

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING UNITY AND CARRYING THE A.A. MESSAGE IN AREA 29  4th QUARTER 2003

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

BARBARA B.

My name is Barbara B, and I'm an alcoholic. I have had the honor and the privilege for the past two years to serve Area 29 as your Panel 52 Chairman and now, with our elections behind us, I will be rotating on and passing the awesome responsibilities to your Panel 54 Chairman, Calvin J. As the Chairman, I had the opportunity to witness many of our dedicated Committee Chairs, DCMs, and GSRs hard at work serving their Groups and Area 29, and I shared in their experience and the rewards that service at this level can bring. We traveled from Cumberland to Ocean City and many places in between to bring unity to Area 29, to keep the Area informed and connected to AA at the General Service Office and worldwide.

Our mission has always been to be of maximum service to those around us, carrying the message to the still suffering Alcoholic. Vital services to our Area are provided through committees, such as Public Information, Treatment, Corrections and Cooperation with the Professional Community. Demonstrations of fellowship are fostered through Convention and Workshop committees, along with the work of our Intergroup liaison. There are also committees vital to the function of Area 29, such as Archives, Audio, Finance, Literature, Grapevine, Registrar, Website and Margenser. We offer many opportunities to be of

service, but the problem has always been in attracting more participation by AA members.

As the current trusted servants rotate on, we will need individuals to put their sobriety into action. The more committee participation we have, the greater our reach to those who need and seek AA services...and for that we are responsible.

Our members come from differing backgrounds, opinions and talents, which are our greatest gifts, and we can use our diversity to spark new ideals to help us grow. Don't deny yourself an opportunity to make yourself available to serve because you think you don't know how or have nothing to offer. Simply make yourself available; it's the job of the Area to show you how to put your talents to use. If we do this, then neither of us will fail.

In our founder Bill W's own words from pg S7 in the Service Manual, "Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles: it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die." You can reach me through the website.

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

Elkridge, MD 21075

TRADITION SEVEN REVISITED

KENNEY M, GSR, MELSON GROUP

With great interest I read the Tradition Seven article by Tom S in the 3rd Quarter 2003 Margenser. It cannot be stated enough the importance of self support to our Fellowship and its spiritual significance to our membership. It is the essence of survival for the individual AA, as well as for the groups to which they belong, to pay their own way.

It was also stated that each member has the right to expect that the money they put in the hat support AA's essential services – not group picnics, parties, etc. Does this extend also to the Area?

Area 29 is supported, via the groups, by that same hat. So are those Districts that have funds, local Intergroups and our General Service Office. Is this money, once it leaves the group, being used to carry the AA message?

If a group should not have a picnic, should the expenses of a Committee leader be paid to a Convention? I was in a District Meeting recently where the DCM requested the cost of registration and the banquet for NERC. There was further discussion that, since the DCM would be traveling with the Area Delegate and sharing a room, there was no further expense. Of course there would be no further expense

because the Area is paying the Delegate's way, including a mileage allowance. A motion was made, seconded and a check was written for the DCM. At the Area level we are regularly paying these types of expenses as part of our normal operating budget and, in some cases, even when the expense is over budget. Is this carrying the message?

Do we have too much money? In 1983 the Area 29 Election Assembly was held in Salisbury, and I was a newly (6 months) sober GSR, fresh out of jail and almost penniless. During the Assembly it was announced that the annual GSO Open House (they did that in those days) was coming up in November. I was "on fire" for AA, and this would be like going to AA Mecca. Alas I was broke and the state of Maryland had felt free to relieve me of my privilege to drive. By the time that Assembly was over, the plan was that five of us (Mary had a car, Tom had a license, and Nancy, Evelyn & myself scraped together our share.) would be there, and we were. One of the many best days of my continued sobriety. Miracle of miracles, we all paid our own way. In those days, and still today, paying my own way is a spiritual experience.

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TRADITION TEN: NO DISTRACTIONS

JACK C., AREA 29 FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Short Form: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Long Form: No AA. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

Definitions:

Opinion (a•pin'•yan) n. judgement or belief; estimation; formal statement by an expert. **-ated** a. dogmatic [L opinio].

Public (pub'•lik) a. of, or pert. to, the people; not private or secret; open to general use; accessible to all; serving the people; n. community or its members; a section of community. [L publicus, fr. populus, the people].

Controvert (kan'•tra•vurt) v.t. to oppose or dispute by argument; to deny or refute. **-ible** adv.

controversy n. disputation; argument, esp. by published writings; debate. **controversial** a. consisting of controversy; leading to controversy; likely to provoke argument. **controversially** adv. **controversialist** n. [L. contra; vertere, to turn.

We (w_) pron. Plural form of **I**; another person, or others, and I [O.E.]

What Tradition Ten means to me as a member of AA: When I am around you for the purposes of AA, you and I (we) should not discuss matters that may lead AA into the realm of public controversy. AA and you and I (we) have no opinion on issues that pertain to the public domain, the world outside of AA. If we don't discuss such issues internally in AA, we will not be distracted from our primary purpose. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers, both inside and outside of AA. If we are busy carrying the message, we are not likely to become distracted by outside issues.

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INTERGROUPS AND GENERAL SERVICE

TOM R, SECRETARY, AREA 29

A question frequently overheard is: "What is the difference between Intergroups and Districts?" Or, "What is the difference between Intergroups and General Service?" Our AA Service Manual states simply, "Traditionally, general service committees and intergroups/central offices have performed different functions. Central offices provide local services; general service committees maintain the link between the AA groups and the AA General Service Board by means of the Conference. So these two separate but vital service structures coexist in many areas in mutual cooperation and harmony."

I have often thought of Intergroups in general terms as the "front lines" of Alcoholics Anonymous. The primary function of our local Intergroup is to provide a phone answering service, facilitate 12th Step calls, and provide a local meeting list. The person answering that phone call at the local Intergroup office may be the first contact with AA for the alcoholic reaching out for help. Or they may be providing assistance to a traveler from out of town looking for an AA meeting while passing through the area. Our Intergroups also maintain committees responsible for providing local AA services, such as jails and institutions meetings, public information and cooperation with the professional community, activities, a bulletin, outreach, and literature. Intergroup actions and operations are guided by steering committees, or councils, as defined in my Intergroup area. Each home group is represented by an Intergroup Representative, who attends regular Intergroup Council meetings and who reflects his or her group's conscience in Intergroup actions.

Within Area 29 are ten Intergroups, which provide these local services. By contrast, the Area is broken down into forty-seven districts. As the link

between the group's General Service Representative (GSR) and the Area Delegate, the District Committee Member (DCM) is responsible for maintaining contact with all of the groups in his or her District. As this responsibility falls on one person, it is logistically easier to reach out to groups in a smaller geographic area. The AA Service Manual suggests, "In the majority of areas, a district includes six to 20 groups. In metropolitan districts, the number is generally 15 to 20, while in rural or suburban districts the number can be as small as five."

I have heard General Service described in the same manner as that of our fellowship—doing together what we could not do alone. Our General Service Office provides the resources to carry the AA message, which we as individuals or home groups could not do alone, such as publishing AA literature; sharing collective experience through AA-developed guidelines for public information, cooperation with the professional community, and new groups; and other services that help carry the AA message worldwide.

Our General Service Area is served by the Area Assembly, which is defined as "any meeting of area GSRs and the Area Committee." Our Area assemblies are responsible for electing officers and a Delegate to the General Service Conference, and for providing reports from Area committees, such as Archives, Audio, our conventions, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections and Treatment Facilities, Literature, Margenser (our newsletter), Grapevine, and Public Information. The Area Assembly provides a forum for our GSRs to share items of concern to their groups.

Area 29 has an Intergroup Liaison who maintains

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TRADITION SEVEN REVISITED

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A main topic of discussion in our last Group Conscience Meeting was this issue. Our regular meetings are typically attended by 20-40 alcoholics and we pass the basket and always inform those present that this is in accordance with our Seventh Tradition: "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." We are self-supporting and we regularly send contributions along the lines of the 60-30-10 plan. We are presently sending no money to our District because the group feels the District has too much money with no stated AA purpose. Our discussion centered on that money we send to the Area. The question we asked

ourselves is: Do the alcoholics who are feeding our basket know how that money is being used once it leaves our group? Would they approve of this being used to fund personal expenses, conventions, banquets and such of their elected servants?

These are tough questions. Bill W worked diligently to insure that the AA groups always held the "power of the purse-strings." Is this a case where the increase in numbers has increased the amount of available dollars so much that the money has to go somewhere? Is our Area now in a state where, if the budget is built with expense money included, that there is no accountability to the groups that support it?

For all the sober, strong, competent AAs in Area 29 who are diligently, and with great purpose, carrying the AA message, I certainly hope not.

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEES, DISTRICT AND HOME GROUP INFORMATION

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Bill H., Chairman

The Archives Committee was determined to have as many of our treasured items available to be seen by the most people during our Fall Conference. For this purpose, a lot of items were put on 8 X 11 poster boards and displayed at various places through out the conference.

A new addition, a map of Maryland listing various cities and the date that AA started there was prominently displayed in the front lobby. About six poster boards with the front page of old editions of the Grapevine along with a picture of Victor E. that was from the 15th State Convention was displayed at a front table. Displayed along the walls in the Alcathon room were enlarged replicas of each of the 18 previous Fall State Conference flyers. Through out the convention center were various old memorabilia of past AA events for all to see.

The Hospitality room contained one table dedicated to Fitz and Jim, the two boyhood friends from Maryland who helped AA in its infancy. Also displayed were the priceless copies of early AA books and literature. Included was a 1st edition Big Book with the full signatures from Panel 1 and 2 to the General Service Conference and a 1st edition Pass It On. Also displayed were early copies of the "Channel" newsletter, a publication from the Baltimore Intergroup of the 50's.

Next year we hope to have a display that shows pictures of various meeting places around Area 29. With your help, this vision will come true. Thanks to Area 29 for the financial support and archival donations. Without your help, there would be no archives to display.

MARGENSER COMMITTEE

Patricia R., Chairman

It has been a pleasure to serve as the chair of this committee. Thanks you very much for this gratifying opportunity. I could never have done it without the help of Earl H. Congratulations to Earl as he takes the helm for the next two years as the new Chair of the MARGENSER. As always, please continue to submit articles of interest concerning our recovering community to our email address or snail mail address.

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

WEBSITE REPORT

Dan N., Chairman

Average hits per day are around 208.

There are currently 12 members of the website steering committee. Our email address is wssteering@marylandaa.org. Please welcome our incoming chairperson, Bob D. I may be staying on in a technical support role.

We spent \$107.46 to addr.com to host the site for the next year. We also spent \$150.00 to DNS Central to register the domain marylandaa.org for 10 years. This put us over budget but we saved approx \$100.00 by renewing the domain for 10 years.

We have the Website guidelines scanned and are beginning to review them for any recommended changes or updates.

We are reviewing adding where-and-when's to the site for areas that do not have them listed elsewhere on the Internet.

We are reviewing the policy of not having any links to anything on the site.

All committees are invited to post information on the website about their committee activities. They can also have an email address @marylandaa.org. The only committees taking advantage of it so far are the Margenser and the two conventions. I am always available to discuss possible changes, additions, problems or concerns with the web site. Contact me via email at webmaster@marylandaa.org

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Jerry F., Chairman

During my travels around the area, one problem has consistently arisen-that of placing literature in the school systems. We would like to share how we approached this problem and achieved success with schools and with law enforcement agencies.

I was invited to attend the September 2002 meeting of the Annapolis Area Intergroup to discuss public information. We agreed to proceed with a cooperative effort to place literature in the county schools. The following questions required answers to accomplish the desired results.

1. What would be considered appropriate literature? The list decided upon was: The Big Book; pamphlets P-1 THIS IS AA, P-2 44 QUESTIONS, P-4 YOUNG PEOPLE AND AA, P-24 A NEWCOMER ASKS, P-35 PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL, P-36 IS AA FOR ME?, P-37 TOO YOUNG?, F-1 AA AT A GLANCE, F-9 A MESSAGE TO TEENAGERS; and the "Where and When" for that particular area.

2. Where would the materials be most valuable? Reasoning that it was unlikely that an at-risk youth would go to the library for any book, particularly an AA Big Book, it was agreed that it would best serve as a resource for guidance offices.
3. How to proceed? It was determined that individual schools could not place material in the school without approval from the school board. A set of materials was presented to the guidance office at the Board of Education for them to read and decide if they wanted it. If they favored having the literature, it then had to clear the media center.

During September 2003, I received a call from the Director of guidance of the Board of Education advising me that they loved the materials and wanted it. Delivery was made within the week.

Communications with supervisory law enforcement personnel in different agencies and divisions resulted in little interest regarding AA literature. However, if a department has a community relations office, they accepted literature enthusiastically.

District 21

The last meeting took place on November 1, 2003. Regular business was suspended to hold elections. The District voted using the 3rd legacy procedures. Mike B. Lower Intergroup chair ran the elections. New officers are Tammie F. - DCM, Teresa N. - Alt. DCM, Deverick - Treasurer. A District workshop was held on Nov. 16.

District 35

Big Books and other AA literature will be distributed to Jude House, a long term rehab facility within the District. The District is continuing to discuss other service projects that can help carry the message. Plans are underway for the district to host a 4th step workshop in April and an Area Assembly in 2004.

District 36

The District 36 Thespians presented Snow White and the Seven Character Defects on November 22. The play was well received and supported by an audience of about 65 people. The District holds monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of every month at the Placid Harbor Yacht Club at 6:30.

NOTICE

Maryland General Service will have a new mailing address, effective January 1, 2004. The new address is:

Maryland General Service
P.O. Box 832
Arnold, MD 21012

Please inform your home groups and group treasurers, and please reference your Group Service Number on all correspondence and group contributions. Also, please continue using the Elkridge address until the end of this year. Thanks!

TRADITION ELEVEN: PERSONAL ANONYMITY

GEORGE R.

The Eleventh Tradition tells me to "maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." There was a time when I thought that this also meant that I had to maintain my own anonymity as well as that of my fellow AA's in every aspect of any association in the rooms of AA. This included as well those outside of the rooms if it related in any way to the Fellowship. It soon became apparent, however, that this tended to put restrictions on my dealings with other members, especially newcomers.

When I first entered the rooms of AA, I was very fearful of the discovery of my identity as my job entailed a certain amount of public repute with the media and certain high-ranking government officials. What would happen to me if my problem drinking was discovered and became public knowledge? Would I not only be embarrassed as well as ridiculed? So I welcomed the tradition of anonymity hoping that it would protect my "reputation".

After several years in the fellowship, I began to attend meetings, conventions and conferences outside of my home area. I soon became aware that if I stayed "anonymous" when associating with people that I met at

these functions that I would be losing out on a very important part of my growth in the program. This became abundantly clear when attempting to do Twelfth Step work or in trying to work with others. Clearly, I would have to sacrifice my personal anonymity if I expected other AA's to contact me either socially or in regards to AA business.

I have come to recognize that AA anonymity may be necessary in order to attract new people into the program who, like me, have a typical alcoholic's ego. The fear that comes along with the "me" of the "shame" of being an alcoholic seems so characteristic. In working the program, our "shame" decreases along with our ego. It is no longer a matter of "me." While the program is one of "attraction rather than promotion," it has become clear that the purpose of the Eleventh Tradition is not to hide our identities from others who need to know who we are, what happened and how we got here. Today, I limit my anonymity to the level of "press, radio, and films;" I choose not to be anonymous in the rooms of AA or in matters where I feel I may be able to help another suffering alcoholic.

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE CALENDAR 2004

February 14, 2004	Area 29 Committee	District 31
February 27 – 29, 2004	NERAASA	Nashua, NH
March 6, 2004	Area 29 Assembly	District 34
March 12 – 14, 2004	NERD	
April 3, 2004	Area 29 Mini-Conference	Easton, MD
April 18 – 24, 2004	General Service Conference	New York, NY
May 15, 2004	Area 29 Assembly	District 35
June 12, 2004	Area 29 Committee	
June 24 - 27, 2004	Area 29 State Convention	Hagerstown, MD
August 21, 2004	Area 29 Assembly	District 36 Lexington Park, MD
September 18, 2004	Area 29 Committee	
October 1 - 3, 2004	NERC	Pittsburgh, PA
October 9, 2004	Area 29 Assembly	
October 21 – 24, 2004	Area 29 Fall Conference	Hagerstown, MD
November 20, 2004	Area 29 Committee	
December 11, 2004	Area 29 Assembly	

The 2004 Maryland State Convention will be held June 24 through June 27, 2004 at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Hagerstown, Maryland. Hope to see you there.

TRADITION TEN

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

Some outside issues (this list is not comprehensive):

Politics

Temperance

The state of the Economy

Religion

Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation

MADD

Court slips or other outside attendance requirements
Addiction

Source: Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions ©1952, 1953, 1981 by The AA Grapevine, Inc., and Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing (now known as Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.)
New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus & Medical Dictionary
©1991 by Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc.

THE TWELFTH TRADITION: NOW WE KNOW

HAROLD G, PAST TRUSTEE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Bill Wilson once stated that of all the traditions, if he had to pick one that would be the most important, it would be the 12th Tradition. Bill wanted to insure the continued growth and expansion of AA as a spiritual entity. He realized that because of the extraordinary group of people who make up our fellowship, there needed to be a set of principles whereby individuals would be afforded the opportunity to sacrifice a small part of themselves for the good of the whole. Members would give up some of their own needs and desires for the good of the group. Up to that point, our fellowship was a kind of word-of-mouth program. The 12 steps provided a framework of recovery for the individual, but no real framework existed for how groups would come together and relate to each other.

In 1941, the Saturday Evening Post published an article by Jack Alexander that painted a compelling picture of AA and how alcoholics had recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. The article created a wellspring of interest, and inquiries began to pour in to the office Bill had set up in Newark, N.J. As more and more people gained sobriety, problems arose concerning such things as money, prestige, power, and who could join AA. In some areas, blacks were not welcome in AA meetings, nor were women, gay people, criminals and on and on.... Groups made up their own rules, and no two sets of rules were alike. Bill Wilson once said that if all the rules were written on one piece of paper, no one could join AA.

Great arguments broke out among the groups; they would invariably call Bill to solve their problem, whatever problem was being argued about at the time. Finally, Bill told all the groups that they should settle their own problems, then call him and tell him what they did. Out of that tremendous turmoil, a sense of experience emerged that Bill recognized as the group conscience.

In 1946, Bill wrote the 12 Points to Insure Our Future, later termed the Traditions. Bill said the 1st Tradition just makes sense — if we don't all stick together, we will all hang separately. The results of the 12th Tradition come as

the direct application of the eleven preceding traditions. Just as the 12th Step, a spiritual awakening, occurs as the result of the previous eleven steps, the spiritual anonymity of the 12th Tradition occurs as the result of practicing the preceding eleven traditions.

Tradition Twelve insures a mood of humble anonymity. Bill considered anonymity of immense spiritual value, the great ego deflator, a leveler of the playing field, and it appeared to be essential in the beginning because of Society's view of alcoholics. We needed to keep our identities secret to insure the recovery of the many alcoholics who wanted to join our movement. As our society grew, we recognized that humility was a spiritual gift, as splendid a gift as the gift of sobriety. Anonymity is the quality that allows each and every person to be equal and united in our cause. No matter who you are or where you come from, no matter your race, gender, or economic status, you have only to walk through the door and say, "I need help with alcohol," and you have a seat at the table.

As Bill wrote, for thousands of alcoholics yet to come, AA does have an answer, but there is one condition. We must, at all costs, preserve our essential unity. It must be made unbreakably secure. Without permanent unity there can be little lasting recovery for anyone. Hence, our future absolutely depends upon the creation and observance of a sound group tradition. First things will always need to be first, humility before success, unity before fame.

Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough encompasses the preceding eleven. The 12 points of tradition are little more than a specific application of the spirit of the 12 steps of recovery. To our group life, and our relations with society in general, the recovery steps would make each individual AA member whole and one with God. The 12 points of tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim. The traditions are securely anchored in those precepts: Charity, Gratitude, Humility, Prudence and Sacrifice. These are the virtues that must stand clear before us in our meditation, and may we, Alcoholics Anonymous, serve God in unity and humility forever.

INTERGROUPS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

a relationship with local Intergroups to share information between General Service and the Intergroups. During my term as DCM, we elected an Intergroup Liaison from our District to attend

Intergroup meetings, primarily to coordinate activities and share information. We have always emphasized a cooperative effort, and not a competitive one, with our local Intergroup to provide AA services and activities. Though our functions may vary, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic.

MARGENSER NEWSLETTER

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