

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING UNITY AND CARRYING THE A.A. MESSAGE IN AREA 29



1st QUARTER 2003

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

BARBARA B.

My name is Barbara, and I'm an alcoholic and currently have the honor of serving Area 29 as Chairperson of Maryland General Service. I just returned from Albany, NY, where I attended Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA) 2003 with a very large contingent from Maryland.

The purpose of the NERAASA is for GSRs, DCMs, Area Committee members and Intergroup Representatives of the Northeast Region to discuss General Service Conference-related issues and concerns affecting AA as whole, as well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity, and service common to the Areas of the Northeast Region.

We were well represented by our Officers, Committee Leaders, DCMs, GSRs and Past Delegates. Earl H., DCM from District 18, gave an excellent presentation on the Concepts and the Fellowship Saturday afternoon on Panel VI, and Donna H., our Grapevine Chairperson, did a great job as the Recorder/Timer on Panel V Saturday morning. Harold G. from Annapolis, who is a past-Trustee, was the speaker for the Saturday night banquet and shared an awesome message.

The NERAASA program began at 3pm on Friday, February 21, with three panel presentations and discussions. A group of roundtable sessions ended the day's activities around 11pm. Many of us got up early

Saturday and joined our Delegate Victor L. for breakfast. Three more panels took place on Saturday, plus roundtable sessions from 3-4pm and again from 10pm to nearly midnight. Sunday's events included report backs from the roundtables; reports from the Northeast Regional Trustee, Tony T., and Greg M., Manager of GSO; and an ask-it-basket session with our Delegates and Trustee.

Many issues were discussed, and some of them may be of interest to you. I know they were to me. Whether the Big Book should be made available on the GSO website and on-line meetings were hot items. I hope you will join us in our Regional Panel groups, which will be meeting around the state, and participate in discussions of these and other items on the agenda of the General Service Conference to be attended by our Delegate in April.

I left NERAASA 2003 with an infusion of heartfelt enthusiasm and reinforced dedication that can only be achieved by attending a service assembly. I look forward to the opportunity to experience this again at the 2003 Northeast Regional Forum to be hosted by Area 50 Western New York on June 20, 21, and 22, 2003, in Grand Island, New York. I hope many of you will join me.

Yours in Love and Service, Barbara B.

MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and to facilitate communication among A.A. members, groups, districts, and intergroups within the Maryland General Service Area.

The MARGENSER aims to be instrumental in carrying the A.A. message. This quarterly newsletter seeks to publish A.A.-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 A.A. policy. Finally, publication shall not constitute endorsement by the newsletter itself, by Area 29, by intergroups, districts, or local groups, or by A.A. as a whole.

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO . . .

To support AAs essential services, the General Service Conference suggests individual groups adopt a specific contribution plan that is suitable to their particular situation.

Any such plan might work like this:

First, take care of basic group expenses (rent, refreshments, AA literature and a prudent reserve fund).

Divide the remaining funds according to whatever formula suits your local needs. For example:

50% to your Intergroup or central office

30% to General Service Office

Box 459, Grand Cent. Station

New York, NY 10163

10% to District

10% to

Maryland General Service

Elkridge, MD 21075

DELEGATE'S REPORT

VICTOR L.

As I begin my second year as Area 29's Panel 52 Delegate, I am making preparations to attend the 53rd General Service Conference in April. I look forward to the input that Area 29 will give me.

But, are we ready to participate in Area 29's regional panels? These panels are an important part of our voice in the conference. All members, GSRs, DCMs, Committee Chairs, Area Officers, and past Delegates should try to attend as many of these regional panel meetings as possible. I hope that each district will be represented at one or more of the panels. The larger your voice, the more it will help me at the Conference.

As soon as you can look at the Conference agenda items, please take time to review them and ask yourself and others questions about these items. The background information is available for all to review.

You have asked Calvin and Peggy to lead us in this endeavor; they have been busy planning the regional panels. Panel leaders are in place, and they are preparing to hold meetings. The final Conference agenda items, along with all background material, have been passed to each Panel and Officer.

The final Conference agenda is a full list of items (approximately 70) that have an impact on the future of AA. Each agenda item comes from an individual AA, through the district, Area, and on to the GSO and Grapevine Conference Committees. Each of these items is very important to the submitter and to us. The process

involved in reviewing and presenting these to the Conference is an amazing work session of sharing, reading, and looking to the "ultimate authority" to provide the right answer at the right time.

I attended the GSO Board weekend that set the final agenda items. What an experience that was to watch the process. The work and enthusiasm is unbelievable there. The non-alcoholic trustees are amazing in the time they devote to us. They are well versed in worldly affairs and give freely of their knowledge.

Let me not forget the alcoholic trustees, directors, appointed committee members, and AA staff. The way they work together for the betterment of the fellowship is a wonder to behold. I would like each of you to have the opportunity to be there at some time.

The fact of the matter is that each of you is eligible to be there at some time. I know it is early in the year, but Area 29 will hold elections in October of this year. Each of you needs to start thinking about how you may continue to serve the Area. I feel that there is a spot for each of us, whether it be the member who opens the door to the meeting, GSR, DCM, Area Committee Chair, Officer or Delegate. The past years of service have been so rewarding that I sometimes wonder at how blessed I have been to be given this chance to serve.

I want to thank each of you that have been a part of my sobriety. I hope that I will see more of you along the path of recovery, service, and unity.

TRADITION ONE: OUR COMMON WELFARE

ARNOLD R., PANEL 46 DELEGATE, AREA 29

The long form of Tradition One states "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 189).

And in *The Language of the Heart*, Bill writes, "Tradition One asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire" (p. 93). He continues later in this same text, "This really means that our personal ambitions will have to be set aside every time they conflict with the safety or the effectiveness of our Fellowship. It means that we must sometimes love our Society more than ourselves" (p. 317).

When I arrived at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous, my welfare came first. The whole world revolved around me. If it didn't pertain to me, I wasn't interested. I wanted meetings to be held at times and in places that were convenient for me. I wanted the chairperson to select a topic that addressed the Step or dilemma that faced me at the moment. I wanted to be allowed to talk as much or as little as I thought I needed at the time. I looked for the piece of literature that addressed my situation and station in life.

Attention to our common welfare describes mature

action I wasn't capable of taking when I arrived. It was only by following the directions my sponsor gave me that I began to take these actions. I learned to observe the Twelve Traditions by taking correct actions long before I really felt like it. I had to act my way into right thinking. By taking the actions of the Twelve Traditions, which assured that our common welfare would come first, I began to feel and believe that it should.

What are some of the things our groups and members do to place our common welfare first? "True brotherhood, harmony, and love, fortified by clear insights and right practices, are the only answers" (*AA Comes of Age*, p. 98). When we quietly usher a drunk or disruptive member out of a meeting to talk to him or her privately, we assure that a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous will continue for those others who want it. When the meeting chairperson selects a topic from AA literature and calls on sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous to share their experience, strength, and hope, this assures that a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous is being held, rather than a self-help group meeting or group therapy session. When we hold closed meetings for alcoholics only, or allow only alcoholics to share at open meetings, we are not excluding our non-

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A LITTLE NOTE ON MY DOOR

JIM T., GSR, WHAT'S THE POINT GROUP

My name is Jim T.; I realize I'm an alcoholic. I say that because for 20 years of my life, I didn't think I had a drinking problem. I grew up in a large middle-class Catholic family, one of 10 children and my father's oldest son. To the best of my knowledge, there was no history of alcoholism in the family. We were blessed with good parents. They sent all of us through private school and college, if we desired.

I was always quiet and shy in school and fared well with my grades. I participated in very few school activities and had no real desire to participate in most high school functions. I graduated from high school in 1980, and that's when my drinking career started.

Drinking was fun and it helped me fit in. I got a job as a roofer and that helped fuel my habit. A cold beer after a hard day's work came with the trade. Everyone else drank in that line of work, why not me? I held my job for 9 years, partied a lot, and got in trouble a few times along the way. "Trouble" meant things like breaking and entering, alcohol and drug violations, and hanging around the neighborhood hoodlums. I suppose I didn't learn anything from these experiences as I kept on drinking.

In 1989 I quit my job, feeling a lack of respect from fellow employees. I got another job doing the same kind of work and felt better, so I drank that much more. I still have that job today, despite my continued drinking.

At that time, I was living with my parents. They put up with a lot of my crap and never kicked me out. I stayed single until I met a young woman at a friend's apartment. This was my ticket to life—a girlfriend and some sense of responsibility; maybe she would help me settle down some. I was a man, finally.

We had a baby girl in the summer of 1991. Although the pregnancy was unplanned, I once again thought such an event would settle me down. While her birth slowed my drinking down, I saw no need to stop. For five years we lived together, nurturing and raising our daughter, in a small but sufficient trailer (which I still live in today). We finally got married in the summer of 1994. Nine months later, in February 1995, she abandoned the relationship, taking our daughter with her.

Now that I'm sober, I can see that this is when my drinking really progressed. What did I do wrong? Why me? Was it my fault? Self-pity set in and grew. In May 1997, I totaled my truck in a blackout about 2 miles from home. I fractured my neck, was charged with DWI, and had my license revoked. Although I told people it was inevitable, I could not truly see it myself. I was blinded by alcohol, literally and figuratively.

I moved back to my parents for about 2 months, hoping to get back on my feet again. I didn't drink during that time, out of respect for my parents' home. But the insanity returned and eventually, I was again walking to the liquor store, beer in hand. I share at meetings now how it was good

exercise for my neck, the range of motion; talk about insane! I couldn't stop, didn't want to stop, saw no reason to stop drinking. I thought I was indestructible then.

I moved back to the trailer I had been living in and resumed my drunken life, drinking, seeing my daughter at least once a month, and working as a roofer. I had no driver's license, but my boss let me use one of his work trucks to help continue to work and pay what few bills I had.

The 12 & 12 (pg 38) says it's "by circumstance rather than virtue" that we enter AA. That is true for me. To get my license back, I enrolled in the local MVA Alcohol Program. One counseling session and two AA meetings were required each week for 26 weeks. I drank for the first couple of weeks, and a counselor (an AA member) found out and helped me reach that place of feeling hopeless. That is something alcohol never did to me. She made me think, "Maybe I do have a drinking problem."

I slowly began to see how my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God, was intervening in my life. I posted a little note on my door that read "Don't buy alcohol today." I knew there was more to it than that. But the note is still there today, and the 12 steps have taken their place next to it. I've been sober for several years now and am going strong. In early sobriety I rode my bicycle to most meetings. I was willing to go to any lengths. The little note on my door was a constant reminder of the insanity that would come with taking a drink.

About half way through the MVA alcohol program, I sent away for my license reinstatement application. I expected a ton of paperwork. Ironically, I received a single envelope and letter. The letter stated, "Our records indicate you are not revoked...." My license had merely expired, and I only needed to take the re-examination. The truth is, I was just too involved with my drinking before to care about it or to realize that my license had been off suspension for nearly a year.

The first alcohol program I went through did not require attending AA meetings. I learned nothing. But this time, with the help of AA, I got my license back and completed the MVA program. Unlike before, I achieved my license goal, and I didn't return to the vicious cycle. I understand for the first time that I needed a never-ending goal, sobriety, if I was to get anywhere in life.

The way I connected my life and Step 1 was to admit that the party was over. My life had been a party for 20 years. Today, I have a sponsor and am blessed to live near an AA member who takes me to meetings. I have a home group, a service position, and I pray on a regular basis.

My first year of sobriety was a test of my faith, patience, and perseverance. I fell off of my ex-wife's roof on December 28, 1999. Fortunately my daughter, who was nine at the time, was there to call 911 and saved my life. I was

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MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEES, DISTRICT AND HOME GROUP INFORMATION

ARCHIVES REPORT

Bill H. Chairman

I don't know about you, but sometimes it is not easy getting up on a Saturday and going to an Area Committee meeting or Area Assembly. We all have loved ones we want to be with, and some of us ache and creak with age. The cold and inclement weather makes it even easier to want to stay home. But the more I get involved with the archives, the more I realize the importance of each action we take in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Reading some of the earlier Margensers, paging through meeting minutes of the beginnings of Maryland General Services, and having the privilege to listen to newly made CDs of the early recordings of Father Dowling and Bill Wilson, instill in me the importance of what each and every one of us in service are doing today. Our experience and the things we pound out in some of these business meetings will become the archives for the members of AA 20 and 30 years from now. We are part of the legacy of AA. Area business meetings are just a small part of carrying the message of AA to our members. Additionally, we are all responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Traditions that were formulated and molded by the early AA members.

The treasures in our archives are immeasurable and will continue to be a light that reflects the foundations established by the first AAs. Just the other day, after an inquiry by Baltimore Area Intergroup, I came across 10 to 15 copies of an early publication put out by the Baltimore Intergroup in the early 1950s. Although smaller, they are similar to the Grapevine, loaded with stories and anecdotes from AA's past. Susan from Intergroup was excited about the publications and plans to reprint and pass on some of the beautiful tidbits that were born of the sweat, tears, and joy of those no longer with us.

In New York last week, I was a guest at the Archives Trustee Committee meeting. In addition to the normal full slate of business, the archivist played samples from the audio preservation project, which is transferring original recordings of our early AA members to CDs. We got to hear a sampling of Bill and Father Dowling. They sounded as though they were in the room with us, clear as a bell. It was exciting, as are most facets of AA.

Well, that is enough from the Archives corner for now. Keep those memories coming.

DISTRICT 10

The Harford Road Thursday Night meeting sponsored several events in late 2002 and early 2003. These included a New Year's Eve dance with a hot buffet, a sponsorship workshop, as well as the group's anniversary.

DISTRICT 18

District 18 will be hosting Regional Panel 6 (Metro West) on Saturday, March 29, and Saturday, April 5, from 9 am – 12 pm. The discussions will be held at Catonsville United Methodist Church at 6 Melvin Ave., and the agenda topics are CPC and Report & Charter. Directions are available at www.marylandaa.org, click on "Calendar." The next District meeting will be on Friday, April 25, at the Christian Temple at 5701 Edmondson Ave. in Catonsville. District 18's DCM and 2 GSRs attended the recent NERAASA.

DISTRICT 20

A workshop titled Three Levels of Service was hosted by District 20 on March 8, 2003, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Hagerstown. We hope the event was well supported by the local members of AA.

DISTRICT 21

Dist 21's Grapevine Committee is prepared to visit groups in that District to help establish Grapevine displays. Bill L. attended NERAASA and took a lot of information in a short period of time by attending the Round Table discussions. District 21 and other Eastern Shore districts have been asked to review Public Information and Policy and Admissions in preparation for the upcoming GSO conference in April. The District meets the first Saturday of each month at 1:30 at St. Alban's Church.

DISTRICT 35

A Fourth Step workshop will be held on April 5, 2003, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Rt 232, Oliver's Shop Rd., in Bryantown, Maryland from noon to 4:00. Lunch will be served from 12:00 – 1:00. A guest speaker will talk until approximately 1:30, and then attendees will form sub-groups and share until 4:00.

DISTRICT 36

The Public Information and Cooperation with Professional Community committees are working hard. They plan a CPC presentation at Chopticon High School for April 2003. Additionally they are trying to work with Compass Treatment Center to carry the message to the residents there. The committees meet the third Monday of each month at 6:30 at the Lexington Park Baptist Church and welcome everyone.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND INTERGROUP

A Serenity Breakfast will be held on April 27, 2003 at the Holiday Inn in Solomon's Maryland. Tickets are \$16. Breakfast from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. All you can eat buffet. Speaker 10:00 to 11:00. A 50/50 raffle will be held.

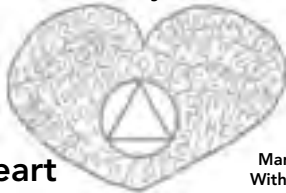
COMING NEXT QUARTER

Don't miss the article "A GSR Experience" in next quarter Margenser relating the GSR experience of the MGS Area 29 Secretary.

Maryland General Service Meeting Dates for 2003

March 22, 2003	Area Assembly	Dist. 36 Lexington Park
April 11-13, 2003	Mini Conference	Easton, MD
April 26-May 3, 2003	General Service Conference	NY, NY
May 17, 2003	Area Assembly (Delegate report back)	District 31
June 12-15, 2003	Maryland State Convention	Hagerstown, MD
June 20-23, 2003	NE Regional Forum	Grand Isle, NY
July 19, 2003	Area Committee	District 11
August 16, 2003	Area Committee	District 17
September 13, 2003	Area Assembly	open
October 11, 2003	Area Assembly (elections)	District 7
October 17-19, 2003	NERC	Mt Laurel, NJ
October 23-26, 2003	Fall Conference	Hagerstown, MD
November 15, 2003	Area Committee	District 32
December 6, 2003	Area Assembly (Transition)	open

33rd Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention



A Full and Thankful Heart

Hosted by
Maryland General Service
With Al-Anon Participation

DAILY SCHEDULE			SPEAKERS	
THURSDAY June 12 th	Noon	Registration opens	A.A. SPEAKERS	
	4:00 p.m.	Open AA Speaker Meeting	Victor K. Westminster, MD	
	8:00 p.m.	Open AA Speaker Meeting	Paul A. Forestville, MD	
FRIDAY June 13 th	9:30 p.m.	Coffee House	Sandy H. Pocatello, ID	
	8:30 a.m.	Registration	Karl M. Covina, CA	
	9:30 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting	John S. Billings, MT	
	11:00 a.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting	Patti O. Laguna Niguel, CA	
	1:30 p.m.	A.A. Workshop	John K. Collingswood, NJ	
	1:30 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop	AL-ANON SPEAKERS	
	2:45 p.m.	A.A. Workshop	Cindy S. Billings, MT	
	2:45 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop	June C. Bixby, OR	
SATURDAY June 14 th	4:00 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop		
	4:00 p.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting		
	6:00 p.m.	Banquet Dinner		
	8:00 p.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting		
	7:30 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet		
	8:30 a.m.	Registration		
	9:30 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting		
SUNDAY June 15 th	10:00 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting		

ADVANCED CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Name _____ Persons Attending AA _____
 Address _____ Attending Al-Anon _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Registration Fee _____ X \$20 _____
 Phone _____ Friday Dinner _____ X \$18 _____
 Saturday Dinner _____ X \$25 _____
 Total Due: _____

YES, I want to help on future committees!

Mail your registration to:
MGS Convention Committee, PO Box 70364, Baltimore MD 21237
 Advance Registration Must Be Received By June 1, 2003

Please make checks payable to:
MGS Convention Committee

FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT

Circle and Triangle Coffee House and AA Unplugged
 Thursday 9:30 p.m.
 bring-your-own acoustic music in the gazebo

Saturday Breakfast
 In hotel restaurant.
 Pay as you go.

Lunch
 Cookouts
 Friday and Saturday noon to 1 p.m.
 Pay as You Go
 Hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken breast sandwiches

International Buffet
 Friday 5:30-7:30 p.m.
 \$18.00
 Chicken parmesan, lasagna, ceasar salad, baby whole potatoes, spring blend vegetables, rolls & butter, chef's choice dessert table, regular & decaf coffee, hot & iced tea

The Banquet
 Saturday, 6:00 p.m.
 Grand Ball Room
 \$25.00
 London broil, seafood Newburg (without sherry), tossed garden salad, fresh fruit salad, rice, red roasted potatoes, sautéed seasonal vegetables, warm rolls & butter, assorted cakes and pies, regular & decaf coffee and hot & iced tea

Dance Dance Dance
 Friday and Saturday nights 10:00 p.m.
 Music by DJ in the Grand Ball Room

LODGING

Hotel Reservation Method
 Our Host Facility is the **Clarion Hotel and Convention Center**. Minimum Two Night Stay at this Hotel Required. \$72 Per Room, Per Night

Clarion Hotel Reservations Only: 888-528-6738
 Be Sure to Mention MD State Convention

Note: Most Hotels Require 72 Hours Notice to Cancel a Reservation

Important: In order to receive our special discounted Convention Rates at the Other Hotels in the Area, you must:
 1. Call the respective hotel directly at the phone number listed below;
 2. Mention MD State Convention when you call.

Other Hotels in the Area:

Comfort Suites	301.791.8100
Days Inn	800.422.2754
Four Points Sheraton	301.790.3010
Hampton Inn	301.739.6100
Sleep Inn & Suites	301.766.9449
Quality Inn	301.733.2700
Venice Inn	800.283.6423

ADMITTANCE TO ALL FUNCTIONS WILL REQUIRE A NAME BADGE

For questions and information: marylandstateconvention@hotmail.com

TRADITION TWO, THE GLUE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER

PEGGY T., PANEL 48 DELEGATE, AREA 29

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Tradition Two is one of the most unique principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and is, for me, the glue that holds us together—the spiritual foundation of our society. It ensures the full and responsible participation of every member; encourages thoughtful, open-minded deliberation; underscores acceptance through humility; and provides tangible experience of a loving God working in my life.

There is no group conscience without the equal participation of all group members. Regardless of length of sobriety, each member has a voice in the organization and administration of the group. And just as the newcomer should not be dismissed for lack of experience, neither should the more experienced member be denied the right of participation and service. All members have the obligation to share in the responsibilities of their group and cheerfully rotate on to their next service commitment. As a newcomer, I looked to the experience of those who had come in before me as both examples of what to do and what not to do. I learned from their successes and their not-so-successful efforts. They helped to shape my participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and, therefore, positively influenced the quality of my sobriety. As a not-so-newcomer in AA, I have the responsibility to both participate as an active member of my group and share my experience as requested.

Thankfully, there are no presidents or benign dictators in Alcoholics Anonymous. While it is helpful to listen to the voices of experience, it is also important that those voices blend with the full membership. I have found that my group and I are healthier and more effective when we avail ourselves to the benefit of all of the shared experience available and do not yield to the will of one. In the effort to develop an informed group conscience, conviction with courtesy is a guiding principle and yet I aspire to remain open-minded enough to consider other options and ideas.

As I expand my vision to include the experience and ideas of others, as well as my own, the possibility exists that my thinking and my conclusions may not be the best. I have indeed discovered that “sometimes the good is the enemy of the best.” For the continued positive journey of my sobriety it is critical that I recognize and evaluate different viewpoints. And when the group conscience comes to a conclusion different than mine, it is equally important that I humbly accept the group conscience as the “one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”

And, finally, it has been my experience to witness and fully appreciate the presence of a loving God in the development and expression of a group conscience. At the annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, delegates from the United States and Canada, trustees of our General Service Board, and staff members from our General Service Office gather to bring to fruition the ways and means by which we, the groups and members of Alcoholics Anonymous, can carry our message of recovery and hope to the still suffering alcoholic. This is a place where 100% of the people 100% of the time are 100% dedicated to service in Alcoholics Anonymous. And while there can be great debate and very divergent opinions on how to carry the message, at the end of the Conference a spirit of unity and hope for the future emerges from the acceptance of a group conscience guided by a loving God. There is great love and great passion for AA and all our principles and traditions in our home group conscience meetings as well.

In every level of service, this tradition is the means by which diverse and opinioned members can work respectfully with each other — and with different groups — in even larger areas, in ever widening circles of love and service to help carry our message of hope to the still suffering and ensure that the doors of AA will be open for those yet to come.

I remain yours in grateful, loving service.

A LITTLE NOTE ON MY DOOR

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

flown to a hospital, where they performed emergency surgery to relieve contusions between my brain and skull. Nothing that bad had EVER happened to me in the worst of my drinking days.

The \$60,000 worth of hospital and doctor bills are things I would have gotten drunk over before coming to AA. Working the steps helped me choose sobriety over a drink. I realize now alcohol would just make it worse, not better. A failed attempt to reconcile with my ex-wife was another test. I'm learning to accept things more rationally these days, and

I believe my Higher Power has put these people and events in my life for a good reason.

My friend Jim M., the man who took me to meetings, said something that stuck in my mind about sobriety: “It’s not so bad after all.” He’s right! I’ve never felt this good in 20 years. The Promises are gradually starting to come true in my life. I plan to keep coming back to the best of my ability and to give back some of what was so freely given to me. The little note on my door served its purpose early on as a caution and a reminder of the affects of alcohol. It’s working just as well today.

THOUGHTS ON THE THIRD TRADITION

BY MORGAN J., PANEL 50 DELEGATE, AREA 29

"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking."

It's been said that when Bill wrote each of the three legacies, he expressed the problem in the first Step (Tradition or Concept), the solution in the second, and the method in the remaining 10. Using that as a guide, the problem that the Traditions address is AA unity. The solution is a loving God as expressed in the group conscience, which then brings us to who can be a member?

The first edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published in 1939, 'makes this brief statement about membership': "The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect, or denomination nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted." That statement, of course, has been rewritten to its present form in the Third Tradition.

I have come to believe that the Traditions are the glue that holds the AA group and groups together, each bound by a common purpose. One can ask what a membership requirement has to do with unity. The answer may lie in what it doesn't do—it doesn't exclude anyone.

In the early days of AA, as groups formed, each created their own rules as to who could and could not be a member of that particular group. When the members of the Foundation Office (the early name for the General Service Office) requested and received the lists of rules from the various groups, they consolidated them, and discovered that if all the rules were enforced, then almost no alcoholic could be a member of AA.

Even today, as is suggested in the pamphlet *AA Tradition*:

TRADITION ONE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

alcoholic friends; rather, we are placing the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous first.

When I go to an AA meeting and have pressing personal problems that seem to have nothing whatsoever to do with the Step or Tradition being discussed, I don't try to turn the meeting into a forum for my woes. Instead I see what I can add to the discussion or remain silent and call my sponsor later. When I find the perfect spiritual book, exercise program, diet, or other solution to add to the already perfect program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I don't take meeting time to sing its praises thus diluting the AA message just to show off my own ideas.

When our trusted servants speak publicly about AA or carry the message to the newcomer in a treatment facility, correctional facility, with the professional community, on the phone, in their homes, they think constantly of how Alcoholics Anonymous might be affected by their words and actions. They are always concerned with the welfare of the whole Fellowship, even if it means missing the opportunity to carry the message somewhere. When a group or a service committee maintains the spirit of rotation among its trusted servants, the personal pride and ambition of a

How it Developed, every AA group goes on "rule-making benders" to deal with all kinds of problems that almost all groups will ultimately face. As groups mature, they discover that they don't have to be afraid of what a newcomer brings to the group. AA has shown that it can withstand almost anything and still maintain its AA reputation and effectiveness provided that the group sticks to its primary purpose.

Bill writes in *The Language of the Heart*, "Tradition Three defines the personal liberty of the AA member. It says in effect, that any alcoholic can be an AA member the moment he says so. Neither can any of us deprive him of that membership, no matter what his behavior." One of the areas I see groups struggle with today is not so much a person's behavior, but their desire for things other than to stop drinking. Concerns about watered-down AA are beginning to be heard more and more. Stopping drinking sometimes seems to take a back seat to other pressing issues. Bill goes on to write: "Perhaps no other society has ever staked out such a broad expanse of liberty for the individual as this. Every AA newcomer feels at once that he is wanted and trusted and loved.... Seldom has any alcoholic taken unfair advantage of that unlimited charter for freedom."

Experience has shown that groups and members that stick to "our primary purpose" survive and prosper. Those that desire other things disappear. The saying often heard is: "If you want what we have, then do what we do; if you don't want it, then you are not going to get it." Bill goes on to say: "Let us of AA therefore resolve that we shall always be inclusive and never exclusive, offering all we have to all, save our title. May all barriers be leveled, may our unity thus be preserved."

few people are set aside for the good of the whole group.

When we choose the sites for our Regional Forums and Area Assemblies and base our decisions on considerations such as giving everyone a chance to host the event, holding it in an Area or district that would most benefit from the service activity and not requiring the same people to drive long distances all the time, we choose the site based on considerations other than great tourist attractions or large concentrations of population. Thusly, we assure participation in service by all members of Alcoholics Anonymous, not by just the urban, affluent, mobile, or some other subset of our membership. Our concern is with all of us, not just some of us.

Delegates to the General Service Conference gather, not as representatives of their Areas ready to fight for what the folks at home want, but instead as each Area's contribution to the collective group conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

There will be decisions we are asked to make in our collective sobrieties that will require that we set aside our personal ambitions and opinions to ensure that we accomplish what is best for all of Alcoholics Anonymous. It should be the hope of each of us that in these moments we will all be guided by our Declaration of Unity Statement. "This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first, to keep our Fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come."

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