

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING UNITY AND CARRYING THE A.A. MESSAGE IN AREA 29  2nd QUARTER 2003

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

BARBARA B.

My name is Barbara B. and I'm an alcoholic. I currently have the honor of serving as Chairman of Maryland General Services and I want to share with you the awesome experience and rewards I encountered when practicing the principles found in our 12 Concepts in my daily life.

In his introduction to the Concepts, Bill writes, "each new generation of AA world servants will be eager to make operational improvements...and we should always realize that change does not necessarily spell progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in world service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore, it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experiences of the past clearly before us. And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these Concepts may then provide a ready means of safe return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover." What immeasurable relief and gratitude I felt after reading this and how thankful I was that Bill recognized and shared this as part of his experience.

The principles in the Concepts that Bill writes about have become the traditions of service work. They are the "Right of Decision," giving our service leaders proper

discretion and latitude; the "Right of Participation," giving each servant a voting status commensurate with his (or her) responsibility; the "Right of Appeal," protecting and encouraging minority opinion; and the "Right of Petition," making certain that grievances can be heard and properly acted upon. With this framework of our service structure firmly in place, Bill assures us that we will insure effective functioning of our service boards and committees so the work that we entrust them to do will fulfill our primary purpose of carrying AA's message to the still suffering alcoholic.

We have dedicated and hard-working individuals serving Maryland General Service, and we don't always appreciate the work they do until we have shared their experience. Many times this hard work goes unrecognized because with the Concepts, as Bill designed them, we have a structure in place by which "all may labor to good effect, with a minimum of friction." Bill writes that this is accomplished by relating our servants to their work and to each other, minimizing personal conflict.

Democratic ideas, such as a system of "checks and balances" and "no group or individual should be set in unqualified authority over another," will ensure working relations that can be friendly and efficient. If we fall short

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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 AA's 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

TRADITION FOUR

VICTOR L., DELEGATE, AREA 29

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

What does this mean to your group? Does it even matter to you or your group? Of course it does. But what? In the area I live in, there are more than thirty-two groups meeting more than fifty-five times per week. These groups are many and varied.

Meeting formats vary from speaker, step/tradition discussion, Big Book discussion, general topic discussion, *As Bill Sees It* discussion, and *Grapevine* discussion to ask-it-basket discussion. Meeting times include daily morning, noon, early evening, mid-evening and late night. It seems that most groups have taken into consideration the meeting time and format of the surrounding groups.

Some groups started because there was a need, either for topic, location, or time. Some started because two members disagreed about the coffee or the way the preamble was read. Do you believe that a group should weigh the time, format, and location before considering starting or changing your group?

Although much thought is, or should be, given before starting or changing groups, that's not always the case. Starting or changing a group could have an effect upon other groups' attendance. Are two moderately or poorly attended groups better than one? I don't feel so; when group members poorly attend a group, one member can become the dominant member. Fortunately when this happens, membership is usually stirred and the group either evolves – or it disappears.

Is your group open to all who suffer from alcoholism...or do you only appear to be? People who come into the room are welcome and are members as long as they say they are. They may not appear to be as sick or

as serious about sobriety as you or me, but they are welcome. I used to say that I wouldn't belong to a group that would have me as a member. The group that welcomes all into the rooms without the thought, "Will they harm our appearance; will they fit in with all the rest of us?" is *precisely* the one I want to belong to. They let you and me in, didn't they?

Time has shown us that a group run by the collective conscience of all its members will prosper in all aspects – spiritually and in membership. A group with a weak conscience will be divided and become directionless. Experience has shown that a group that binds itself to another issue or cause is courting with trouble.

The group that I belong to will be seventeen years old on Mother's Day. It was founded by a group of members who saw a need for a group in a locale that had no meeting. A lot of conversation went into the location; I believe it was the place that actually drew the members. After the first meeting, a group conscience was held, and the group has been meeting ever since.

We have a format that has been reaffirmed by many group conscience discussions. We have found that by having a consistent format, members know what to expect at each meeting. We hold a group conscience regularly, and we support the local Intergroup, District, Area, and General Service Office. I hope that yours does also, according to your group conscience.

Members have come, gone, and some have even returned. Those that do are always welcomed back into the group. Ours is not the only meeting and group format, but it works for us, and I hope yours does for you – without affecting other groups or Alcoholics Anonymous itself.

TRADITION FIVE

TOM R., SECRETARY, AREA 29

Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill W. writes, "We think we should do one thing well rather than many things in which we are not called. That is the central idea of this Tradition. Our society gathers in unity around this concept. The very life of our fellowship requires its preservation. 'Shoemaker, stick to thy last' is no dull cliché for Alcoholics Anonymous. Together we have found a substantial remedy for a terrible malady...It is our experience as alcoholics that makes us of unique value on our sector of the total alcoholic front. We can approach sufferers as no one else can. Therefore, the strongest kind of moral and ethical compulsion is upon us to do this and nothing more...Most emphatically, then, AA has but one single purpose: *to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.* That is our basic objective, our real reason for existence."

I was not a "first-nighter" in Alcoholics Anonymous. I initially came around the rooms of AA after a series of legal interventions got my attention, and did not drink for some time. I had never at that time given up my right to drink, and as my sponsor tells me, I held on to the reservation I could drink safely. After two more years of "research" in controlled drinking, it took yet another legal intervention to get my attention. At that moment I was terrified I would drink again, and soon, if I did not do something immediately. I knew this from my own history. I felt a tiny ray of hope knowing that AA was there. As I attended my first meeting the following day, I felt for the first time in my life that sense of hope that things may be okay. When I returned to my home group the following Monday, I saw the familiar faces of the people who were still there, and still sober. I felt at home for the first time in my life.

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TRADITION SIX

GENE R., PANEL 36 DELEGATE, AREA 29

An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

There are many good sources of excellent reading material concerning our Traditions. There's *The Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions*, *AA Comes Of Age*, *The Twelve Traditions Illustrated* and the pamphlet by Bill W. *AA Tradition: How It Developed*. I mention these sources, not so much for the oldtimer, but as a reference for the newcomer. After all, it is the newcomer that our AA unity and survival will be entrusted to. As a newcomer, it was pointed out to me that I had a grave responsibility. My sponsor stressed upon me that preserving AA Unity was a responsibility of every AA individual and group, not that of a select few, but everyone.

I'm happy to report that I belong to a home group that shoulders this responsibility to the utmost. The pamphlet *AA Tradition: How It Developed* reads like this: "We can say quite emphatically that neither AA as a whole nor any AA group ought to enter any activity other than straight AA. As groups, we cannot endorse, finance or form an alliance with any other cause, however good...."

Is it any wonder that you will not find any non-Conference-approved literature on display at our home group? We don't buy it, don't sell it, and don't display it. While I have, and still use, some of this literature, I would never take this material into an AA meeting. If we were to sell or put this type literature on display, then we would automatically be putting on the AA stamp of endorsement, whether actual or implied! We want no watered down version of AA. We prefer to be the "straight AA" that Bill wrote about.

Concerning affiliation: about two years ago, the church where our group meets sought our assistance. The nearby country store and deli had applied for an "Off Sale" license to sell alcoholic beverages. The church, being very much opposed to this idea, took action. They asked if the AA group would join forces with them in an effort to get this license denied. The church just knew that us drunks, wanting to stay sober, would welcome an opportunity to stamp out the efforts for another watering hole. Upon explaining the group's primary purpose, followed by a

summary of the Sixth Tradition, the church understood.

One group member, however, felt compelled to go along with them to the licensing hearing, not as a church member and certainly not as an AA member. Not that he really had any concerns about another booze joint in town, but he felt a need to keep the AA group in good grace with the church. Con artists change slowly.

Here's some additional experience on Tradition Six from outside my home group: A new group formed in the Northeastern MD Intergroup area. This group met in the Harford Memorial Hospital, so they named themselves the "Harford Memorial Hospital Group." At an Intergroup meeting, the subject of the group's name was brought up. Some there felt that this group's name was a violation of Tradition Six. Use of the Hospital name implied affiliation and endorsement. So at the recommendation of the Intergroup Council, the Intergroup Chairman sent a letter to this group advising them of the violation and suggested they might change the name, since it has been long recommended that we not name groups after institutions or individuals. You know, this group asked no questions and actually conformed to new idea. In fact, they were happy to do so, because they certainly didn't want to harm AA in any way.

As an AA member, I owe it to myself and to AA to be as informed a member as I possibly can that I might better fulfill my responsibility toward preserving our unity. My hope is that someone will read this article and be motivated to further study the sources of information I noted about The Traditions and the importance of unity to our life-giving Fellowship.

Reading from the Twelve And Twelve: "Unity is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or AA dies. Without unity, the heart of AA would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God; His gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their caves, alcoholics would reproach us and say, 'What a great thing AA might have been!'"

I believe this with all my heart and pray that you do also.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

in these goals, a good dose of humility will bring instant relief. Bill also suggests, "[W]e ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any group or entity," but that each group and committee is responsible for the management of its funds.

We accomplish these goals in Maryland General Service by sharing with our fellowship what we do as Officers and Committees through demonstrations at our conventions and through workshops. This is also the means we use to attract our members into service and get our groups to support us. I find that the structure built

by Bill through the Concepts holds up like a very strong house. When I let go and practice the principles, they serve as wonderful tools for solving problems. They also give me the chance to experience the talents and dedication of those serving with me, and I am in awe at how this all works.

In my daily life, I have discovered the problem-solving power of practicing the principles found in the Concepts. I am able to correct mistakes, resolve conflicts, and turn potential failures into successful ventures. I also find that these principles help remove the obstacles to a rewarding life, so I am able to enjoy a personal life that means more than I could have ever imagined. As we "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny"

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEES, DISTRICT AND HOME GROUP INFORMATION

ARCHIVES REPORT

Bill H. Chairman

On a cold and rainy Saturday, April 5, 2003, the Archives went on a road trip to Central Pennsylvania College in Summerdale, PA at the request of District 36, Area 59. The purpose was a "history of archives" gathering.

There were archival exhibits from Area 59 (Eastern PA), Area 29 (Maryland), Area 44 (North Jersey), SEIPA (Philadelphia Intergroup), the Clarence S. Archive (now at Brown University), and other Intergroups, Host and Co-Host Districts.

The first panel consisted of Traynor H. and John B., each with over 50 years of sobriety. The second panel consisted of historians Mel B., Nancy O., and Mitch K., all published authors in the area of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the afternoon, I was privileged to sit on a panel with two Archive Chairs from the Pennsylvania Area. The displays were fabulous, including extensive displays on Fitz Mayo, Jim Burwell, and a large collection of material on Clarence S. from Akron. This included a piece about the historian whom Clarence asked to do his story.

Yes, there were some quotable notables there. But the real gem was the enthusiasm expressed by the 50-plus people who were present for this gathering of the ages, past and present.

Most of them looked like kids in a candy store, seeing original pictures of the early AAs and even a few Oxford Group members. The smiles were ear-to-ear when one picked up one of the original shares that were issued on behalf of early AA. I was informed about some of the gems that our own archives contain. It was a marvelous learning experience that also strengthened my faith in AA and its trusted servants.

I want to thank Maryland General Service and the members of AA in Area 29 for allowing me to share in these types of once-in-a-lifetime experiences. This drunk needs all the help he can get.

2003 FALL CONFERENCE

Chuck C., Co-Chair

The 2003 Fall Conference will be held at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center on Oct. 23-26 in beautiful downtown Hagerstown, MD. The theme for this year's Conference is Happy, Joyous, and Free. Sorry, no glum lots please, unless of course you are new and/or suffering; then it will be a great avenue for being of service. Feel the warmth and love of the Fellowship and open your ears and mind to the message of recovery, strength, and hope. More will be revealed in the future about Conference details.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Jerry F., Chairman

Literature has been submitted to the Anne Arundel County Board of Education for their approval to be distributed at middle and high schools in the county.

The Annapolis city Police Department has been given a set of video Public Service Announcements for use with their Comcast TV programs.

Literature has been distributed to Owensville Primary Care, Partners in Recovery, Hope House, Pastoral Counseling, Jude House, and the Annapolis city Police Department Community Relations Division.

The PI Chairman will attend the District 9 meeting on May 20 to review PI opportunities in the District to determine how the committee can be of service. If any group or District desires assistance with projects in their area, please contact the PI Chairman, Jerry F. Perhaps you have a new idea that would help the committee carry the message. If so, please contact us.

District 6

Big Books and other AA literature have been purchased and will be distributed to libraries and medical offices within the District. There are one new GSR and one new Alternate GSR representing home groups in District 6. The April meeting was cancelled for the Easter holiday. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2003.

District 18

Earl H., DCM

District 18 again hosted the Metro West Regional Committee Area Cluster Panel Thingamabobby this year. Although I make light of my confusion over the name, the discussions were important and fruitful. And we do thank all who attended our two Saturday discussion sessions and those who made the trip to Easton for the Mini-Conference presentations.

The District continues to grow in our level of activity. Our last District meeting was held on April 29. Nine were in attendance. We discussed various District and Area topics and formed a committee to work on hosting the December 6 Area Assembly.

District 21

Bill L., DCM

An ad-hoc committee is being formed to consider writing a set of by-laws using guidelines from Area 29, Intergroup

and the Service Manual. A decision will be made after GSRs have polled their groups. There is much concern in the District about money being spent without the body's approval. A budget will be developed to assist in making fiscal decisions. The topic of the next workshop will be "Anonymity." See Jen, Shauna or Teresa if you are interested in assisting with this event. Some district 25 groups are attending and participating in District 21 events, as District 25 is not active.

District 31

On March 22, 2003, District 31's Master Thespians performed "Snow White and the Seven Character Defects". The production was held at Woods Memorial Church in Severna Park, MD with about 200 in attendance. The District began planning of the production over a year ago, and assembled a wonderful cast of performers with Jai H. directing the

ensemble. The District is currently working on plans for a bus trip to New York to visit the General Service Office. It is notable the District has volunteered once again to host an Area Assembly, on May 17th. Kudos to our fine folks in District 31!

District 32

Rob A., DCM,

District 32 would like to invite all AAs to the following events:

June 22nd or 29th at the Atlantic Club, 2 1/2 miles west of Ocean City – AA Open House. Videotapes of Bill Wilson telling his story and "This is AA" will be played every hour. Intergroup is joining in the event and will have the bookstore open. A Grapevine display and representative will be present, as well as the local Archives display. Call for time or ask around at meetings.

In August or September there will be a picnic at Showell Park or Stephen Decatur Park in Berlin. There will be a

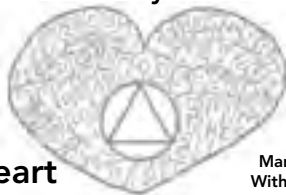
\$5.00 charge for food, and an AA open meeting will follow. In the September/October timeframe the District is sponsoring a bus trip to GSO. On November 15, District 32 will host the Area 29 Committee meeting.

District 36

The Corrections and Treatment (C&T) committee gave a presentation to the Marcey House Board of Directors on April 17, 2003. The Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with Professional Community (CPC) committees gave a presentation to Chopticon High School on April 24, 2003. Groups were requested to take meetings into the Anchor Treatment Facility and the Marcey House on a scheduled basis, with each home group reporting their decision at the May meeting. The Archives committee needs material to add to the growing collection of AA memorabilia.

33rd Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention

Hagerstown, MD



Clarion Hotel and Conference Center

A Full and Thankful Heart

Hosted by Maryland General Service With Al-Anon Participation

DAILY SCHEDULE

Day	Time	Event
THURSDAY June 12 th	Noon	Registration opens
	4:00 p.m.	Open AA Speaker Meeting
	8:00 p.m.	Open AA Speaker Meeting
	9:30 p.m.	Coffee House
FRIDAY June 13 th	8:30 a.m.	Registration
	9:30 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
	11:00 a.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
	1:30 p.m.	A.A. Workshop
	1:30 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
	2:45 p.m.	A.A. Workshop
	2:45 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
	4:00 p.m.	A.A. Workshop
SATURDAY June 14 th	7:30 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet
	8:30 a.m.	Registration
	9:30 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
	10:30 a.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
	1:00 p.m.	Combined A.A. / Al-Anon Workshop
	2:45 p.m.	A.A. Workshop
SUNDAY June 15 th	2:45 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
	4:00 p.m.	A.A. 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
	10:00 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting

SPEAKERS

A.A. SPEAKERS

Victor K.
Westminster, MD

Paul A.
Forestville, MD

Sandy H.
Pocatello, ID

Karl M.
Covina, CA

John S.
Billings, MT

Patti O.
Laguna Niguel, CA

John K.
Collingswood, NJ

AL-ANON SPEAKERS

Cindy S.
Billings, MT

June C.
Bixby, OR

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 Conference 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

A POEM

RAY N., SEATTLE WASHINGTON

Forty-five years out of the womb and still a baby
Telling myself, "if only," "I shoulda," "I coulda" and
"maybe"

I knew about God, was close to Him once
But I had the plan and did my own stunts

Wallowing in self-pity and hopeless despair
Very alone and trying not to care

When drinking, I became a man of renown
Yet deep down inside I felt like a clown

To jails I went thinking, "How could this be?"
"You were out of control" answered the lock and the key

While there in my cell I felt very low
But slowly I felt my heart start to grow

Why am I here? This is not my plan.
Surrender to Me, I know that you can.

Slowly I creep towards God's will for me
Blinded no more, through Him I can see

People like me; I'm no longer alone
A look at the treetop, the eagle has flown

I know I need help and give thanks every day
For the people I meet like me in AA

Maryland General Service Meeting Dates for 2003

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	District 21
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)	District 18

A GSR EXPERIENCE

BY TOM R., SECRETARY, AREA 29

Our service pamphlet titled "G.S.R." begins by suggesting the General Service Representative "may be the most important job in AA."

It was during a group conscience of my home group that an announcement was made that our group needed a GSR. My friend, and past GSR, Lynn turned to me and said, "Why don't you do it? You would attend meetings of Maryland General Service several Saturdays a year and represent our group." In the spirit of willingness and faith, and having accumulated all the knowledge about what a GSR was that could be gathered in twenty seconds, I said "Okay." A vote was taken and I was introduced to AA service beyond the home group.

I subsequently received a notice about an upcoming Area Assembly and was directed to Finzel, MD. I left my first Area Assembly dazed and befuddled. The business of the day was the proposed Area budget, and I recall a lengthy debate concerning a \$200 increase in a particular committee budget. I was prepared to open my personal checkbook to help settle the matter. What I also left that day with was a sense of awe at the extent of our service structure and the beautifully latticed way it all seemed to work together. My confusion was dwarfed by intrigue and a thirst for learning more about AA service. I quickly recognized there a room full of people who were grateful to be sober and passionate about the work they were doing.

At my first Area meeting, my friend Bill suggested I get a copy of the AA Service Manual. The AA Service Manual includes in the Chapter "The Group and its GSR":

"The general service representative has the job of linking his or her group with AA as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's thoughts to the district committee member and to the delegate, who passes

them on to the Conference. This communication is a two-way street, making the GSR responsible for bringing back to the group Conference Actions that affect AA unity, health, and growth. Only when a GSR keeps the group informed, and communicates the group conscience, can the Conference truly act for AA as a whole."

I began my task of carrying back to my group the Area's annual budget and budget reports, information on Area Committee functions, who our Area Officers and Committee Chairs were, GSO news, and District functions throughout the Area. I talked to my home group members about Conference agenda items, such as a suggested new AA pamphlet; the Fourth Edition of the Big Book (then a work in progress); and changes to existing literature. Being the GSR gave my home group a vote in the Area and a voice for my group's conscience to General Service and to AA as a whole. As GSR, my role as a conveyance of the Twelve Traditions to the group grew as my understanding of the Traditions expanded through experience in the Area. Over time, I was introduced to the Twelve Concepts for World Service.

While being guided along by past GSRs in my group, I also sought service advice through the Area. Our District had not been active for some time, so our group did not have the benefit of a District link between our group and the General Service Area. My friend Jim and I decided to take action and try to get the District active again....

The General Service Representative experience not only provided our home group with a link to AA as a whole, as it still does through our current GSR, it opened up a wonderful realm of service experience and fulfillment, which has greatly enriched my sobriety. I am grateful for the honor and privilege of having served my home group and Alcoholics Anonymous, and I look forward to the service opportunities to come.

TRADITION FIVE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

That night, as fellow AAs put out their hands to welcome me, I felt an extreme sense of relief and gratitude. Although some members had left the area or passed in my absence and some new members had joined, the group was still there, Alcoholics Anonymous was still there, and the message of recovery had not changed. It was exactly what I, a suffering alcoholic, needed. It is reassuring to know that I can walk into a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and hear the experience, strength, and hope of another recovering alcoholic. As a recovering alcoholic, I feel it my responsibility as well to be in my home group, or in any meeting of AA, to carry the message of recovery and put out my hand to the new person. I want to be there, and

my home group to be there, for the next suffering alcoholic.

The AA pamphlet *AA At A Glance* includes a section "What AA Does Not Do," which indicates that "AA does not...provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or other welfare or social services...provide domestic or vocational counseling...provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc." I am surely not qualified to perform many of these services. Our literature states our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. The *AA At A Glance* pamphlet further suggests, "Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism." That keeps it pretty simple for me. By keeping to our primary purpose, I stay focused on my recovery from alcoholism, and maintain recovery as my highest priority.

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 465
VALLEY LEE, MD 20692

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

New Correction Change

Group Individual

Mail form to: Marsenser
P.O. Box 465 Valley Lee, MD 20692
Or E-Mail to: marsenser@marvlandaa.org