

MARGENSER

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

Delegate's Corner: The Spirit of Rotation

Barbara B
Area 29 Panel 56 Delegate

I want to share a talk I came across, given by Loren B, Panel 51 Delegate from Montana, at the 52nd General Service Conference on the "spirit of rotation" and the concept of "letting go." I have taken the liberty of condensing it, but it is too good to try to rewrite it in my own words:

"At the 1955 Convention in St Louis, Bill W passed on to the fellowship the responsibility for the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Just imagine how difficult that must have been for Bill. He formalized the Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts and wrote most of our literature. He set up our service structure and helped make AA available worldwide. He was the driving force behind the movement, and now he was letting go of the reins and allowing the Conference to act in his stead.

"In our book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill describes the emotion and challenges of stepping down as a

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Carrying on Our Right of Participation

Tom R
Area 29 Alternate Delegate

Friends, I hope everyone is enjoying a safe and sober summer! In February and March of this year, we had the opportunity through our six Regional Panels to review and discuss the Conference agenda items for this year's General Service Conference. I attended many of the Regional Panel meetings throughout Area 29 and had the privilege to facilitate the Area 29 Mini-Conference on April 7 – 9 in Salisbury.

Our Mini-Conference helped prepare our Area Delegate for the General Service Conference, which was held April 22 – 30 in NYC. At the Mini-Conference, our fellowship voiced our Area's conscience on these items, items that affect Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Our guest for the weekend was Greg M. from the General Service Office. After the weekend of presentations, discussions, and activities, Greg remarked on how thoroughly researched and informed our participants were on the items we discussed.

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Service, a Moral Responsibility

Bill H, Chair, Workshop Committee

For the past seventeen years, I have been involved in service in one fashion or another. Whether at the home group, Intergroup, or General Service level, I have stayed involved. I have often wondered why I wanted to be so involved, so I sat down one night and traced my service work back to the beginning. I think most of us can come up with the answers: a strong vibrant home group along with a concerned and caring sponsor.

Our home group, Mannasota, tried to have jobs for every home group member. We had a group conscience every month at someone's home. It was not so much a business meeting as it was a gathering of concerned members of AA who wanted to know what was going on and how we were holding up our end of the partnership. Each member had figuratively signed a contract with AA. Alcoholics Anonymous would give us a daily reprieve in return for us not drinking one day at a time and getting off our duffs to carry the message to

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MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and facilitate communication among AA members, groups, districts, and intergroups within the Maryland General Service Area. The MARGENSER aims to be instrumental in carrying the AA message. This quarterly newsletter seeks to publish AA-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength, and hope. Material will be reviewed by the MARGENSER committee chairperson or by a member of the committee. Nothing published in the MARGENSER should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or AA policy. Finally, publication shall not constitute endorsement by the newsletter itself, Area 29, intergroups, districts, local groups, or AA as a whole.

Keeping in the Middle through Service

Eva H, Area 29 Webmaster

Alcoholics Anonymous has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. When my father became a member of AA in 1979, I certainly never imagined that I would join him in the fellowship 24 years later.

Some of my earliest memories entail visions of him and his fellow AA members gathered around our kitchen table sharing their experience, strength, and hope with each other. Although I had no concept of what they were talking about at the time, I would later come to realize that many of their discussions revolved around their involvement in service in Alcoholics Anonymous. Today, I have no doubt that my own involvement in service not only enhances my sobriety, but is also one of the primary reasons I'm still sober.

After 18 years of struggling with my alcoholism and associated denial, I finally surrendered and began my journey in AA. Like most of us, I was physically, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt when I arrived, with very little hope for my future. All of my actions were driven completely by fear. I had absolutely no idea that I would soon be able to look back after only a few 24 hours in the program and see such dramatic changes in my life.

At nearly three years of sobriety, I can honestly say that with the guidance of my Higher Power, a wonderful sponsor, and the powerful program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am happier than I have ever been in my lifetime. Considering that I'm still what many would regard as a 'baby' in the program, it would seem that I have a lot to look forward to as my journey continues.

When I was sober for about 6 months, I was introduced to service in AA. I knew about the various service positions in my home group, and although I didn't hold any positions officially, I was pretty eager to help wherever I could. By getting involved in the clean-up and other 'behind the scenes' tasks that are required to keep a group running, I discovered that it gave me an opportunity to interact with other AA members when I might have been too shy to approach them otherwise.

After getting to know my home group members and becoming more comfortable in my surroundings, I volunteered to take the Intergroup Representative position. This job provided even more occasions to meet new people and expand my network of friends in the program. Equally as important, it was

through this position that I began to learn more about the service structure of AA.

My first exposure to service at the Area level came not too long after that. Because I was still so new in sobriety and hadn't learned how to occupy my free time very well, I was pretty desperate to find new things to do. After all, I was painfully aware the only thing that still seemed natural to me was drinking. When I heard about a group of people getting together to attend an Area 29 Assembly, I was somewhat reluctant to join them, but decided that it sounded like a fairly positive way to spend a Saturday (compared to spending it alone, which was a very dangerous place for me at the time).

My decision to tag along resulted in one of the best days I had in sobriety up until that point. I would imagine that any AA member who has ever gone on a road trip with a group of recovering alcoholics can probably relate when I say it can be an amazing adventure that often involves a lot of laughter, occasional tears, and a sense of fellowship that is wonderfully incomparable to any other feeling I've ever experienced. I will always remember the recurring thought in my head that day: "I finally fit in."

Fast forward a couple of years, and I can't even begin to count how many of those "adventures" I've been on or how many friends I've made in the fellowship during my travels. My sense of responsibility to AA and to fellow alcoholics has grown exponentially along the way. And through service, I am honored to be able to give back to the program that has given me so much.

I currently serve as the Webmaster for Area 29 and, as such, am privileged to be a member of the Area 29 Website Committee. Because our committee members are spread throughout Maryland, we use the technology of the Internet to hold our monthly meetings by joining together in our own private online chat room. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with other recovering alcoholics in an effort to provide information regarding Area 29 and to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to anyone who has access to the Internet.

I will be forever grateful to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous who introduced me to service and I would encourage anyone in AA who hasn't experienced it yet to dive right in. I've heard it said in meetings that being involved in service helps to maintain sobriety by keeping you right in the middle of Alcoholics Anonymous, preventing you from 'falling off' by getting too close to the edge. In my case, this hits the nail right on the head. ▲

Unity in a Home Group

Marla M, Pikesville North Group

Last night was our group conscience meeting after our home group meeting. I was thrilled by the number of home group members who stayed. It was great and refreshing. Our main order of business was about our rent increase. I am sad that the times have changed so much that utility costs and business bottom lines are affecting AA.

I must say I was impressed by the decisions that we arrived at as a group. We decided that on anniversaries, the celebrant would now supply his/her own cake and/or choice of sweets. The group had so generously provided this tasty treat for years. (In fact, I believe we were the only group in the area that did so!)

We opted to stay at our spiritual home; we have been there for over 10 years. We all believe it is important and imperative to remain. The returning alcoholic may be comforted to know that AA is exactly where we have always been, exactly where they found us before. We also as a group decided that we would meet the rent, even if at the time it came due we hadn't collected the amount needed from the basket collection. This brings me to the reason for my writing.

I had recently read an article about rising costs but dwindling donations in the *Grapevine*, and it has really hit home, especially now that it is right in front of my face. (You know sometimes it still takes that 2x4 for me to get it!) With the rising costs we face, the donations in the baskets have, sadly, not increased. I hope and pray that it is only an oversight on the meeting attendees, but I think it needs to be stated more often and definitely more vocally at meetings.

Don't get me wrong! I am on a fixed income with 3 young children and am definitely not always able to contribute. But I do make sure I can contribute in other ways to make up for the AAs who do put in extra, week after week after week. But sadly it is always that same few, the ones that hold the home group together in tough times and in good times.

Yes, a home group always looks attractive with many active participants...but I remember when it was just a small (2-3) group of core members who held ours together...just to make sure we were always there and our doors always open. And isn't that what service and AA are all about? Being there with doors open, hands outstretched and hot coffee brewing? Maybe as a collective group of AAs we can come up with a solution that won't go against any traditions or principles of AA! Anyone up for it? ▲


(Delegate's Corner) continued from page 1...

leader of Alcoholic Anonymous and speaks about AA being safe in the hands of the fellowship, even from him. Bill knew the pitfalls of having a person in a position of power in AA and of the problems it could cause within a group, district, or area. He knew how easy it could be for any one of us to be deluded into thinking we are an expert, that we have some measure of importance, and that we don't have to abide by the group conscience because we know better. He understood that rotating leadership is best.

"The spirit of rotation means more than just giving up the title of a service position. Rotation means truly letting go of the control and the actions. It means allowing new GSRs, DCMs, Committee Leaders, and Officers to make mistakes without criticism and do their jobs without undue influence from those who have rotated out of those positions. It means allowing the entire service structure to operate with God leading the way by expressing Himself in our group conscience.

"The benefits of rotation are very real and practical. The benefits to the individual are beyond our imagination because we know that anything God has in store for us will be better than anything we could have planned for ourselves, and when we make ourselves available for service, we have new opportunities for growth. We can't move forward if we are still clinging to our present conditions. We don't know what God has planned for us, but we'll never find out if we are not willing to let Him guide us further down the path.

"By rotating out of a service position and truly letting go of the job, we open ourselves to an ongoing spiritual awakening. In effect we are saying to our Higher Power that we finished the job laid out for us and are ready for what He wants us to do next. Bill set the example for all of us, and the challenge for us is to follow his example."

I could not find a better expression of my own feelings regarding this and I hope you feel as I do, that we must continue to allow God through our group conscience to lead the way, both in and out of AA. I am your trusted servant, and you can reach me by e-mail to delegate@marylandaa.org. 

Leadership in AA: The Key to Our Future

Peggy R, Area 29 Past Delegate, Panel 48

I have been struck recently by the stark similarities between what our co-founder Bill W discusses in his Concept IX essay and some of the issues facing Maryland General Service today. When Bill wrote this particular Concept, he was still somewhat struggling with his rotation from active responsibility for our Fellowship. His concerns for the Fellowship's future were based around the strengths of its future leaders. Today, Area 29 has experienced the rotation of a significant number of experienced service leaders and the introduction of new trusted servants.

Bill writes in his opening of the essay: "No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work."

As we well know, one of the keys to our successful continuation of service to the groups of AA is our principle of rotation. Taking heed of this very valuable idea saves us from the tyranny of a permanent class of service workers who *may* come to believe that service cannot survive without their extended experience. Hopefully, past trusted servants become like elder statesmen who see the wisdom of rotation, hold no resentment, whose experienced judgment is sound, and are available for counsel when asked.

Rotation also offers us the constant influx of new and willing service workers with great passion for AA and its services, with lots of new ideas and questions, but no experience and little or no understanding of the past. As Tradition Two has shown us, a loving God expresses itself through a group conscience of all of its members. An informed group conscience includes the lessons of the past and hope for the future. "This is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well-advised by our elders, will be in the long run wiser than any single leader" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pg 135).

Concept IX is about leadership. Somewhere between the big doers, those infallible and inspired managers, and people-pleasing automatons is where our leaders usually come from. Bill writes: "We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We need only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

"A leader in AA service is therefore a man (or a woman) who can personally put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job.

"Good leadership originates plans, policies and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions.

"Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

"Another qualification for leadership is 'give and take' – the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us 'all-or-nothing drunks.' Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by *a series of improving compromises*.

"Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is the acid test. There are always the constructive critics; our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.

"Now we come to the all-important attribute of vision. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some may feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy, because we AAs are constantly telling ourselves, 'One day at a time.' But that valuable principle really refers to our mental and emotional lives and means that we are not to foolishly repine over the past nor wishfully daydream about the future.

"These points are practical illustrations of the kinds of careful discrimination and soul-searching that true leadership must always try to exercise" (*Leadership in AA: Ever A Vital Need, The AA Grapevine, April 1959*).

Particularly meaningful to me has been Bill's belief that in AA we must lead by example – not directive, that we must exercise vision, and that we must always be patient and tolerant in the face of criticism. So, as always in AA, it is the spirit of service and sacrifice that helps us

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(Leadership in A.A.) continued from page 3..

become usefully whole. I am challenged every day to practice these principles in all my affairs. I cannot possibly have all the answers, therefore I must be willing to seek out those who have gone before me and ask them to share their experience. Then I must look past my own preferences, likes and dislikes, and act in the best interest of the Fellowship as a whole. Although I may have to completely change my thinking or give up some cherished notion, it is in those moments that I can feel the nearness of the God of my understanding. I have faith that the God of my understanding always makes the best use of my life and shows me the way.

I recognize that my recovery has given me the opportunity to participate as a responsible member of society – but not at the expense of the Fellowship that has made this possible. Yes, life is busy, but I wouldn't have a life if there had been no one to carry our message of hope and recovery to this alcoholic. It is precisely because, as Tradition One tells us, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity," that I serve. But I can't, and certainly no one can, do it all. We must depend upon the continuous rotation of all members into service.

I am still baffled that many groups do not have an active General Service Representative (GSR) nor are they listed with our General Service Office (GSO) and, therefore, not only do they remain uninformed about AA as a whole, but they are not fulfilling their responsibility of participation to the Fellowship that gives them life. I find it disappointing, too, that some consider it a chore or drudgery and bemoan the intrusion on their personal time. Let us not forget that if there were no meeting place to go to, no "Big Book" to lay out our program of recovery, no consistent literature, no one to answer the calls of those searching for recovery, we probably wouldn't last very long.

Why aren't we lined up to serve?

Do we recognize the need for group officers?

What are our criteria for election?

Do we sometimes give positions to people "because it would be good for them?"

Why do some election ballots have only one name standing for a service position?

Why are there service committees with only one member, the chairperson?

Do we discuss how we can best strengthen the composition and leadership of our future trusted servants?

This is not politics and this is not a popularity contest – this is service to Alcoholics Anonymous, to our continued recovery and to the recovery of those yet to come. I've heard it said, "Gratitude is an action word." So it is my hope that all you grateful, sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous are giving back that which was so freely given to you. Our future depends on it. ▲

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO...

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

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 22561
Baltimore, MD 21203

THE MARGENSER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The Margenser Committee welcomes submissions. We are here to serve you. Submissions should be no more than 750 words and about service or recovery. Please include your first name, last initial and home group. Send all correspondence to Margenser Parkville, MD 21234 or via email to margenser@marylandaa.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is November 24, 2006.

REACHING OUT TO THE "DARK DISTRICTS"

Many of our neighbors do not actively participate in Area 29, nor are their voices heard within AA as a whole. We encourage you to reach out to those districts without active GSRs or DCMs, sharing your experience of service beyond the home group and carrying the message one-on-one. Area 29 welcomes your ideas on how we can best do this and offers our support.

AREA 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE 2006 CALENDAR

August 12	Area Assembly	North East, MD – District 11
September 16	Area Committee	Abingdon – District 29
September 16	Hagerstown Group 60th Anniversary Dinner	Hagerstown – District 20
October 28	Area Assembly (Inventory)	Fall Conference – Hagerstown
October 26-29	MD Fall Conference	Clarion Hotel – Hagerstown
November 18	Area Committee (Budget)	Westminster – District 9
December 9	Area Assembly (Budget)	Aberdeen – District 30

AREA 29 COMMITTEES NEED PEOPLE

Have an interest in a new service direction? Join us. Area 29 Maryland General Service has service positions to meet you at the level of your needs. No prior experience necessary. No resumé needed. Just a willingness to offer Love and Service. Contact the Area Chairperson at chairperson@marylandaa.org.

*The 22nd Annual
Area 29
Fall Conference*

Hosted by
Maryland General Service



**October 26, 27, 28, 29, 2006
Hagerstown, MD**

Clarion Hotel & Conference Center

A.A. with Al-Anon Participation

A.A. Speakers

Doreen S. Glen Burnie, MD John H. Hilton Head, NC Chandler M. Baltimore, MD Karen G. Venice, CA Elaine R. Pittsburgh, PA Keith L. Ocala, FL Dick A. Lithia Springs, GA

Al-Anon Speakers

Barbara A. Lithia Springs, GA

Thursday, October 26	Friday, October 27	Saturday, October 28	Sunday, October 29
12:00 pm Registration Opens 12:00 pm Hospitality Room Opens 12:00 pm MGS Room Opens 4:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 5:00 pm A.A. Alcañon Starts 6:00 pm **Children's Piñata Making 8:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 10:00 pm Open Mic Night Featuring Karaoke	8:00 am Registration Opens 9:00 am Third Annual Fall Conference Golf Tournament 9:30 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 11:00 am Al-Anon Speaker Meeting 11:00 am **Kids' Halloween Arts & Crafts 1:30 pm A.A. Old Timers Meeting (Main Ballroom) 1:30 pm Al-Anon Workshop 1:30 pm Poolside Gathering 2:45 pm Choice of two A.A. Workshops Berkeley-Franklin Rooms 2:45 pm Al-Anon Workshop 4:00 pm Choice of two A.A. Workshops Berkeley-Franklin Rooms 4:00 pm Al-Anon Workshop 6:00 pm *Buffet Dinner 6:30 pm **Family Fun Pumpkin Carving 8:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 10:00 pm Poker Tournament (not for money) 10:00 pm Rags to Riches DJ Dance (come as you like)	7:30 am *Buffet Breakfast 8:00 am Registration Opens 9:30 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 11:00 am Al-Anon Speaker Meeting 11:00 am **Children's Make Your Own Scarecrow 1:30 pm Joint A.A./Al-Anon Meeting Sobriety Scavenger Hunt (held in Lit. & Archives Room) 2:00 pm Choice of two A.A. Workshops Berkeley-Franklin Rooms 2:45 pm Al-Anon Workshop with Alateen participation 4:00 pm Choice of two A.A. Workshops Berkeley-Franklin Rooms 4:00 pm Al-Anon Workshop 4:00 pm **Kids' Halloween Fiesta 6:00 pm *Conference Banquet Dinner 8:00 pm A.A. Speaker Meeting 9:30 pm **Halloween Costume Parade 10:00 pm AA Jeopardy 10:00 pm Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde Halloween Costume Dance 12:00 am AA Charades & Pictionary	7:30 am *Buffet Breakfast 8:30 am Sunday Sunrise featuring Coffee & Donuts 9:00 am Last A.A. Alcañon 10:00 am A.A. Speaker Meeting 11:00 am Conference Closing
*A.A. Alcañons are Open Discussion Meetings which run 24-hours continuously throughout the Conference. Meetings are 50 minutes in length, and begin on the hour, with 2-hour breaks during the A.A. Speaker Meetings.	*Registration For Meals Required	*Registration For Meals Required	
**All Children's Activities Require PARENTAL/GUARDIAN Supervision	**All Children's Activities Require PARENTAL/GUARDIAN Supervision	**All Children's Activities Require PARENTAL/GUARDIAN Supervision	



**CONFERENCE ATTENDEES PLEASE REGISTER IN CONVENTION CENTER LOBBY UPON ARRIVAL
ADMITTANCE TO ALL CONFERENCE FUNCTIONS REQUIRES AN IDENTIFICATION NAME BADGE**

Handicap & Wheelchair Accessible Interpretation For The Hearing Impaired

Nancy K, Past Delegate and Committee Chair
announces

**NERAASA 2007
Planning Committee
Meetings**

Second Friday of the month beginning January 13, 2006.7:00 pm at
Christian Temple, 5820 Edmondson
Ave., Catonsville, MD

Yes folks, right here in our own back yard,
Maryland is hosting the
Sixteenth Annual Northeast Regional
Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly. Get
involved in the planning of this exciting event.

Have questions? Want to know about the
responsibility of carrying the message of Unity,
Service and Recovery? This could be one of
the highlights of your spiritual journey.
Come and enjoy.

**Sobriety in the
Park Picnic**

District 9 will host its 1st annual
Sobriety in the Park picnic on
Saturday, August 9, from 11 am
to 7 pm, at the Taneytown
Memorial Park in Taneytown.

Food - Fun - Fellowship!

For more information,

e-mail

Activities_chair@d9mdaa.org.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Day _____ Evening _____

Attending: A.A. Al-Anon Other

(1a) PRE-REGISTRATION (Prior to Oct 1) _____ X \$20.00 = \$ _____

(1b) REGISTRATION (After Oct 1) _____ X \$22.00 = \$ _____

(2) GOLF TOURNAMENT _____ X \$65.00 = \$ _____

(3) MEALS

Friday Buffet Dinner _____ X \$20.00 = \$ _____

Saturday Buffet Breakfast _____ X \$10.00 = \$ _____

Saturday Banquet Dinner _____ X \$22.00 = \$ _____

Saturday Banquet Dinner Vegetarian _____ X \$18.00 = \$ _____

Children's Menu _____ X \$11.00 = \$ _____

Sunday Buffet Breakfast _____ X \$10.00 = \$ _____

Banquet choices must be made with the reservation. Please purchase banquet tickets in advance.

(Please choose one entree) Beef Chicken Pene Pasta

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

**Please Make Checks Payable To and Mail To:

MGS Fall Conference, P.O. Box 358, Arnold, MD 21012 (Your returned check is your confirmation)

E-Mail Address: fallconference@marylandaa.org

**Third Annual Fall Conference
Golf Tournament**

Friday, October 27, 2005

Location: Black Rock Golf Course
20025 Mt. Aetna Road
Hagerstown, MD 21742
240-313-2816

Shotgun Start: 9:00 am

Price: \$65.00 per Golfer
(Price includes Greens Fees, Cart, Awards, & Box Lunch)

Format: Captain's Choice
Sign up as a team or join with other golfers at the course

Awards: Closest to the Pin (4); Longest Drive (4);
1st Place Team; 2nd Place Team; 3rd Place Team
Awards Presented at Saturday Night Banquet

LODGING REGISTRATION

Contact the Clarion Hotel directly to reserve your room(301/733-5100).

All rooms reserved on a first-come, first-served basis at \$72.00 flat rate per night, per room by Oct. 1.

MENU

SATURDAY, SUNDAY BREAKFAST \$10.00

Scrambled Eggs, Cream of Chipped Beef with Biscuits, Sausage
Coffee, Tea, Decaf

Saturday - Banquet (Plated) Dinner

All Dinners to include: Tossed Garden Salad w/Ranch & Italian Dressings, Red Roasted Potatoes, Vegetable Medley, Rolls & Butter, Chef's Selection of Desserts
Coffee, Tea, Decaf & Iced Tea

Choice of Entrée

Roast Top Round of Beef \$22.00

Lemon Pepper Chicken \$22.00

Vegetarian Selection: Sun Dried Pene Pasta \$18.00

Children's Menu: Chicken Fingers, French Fries, Applesauce \$11.00

FRIDAY DINNER BUFFET \$20.00

Tossed Garden Salad w/ Ranch & Italian Dressing
Turkey w/Dressing OR Flank Steak
Chef's Choice of Potato & Vegetable
Rolls and Butter, Assorted Cakes & Pies
Coffee, Tea, Decaf & Iced Tea

Other Available Activities

Swimming Pool
Health Spa
Putting Green
Shuffle Board
Hagerstown Area Points of Interest
Please see Hospitality Room for local restaurants and area activities.

Walking the talk at MGS

Dan P, Area 29 Treasurer

One of my first impressions of AA was something that we often take for granted: the fact that the meeting started on time and ended on time. I didn't expect this. I was used to gatherings that started late and ended, well, when the lights came on and the bartender called out "time," using a clock set ahead so he could go home on time.

That simple practice of starting a meeting when they said it would start was just part of a bigger discovery about these people I had just encountered for the first time. I found out that, to a surprising extent, they did what they said they were going to do. I could rely on them. As surprising as this discovery was, it was also a trait that attracted me to AA. It was something that I wanted for myself.

How does reliability come out of spirituality? It seems to me that it derives from our first honest look at ourselves in Step Four and our making of amends in Step Nine. In both of these steps we are forced to look at ourselves through the eyes of others, as humans in the world of other humans. Once we begin to break out of our self-centeredness, we can begin to see that, when our actions correspond to our talk, we are more comfortable with ourselves and are more at home in the world of others.

When we move into service in our groups, we find that the reliability we see in AA meetings has its roots in the spiritual concepts behind the Traditions. Many groups use the group conscience process to establish a specific order for their meetings. Often the person opening the meeting follows a specific script. This process helps us maintain the unity of the group and is one small way that we give assurance to the newcomer that we can be relied upon.

At the level of the Area, our group conscience is expressed in several ways, one of which is the by-laws of MGS. That is the script that keeps the Assembly process running smoothly. Because it is relatively difficult to change, it is tempting to simply ignore the by-laws when they seem inconvenient. But the spiritual principles behind unity, group conscience, and reduction of self-centeredness mean that, when change is desired, we should go through the process of amending the script.

There are those who say that we need not adhere to our written rules, at least not the by-laws, because the Assembly is a spiritual entity. But the experience of our groups demonstrates that is not the case. There is spiritual value in reliability: saying what we do and doing what

we say. We may not always (or ever) do it perfectly, but it remains an ideal that is worth striving for. ▲

The Hagerstown Group Celebrates 60 Years

On September 16th, 2006, the Hagerstown Group will celebrate its 60th Anniversary. The group is the third oldest AA group in Maryland and was founded in 1946 by Ira H, a physician. According to the General Service Asst. Archivist, there is a letter on file in the Archives dated 9-26-1946 that states in part:

"...[W]ith the aid of the Towson and Baltimore groups we have this week started a small group of AA here in this town. We are using my office (115 West Washington Street) as a meeting place on Tuesday and Friday nights, until someplace else seems necessary or available. Meetings are at 8:30 PM.... We had a tentative organization of ten to start, seven arrived at the first meeting, which I hope may form a nucleus"

Over the years, as often happens, the group waxed and waned but managed to continue as a viable group. During the mid 1950s and into the 1960s, Bob S was a mainstay of the group and made a significant contribution to its history. Additionally, for many years, Bill C (who passed away in 1981 with more than 30 years of sobriety) was a key member of the group during some of the lean years.

In the spring of 1970, in Bill's kitchen, plans were formulated for the first Maryland State Convention. Invitations and envelopes were addressed by hand and mailed to groups in Maryland and surrounding locations listed in the General Service World Directory. The Maryland State Convention has continued annually since then.

There was a time in the 1970s, during the oil crisis, when the group was struggling. Seven or eight of us met in a closed-off portion of the Saturday night meeting hall and used a small space heater to warm the air sufficiently enough to enjoy a small measure of comfort during the meeting.

From time to time, due to scarcity of members, there would be discussions at group conscience meetings about whether or not to continue our meetings. Thankfully, those discussions always resulted in a decision to continue "a little while longer."

Today, the group is healthy and vibrant, with a great mix of sober members and a steady influx of newcomers, the lifeblood of AA. There are three meetings a week, all starting at 8 PM. On Monday, we have a closed Big Book meeting. Thursday night is a closed step meeting, using

the Twelve and Twelve as a guide. Saturdays are open discussion meetings, and this is the night reserved to celebrate anniversaries. The fourth Saturday of the month is a speaker meeting. Please visit us when in the Hagerstown vicinity.

The 60th anniversary celebration will take place in Riggie Hall at St Joseph's Catholic Church on the corner of Virginia Avenue and Halfway Boulevard in Hagerstown. Fellowship is at 5 PM, followed by a catered buffet at 6 PM and a speaker – Bobby C from Philadelphia – at 8 PM.

Admission, due to space considerations, is via ticket only. Tickets are \$20.00 per person and can be obtained from any group member or by sending your check made out to "Hagerstown Group" to PO Box 671, Hagerstown, MD, 21741 by September 9th, 2006. Please contact Sam W. or Nancy B.

A flyer with additional information is also available online at www.hagerstownaa.org or www.marylandaa.org.

Thanks to Tom A and Rick B for providing valuable research data for this article. ▲

Feeling Part Of

John J, Co-chair Archives Committee

I am an alcoholic, and my problem is John. I am the Area 29 Archives Committee Co-chair. I would like to share a little of my experience with you, having just returned from the annual State Convention in Hagerstown, Maryland. Although I have attended the past two years, this was the first time I was involved to any degree.

The archives committee brings a display to the convention, so everyone can see some of Maryland's AA history. Among some of the displays in the corridors are Grapevine covers from past issues and fliers from past events.

Unlike some of the other service opportunities that I have undertaken in the past, this one requires a great deal of time and effort: storing the archives, organizing the thousands of documents that show the rich history from the past to the present, carrying the material to all Area events and setting up and breaking down displays. I enjoy it a great deal, though, as I do any service opportunity.

Just like my sobriety, the more effort I put into it, the more I get out. Being involved in the Archives Committee, as with service within my home group, helps me feel "part of." I was thrilled with the number of people who viewed our displays. Please come see us at the Fall Conference as we hope to add some new items. ▲

(Service...) continued from page 1...

the still suffering alcoholic. Each meeting ended with the Traditions Check List, when we basically took a mini inventory of the group.

The home group participated in Intergroup and supported some of its fundraisers. They taught me how to have fun in the program and to support local AA entities. My sponsor took me to my first institution commitment and taught me the importance of carrying the message behind the walls. He encouraged me to get involved and introduced me to the people who had experience.

I met people like Jerome J. and Calvin B. and watched them in action. Each of these guys had around 15 years of experience in carrying the message of love and service to our incarcerated brothers and sisters. They led by example. Nothing got in the way. They never seemed too tired, too sick, or too busy to carry the message anywhere for AA.

I met people who could not afford a car but would sponsor a meeting every week and be there, come hell or high water. I have seen these people stand up in the middle of an institution meeting with a hundred inmates present and ask some of them to be quiet so the rest of us could live in sobriety. There was no fear. There was no intimidation. There was no arrogance. The only thing present was the concern that someone might not hear the message, and it was this man's responsibility to make sure the message could at least be heard.

My sponsor took me to my first General Service meeting and took the time to explain the purpose of General Service, what a GSR does, what the General Service Conference is about, and how unity, service and recovery are all united for the continuance of this thing called Alcoholics Anonymous.

My sponsor took me to my first State Convention, and I was fortunate to see the people behind the scenes. They were happy and excited, despite giving up time from their precious lives for nine months to see that this event would be the best that it could be for those who chose to attend.

My service sponsor gently pushed me in Maryland General Service, even though I had not been a GSR. He kept me informed on all facets of the process. He supported me wholeheartedly, as did the rest of my home group members, when I attempted to take on other positions.

I think that one of the most important things I learned throughout this pleasant journey is that it has always been a partnership, a two-way street. In any position I have been involved in,

(Right of Participation) continued from page 1...

To follow up on the General Service Conference and to remain intent on continuing the Regional Panel process throughout the year, we would like to reconvene the panels at our Area Assemblies, review the Conference Advisory Actions, and see the result of our work earlier this year. We can review which items became Conference Advisory Actions or where no action was taken.

We may even wish to submit a suggested agenda item for next year's Conference. Conference agenda items submitted through our Area Delegate must be recommended to the Area no later than the October Area Assembly. However, the deadline for all final agenda items is January 15, 2007.

As you know, each Regional Panel is assigned items related to two topics, such as Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections, Archives, Report and Charter, Literature, etc. In an effort to avoid having a panel review and discuss items from the same topics year after year, the panels rotate topics every two years. In 2007, our Regional Panels will be reviewing Conference Agenda Items from the following topics:

Panel 1	Eastern Shore	Archives, Finance
Panel 2	Western Shore	Public Information, International Conventions and Regional Forums
Panel 3	North Eastern	Policy and Admissions, Treatment Facilities
Panel 4	North Western	Corrections, Report and Charter
Panel 5	Metro East	Literature, Cooperation with the Professional Community
Panel 6	Metro West	Agenda, Grapevine

We will be receiving all of the Conference agenda items and pertinent background material for the 2007 General Service Conference by early February of next year. Our panels will again begin to meet in the local communities. All AAs are encouraged to attend and participate. Our 2007 Area 29 Mini-Conference will be held from March 30 – April 1 at the Salisbury Ramada Inn.

I look forward to carrying on our right of participation through our Regional Panels and ensure, as stated in Warranty Four, "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." ▲

there has always been this partnership. AA has supplied me with tools to perform the task. These tools come in all shapes and sizes, such as written guidelines, workbooks, the Big Book, tapes, past experiences of other AA members, as well as the money and moral support to do the job. My responsibility was to perform the task to the best of my ability.

When necessary, I formed a committee, so everything could come to fruition. I was responsible to carry the message within the parameters of the Traditions and the spirit of sobriety. When I saw things at MGS that I did not like, I had to learn how to deal with them without complaining and undermining Maryland General Services. People, places, and things sometimes interfered with my progress, but I had a sponsor and a service sponsor to keep me straight.

Along this service journey, I have learned many important things. Perhaps the most important is that I have a moral responsibility in any task I may perform for Alcoholics Anonymous to do the best I can and to use the resources around me to achieve that goal. If I am the butt-can person, then I will try to be the best darn butt-can person in AA. No position is more important than any other, and each needs our full commitment. We must remember first and foremost that our sole purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. ▲

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