

# MARGENSER

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

## Delegates Corner: Anonymity – Be Aware

*Nancy B, Panel 60 Delegate, Area 29*

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” Our 12th tradition was forgotten by me at the recent International A.A. Convention in San Antonio, Texas. I would like to make a public 10th Step amend to all attendees. When approached on the street by a passerby and asked what the green lanyards everyone was wearing meant; caught up in the excitement of the moment, I responded that we were attending the International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had just broken the anonymity of everyone wearing a green lanyard. I can break my anonymity if I choose, but I was wrong to break the anonymity of others. I apologize.

In addition to my personal snafu, an alarming trend in the fellowship is taking place. Many of us are forgetting about the 11th tradition of personal anonymity “at the level of press, radio and films” which has been extended to include television and all public media including the Internet. With the advent of

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## District Visits to Groups: Experience, Strength and Help

*Bob C, Area 29 Treasurer*

Many General Service Representatives (GSRs) interested in relighting their districts, as well as current District Committee Members (DCMs), ask for experience about how to “pitch” the idea of general service to groups.

The following outline is the actual experience of a small group of GSRs that helped relight two still-lit Area 29 districts several years ago. With minor modifications, this approach has also worked well for DCMs and district outreach committees since then:

- I. In the weeks before visiting meetings:
  1. We met weekly with our fellow GSRs to read and discuss the pamphlets “The 12 Traditions Illustrated” and “The 12 Concepts Illustrated.” An Area 29 trusted servant sat in and helped out whenever we had questions.
  2. We each worked up a 5-minute talk using the talking points in section III below. We practiced on each other several

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## May We Speak Again, Please?

*Arnold R*

Good evening. Our name is AA Grapevine, and we are alcoholics. To qualify, let us say that we have been trying to join every group in A.A. for nearly 66 years now. We come along every month, and we've seldom ever gotten up here and talked about ourselves.

The AA Grapevine is the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge about the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere.

The Grapevine is your magazine; the articles it presents are written by A.A. members, with an occasional “guest” non-A.A. volunteer contributor. For example, in the August 2010, issue we had contributions from 10 different states, and an article from the United Arab Emirates.

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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.

## AA's Day of Infamy 4 P.M. Sunday Afternoon July 3rd 1955

Ron M, *BYOL Easton*

Bernard Smith, the Chairman of AA's Board of Trustees steps to the podium and announces the Fifth Annual Conference of the General Service Conference to be in session. Behind him sits the entire board along with Bill W. who is introduced and takes the microphone. Dr. Bob has now been gone for almost 5 years and reality indicates that Bill, being 60 years old, recognizes the importance and need to pass the baton and guidance of Alcoholics Anonymous to another generation in order to insure its posterity and longevity. Over many years of trial and error, working with alcoholics and day to day experiences the **THREE LEGACIES OF RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE** evolved. Initially Dr. Bob and Bill provided most of the service and guidance of the program. Now it was time to step aside.

In part, Bill presented the resolution:

"We, the members of the Twentieth Anniversary Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, here assembled at St. Louis in July of the year of 1955, declare our belief that our Fellowship has now come of age and is entirely ready to assume full and permanent possession of the Three Legacies of our AA inheritance – the Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service."

While all are equally important, one tends to be constantly overlooked.

### "SERVICE"

Most, if not all, who enter the rooms of AA are in search of RECOVERY and if they remain for even a short period of time a sense of UNITY develops.

At the basic roots someone needs to set up the rooms. A missing coffee pot is considered a crisis and every meeting needs a chairperson. Groups need several trusted servants to take care of the various needs of the group in order to insure the continuity of the group. Contact with the rest of the

AA world is provided by Intergroup and Area representation. Intergroup representation and Group Service Representatives are the links and keystones for the group to be integrated with Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. The pamphlet "The AA Group" is arguably the most important service guideline piece available. Read it, study it, and utilize it.

Let's all get involved and insure OUR program survives for generations to come. ♣

## Our Fourth Tradition

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

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

Bill W. writes in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, "A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure A.A. as a whole, nor ought it affiliate itself with anything or anybody else. There would be real danger should we commence to call some groups "wet," others "dry," still others "Republican" or "Communist," at yet others "Catholic" or "Protestant." The A.A. group would have to stick to its course or be hopelessly lost. Sobriety had to be its sole objective. In all other respects there was perfect freedom of will and action. Every group had the right to be wrong."

How many times, I ask rhetorically, have I attended an A.A. meeting in another part of the state, or in another state and thought they aren't doing it right here? "Why don't they ask for announcements during the meeting? Why don't they have the same readings I'm used to hearing back home? Why is the chairperson talking so long?" Then I find myself stepping back and asking if the A.A. message of recovery is being shared, and aren't people staying sober? Who am I to judge how this meeting is conducting itself as long as the

language of the heart is being spoken. And if not, would not these problems work themselves out? The Fourth Tradition speaks to our primary purpose discussed in Tradition Five, and our non-affiliation with outside enterprises discussed in Tradition Six.

A dictionary source defines autonomous as self governing. A group which is autonomous is free to choose its own day, time, meeting place, format, meeting length, type of literature, contribution plan, election of trusted servants, and even what brand of coffee to serve; or even if they will have coffee at all. Some of the most stirring sharing I have heard was in meetings which avoided announcements, had a smoldering ashtray at every chair, or had not a Big Book or recovery pamphlet to be seen. Still other meetings began with what I was raised up with as the requisite readings, announced a plethora of Conference Approved literature for sale or at no charge, then the chairperson asked for non-A.A. related announcements. My immediate response was to speak up and ask they save the non-A.A. related announcements for a non-A.A. meeting. Imposed pontification and reference to A.A.'s non-affiliation aside, each group has a right to make its own decisions by group conscience on how to conduct their meeting. Tradition Two reminds me of the group's ultimate authority as a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. That would not be me. The second part of Tradition Two reminds me, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Albeit not a leader, I am reminded I do not govern. Every group had the right to be wrong. When a Tradition is being violated, I can share my experience and the experience of others before me but cannot direct a group on

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social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, to name only three of the dozens in existence, the fellowship is encouraged to take the time to be aware, and more diligent than ever, about information being posted.

I will not go into a discussion on the various social networking sites since I do not use them and therefore have no experience. My purpose in writing this is to ask all members, groups, districts, and Intergroups to consider engaging in discussions, and to research the articles and information available which provide the experiences and suggestions necessary to avoid possible violations of our 11th and 12th traditions. Resources include *Understanding Anonymity* (pamphlet P47); *A.A. Guidelines – Internet* (MG-18) found on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org); Box 459 – 2009 Winter Edition, “Anonymity and Social Networking Sites”; articles on anonymity and social networking found on [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

To kick off discussions, a sharing session was held at the July Area Assembly. A synopsis of this sharing can be found in the minutes from that meeting or I can provide you with a copy. In addition, District 10 will hold a workshop titled “Anonymity in the Digital Age” on November 13. Please plan to attend and watch for other workshops on this topic coming up in the future. Check out the Maryland General Service website at [www.marylandaa.org](http://www.marylandaa.org) for flyers and announcements of this workshop and other events. ☺

*(Fourth Tradition) continued from page 2...*

how to conduct their business.

Through working in A.A. service in the Intergroup, in General Service and my home group I have the opportunity to learn and apply the Traditions in conducting the business of living the society of Alcoholics Anonymous. We find our own way. I learn from my own mistakes as our Traditions were born out of past experience, and continue to move forward. ☺

*(May We Speak?...continued from page 1...*

We need more written contributions. That is, we ask you to share your experience, strength and hope. After all, it's no harder than talking at a meeting. For some people who are "podium shy" it is easier to write what you think. The A.A.G.V. editorial policy precludes poetry from being published, but articles, case histories, opinions, and criticisms especially of the Grapevine's style, contents and appearance are most welcome. We don't pay for your submissions . . . we read everything sent in . . . and we love you whether we print you or not.

In addition, we thought you might like to know something about our problems, since we have offered to read about yours. Our big problem is the pretty simple one of reconciling our printing costs, paper costs and such with part of the Eleventh Tradition. "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion," is the way it reads.

We have been trying to attract enough readers to break even with our production costs. So far, we haven't reached that break-even point. We get lots of compliments . . . but we need more readers!! We are told that many groups use the Grapevine as the subject matter for meetings. . . That the Grapevine is a powerful ally to take on Twelfth Step calls . . . that our covers are pretty. . . that the Grapevine makes a fine anniversary gift. But what we want to read are some subscription order blanks nicely filled in.

We also thought you might like to know who does get the Grapevine. Well, listed below are Grapevine subscriptions for the month of June 2010 for each of the eight General Service Conference regions in the United States and Canada along with the approximate membership numbers taken from the 2009 Final Conference Report. Less than seven percent of our glorious fellowship subscribe to “Our Meeting in Print.”

Regions	Subscriptions	Membership	Percentage
Pacific	16,241	316,321	5.1%
Southwest	9,309	118,824	7.8%
Northeast	18,826	329,576	5.7%
East Central	11,443	201,719	5.7%
West Central	5,283	81,396	6.5%
Southeast	15,360	148,037	10.4%
Western Canada	2,672	30,456	8.8%
Eastern Canada	3,992	63,530	6.3%

There it is, in a nutshell. Thank you, for letting us share. It does you good sometimes, we hear, when you're all full of your own problems to get up and talk. Right now, we have to hurry along and get ready for next month's issue.

(Editor's note: the author of this article, Arnold R., is a past Area 29 Delegate; he also served as an A.A.G.V. Director, as well as a Trustee on the General Service Board) ☺

## Service and Sobriety

*Kit, Bond & Green, Westminster*

When we take the ninth step, and make amends to all the people we have harmed, there are still some areas of our past lives that cannot be addressed. There are those who have passed beyond our contact, living lives far from our own; and there are those who have passed away. For these amends, and for our future sobriety, we can make a living amends, that is, we can live our lives to the best that we can, making sure that we are present and aware of all the people and situations in our lives. We can extend a helping hand to all those who need one, and we can avoid falling into the traps that

we know our character defects will lead us into.

Service in the fellowship can be as brief as sharing our experiences, strength and hope in a meeting, or as involved as doing the jail commitment, taking meetings to those who are incarcerated and thus unable to get out. But at whatever level we can help, extending our hand to a fellow sufferer brings a twofold blessing. We remember all the misery that active alcoholism brought to us, as well as to those around us. Sharing our experiences, what we've learned, where we've been lets the newcomer know that she is not alone, that others have suffered as she is currently suffering. Our greatest gift is the hope that we can offer those who are still out there. ☺

## Unity

*Mike F, Westminster Wed. Night Group*

Hello, my name is Mike F. and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is February 13, 1983. My home group is the Westminster Wednesday Night Group; I have a sponsor and sponsor others. I currently hold two service jobs in my home group and have at one time or another held all service jobs at the group level.

I am writing today about AA Unity, a topic suggested by another trusted servant who will remain nameless.

There are many sources of information in our AA Literature that deal with Unity - Tradition One, The Big Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, the Traditions Checklist, etc. I refer to all of these and more when I have questions.

My sponsors (I have had two), my continuing study of our literature and my experience during my sobriety, have taught me the following.

I have probably made most of the mistakes that break Unity. Live and learn. So because of this . . .

1. I try never to mention the religion I was raised in when sharing at a meeting. If a newcomer is a member of that religion they may get the idea that AA is opposed to them and their religion and never come back.
2. I check my politics at the door. You probably don't agree with my politics and I sure as heck don't agree with yours!
3. I refer only to AA literature when sharing during a meeting. I use other literature and will cover that outside the meeting if you are interested.
4. If I am really agitated by non-AA proceedings at a meeting (for example, psychobabble - "my therapist says" - , rehabspeak - "triggers" - "inner child" - talking to chairs, group therapy, disparaging remarks about religions - non-alcoholics - clergy - doctors, drugalougues) I try to practice restraint of tongue, usually by passing. I don't often pass but will do so if it means saving an opportunity to be helpful later. Please bear in mind that I am not personally opposed to any of these

- concepts, disparaging remarks excepted. Nevertheless, they are not AA concepts and are in direct conflict with our primary purpose as stated in Tradition 5.
5. If I am spiritually fit in situations described above in point number 4, I try to comment on the topics at hand and not make personal attacks. All of this non-AA claptrap is covered well in our literature and if I try I can usually remember a passage that is appropriate. For example the currently popular topic of finding our "triggers" is covered very masterfully on pages 100-101 in our Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, in all four editions.
  6. I try not to mention outside issues, for example, "happy Mothers/Fathers/Veterans/Columbus/etc" day. These have nothing to do with our primary purpose and could be quite divisive especially to a bristling newcomer or bleeding deacon. Current events are taboo for me, also.
  7. When my group makes a decision I personally disagree with, I try not to
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## THE MARGENSER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The Margenser Committee welcomes submissions. We are here to serve you. Submissions should be no more than 750 words and about service or recovery. Please include your first name, last initial and home group. Email all correspondence to [Margenser@marylandAA.org](mailto:Margenser@marylandAA.org) or mail to Maryland General Services, P.O. Box 701, New Market, MD 21774. The submission deadline for the next issue is November 25, 2010.

## 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.

## 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 701  
New Market, MD 21774

# SERVICE WORKSHOP

## ANONYMITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Sponsored by District 10

November 13, 2010 10:00 am – 2:00 pm  
Bethesda United Methodist Church  
6300 Harford Rd Baltimore, MD 21234



Coffee and sodas will be provided

Please bring a dish to share for lunch

For more information please contact

Nannette Z. or Gale W. @[district10@marylandaa.org](mailto:district10@marylandaa.org)

## Traditions Day in District 31

**When:** Saturday  
November 13, 2010  
12 Noon

**Where:** St. Martin's in the Field  
375 Benfield Road  
Severna Park, Md.

**Schedule:**

12 Noon Lunch (free)

1:00 p.m. Traditions Play

2:00 p.m. Workshop  
hosted by  
past delegate  
Tom R.



(District Visits...) continued from page 1...

weeks in a row. Our “pitches” improved with practice, and we gained unexpected confidence.

3. We built a list of meetings, locations and times in our district.
4. Since we were relighting our district, we picked a date, time and place for the first district meeting. We scheduled a trusted servant with experience in Third Legacy Procedure elections to attend in case we decided to elect officers. We made a flyer announcing the district meeting and took it with us on group visits.
5. We split up our list so we could visit as many meetings as possible within 4 weeks of the district meeting.

II. At the meeting:

1. We went in twos and arrived 20 minutes before the meeting.
2. We sought out the chairperson or coffee person and introduced ourselves. We asked whether we could talk to the home group for 5 minutes after the meeting about whether they'd like to take part in the district. If it needed to be another night, we stayed and enjoyed the meeting then returned on the appointed night. Some groups wanted us to do it the same night, usually after the meeting.
3. At the start of the talk, one effective

way we found to grab their attention and make it fun – if we had practiced! – went like this: “Now, I can do this talk in 5 minutes. So who has a watch and can time me? Good. Now sound the alarm in exactly 5 minutes, and I'll stop whether I'm done or not. OK? Go!” and start your presentation. (Guarantee: If you do this, not one person will leave before you're done, because they want to see if you make it through in time!)

III. Talking Points (Making a “Pitch” for the District):

1. Start with a Principle (pick your favorite):
  - a. “How Concept I relates to Tradition 2” (You learned this in the weeks you spend studying the Traditions and Concepts with your fellow GSRs in section I above)
  - b. “The Responsibility Statement” (When anyone, anywhere...)
  - c. “A Declaration of Unity” (See inside front cover of The A.A. Service Manual)
  - d. Insert your own idea here
2. “What is a district?” – It's a collection of groups in a local area, connecting the local groups to other groups in the state and to A.A. as a whole.
3. “What does a district do?” – It insures the future of A.A. by enabling the

groups to be informed about and have ultimate authority over all of our general services.

4. “Why do I want to have a district?” – To give my group a voice in A.A. as a whole, and to insure A.A. will be here if any of my children/nieces/nephews/grandchildren need it some day.
5. Close with a clear request: “So I'm here tonight to ask the question, will your home group select a GSR to send to our district? Thank you.”

IV. After the pitch:

1. We took any questions and helped the group select a GSR (one who was actually in the room at the time!) if they wanted to.
2. We obtained a contact person and phone number/e-mail address, whether the group decided to be involved or not.
3. We arranged to give each GSR and alternate GSR a reminder call 2 days before the scheduled district meeting. Reminder calls are very important in helping the interested people to actually show up!
4. We revisited each home group meeting within the next few months.

Please ask any Area 29 officer at an Area Assembly to get help planning district visits to home groups. We would be thrilled to help you out in this vital area of service! ☺

## MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE, AREA 29

### 2010 CALENDAR

Area Assembly (Inventory)	October 16	District 35
Fall Conference	Oct. 28-31	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	November 20	District 20
Area Assembly	December 18	District 22

## AA History: Eastern Shore—Delmarva

Ron M, BYOL

At the outset I must offer a disclaimer.

Although I have done a substantial amount of research, I am fairly certain of the events and dates however a lot of the information came from the memory of old timers. Hard copy documentation is often very hard to find.

Of course the origins of AA was in Akron, Ohio and along with New York city our beloved society continued to grow, however slowly at first. Along the way it seemed to have bursts of energy that provided momentum to give us the AA program as we know it today. The evolution and growth of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous was not much different on the Eastern Shore.

After serving in the military during World War II a fellow by the name of Willis H came home to Berlin and the Ocean City area. This was the latter part of 1944. He was discharged in August of 1945 when the war ended. Willis decided he needed and wanted some rest and relaxation and went for a short two week vacation in Ocean City. It is reported that those two weeks turned into a drinking spree of about a year and a half bringing us to the beginning of 1947. Finally coming home he looked up an old time friend by the name of Dirk Q. Dirk is the first person that I was able to identify as being in AA on the eastern shore. At that time Dirk was apparently sober having been to St. Luke's Hospital in Philadelphia for treatment. It is reported that Dirk said to Willis, "I've been waiting for you." Dirks sobriety ties into the travels of Jim B who is credited with carrying the message to Baltimore and Philadelphia. So in a round about way, AA in Delmarva found its way from the western shore. Dirks's continuing sobriety without meetings could be attributed to a few possibilities such as being a "LONER" and getting any and all information by way of mail from New York, from some traveling AA's or both.

There is evidence of at least one AA meeting in Wilmington Delaware in 1944. In late 1946 there appeared an article in the "Delmarva News" which was published in

Selbyville. The article indicated that a special meeting of AA would be held in Frankford Methodist Church in Frankford Delaware, Sunday night at 8 P.M. That meeting became the genesis of AA in Delaware.

Willis and Dirk attended the meeting, hearing a speaker named Dave M. from Wilmington. The message he carried was that there was to be a new meeting starting in Dover at the Century Club on the Green. On February 7, 1947 Dirk, with his newly acquired 1947 Pontiac, took Willis to Dover for the meeting. For the next several months these two pioneers along with a few new members traveled the 60 miles to Dover and attended a meeting every Wednesday night. In March 1947 Clarence F. started a meeting in Lewes-Rehoboth Delaware.

The trip apparently got to be quite long so on October 6, 1947 they organized and held the first meeting on the eastern shore of Maryland. It was held in the Berlin library room.

A few months later in December 1947 a Baltimore AA named Leland S who had moved to Easton, met up with Art O and they started the first meeting in Easton. The exact date is not available but it was reportedly on a Tuesday evening.

By the end of 1947 there were 5 meetings in Delmarva. Dover Lewes-Rehoboth, Laurel, Berlin and Easton.

In April 1948 the AA message traveled from Berlin to Salisbury. Marion M and his wife Helen started the Salisbury group in the Wicomoco Presbyterian Church. Later in 1948 in a joint effort of the Berlin/Salisbury contingent and the Easton group the AA message was brought to Cambridge. The persons credited for this work were Allen and Hildegard and Babe P.

In retrospect, it is interesting to note the route AA took and the people responsible for its arrival on the Eastern Shore/Delmarva. It is well known that Bill W. and Dr. Bob were the founders. Bill came back to New York and began carrying the message. One of the very early members recruited in New York was Fitz Hugh M (11/39) who in turn carried the message to Jim B (6/38). Both were

from Anne Arundel County, Fitz (Our Southern Friend in the BB) and Jim (The Vicious Cycle in the BB). Fitz is credited with starting AA in Washington DC and Jim went north to Baltimore and then on to Philadelphia where he was instrumental in bringing the message to the hospitals. The aforementioned Dirk was most likely the beneficiary of his efforts and today AA is alive and well on the Eastern Shore-Delmarva. ♣

*(Unity) continued from page 4...*

- continue retaliation and argument. If I am in that much disagreement perhaps it is time to find a new home group.
8. At group conscience, district and area assembly meetings I will readily and fearlessly point out items that are in conflict with our AA Traditions – not popular but definitely necessary. I have been accused of "having an opinion" on numerous occasions. If understanding the definition of the words in our Traditions and having seen them ignored, defied, violated – my term, I know they are only "suggested", is having an opinion then I am guilty as charged.
  9. When I am asked to lead a meeting at another group I always inquire as to that group's conscience so that I may abide by it.
  10. The AA program, that is, the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts were handed to me undiluted. I try to pass them on in the same manner.
  11. When sharing at a meeting and/or especially talking with newcomers I try to ensure that this encounter with AA is not their last.

The list above is not all-inclusive. If you read this article you can probably come up with some of your own approaches to being a unifying force in our fellowship.

When I first came to AA the old-timers "suggested" that I "sit down, shut up and listen". That's what I shall do for now.

P.S. If I am arrested tonight and accused of being a member of AA, I hope to God that there is enough evidence to convict me! ♣

# MARGENSER

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