

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING UNITY AND CARRYING THE A.A. MESSAGE IN AREA 29  3rd QUARTER 2003

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

BARBARA B.

My name is Barbara and I'm an alcoholic. I currently have the honor and privilege of serving as Chairman of Maryland General Service. You can reach me via our website at www.marylandaa.org.

The next time Area 29 meets in assembly will be on October 11, 2003, when we will suspend all regular Maryland General Service business and hold elections for a new panel of Area officers to serve us for the next two years. Each group is asked to send its GSR, and each District is asked to send its DCM, not only to cast their votes but also to have individuals present to stand for the panel of officers.

The panel consists of the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. In the spirit of rotation, we will ask members who have not previously held the offices under consideration to stand for one of the elected positions. When we do this, we are not only fulfilling the "Third Legacy" of our Fellowship, but we are also following the plan Bill W. and Dr. Bob formulated to have our members assume full responsibility for AA's unity, AA's service responsibilities, and AA's service structure (outlined in the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts for World Service).

Bill wrote about his vision for the future of AA in his many articles published in the Grapevine. A collection of

Bill's Grapevine articles written between 1944 and the late 1960s are assembled in the book *The Language of the Heart*. In it are AA's history and a collection of Bill's thoughts and ideals, based on the lessons learned through the trials and errors of our emerging Fellowship.

In the early days, Bill and Dr. Bob, along with a Board of Trustees made up of non-alcoholic friends, took sole responsibility for the conduct of AA's services. These included AA World Headquarters, the General Service Office and the publishing of AA literature and the Grapevine. Bill wrote of his concerns that the structure was fragile and in danger of collapse unless a permanent blueprint for the structure were put in place. He was also concerned that AA was growing so fast that the average member had lost touch with headquarters and did not understand the work that was being done there. Only a few members knew whom the Trustees were, and less than half of the groups were making contributions to the General Service Office in NY.

Bill came up with the idea of a Conference made up of AA members elected by AA itself. The Conference delegates would inspect the headquarters yearly and serve as a body to which the Trustees would be responsible, a guiding conscience of our whole world effort. The Conference would provide the direct link

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MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and to 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, by Area 29, by intergroups, districts, or local groups, or by AA 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
c/o

Elkridge, MD 21075

TRADITION SEVEN

TOM S., BALTIMORE, MD

Every AA group out to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Tradition Seven is the tradition most often stated at local AA meetings, generally as an explanation of why the basket is passed. Being self-supporting keeps us from outside influences we would need to contend with if our policy were otherwise. Experience has shown that "Whoever pays the piper is apt to call the tune."

Yet meeting group expenses is not always easy. From early days we have been described as being "tight as the bark on a tree." As all expenses have increased, we still see a large number of members accepting the "AA bargain": 2 doughnuts and/or 2 cups of coffee for \$1 or less.

The word "fully" is often overlooked in the 7th Tradition. Fully means we need to pay our own way in every area – our home group, our Intergroup, our Area General Service, and our General Service in New York. We need to support those service arms of AA that provide phone service, literature, directories, etc.

The formula 50-30-10-10, described in our

literature, seems to be a fair distribution of funds. But if the local group, through its group conscience, desires a different formula, it is certainly free to do so. But the most important thing is that it does have a plan in place to support the vital needs of AA.

When I place my contribution in the hat, I feel I have a right to expect it will be used to support AA's essential services. Money collected at meetings, therefore, should not be used for a group's picnics, parties, etc. Instead, members of that group should finance these affairs.

Tradition 7, like all the other traditions, was born out of the experience of early AA. Remaining self-supporting is an absolute necessity if we are to continue to be free from outside influences and affiliation. There is a place where our material and spiritual needs can be met: in the hat.

The financial support of AA rests on the shoulders of sober AA members. We need to continue to meet this obligation if we are to maintain AA as we now enjoy it and ensure that the vital services will always be available.

TRADITION EIGHT

PAUL W., PANEL 26 DELEGATE, AREA 29

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Alcoholics Anonymous should never have a professional counseling class. That is, AA itself should never have paid professional therapists. As Bill W. wrote in *AA Comes of Age*, "experience has shown that, at this level, money and spirituality do not mix." In the area of 12th step work, we should never be paid for sharing a program of recovery that was freely given to us. Simply put, for face-to-face treatment of a drunk, no money whatsoever, ever.

Does this include members who are employed in various capacities in the field of alcoholism? The answer is no; this is not professionalism as applied to AA's 12th Step. Their work and their AA membership are kept separate. Those who are qualified by experience, training, and education are entitled to pursue these occupations as individuals. Most of us wear two hats, one as an AA member and the other for our particular job. Those who are employed by treatment centers or agencies are entitled to the same consideration.

On the other hand, part of Tradition 8 states that

"our service centers may employ special workers." I don't think any of us could afford to quit our jobs and work for AA full time without pay.

So those employed to provide services for AA are entitled to be paid the same as if they were working in the commercial world. Our intergroup and General Service Offices need a staff to provide needed services to the groups they represent. Since this work would be reasonably compensated in the business world, likewise Tradition 8 allows us to compensate these special workers in the same manner.

Consider that our traditions are the result of the experience of the fellowship during the first 10 years of its existence. They were not decided by committee but by trial and error. As a result, our fellowship was given us our second legacy, that of our traditions.

So remember that for AA to function, we need to hire people where there are legitimate jobs to be done, but under no conditions should an AA be paid for carrying the message to someone else. We need to keep in mind our singleness of purpose.

The bottom line, our 12th Step – carrying the message – is never to be paid for. But those who labor in service for us are worthy of their hire.

APPLYING THE TWELVE CONCEPTS TO AA AS A WHOLE

EARL H., DCM, DISTRICT 18

I was recently asked to give a short talk on "the 12 Concepts for World Service as they apply to AA as a whole." Of course, I immediately panicked. What in the world do I know about the 12 Concepts for World Service? So, I did what I always do when I don't know or don't understand something. I prayed, I went to others for help, and I picked up the AA literature. Fortunately, I didn't need to go into any great detail about the nuts and bolts of each Concept, but I did find a great deal about how the 12 Concepts apply to our Fellowship, beginning with their history:

In 1938, Bill W and Dr. Bob, with an eye on the future growth of AA and with the help of "dedicated friends," started working on a world service structure. They began by forming a trusteeship for AA as a whole, the Alcoholic Foundation, renamed the General Service Board in 1954. They foresaw the Alcoholic Foundation as a way to provide the "special services" that could not be effectively performed at the group or area levels. These services included writing and translating "uniform" AA literature, developing public relations policy, handling large numbers of requests for help, publishing a monthly magazine, and helping new groups form (armed with a wealth of experience from successful groups).

By 1950, AA membership grew from 50 to 100,000, and most of these "special services" had become a reality. With the 12 Traditions in place, the fear and doubt surrounding AA's growth had been replaced by "confident unity." According to Bill, this could not have happened without our services. "World services...had taken on crucial meaning for AA's future." He went on to say that, if these failed or stalled, our unity and our ability to carry the message would be damaged, perhaps beyond repair.

In 1951, the General Service Conference met for the first time on an experimental basis, despite widespread feeling that a conference representing all of AA would not work. Many of the trustees felt that being accountable to a conference of AA Delegates would result in "politics, confusion, expense, and fruitless strife," making it difficult, if not impossible, to carry out vital AA services.

But something happened in 1948 that underscored the importance of the Conference and the need to secure the future of Alcoholics Anonymous. That was the year that Dr. Bob was diagnosed with a terminal illness. That was the year that AA – and Bill – had to face the reality that the two co-founders would not always be around to decide policy matters and advise the trustees and groups. So who would?

Bill felt that that responsibility should pass to the "collective conscience of the AA groups." With these thoughts in mind, Bill eventually sold the General Service Conference idea. And at the International Convention in St. Louis in 1955, Bill officially turned over that responsibility, making the General Service Conference the "voice and effective conscience of the AA groups" in the US and Canada. Through trial and error, and guided by AA principles, the General Service Board, General Service Office, and General Service Conference came to understand the responsibilities of each and how the various trusted servants would relate to each other.

At the 1960 General Service Conference, Bill announced that he was working on a set of essays for 12 Concepts. He distinguished between "final" and "delegated" authority. He affirmed that, while final authority should fall to the groups, "responsibility and authority had to be delegated at all levels of service" to meet our service obligations.

The AA Service Manual describes the "how" of our service structure. The Concepts, as Bill described them, are an "interpretation of AA's world service structure;" they are an attempt to record the "why" of that structure, the lessons of past experience, and the relationships between the various AA world service entities. They also outline, in Concepts 3, 4, 5, 9, and 12, a group of spiritual principles, which, like the Steps and Traditions, help keep our world service work on a spiritual plane. Each Concept, according to Bill, "is really a group of related principles...resulting from long reflection and extensive consultation."

Concept 1 proposes that final responsibility and ultimate authority for world service should always rest in the hands of the collective conscience of the whole Fellowship. It has Tradition 2 as its cornerstone, essentially stating that "AA groups are to be the final authority; their leaders are to be entrusted with delegated responsibility only."

Concept II takes delegated responsibility to the level of world service. By confirming the General Service Conference charter in 1955, AA groups delegated complete authority for maintaining world services to the Conference, making it the actual voice and effective conscience for AA as a whole.

Concept III suggests that we endow each trusted servant or service entity with a traditional "Right of Decision" to ensure effective leadership and, frankly, to get things done. If we trust someone enough to be our trusted servant, our representative, then we should trust that individual to make informed decisions on our behalf. We further should grant

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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

between AA groups, the Trustees, and AA's Headquarters, ensuring the survival of the Fellowship through unity and service.

With AA's growth came Maryland General Service, which formed to elect Maryland's delegate to the Conference and to provide unity and service throughout

the state and with AA World Service. The AA Fellowship can be very proud and grateful to the members who have dedicated themselves to serve them and AA as a whole. If your group has lost touch with AA as a whole, and your members do not know what goes on at our headquarters, then your group needs to send its representatives to District meetings, Area Assemblies, and District Committee Meetings to learn first-hand about unity and service and to carry out the vision of our founders.

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEES, DISTRICT AND HOME GROUP INFORMATION

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Linda J., Co-Chair

When I first got to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, I heard people talking about having spent time in jail or rehab as a direct result of their drinking. I soon learned that the only difference between persons within institutions and myself was that I simply didn't get caught. The Big Book aptly conveys on page 204 how I was dressed and where I had been residing when I arrived to AA: "...clothed in a protective armor against the world's misunderstanding... That armor had turned into prison walls, locking me in loneliness – and fear."

It was out of that desperation that I became willing to do whatever it was going to take to get, and more importantly, to stay sober, one day at a time. So if I was going to pray to my Higher Power (whom I choose to call God) for guidance and direction, then my sponsor suggested I be willing to listen to the message. So early on in sobriety, God spoke to me through the people in the rooms and the message was clear: be of service to the next suffering alcoholic in correctional and treatment facilities.

I'll never forget the first time I took a meeting in by myself. I parked, turned off the car, put on my badge, looked upward, and said, "OK, God, in case you hadn't noticed, I have arrived here. Please bless me with the message of Your will for these ladies." And, who'd have thought that "God could and would if He were sought" – it works every time for me!

My service commitment entails carrying AA open discussion meetings into various facilities several times monthly. At the jail, a Beginner Step Meeting is conducted on the first three steps twice a month. I don't ever want to forget that I could have just as easily been in jail and that, only by the Grace of God, I was spared the personal experience. Every single meeting I lead behind the walls is clear evidence to me that God is doing for me what I could never do for myself. It is no easy mission to lead a meeting of "fired-up women" full of fear, who take no responsibility for their current address and know they went to jail because of someone else.

After leading institutional meetings for a while, it became clear that God had much bigger plans for me. When the first inmate asked me to sponsor her, my old way of thinking said, "Oh, I couldn't possibly." Yet the words came out of my mouth as, "Yes, I'll be your temporary sponsor and help you work the steps." I found that I could meet with her, and others since, one-on-one, through the mentoring program.

I couldn't even begin to describe how humbling these experiences have been for me. Nor could I describe the abundance of joy and peace God allows me to receive as the direct result of sharing this gift so freely given to me. I am daily amazed at how truly blessed I am in sobriety. Last night, I was at a meeting I rarely attend, and just before it was to begin, someone I sponsored inside jail a short while ago

came in. I had lost touch with her once she was on the outside, and now once again we are connected on this journey together. Just another bit of tangible evidence that God is doing for me what I can't do alone. Thank you, God!

Through participation in Maryland General Service (MGS) as the Co-Chair of the Correctional Committee, I am learning more each day about how to "bridge the gap" between facilities and the larger AA community. There is a great need for members of the fellowship to participate in service at all levels – including writing letters to inmates, leading meetings, temporarily sponsoring people in jail, assisting with community re-entry, and helping further development the MGS committees.

I have all too often heard people say something to the effect that they wouldn't know what or how to participate. Well, at least this is a starting point: my suggestion would be pray, then either check with your Sponsor, contact the Chairperson of Maryland General Services, or call me for more information. Any of us can assist in channeling your service energy in to continue passing on to suffering alcoholics what was so freely given to us all.

District 35

Sue A., DCM

District 35 hosted an AA History Night on June 21, 2003. They viewed two movies, "Hope" and "Markings on the Journey." The moderator, Ray B., opened with comments and answered questions after the movies. Fellowship and popcorn were enjoyed by all. Thanks to everyone who helped with and participated in the event. The district is currently planning a Service workshop for sometime in October. District 35 meets the first Thursday of every month at 7pm at Peace Lutheran Church in Waldorf.

A Talent Show will be presented on October 25, 2003, at Good Samaritan Presbyterian Church on Route 5 South in Waldorf. The show starts at 6:30pm with a meeting to follow. If you would like to participate, contact Darryl and register your act by September 25, 2003. A karaoke machine will be available for participants' use. This event is free to all.

District 36

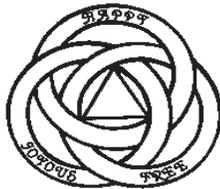
An AA History Workshop is presently scheduled for November 15, 2003, from 10:00am until 3:00pm, at William Winpissinger International Aerospace Workers and Machinists Union Center, a.k.a. Placid Harbor Yacht Club, in Hollywood, Maryland. There will be guests speakers, and lunch will be provided. The District 36 thespians will present "Snow White and the Seven Character Defects" on November 22 at 2:00pm at Lexington Park United Methodist Church.

The 19th Annual Area 29 Fall Conference

Hosted by Maryland General Service

October 23 - 26, 2003 • Hagerstown, Maryland

Clarion Hotel & Conference Center (Formerly Ramada Inn)



First Annual Fall Conference Golf Tournament
(See Reverse for Details)

A.A. with Al-Anon and Alateen Participation

Bill B. Chuck S. Elaine E. John A. Tami C. Don C. Donna E.
Cottonville, MD Ellittown City, MD Ellittown City, MD Dallas, TX Atlanta, GA Colorado Springs, CO Bermuda Springs, CA

Al-Anon Speakers
Renee J. TBA
Upper Marlboro, MD TRA

Thursday, October 23	Friday, October 24	Saturday, October 25	Sunday, October 26
12:00 pm Registration Opens Hospitality Room Opens MGS House Opens Lunch (on your own)	12:00 pm Continental Breakfast* Registration 1:30 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 1:30 pm Al-Anon Speaker Meeting	7:30 am Buffet Brunch* Registration 9:00 am First Annual Fall Conference Golf Tournament	7:30 am Buffet Breakfast* 9:00 am Last Address 10:00 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 11:00 am Conference Closing
4:00 pm A.A. Early Bird Meeting 5:00 pm A.A. Alateen Begins 6:00 pm Dinner (on your own)	1:30 pm Al-Anon Workshop 2:45 pm A.A. Workshop 2:45 pm Al-Anon Workshop 4:00 pm A.A. Workshop 6:00 pm Buffet Dinner**	9:30 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 11:00 am Children's Arts & Crafts** 1:30 pm Recovery Play 1:30 pm Children's Arts & Crafts** 4:15 pm A.A. Workshop 8:00 pm Conference Banquet Dinner**	7:30 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 8:00 pm Alateen Meeting/Pasta Party 9:30 pm Ice Cream Social (Cash Sale)
8:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting Thursday Night at the Movies Round Quince (Cholesterol) Ice Cream Station (Cash Sale)	8:00 pm Children's Costume Contest** 9:00 pm Ice Cream Station (Cash Sale) Halloween Costume Dance Party	8:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 8:00 pm Alateen Meeting/Pasta Party 9:30 pm Ice Cream Social (Cash Sale) 10:00 pm Happy, Joyous & Free Dance Party	

*Not an A.A. Alateen or other speaker meeting which is continuously throughout the conference from 7:30 until 10:00 pm. A.A. Speaker Meetings Meeting are 30 minutes in length, and begin on the hour.

Conference Attendees Are To Register In The Convention Center Lobby Upon Arrival. Admittance To All Conference Functions Requires A Conference Name Badge.

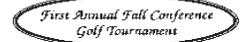
Disabled and Wheelchair Accessible

Interpretation for the Hearing Impaired

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: Day _____ Evening _____
Email Address: _____
(For confirmation purposes)

LODGING INFORMATION
Contact the *Clarion Hotel* directly to reserve your room (301-723-5100). All rooms reserved on a first-come, first-served basis at \$72.00 flat rate per night, per room.
Other Hotels in the Area:
Comfort Suites (301) 791-8100
Days Inn (800) 422-2754
Quality Inn (301) 733-2700
Venue Inn (800) 283-6423 (Pet Friendly)



Attending: A.A. Al-Anon Alateen Other

(1) REGISTRATION(S) _____ x \$20.00 = \$ _____
(2) GOLF TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION _____ x \$65.00 = \$ _____
(3) MEALS _____ x _____ = \$ _____

Friday Continental Breakfast _____ x \$6.00 = \$ _____
Friday Buffet Dinner _____ x \$18.00 = \$ _____
Saturday Buffet Breakfast _____ x \$11.00 = \$ _____
Saturday Banquet Buffet Dinner _____ x \$23.00 = \$ _____
Sunday Buffet Breakfast _____ x \$11.00 = \$ _____

Meals Subtotal \$ _____

First Annual Fall Conference Golf Tournament
Saturday, October 25, 2003 • 9:00 am
Location: Black Rock Golf Course
20025 Mt. Aeneas Road
Hagerstown, MD 21742
240-313-2816
First Tee Time: 9:48 am
Price: \$65.00 per Golfer
(Price includes Greens Fees, Cart, Awards, & Bus Lunch)
Format: Best Ball, Captain's Choice
Sign up as a team or join with other golfers at the course
Awards: Closest to the Pin, Longest Drive, 1st Place Team
Awards Presented at Saturday Night Banquet
Golf Contact Info: Ron F. 443-768-7135 or 410-246-5372

** TOTAL ENCLOSED (1, 2, & 3) \$ _____

** Please make checks payable to and mail to: MGS Fall Conference, P.O. Box 1484, Ellittown, MD 21041-1484

Conference Registration Confirmation Will Be Mailed Upon Receipt of the Above Form and Payment

OTHER AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES

Swimming Pool, Health Spa, Putting Green, Shuffle Board, Hagerstown Area Points of Interest

Enjoy:	Price
Continental Breakfast*	\$6.00
Assorted Chilled Fruit Juices, Breakfast Breads	
Buffet Dinner**	\$18.00
7:30 am - 9:00 am	
The Lieutenant's Buffet	
Tossed Salad with Assorted Dressings	
Lemon Pepper Chicken	
Roux Sirloin of Beef	
Chef's Choice of Potato & Vegetable	
Warm Rolls & Butter	
Assorted Cakes & Pies	
Saturday Buffet Breakfast*	\$11.00
7:30 am - 9:00 am	
Gerryburg Buffet Breakfast	
Assorted Chilled Fruit Juices, Sliced Seasonal Fresh Fruit	
Basket of Homemade Breakfast Breads, Scrambled Eggs & Home-fried Potatoes, Bacon	

MENUS

Enjoy:	Price
Saturday Buffet Dinner*	\$23.00
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	
The Colonel's Buffet	
Tossed Salad with Assorted Dressings	
Baked Haddock, Filet with Lemon Dill Butter	
Roast Pork Loin	
Rice Pilaf, Sugar Snap Peas with Red Peppers	
Warm Rolls & Butter	
Assorted Cakes & Pies	
Sunday Buffet Breakfast*	\$11.00
7:30 am - 9:30 am	
Sunrise Buffet	
Scrambled Eggs, Bacon, Sausage, Country Fried Potatoes	
French Toast Sticks with Maple Syrup	
Freshly Baked Biscuits	

* Registration for all meals required
All Meals Include Fresh Brewed Regular & Decaf Coffee & Tea

TRADITION NINE

Olivia N.

AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

In my early years of trying to get sober, I was introduced to the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Little did I know at that time that the steps would be the very ingredients of my sobriety, A-Day-At-A-Time.

Around my three months in sobriety, my sponsor introduced me to the Twelve Traditions. Thank God for knowledgeable, caring sponsorship, because when I came into this blessed fellowship, everybody sponsored me, whether I liked it or not. Many have passed on to the big meeting in the sky, but they left me a wealth of knowledge.

When I looked at the traditions, I could not envision how a group of sentences could hold a group of people together. I later learned that the Traditions are the cement that holds a group together.

For our own survival, Tradition Nine closes up avenues for people who think that they can come into Alcoholics Anonymous and become presidents and bosses. I am fully aware that human authority in Alcoholics Anonymous does not exist.

I am grateful and thankful to God that, when the Traditions are practiced and incorporated into my home group, there is no room for authorities, presidents, bosses, constitutions, or bylaws. The Ninth Tradition forces me to take a hard look at my responsibility when it comes to serving on a committee and exercising patience and humility in any service position that I may volunteer for or be asked to fulfill.

In my early days, months, and first year in sobriety, I could not see how an organization could not be organized (even

though we are organized), relying strictly on a loving God who expresses Himself in each group conscience or business meeting. However, we do need to invite Him into our meetings.

What I have learned from this tradition is: 1) I do not have to be the ringleader, try to boss anybody in AA, or to always be out in front to be a good member; 2) I do not have to fear authority; and 3) I am mature enough to use all the elements of the AA program to stay focused and do what needs to be done – even if no one forces me to or asks me to do a job. I take pride in being a responsible person in AA.

I must admit that it is hard to give up a position that you like doing and are comfortable doing, regardless of what position or capacity you are serving in or are involved in. However, the Ninth Tradition teaches me that I must step out of an AA position gracefully when my tenure is over and move happily on to another activity. There is always something to be done in AA, if you simply open yourself to it. I am well aware that rotation is very important and necessary for my growth in sobriety. If I practice this, I can move forward in humility.

I am also aware that it is necessary to have service boards and committees to keep Alcoholics Anonymous running smoothly. If I can remain teachable, however, at all levels of responsibility and show up willingly to do whatever needs to be done, I will receive in great measure.

For the past thirty years plus, these Traditions, Steps, and Concepts have been the greatest assets in my life. I thank God for Alcoholics Anonymous, my home group, my sponsors (I have had only two), wisdom, and patience. But most of all, I am thankful for sobriety. Because of it, I stand ready, willing, and humble to serve in any capacity where I am needed.

CONCEPTS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

him or her the right to decide when to make a decision and when to seek guidance or approval.

Concept IV suggests granting a "Right of Participation" at all service levels, allowing voting representation in proportion to responsibility. The spiritual base for this Concept also comes from Tradition 2. By granting a "Right of Participation," we ensure that no member is placed in "ultimate authority" over another, that no members are "second class." Bill strongly warned us to safeguard against any attempts to "weaken, modify, or toss out" this right. "It is vital," he said, "to preserve this traditional 'Right of Participation' in the face of every tendency to whittle it down."

Concept V recognizes that, in a Democratic society such as ours, the minority is frequently right. It suggests that "a traditional 'Right of Appeal' ought to prevail" and that petitions to redress personal grievances should be considered carefully. On important issues, the minority not only has the right, but the duty to state its case. "The well-heard minority...is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority." Others here have no doubt seen initial votes reversed, thanks to additional information or thoughts expressed by the minority.

Concept VI expands on the idea of delegated responsibility expressed in Concept II and reaffirms the "Right of Decision" expressed in Concept III. Where AA groups delegate the final responsibility for AA services to the General Service Conference, the Conference, in turn, delegates administrative authority for the operation of AA World Services, Inc. (including the General Service Office) and the AA Grapevine, Inc. to the trustees of the General Service Board. The trustees' responsibilities also include managing AA's finances, carrying the message overseas, safeguarding the Traditions, and carrying out AA public information activities.

Concept VII acknowledges that the Charter and By-laws of the General Service Board grant it legal power to manage and conduct world service affairs. It also notes that the Conference Charter is not a legal instrument; the Conference, therefore, relies on AA tradition and funding.

Concept VIII spells out the two primary purposes of the General Service Board and its committees: 1) to serve as the primary planners and administrators on "larger matters of overall policy and finance," and 2) to provide "custodial oversight" for AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. It accomplishes this, at least partially, by electing their directors.

Concept IX presents yet another spiritual principle applicable to world service, namely "Leadership." It points out that good service leadership is "indispensable" at all levels and that the trustees must assume the world service leadership role initially held by Bill and Dr. Bob. Bill further describes qualities necessary to lead in our Fellowship, such as leading by example (not directive), exercising vision, and facing criticism with patience and tolerance.

Concept X states, simply put, that service responsibility should equal service authority, and that authority should be well defined by tradition, resolution, job description, charter, or by-laws. Bill's essay continues where Concept VI left off, applying delegated responsibility and "Right of Decision" within the service structure, from the Conference Board, through the directors of its subsidiary service entities, and down through the ranks of the GSO and Grapevine staff and other employees.

Concept XI works as a companion to the spiritual principle of "Leadership" introduced in Concept IX: The trustees should be assisted by the best possible people and that identifying, placing, and assigning rights and duties to them are matters of great concern. Bill's essay explains in great detail the structure and function of Board committees, relationships between service entities, and office policies.

Concept XII is a statement of the General Warranties of the General Service Conference:

- Warranty 1—"The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power."
- Warranty 2—"Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, should be its prudent financial principle."
- Warranty 3—"None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others."
- Warranty 4—"That all important decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and wherever possible, by substantial unanimity."
- Warranty 5—"That no Conference action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy."
- Warranty 6—"That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action."

Unlike the first 11 Concepts and the remainder of the Conference Charter from which they are taken, these General Warranties cannot be readily amended. They can only be changed by the written consent of three-quarters of all the AA groups in the world. Bill felt that the Warranties "indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which the Conference

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Maryland General Service Meeting Dates for 2003

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 DCM EXPERIENCE

TOM R., AREA 29 SECRETARY.

I was half way through my two-year term serving as General Service Representative (G.S.R.) for my home group, Arnold Area As Bill Sees It. My friend Jim L. and I were attending an Area Assembly and poring over a list of groups in our home district. We had by now become aware in our service to Area 29, Maryland General Service, that many groups in our district were not represented by a GSR and there was not an active District Committee Member (DCM) or Alternate DCM. We had a dark district.

We pondered what to do as we pored over and over again through the list of groups. We knew many of the people in these groups, didn't we? What could we do to get our dark district active again? What does the district do? What does the DCM do? A quick reference to the AA Service Manual reveals the simple definition of a district: "A district is a geographical unit containing the right number of groups – right in terms of the committee member's ability to keep in frequent touch with them, to learn their problems, and to find ways to contribute to their growth and well-being."

The DCM is defined simply as: "The district committee member (DCM) is an essential link between the group GSR and the area delegate to the General Service Conference. As leader of the district committee, made up of all GSRs in the district, the DCM is exposed to the group conscience of that district. As a member of the area committee, he or she is able to pass on the district's thinking to the delegate and the committee." The Service Manual further lists the DCMs duties, including attending all district meetings and area assemblies, receiving reports from the groups through GSRs and through frequent personal contacts with groups in the district, helping the delegate cover the area and obtain group information for the AA directories, keeping the GSRs informed on Conference activities and AA service-related material, keeping groups informed on Conference-approved books and pamphlets, organizing workshops or sharing sessions on service activities, and sending district minutes to the delegate and alternate.

We saw that active districts held monthly meetings with their GSRs. Our first step was to get the word out to groups in our district that we would be holding monthly meetings. Jim and I found a meeting place, selected an evening and time, and began announcing our district meeting. At our first meeting we held an election. The group elected yours truly as DCM, and other members were elected Alternate DCM, Treasurer, Recorder, Intergroup Liaison, and a trusted advisor. We also voted as a group to maintain the meeting time and location and establish our mailing address for group contributions.

We began to discuss the business of our district. As DCM, I began to carry back to the district much of the same kind of information I carried to my home group as GSR, such as area and GSO news and events, and I encouraged group

participation in the district and area. With the help of our GSRs, we reached out to all of the groups, informing them of our district and area meetings. We encouraged groups to elect GSRs and Alternate GSRs. The district meetings quickly became a forum to discuss group issues, and issues related to the Twelve Traditions and AA as a whole. We were able to use our resources as a district to organize workshops on issues of concern to our members. One example was the first workshop we held on the issue of court slips as they relate to AA Traditions, additionally the Structure of the Home Group. Workshops (or forums) became a vehicle to inform members on AA's Traditions and provide sharing sessions. We subsequently held forums on 12th Step Work – How to Deal with a Wet One, Sponsorship, and a Twelve Step Mini Retreat. We also put on a production of the Traditions Play.

In our early months of district activity, our local Intergroup did not have an active Activities Committee. Our district grabbed the reigns and organized a fall picnic, and with the great turnout of the picnic, we began planning a spring dance. The district is still putting together these activities, in coordination with the now active Intergroup Activities Committee.

Through our outreach to district groups through workshops, forums, and even social activities, we began making groups aware of the district's presence and function. We also began printing and distributing a quarterly district newsletter to raise awareness in our groups. We found that some groups simply were not aware of the district and area functions, and they subsequently elected a GSR and Alternate GSR. We also found that some groups just weren't interested. But we carried the message of service. We encouraged our GSRs to participate in Regional Panel meetings to review Conference Agenda Items and prepare our delegate for the General Service Conference.

Through my experience as D.C.M., I had the opportunity to represent the district at the Northeast Regional Conference and Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly, and to report the ideas and experiences we shared at these service events. Area Assemblies and Area Committees became a chance to network with other DCM's in Area 29, to exchange ideas and information, and to find out about workshops, plays, breakfasts (yum!), and other district activities throughout Maryland. And it was always a privilege to present our district's report to the Area Assembly and Area Committee.

I enjoyed the experience of serving as a link between the group GSR and the delegate, and the opportunity to learn about one more level of service work in Alcoholics Anonymous. But as a friend advised, once I reach a point where I've figured out that I know what I'm doing, it's time to move on and do something else. And as my term as DCM came to an end, I rotated out to learn a new job in AA And I'm still learning.

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As Alcoholics Anonymous and the work of Alcoholics Anonymous on a global scale have grown, the 12 Concepts for World Service have proven themselves to be invaluable guiding principles and vital to a system of checks and balances that has enabled AA as a whole to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.

CONCEPTS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

should always possess.... These are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves."

The 12 Concepts for World Service were adopted by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1962. 12 Steps for recovery, 12 Traditions for unity, 12 Concepts for World

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