it is.

A.A. is made up of many personality types from the super salesman promoters such as Bill W. to the conservative position of Dr. Bob. in "keeping it simple." We are fortunate in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to have conservative members as well as our enthusiastic promoters. The conservative members will surely see, fulfilling our structured obligation, that A.A.'s service structure will never get over organized by promoters. With millions of alcoholics waiting for the message of A.A. all over the world, the balance in our Fellowship is maintaining our singleness of purpose and

discharging our only obligation of carrying the message to alcoholics.

With our informed group conscious we have continually throughout the history of A.A. been able to weather discord and negativism because of our firm commitment to unity. The underlying knowledge that failure to maintain unity, and pursuing an unsafe course for A.A., will lead to its demise and ultimately to the jeopardy of our individual sobriety.

While we do not recognize and have resisted, sometimes violently, the idea of any type of general organization efforts which would hinge on government, we have resolutely and persistently insisted upon organizing special services to assist members of our Fellowship to be more effective and available to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Our fellowship was fortunate that Bill recognized that we had to have the printed word of our message with the Big Book published in 1939. Guidelines were adopted which resulted in our 12 Traditions in 1950 to share our experience with our varied problems of group functions in carrying the A.A. message.

The publication of the long form of the Traditions in the *Grapevine* in 1946 was controversial because individuals and groups thought that the "New York office" was trying to dictate rules or regulations on our operations to their groups and their service functions.

Bill W.'s perseverance in discussing the problems of the various groups and recognizing the similarity of same was able to convey to the Fellowship our need to share our experiences of group autonomy and service and the unique experiences of the groups of A.A. members from its beginning in 1935.

The evolution of our service structure is a direct result of Conference actions resulting from group requests to assist the groups in providing a better and more effective way to provide service to the A.A. members and A.A. groups.

How best can the message of recovery be carried and disseminated among those throughout the world who needed to hear this message of recovery from alcoholism? It was recognized early on by Dr. Bob and Bill that the printed word would be necessary to carry the clear and ungarbled message of the A.A. program of recovery through the suggested 12 Steps.

We all recall the perilous days of early A.A. in attempting to complete the Big Book as a textbook on alcoholism and recovery. If the message of recovery had been limited through

word of mouth communication, only a few alcoholics would have heard the message of recovery. The peril of not having the recovery message available to those who needed it in an appropriate and proper form was clearly recognized. Thus the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous was published by a fragile and struggling fellowship in 1939. With publication and copyright of the Big Book, A.A. then had some order and consistency in its message that would not be garbled or twisted beyond recognition.

The availability of the Big Book, as we know, permitted wider circulation and dissemination of our message of recovery far beyond New York and Akron to the alcoholics where they lived. The same message of recovery in Akron and New York exists around the world today.

The adoption of our 12 Traditions gave us a vehicle by which our service could be implemented to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic.

The General Services that A.A. provides at the group, district and area level, as well as at the General Service Office, is carried out without authority to order any A.A. member or group as they are autonomous. We make suggestions based on shared experience.

We recognize that we cannot dictate to fellow members individually or collectively and choose not to do so.

We understand and recognize as recovering alcoholics that unless an A.A. member follows, to the best of his ability, our suggested 12 Steps of recovery, he or she almost certainly will sign his or her own death warrant. The ultimate return to active alcoholism with certain tragedy and ultimate alcoholic death resulting therefrom are not penalties inflicted by people in authority but are results of personal disobedience of spiritual principles. We recognize that we must obey certain spiritual principles or we die.

This same principle regarding our own individual sobriety and the opportunity to continue to live in a spiritual life, applies to our A.A. group. Unless there is conformity to A.A.'s 12 Traditions, a group, too, can deteriorate and die. We are committed, if we are to maintain our recovery, to the unity that is demanded of us through spiritual principles of the 12 Traditions to freely give through the service of carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic.

So we of A.A. do obey spiritual principles first, because we must and, ultimately, because we love life that such obedience brings to each

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- sent to known GSRs, DCMs, MGS Officers, and Committee Chairs, by email using personal ISP accounts with their industry limitations, and by postal mail for those without email. While all MGS Committee and Assembly meetings are open to the fellowship, the general membership has to visit the MGS website to find out about upcoming meetings. Having a subscriber list that anyone can sign up for would enable wider notification of upcoming meetings. Establishing a separate subscriber list for Area 29 events, including District events such as workshops would also widen the communication umbrella.
2. Permitting online contributions from individuals and groups – while the bulk of contributions would still probably be received via postal mail, some of the membership is very much at ease using the Internet for these types of transactions. It would also ensure more accurate delivery of contributions when the postal address changes as the result of a change in Treasurer.
 3. Permitting online registration for the State Convention and Fall Conference – I believe that opening this form of registration would increase the attendance at these events. Allowing online payment through Paypal or some other payment mechanism would also benefit attendance. And the email addresses could be added to the event subscriber list for wider notification.
 4. Setting up special websites for the State Convention, Fall Conference, and Mini-Conference – these websites could provide more specific information about the particular event, such as hotel registration information, meals, workshops, speakers, activities, etc. Once set up, they would be relatively easy to maintain from year to year, and could be part of the planning committee for that event.
 5. Electronic distribution of the Margenser newsletter – the two greatest expenses in the production of the Margenser are the printing of the publication and its postal distribution. Establishing an electronic subscription to the Margenser, managed through the subscriber list in item 1 should significantly reduce these costs.

These are just some of the ideas that have been offered when discussing ways for Maryland General Service to utilize the Internet. These and more can be investigated by a website committee staffed with energetic and imaginative people. We hope you'll consider volunteering for our committee. ▲

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one of us. Great suffering and great love are A.A.'s discipline. We have no other.

It is through sacrifice that we practice A.A.'s 12 Traditions including Tradition 9 which requires us to provide some general service. It is in the spirit of this service that we elect G.S.R.s from A.A. groups, the informed rotating service committees and group affiliations in the area with district meetings, regional meetings, area assemblies and ultimately the area group representatives, the area delegate to the General Service Conferences. The Trustees elected by the General Service Conference serve as an independent body but are directly accountable to our Fellowship through the area delegates and the groups throughout the 92 areas in the United States and Canada. Our Trustees are caretakers and expeditors of our World Services through our Conference Charter and By-laws of the General Service Board and corporate laws of the State of New York.

A.A. is truly a society without organization as such; sacrifice is the basis of service, and founded on the spiritual principles, A.A. is a true Fellowship.

Our service jobs are directly responsible to the group conscience whether it be the A.A. group, district, area, region, General Service Conference or A.A. General Service Board. A.A. is a service society with only one purpose – to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic.

The excellent services that we are able to provide assists our groups, districts, areas and regions and are a direct result of gifted and dedicated people who use their education and expertise to assist us in providing the best possible services to our A.A. members.

Action is the magic word for us in service. We should continually strive to devise better ways of carrying the A.A. message to those who still suffer. We need to continue to publish our books and literature and protect the integrity of our message for all who need them.

The good will of our Fellowship that we enjoy throughout the world in large measures is directly due to services which we provide through our service structure. May each of us continue to sacrifice in following the spiritual principles and maintaining those principles over personalities and may we continue to carry the spiritual message that was freely given to us so that we may freely pass the A.A. message on to the suffering alcoholic. ▲

(General Service Matters...) continued from page 4...

Committee meeting minutes, the MGS financial report, the GSO newsletter (once I receive our group's copy of Box 4-5-9), and announcements of upcoming service-related functions, such as the Area 29 Fall Conference, the District 10 Sex in Sobriety workshop, the Area 29 chili cook-off, and the 2012 Northeast Regional A.A. Service Assembly.

Yet I must be careful to express this information within the spirit of Traditions 2 and 11, of service and attraction rather than government or promotion, for I have learned through experience that self promotes, while spirit attracts. I am nothing more and nothing less than a trusted servant of God, A.A., and my home group. It's what I do, not what I say, that counts. That's why I'll be proposing to organize a January Big Book workshop at our next District meeting just nine days from now. The only way to end the apathy in my home group and my District is to get busy myself, for when we get busy, we get better, all of us addressing our three-fold illness by working together within the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service, as we trust God, clean house, and help others. ▲

(Going to Any Lengths...) continued from page 4...

learned to trust myself and others thereby demonstrating my faith in the God of my understanding. As I and my other homegroup members continued to utilize the principles of unity and faith articulated in Tradition Two, we are able to look for and discuss additional ways our group can be of service in fulfilling our primary purpose. There is always more we can do of course, but I am happy to report that at our group conscience/business meetings, our discussions are lively and purposeful.

As my "circles of love and service" continue to expand outward, it is incumbent upon me to add my voice, my support, and my efforts to service at the Intergroup, District and Area levels. This is the place where an even greater geographic diversity of members come together to share experience, strength and hope in carrying the message to those who have not yet heard the good news. At this level we can share best practices and coordinate activities; doing together what one person or one group cannot do alone. Here we can begin to reach out to the still suffering and under-served populations and try to find the best methods available to reach them; maybe through Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections and Treatment committees. These committees can develop the lines of communication with our

continued on page 7...

(*Going to Any Lengths...*) continued from page 6... friends outside of the fellowship who can refer or recommend us to those who need our message of recovery from alcoholism.

Have we identified and reached out to every special group? Not yet. A few that come to mind that may need our message of hope and recovery are: our elder members in nursing homes, districts or groups that are not participating in Area or Intergroup and therefore isolated from the full family of AA, our Spanish-speaking members in Area 29 and other sufferers isolated by culture or language, our special needs members and members who are homebound. That's just a few; I'm sure there are others.

Finally, our fellowship as a whole reaches out a national and world-wide hand to the still suffering alcoholic through our General Service Office in New York. From our various communication streams (i.e., our Delegate, Box 459, AAWS Highlights, and the Final Conference Report from each year's General Service Conference) we learn about our whole fellowship's efforts to reach out to alcoholics outside of the US and Canada, coordinated efforts to communicate with incarcerated members who need us and Loners and Internationalists, preserving the integrity and continuity of our message with our literature, and developing new ways to attract special groups of alcoholics that may be afraid they don't belong.

What is critically important for me to be mindful of is that our General Service Office reflects the desires and directives of the groups it serves. It is simply the repository of all of the experience and work of all the groups in Alcoholics Anonymous in the US and Canada and the operational arm of our world-wide outreach. We request, endorse and delegate the work done beyond our group but on our behalf.

The General Service Office, the General Service Board, the Delegates, the Areas and the Districts all exist to serve the groups of AA. And the groups of AA are made up of members like you and me. The "we" in the question "Are We Going to Any Lengths" includes each of us individually and collectively.

I have to look to my part first and only. It is not my place to take another's inventory or make assumptions about anyone's level of participation. But it is important that I give back that which was so freely given to me. By helping to create the conditions that will encourage and inspire more members to look beyond themselves and happily and gratefully reach out past their comfort zones, my recovery, peace and serenity is immeasurably multiplied.

I am acutely aware that as long as there are

people in this world and alcohol is produced, there will ever be the need for Alcoholics Anonymous and members like us to reach out to those "who still stumble in the darkness one short block from this room."

As Bill W. writes in his essay on the Twelfth Step on page 124 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*,

"Still more wonderful is the feeling that we do not have to be especially distinguished among our fellows in order to be useful and profoundly happy. Not many of us can be leaders of prominence, nor do we wish to be. Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God's help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God's sight all human beings are important, the proof that love

freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God's scheme of things – these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes. True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God."

I aspire to that ideal. And the way in which I continue to move toward that ideal is to ask the question, "Are We Going to Any Lengths" and then act upon it. I am wonderfully human, gratefully flawed but enthusiastically trudging the road of Happy Destiny. ♣

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE, AREA 29 2012 CALENDAR

Area Committee	February 11	District 6 St. James Parish 5757 Solomons Is. Rd. Lothian, MD 20711
NERAASA	March 2 – 4	Albany, NY
NERD	March 16 – 18	Sturbridge, MA
Area Assembly	March 24	_____
Mini Conference	April 14	District 46 Presbyterian Church of Chestertown 905 Gateway Drive Chestertown, MD 21620
General Service Conference	April 21 – 28	New York
Area Assembly (Report Back)	June 2	_____
MD State Convention	June 14 – 17	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	July 14	District 41
Area Assembly	August 11	_____
Area Committee	September 22	District 9
Area Assembly (Inventory)	October 20	_____
Fall Conference	October 25 – 28	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	November 17	_____
Area Assembly	December 15	_____

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