

MARGENSER

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

Service for Our Own Sake

Bob C., Panel 62 Area 29 Delegate

This October, Area 29's Assembly elects a new panel of officers for the two years starting January 1, 2014. Congratulations to each of you, yet to be chosen as trusted servants "directly responsible to those we serve," as you begin the next chapter of area service. Likewise, I extend a huge "thank you" to the Panel 62 officers and committee members who have served Area 29 during Panel 62. Serving you, and serving *with* you, will always rank right at the top of my gratitude list.

I'm not convinced that "willingness to serve" is something we conjure up on our own, any more than willing oneself to stop drinking works for a drunk with no program. The experience of the past two years has convinced me that most of those who serve below the home group level have no other choice, being impelled by a spiritual "second bottom." Yet, I still thank you for your willingness to serve, because we so *need* you – because God would no more save A.A. from itself than God did for the Washingtonians, the Emmanuel Movement or the Jacoby Clubs that preceded us. Many members say they "don't have time" for intergroup and general service work. Those members simply aren't primed for service beyond the home group – at least, not yet. That's not a judgment, just a fact

to accept and understand for our own serenity's sake. But because service is also a mortal matter, I thank God that you *are* willing, and that you will cultivate others yet to come. As stand-ins for Bill W. and Dr. Bob, *you* embody the link between our groups and our world services, so *you* ensure the future of A.A. "for the child born tonight, destined for alcoholism."

The greatest gifts of service aren't the actual products we bring to fruition. The prime beneficiary is the member actually doing the work. In general and intergroup service, learning to work with others on a worthwhile project, learning to submit totally and voluntarily to the group conscience, learning to trust the group to resolve things far better than we could alone, and learning that sacrificing our pet ideas for the common good makes us more complete, are some of the personal payoffs. So it's not just a trite expression – it's from the bottom of my experience – when I say, "Thank you for allowing me to serve."

Finally, let's remember never to rotate "out," but always "on." I rotated "out" when I had five years' sobriety. Within two years, I had slid completely out of A.A. meetings and stayed there for another five years. Finally I hit
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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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my second bottom, fortunately without drinking, but I returned to you more seriously suicidal than ever before. After reworking the Steps, I got involved and stayed involved in service. Funny thing – I haven't thought life wasn't worth living a single time since.

This member counts himself fortunate to have found service to be a personal necessity. I now eagerly anticipate answering the phone at West Central Intergroup and trolling for drunks again at my home group, the Antiques Group in New Market. But as I go forward into continued service, I will always hold close the incompara-

ble experiences and relationships you have afforded me during the past two years. No words can say it better for me than how another delegate put it six years ago: "Life isn't made of the number of breaths we take; it's made of the moments that take our breath away." Thank you for taking my breath away." ▲

An Urgent Request

Bob C., Area 29 Delegate

Albin is a regular guy. He and his wife Jules run what I like to call an "open house." When my travelling companion Francis and I arrived to visit last weekend, John (one of the guys Albin sponsors) met us on the front porch. The five of us sat down to a homey lunch of Costco quiche, green salad, fruit salad and iced tea. We talked about Albin and John's home group and Francis' and my past few days at an A.A. retreat. As we ate, another Albin pigeon, Craig, swung by with Denise, his wife. Craig, just past his first A.A. birthday, and Denise had reunited only a few days before. To look at Albin, sitting around a Brooklyn row house on a Sunday afternoon wearing shorts and flip-flops and a well-loved Hawaiian shirt, you wouldn't suspect the guy is a trustee on A.A.'s General Service Board. Or then again...that might not surprise you at all. After lunch, Albin poured coffee. We sat on the deck, just a few feet from his neighbors' open window. Utterly unself-conscious, Albin told us about the trustees' "homework" for the next Board

meeting in early November: To bring their "five most important questions or issues in better carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic." The Board will use the answers to improve its service to the Fellowship.

Albin is a true listener, open-minded thinker and humble man, so he knows he's a lot smarter with all of us than with just himself! So right away, he began to quiz us with the following questions:

- "As an A.A. member, what do you think is the biggest problem in A.A.? How can the trustees help with this problem?"
- "The first line in the Board's by-laws says our trustees have "but one purpose, that of serving the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous." What can the trustees do to better serve the groups?"
- "Are the groups getting everything they need to help the still-suffering alcoholic?"

We tossed some topics around – communication, anonymity, self-support

and singleness of purpose, to name a few. Finally I remembered that, like Albin, I can always do better if I "copy from someone else's paper," so I asked: Can I take this as a homework assignment and send answers back from our home group members in Maryland? "Sure," he exclaimed, "that would be great! That's what we need...direct feedback from the people who are on the firing line!" So now this homework assignment includes Albin, me – and you. Lives depend on this: What services do you, or your home group, need to help you better carry the message of A.A. to the drunk who's still-suffering? Your trustees desperately want to know, so they can provide those services to us. Send your answers to Albin's questions to delegate@marylandaa.org, and I will forward them to Albin, so together we can improve the ability of all of us to help an alcoholic who, right now, feels exactly like you and I did just before our first meetings! And thank you for your service...which in this case, is service to the alcoholic yet to come. ▲

My Experience As A New GSR

Amanda A.

While attempting to get more connected in AA, a woman in my former home group told me, "Amanda, you're around AA but not in AA". I didn't understand what she meant then, but I do now. When the Captain's Table in Towson became my home group in February 2013, I knew I had to do some things differently to improve the quality of my recovery. I had to get

involved in my home group and get "in" AA. I immediately got a sponsor, attended 7-10 meetings a week, and began expanding my contacts in the fellowship.

My service work started with taking minutes during the group conscience meetings where I got elected as GSR (April or May). In June, I was elected Secretary of the Sunday morning meet-

ings through December. My sponsor, Barb D., trained me in my role and responsibilities as Secretary and we attended a Baltimore Intergroup Workshop for Secretaries held this summer.

David R., Area 29 Treasurer, was instrumental in getting me started as a new GSR. He gave me literature, an

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overview of roles and responsibilities and introduced me to people. One key person I met was Kimberly S., District 10 DCM, who invited me to attend the District 10 meetings to make more connections and get familiar with the process.

At my first District 10 meeting, I learned that my district, District 4, is “dark” or inactive and does not have a voice in AA outside of the individual groups. Immediately, getting District 4 “lit” or active became a goal for me as GSR. District 10 invited me to attend

their regular meetings until District 4 is active.

In August, I attended my first Area 29 General Service Assembly where I met more people and learned so much about how AA operates outside of the groups. I was like a sponge and soaked up as much information as I could. Bob C., Area 29 Delegate, asked me to write and give a GSR report on District 4 and I did. I felt like I was truly “in” AA and not just around AA. I have a better understanding and appreciation for “I am responsible” and AA service work.

David R. and Bob C. agreed to schedule a meeting with some District 4 GSRs and guide us through lighting up the district. This meeting hopefully will take place in October.

Getting involved in service work as Secretary and GSR has definitely improved the quality of my recovery and subsequently the quality of others’ recovery by ensuring the message of hope is available to anyone, anywhere who reaches out for help. For that, I AM responsible. ♣

Spiritual Awakening

Ron M., Alternate Delegate

No burning bush here. Although Bill W. relates to his flash of light, the experience for most of us is what William James refers to as the “educational variety”. As a common variety drunk I prefer to view my spiritual awakening as being of the garden variety. That is, the awakening as experienced by the majority of members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Just what is a spiritual awakening and what results can be expected to occur as a result?

Like most of us, I came to AA not knowing what to expect, and in the beginning questioning and challenging whatever was said in the meetings. When the concept and idea of God (I did not hear the phrase Higher Power) was discussed I was immediately turned off and immediately ready to run for the door. In step 2 of the 12 and 12 it refers to the fact that AA comes harder to those who have lost or rejected faith than to those who never had any faith at all. I relate to that statement very well.

As a child I was given a strong religious education up to and including high school. This God of my childhood remained strong into my early 20s when I started to drink. As my drinking career progressed my religious beliefs regressed to the point that a few months before quitting I sat with the church pastor and proudly proclaimed that I had become agnostic. From that bottom

it took a number of years to crawl out of the mental pit of non-belief. I have found that the entry to the state of true sobriety, and not just dryness, is found at the threshold of a spiritual awakening. As time moved along, one day at a time, I did not drink but I found that I was not experiencing the same degree of freedom and well being that was exhibited by others in the program. Although I was a faithful attendee of AA meetings, had a sponsor that I used infrequently, I was still uncomfortable in my own skin. After looking around and taking a number of other peoples inventories, I came to the conclusion that maybe I ought to try finding a HP that could and would help me along the road of happy destiny. This journey was not an easy one. Trying to shed the God of my childhood and develop a new, loving and understanding HP turned out to be a long and arduous chore. Thanks to numerous loving and understanding persons, both in and out of the clergy, I was finally able to look to my inner self and find a personal HP that did not resemble the God of my childhood. This took me into the 8th year of continuous AA membership. I was able to look around and take the best of others and leave the rest. Today, my spiritual life is a mixture of numerous observations of fellow AA’s. I am able to look in the mirror and be able to look the guy in the glass right in the eye

and say I’m OK, because I believe in a HP of my understanding and that HP gives me the serenity that allows me to live one day at a time, happy joyous and free.

At this point I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and recognize an icon in my life as he relates to my spiritual growth and survival over these past many years. Very early in my journey of sobriety I was introduced to Brother Alexis. We would meet from time to time at meetings and spiritual retreats where we would have the opportunity to chat and discuss our feelings and emotions. I was blessed a number of times when he would agree to be the guest speaker at one of my anniversaries. He even gave the eulogy at my late wife’s funeral. We became more than friends and I quickly requested him to be my spiritual advisor which he readily agreed to. After numerous intense one on one chats I began to ease into a comfort zone as it relates to my spirituality. Brother’s guidance led me to the understanding and comfortable feeling that my spirituality was truly an inside job, and rather than relying what is otherwise known and referred to by many as “DOGMA” my innermost feelings and beliefs should direct my spiritual direction.

Recently Brother left us after an extended illness and is now carrying the message to those meetings in the sky. ♣

Concept Presentations

Clinton F.

The following concept presentations were given at the September Area Committee meeting.

Concept X

What is it? Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority. The scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, be specific job description or by appropriate charters and by-laws.

Why? Each service entity has its own charter and responsibilities to which it serves (Tradition 9) and these entities must have the Right of Decision to carry out their mission (Concept III).

Tradition 9 and Concept III

Tradition 9 states: A.A. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. Although, the ultimate authority lies within the A.A. group, there is no way an A.A. group can provide all the services that A.A. does as a whole. Delegation of responsibilities and authority needs to be well defined and approved by the entity that is delegating and mission or purpose must be defined.

The delegation of duties and responsibilities up and down the Service structure is essential for each level on the upside down pyramid to carry out the missions and have the authority to do it.

Bill warned us against using the Right of Decision as an excuse for the failure to make proper reports of actions taken, or for exceeding a clearly defined authority, or for failing to consult the proper people before making an important decision. For example: the plumbing in the building that an A.A. group is renting is broken. Someone in the group is a plumber and offers to fix it at cost. Who is responsible? Is the responsibility that of the group or the landlord? In my opinion it's the landlord's responsibility; however, he or she can talk to the plumber as an individual contractor and not as a group member.

In summary, Concept X states that every level must have well defined authority and responsibilities to carry out the mission and/or duties.

Concept III states that the Right of Decision rest squarely on the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust A.A. and we trust each other.

Tradition 9 states that even though the groups have the ultimate authority in A.A., they delegate authorities to

each level of the service structure because they cannot do it themselves.

Concept XI

The eleventh concept states, "While the trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible **standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants**. Therefore, the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern."

As Bill laid out these words, he next wrote that the longtime success of our general service board would rely on the harmonious association and competent leadership of those non-trustee members. In order to provide this foundation of success for these special workers, Bill outlined the best practices in place in 1962 at the General Service Office when he wrote

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SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO...

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

Maryland General Service, Inc.
PO Box 20177
Baltimore, MD 21284-0177

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the eleventh concept. These included the four principles of the status of executives; paid workers, how compensated; rotation among staff workers and Full participation of paid workers.

Each of these principles should be familiar to us in their similarity to the preceding concepts, providing for right of decision of Concept Three, Right of Participation of Concept Four and the tenet of Concept Ten that responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority. These rights, and the practice and wisdom of equality in job rotation and fair compensation, ensure that the members of the General Service staff are given a set of spiritually based tools to succeed in their mission, much like the spiritual tools we have in recovery and the unity of our fellowship.

Ultimately, the right person for the right job needs to be found. As you may be aware, the responsibility to place both alcoholics and non-alcoholics into positions within the world service structure falls upon the trustees nominating committee. In Bill's essay on Concept Eleven, he dedicated several paragraphs to this

awesome responsibility of the nominating committee, and how vital their work is to the future of Alcoholics Anonymous. Here, Bill outlines the need for not only professionals who are familiar with business and professional practices, but also for the knowledge of the fellowship that the alcoholic brings to the job.

Often reading like a text on management or leadership, Bill's Eleventh Concept essay imparts much wisdom, insight and experience on how the administration of this rather unique business, corporate structure and fellowship is treated no differently from how we administer our homegroups or our individual programs of recovery, through the use of a set of spiritual principles, and the common bonds that hold us together. In reflecting on the eleventh concept, it is useful to review the concepts checklist. The checklist asks if we understand how non-trustee directors and non-trustee committee members serve and strengthen the committee system.

As Bill highlighted, these are professionals whose business or professional skills offer a level of expertise that the general service office requires.

Next, the checklist asks how special workers are encouraged to participate in Alcoholics Anonymous. This is accomplished through the General Service Conference and committee process where non-trustee members and staff members are a key element. Finally, the last inquiry asks if we practice rotation. As we know, the GSO staff just like the rest of A.A., rotates in their jobs on a periodic basis. This not only enables A.A. to gain new perspectives and talents, it also allows for the staff member, trustee or director to keep their outlook fresh, and open them up for growth and new experiences.

In closing its worth, mentioning Bill's introduction to the concepts found in the A.A. Service Manual. In it, Bill foresees that new generations of A.A. servants will find new ways to conduct business, and will meet new needs and challenges accordingly. Bill also reminds us to remember the history of A.A., and that change does not necessarily spell progress. So my take on that, is no matter what we do today, there will always be the need for A.A. services, and servants, so pick your relief wisely. ▲

General Service Matters

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

On October 19, our Maryland General Service Area Assembly will gather in Annapolis to elect our Panel 64 Officers for Area 29 to serve a two year term that will span the period from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2016. General Service Representatives or their Alternates, District Committee Members or their Alternates, Area Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Chairs or their Co-Chairs, and current Area officers will vote for the Area 29 service positions of Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary, and

Treasurer in accordance with what has come to be known in Alcoholics Anonymous as the Third Legacy Procedure. This unusual electoral process is detailed on pages S21-S22 of the 2012-2013 Edition of The A.A. Service Manual and also on pages 22-23 of the February 2012 edition of the Maryland General Service Area Assembly Handbook.

The Third Legacy Procedure for elections of Area Delegates and other trusted servants in Alcoholics Anonymous is very different from a

typical contested political election. Only those present may be nominated for any position. No one campaigns for office, collects campaign contributions or spends money on advertising. Because a wide selection of candidates is available, it is virtually impossible to railroad a candidate for election. And since substantial unanimity rather than just a simple majority is required for election, factions and parties are practically eliminated. All votes are conducted by written ballot.

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Eligible candidates from the pool of current and past Area 29 Area Committee Members are asked whether they wish to stand for a given position. Prayerfully, respectfully, and after due consultation with significant others, each eligible individual then accepts or declines the opportunity to be considered. Sometimes, nominations may be opened to other members of A.A. in addition to candidates from the Area Committee. Those who do stand for an office are each granted up to two minutes to state to the Assembly their qualifications for the position.

Only after all candidates have been heard is the matter put to a vote. A candidate is elected only if he or she receives a 2/3 majority of the total vote. If there is no single candidate with substantial unanimity (a 2/3 majority), then the matter goes to a second ballot. Again, substantial

unanimity is required for election. If no candidate has a 2/3 majority, then those candidates with less than 20 percent of the total vote are automatically withdrawn, although the top candidate and at least one runner-up candidate must remain for the third ballot.

On the third ballot, a candidate with a 2/3 majority of the total vote is elected. If that does not occur, then candidates with less than 1/3 of the total vote are withdrawn, while the top candidate and all runners-up remain for a fourth ballot. Again, a 2/3 majority is required for election during the fourth ballot.

If, at this point, no candidate has substantial unanimity, then the candidate with the lowest vote total is automatically withdrawn, so that only two candidates remain (or the top candidate and all runners-up). The election chairperson (our most recent past

Delegate) asks for a motion to conduct a fifth vote. If a simple majority votes in favor of a fifth ballot, then that vote is conducted, and a winner is declared only if he or she obtains substantial unanimity. If the motion for a fifth vote is defeated, then the election goes to the hat; that is, the winner is determined by lot. If a fifth vote is conducted, and no candidate has a 2/3 majority, then the election automatically goes to the hat. The election teller (a past Delegate) literally draws the name out of a hat.

This Third Legacy Procedure encourages well qualified candidates to stay in the balloting even if they do not receive many votes in the early rounds. It is a prime example of the hand of God being expressed through the decisions of an informed group conscience. Every member of A.A. is invited to observe this fascinating process. ♣

Are There Leaders in AA?

Tom R, As Bill Sees It Group, Berlin, MD

Do we actually have leadership in AA? Bill Wilson said we do in a 1959 article in the April Grapevine reprinted in The Language of the Heart, pages 287 – 292. Extracts from this article are printed below.

“No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and AA can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we AAs sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without any leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of ‘principles before personalities’ around to such a point that there would be no ‘personality’ in leadership whatever.

... “Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: ‘Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example.’ In effect we are saying to them ‘act for us, but don’t boss us.’

... “A leader in AA service is therefore a man (or a woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgment of his own – well, he really isn’t a leader at all.

... “Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere

... “Good leadership never passes the

buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided of course that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

... “He recognizes that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm – using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

... “Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long contin-

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 ued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed . . . Then we have those who we like to call our 'destructive' critics. They power-drive, they are 'politickers,' they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttlebutt to gain their ends – all for the good of AA, of course! Well, in AA at least, we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle

sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending entirely on how we relate ourselves to them.

. . . "This discussion on leadership may look, at first glance, like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of AA member. But this is not really so. We are simply recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight . . . we only declare that we ought select

that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find . . . in the spot where it will do us the most good.

. . . "Thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in each and all of its great affairs!"

The above article was taken from the following Newsletter: The Hand of AA 24 Hrs. a Day South Palm Beach County Intergroup Association, Inc. September, 2009 Vol. 25-9 

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE AREA 29 2013 CALENDAR

Area Assembly (Elections)	October 19	District 22
Fall Convention	Oct 24-27	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	November 16	District 32
Area Assembly	December 14	District 37

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 December 15, 2013.

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.

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