

District 12 Area 21 Newsletter

October 2015

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EXCEPT IN MATTERS....

Affecting other groups or AA as a whole. How often are those read in meetings yet all that is heard is *Each should be group autonomous...* not as sometimes read anonymously.

It all starts in the Home Group. The long form of Tradition 4 tells us *With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted.* It is here that importance of the group conscience and it's relationship to A. A. is revealed.

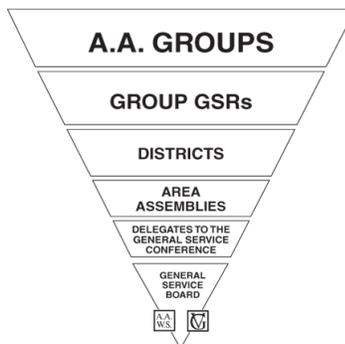
A.A.'s process of insuring that the Fourth Tradition is followed is through the Home Group. The origin of the name Home Group is quite simple. Early meetings first started in people's and as the meetings grew they moved into larger meeting rooms such as church's, schools, YMCA's or club houses.

Each person that considers themselves a member of A.A. should choose a Home Group. Just one... This is the

group that they wish to express their Fourth Tradition responsibility. The Long Form of the First Tradition reminds us that *Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole.*

A.A. has what many would consider a upside down business model. Or as it is referred to an inverted triangle. The group members run the program.

STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE
(U.S. and Canada)



Each group elects a Group Chairperson or General Services Representative, GSR. The term GSR makes a statement that this person is the Group's representative and interfaces to A.A. as a whole

for the Group. It is the GSR's responsibility to attend District Meetings monthly and Assembly Meetings quarterly. The GSR's are voting members at the District and Area meetings. A.A. does not have a proxy vote system. If the GSR is not present the Group does not have a vote and their concerns are simply lost. These votes for example determine just to name a few activities: how to carry the word, how meetings are published, who the District and Area Officers are where District and Assembly Meetings are held and most importantly what is carried by the Area Delegate to the yearly General Service Conference for all of A.A. representatives to hear and vote on.

It is the GSR's job to communicate this information and to gain an understanding of how the group feels about the future of A.A. Then to gather the groups opinions and present them to District and the Area Assembly. All Groups, Districts and Areas through out North America use this process. From the Group to the General Service Conference and back via The General Service (Conference) Representative. (see back page)

As with all aspects of A.A. it works if you work it and as pointed out in both the Long Form .. Continued on page 2

From the Frying Pan Into the Fire— my first leads

By Tova G.

If you had told me six months ago that I'd be leading meetings, I would have thrown back my head and laughed hysterically in disbelief. I then would have gone back to bowing my head and crying hysterically in pain. As many of us AAers do, I came in to Alcoholics Anonymous in full blown trauma, emptying tissue boxes and trying to hang on to my tenuous sobriety.

Slowly, gradually, I came out of the fog, found meetings I liked, set up a support system within the program, and just kept coming back. Day after day, week after week, month after month I sought solace in the collective wisdom of the fellowship, while my spirituality expanded and I learned more of my truth. First though, I had to spew the emotional garbage

that had brought me down to my bottom, but as time went on I observed and listened and learned. Still, the thought of putting together an alcoholism---related topic, tied into a reading, and sharing my own experience in such a way that would spark a lively, meaningful discussion seemed out of reach, in spite of my real longing to try it, and my admiration for continued on page 2

Big Book Trivia

September Answers:

This was a bit of a trick question. The Fourth Dimension is on page 8 and 24

Extra Credit:

Sixth Sense is on page 85

October Question:

What printings of the 4th Edition talked about the difference between Electronic Meetings and Home Groups

Extra Credit:

What passage has replaced this in later printings of the 4th Edition

Did you know? .

As Bill See's *It was* originally published as "the A.A. Way of Life a reader by Bill" in 1967 and over the course of 10 years slowly changed its name to "As Bill See's *It*". First by changing the dust cover then the books cover and title page.

In 1986 A.A. Lobbied Congress to evoke a little known aspect of the Copyright Clause of the Constitution to pass an Act that would restore A.A.'s Copyright ownership of the First and Second Edition to the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The attempt failed.

Frying Pan ... continued

those who so effortlessly pulled it off.

The first lead happened at about the four and a half month mark, for a meeting I seldom ever attended. It was a favor to a friend who needed someone to fill in at the last minute. I was more or less ready after a frantic afternoon of serious over preparation, showed up and was clearly nervous. It then seemed to occur to my friend just how incredibly nervous I was, and she suddenly asked me how much sober time I had. When I told her, a brief look of oops---maybe---she---will---screw---this---up passed over her countenance. I didn't screw it up, it wasn't horrible, just sort of so---so. There was only a small group there, who seemed to sense my pain, and we got the most out of it possible. Strangely, I talked about something of which I knew absolutely nothing: the Fourth Step. For newbies like myself, I suggest two pertinent ideas: don't talk about something you haven't done, and whatever you say, make it brief.

The second lead was better, I stuck to a daily reading and

looked up relevant quotations from people with a heck of a lot more wisdom than me. I had wanted to have some original thoughts, but was reassured there ARE no original thoughts left to be had in AA!

By the third lead, I was way overconfident, and had the audacity to use my (overlong) lead for my personal agenda. My sponsor didn't think much of that, let me tell you! So my next (overlong) lead was an apology of sorts for the previous week! This week I am going to cut back on the theatrics and focus more on what leads are all about: choosing an AA related topic, tying it into a reading, and sharing what little experience I have, or better yet, until I get some of my own, briefly share someone else's wisdom with the group. The idea is to spark discussion, not create controversy. Keep it simple, and even if it flops, there's always something else to talk about.

Except in Matters continued...

of the First Tradition and the Unity Statement if we don't some of us surely will die.

The Responsibility Statements reminds that "I want the hand of A.A. always to be there, and for that I am responsible"

As A.A. members we have to be responsible and find a Home Group, be aware of what is happening in A.A. express our opinions on matters to our GSR, who in turn is responsible to attend District and Area to express these concerns so that A.A. will continue and be read the moment a suffering alcoholic reaches out for help.

... "and for that I am responsible."

At District each month fewer than 10% of the groups are represented and in Area each quarter for the everything south of Kankakee that number is dramatically less. When one realizes that a very few number of people are actually holding the structure of A.A. together it is amazing that anyone ever gets sober let alone can find a meeting to stay sober.

Yet a few keep doing the behind the scenes work to keep the whole running. Everyone should start thinking what they can do to keep A.A. around for future generations

Each member of A.A. is but a small part of a greater whole.

The Fundamentals in Retrospect Dr Bob Grapevine Sept 1948

It is gratifying to feel that one belongs to and has a definite personal part in the work of a growing and spiritually prospering organization for the release of the alcoholics of mankind from a deadly enslavement. For me, there is double gratification in the realization that, more than thirteen years ago, an all-wise Providence, whose ways must always be mysterious to our limited understandings, brought me to "see my duty clear" and to contribute in decent humility, as have so many others, my part in guiding the first trembling steps of the then-infant organization, Alcoholics Anonymous

It is fitting at this time to indulge in some retrospect regarding certain fundamentals. Much has been written; much has been said about the Twelve Steps of AA. These tenets of our faith and practice were not worked out overnight and then presented to our members as an opportunist creed. Born of our early trials and many tribulations, they were and are the result of humble and sincere desire, sought in personal prayer, for divine guidance.

As finally expressed and offered, they are simple in language, plain in meaning. They are also workable by any person having a sincere desire to obtain and keep sobriety. The results are the proof. Their simplicity and workability are such that no special interpretations, and certainly no reservations, have ever been necessary. And it has become increasingly clear that the degree of harmonious living that we achieve is in direct ratio to our earnest attempt to follow them literally under divine guidance to the best of our ability.

Yet there are no shibboleths (which means "long-standing formula, doctrine, or phrase, etc., held to be true by a group) in AA. We are not bound by theological doctrines. None of us may be excommunicated and cast into outer darkness. For we are many minds in our organization, and an AA Decalogue (which means "Ten Commandments") in the language of "Thou shalt not" would gall (which means "irritate") us indeed.

Look at our Twelve Traditions. No random expressions, these, based on just casual observation. On the contrary, they represent the sum of our experiences as individuals, as groups within AA, and similarly with our fellows and other organizations in the great fellowship of humanity under God throughout the world. They are all suggestions, yet the spirit in which they have been conceived merits their serious, prayerful consideration as the guidepost of AA policy for the individual, the group, and our various committees, local and national.

We have found it wise policy, too, to hold to no glorification of the individual. Obviously that is sound. Most of us will concede that when it came to the personal showdown of admitting our failures and deciding to surrender our will and our lives to Almighty God, as we understood him, we still had some sneaking ideas of personal justification and excuse. We had to discard them, but the ego of the alcoholic dies a hard death. Many of us, because of activity, have received praise, not only from our fellow AAs, but also from the world at large. We would be ungrateful indeed to be boorish when that happens; still, it is so easy for us to become, privately perhaps, just a little vain about it all. Yet fitting and wearing halos are not for us.

We've all seen the new member who stays sober for a time, largely through sponsor-worship. Then maybe the sponsor gets drunk, and you know what usually happens. Left without a human prop, the new member gets drunk, too. He has been glorifying an individual, instead of following the program.

Certainly, we need leaders, but we must regard them as the human agents of the Higher Power and not with undue adulation as individuals. The

Fourth and Tenth Steps cannot be too strongly emphasized here - "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves...Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." There is your perfect antidote for halo poisoning.

So with the question of anonymity. If we have a banner, that word, speaking of the surrender of the individual - the ego - is emblazoned on it. Let us dwell thoughtfully on its full meaning and learn thereby to remain humble, modest, and ever conscious that we are eternally under divine direction.

Alcoholics Anonymous was nurtured in its early days around a kitchen table. Many of our pioneer groups and some of our most resultful meetings and best programs have their origin around that modest piece of furniture, with the coffeepot handy on the stove. True, we have progressed materially to better furniture and more comfortable surroundings. Yet the kitchen table must ever be appropriate for us. It is the perfect symbol of simplicity. In AA we have no VIPs, nor have we need of any. Our organization needs neither titleholders nor grandiose buildings. That is by design.

Continued on page 4

A Brief History of the Sobriety Chips

When and where Chips were first given out for sobriety anniversaries has long eluded historians. Many believe that it all started with Sister Ignatia who gave all graduates from a five day Detox at St. Thomas Hospital Akron, Ohio a cloth Sacred Heart Badge with instructions to return the Badge if they ever drank again.

Early members played a lot of cards. Poker chips were in most club houses. Some argue Indianapolis in 1942 was the first place to award poker chips, others argue Elmira N.Y. in 1947. Not to be left out Portland also claims the to be the first.

In the February 1948 Grapevine R. G.W. of Charlotte, North Carolina wrote "No, I don't believe that the "chip system" will keep anyone sober. Only a Higher Power can do that. But we are a nation that lives by symbols; what is the American flag but a piece of bunting, unless fully appreciated on what it stands for? Frankly, I hate poker. Yet, I wouldn't trade a mile-high stack

of green stuff for my precious blue pocket piece." Which establishes the practice was firmly in place in 1948.

Dr. Harry Tiebout, a longtime friend of A.A. and during the 1940's Bill's psychiatrist, was asked to look into the problem of sobriety birthday parties leading to another drunk and in the September 1965 Grapevine article entitled "When the Big "I" Becomes Nobody" wrote "Early on in A.A., I was consulted about a serious problem plaguing the local group. The practice of celebrating a year's sobriety with a birthday cake had in a certain number of the members getting drunk within a short period after the celebration. It seemed apparent that some could not stand prosperity. I was asked to settle between birthday cakes or no birthday cakes. Characteristically, I begged off, not from shyness but from ignorance. Some three or four years later, A.A. furnished me the answer. The group no longer had such a problem because, as one member said, "We celebrate still, but a year's sobriety is now a dime a dozen. No one gets much of a kick out of that

anymore."

There is an oral legend about 1935 Buffalo Nickels being given out to someone celebrating their first year of sobriety. Why? In 1935 when Bill used a phone to arrange his meeting with Dr. Bob that founded A.A. and a phone call cost a nickel. With explicit instructions that you always keep the nickel close by, and before you pick up a drink, use the nickel to call someone.

The Temperance Movement as early as the 1840's were giving out Pledge Coins to new pledges.

As early as 1870 several Temperance movements in the English India Army would give out metals for each year of sobriety.

As to the detailed specifics as to who started it and where it started no one knows.

Dr Bob on Fundamentals continued

Experience has taught us that simplicity is basic in preservation of our personal sobriety and helping those in need.

Far better it is for us to fully understand the meaning and practice of "thou good and faithful servant" than to listen to "When 60,000 members [in 1948 and 100 in 1939] you should have a sixty-stories-high administration headquarters in New York with an assortment of trained 'ists' to direct your affairs." We need nothing of the sort. God grant that AA may ever stay simple.

Over the years, we have tested and developed suitable techniques for our purpose. They are entirely flexible. We have all known and seen miracles - the healing of broken individuals, the rebuilding of broken homes. And always, it has been the constructive, personal Twelfth Step work based on an ever-upward-looking faith that has done the job.

In as large an organization as ours, we naturally have had our share of those who fail to measure up to certain obvious standards of conduct. They have included schemers for personal gain, petty swindlers and confidence men, crooks of various kinds, and other human fallibles. Relatively, their number has been small, much smaller than in many religious and social-uplift organizations. Yet they have been a problem and not an easy one. They have caused many an AA to stop thinking and working constructively for a time. We cannot condone their actions, yet we must concede that when we have used normal caution and precaution in dealing with such cases, we may safely leave them to the Higher Power. Let me reiterate that we AAs are many men and women that we are of many minds. It will be well for us to concentrate on the goal of personal sobriety and active work. We humans and alcoholics, on strict moral stocktaking, must confess to at least a slight degree of larcenous (which means "characterized by the wrongful taking of the personal goods of another") instinct. We can hardly arrogate (which means "to assume to ourself without right") the roles of judges and executioners.

Thirteen grand years! To have been a part of it all from the beginning has been reward indeed.

Answering Service Needs Volunteers



**FOR IMMEDIATE
ASSISTANCE 24 Hours 7
Days a Week call (217)**

373-4200

These are important words to anyone seeking help. The responsibility is to insure that there are names on file with the answering service to respond when the call for help comes.

"I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of A.A. always to be there and for that I am responsi-

ble."

This is an opportunity to be involved in the very heart of A.A. Twelfth Step Work.

Additional names are need to help in providing rides to those visiting or in need of a meeting. A special need for members outside of the Cities of Champaign and Urbana.

**To learn
about service
opportunities
contact any
District Chair
or use the
web sites
contact page
[http://aa-eci.org/
contact/](http://aa-eci.org/contact/)**

Concept 12, The Warranties of A.A.

General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action. A.A. Services Manual and Twelve Concepts

Announcements

Mattoon is sponsoring The GSR Workshop Experience November 21, 2015 at First Christian Church 16th & Wash Mattoon, IL from 1 pm ~ 4 PM Topics include. The importance of a group having a GSR. What is a GSR's Responsibilities. How important is it to my group and to AA as a Whole. There will be an open

speakers following the Workshop. The Speaker is Steve O. from Decatur.

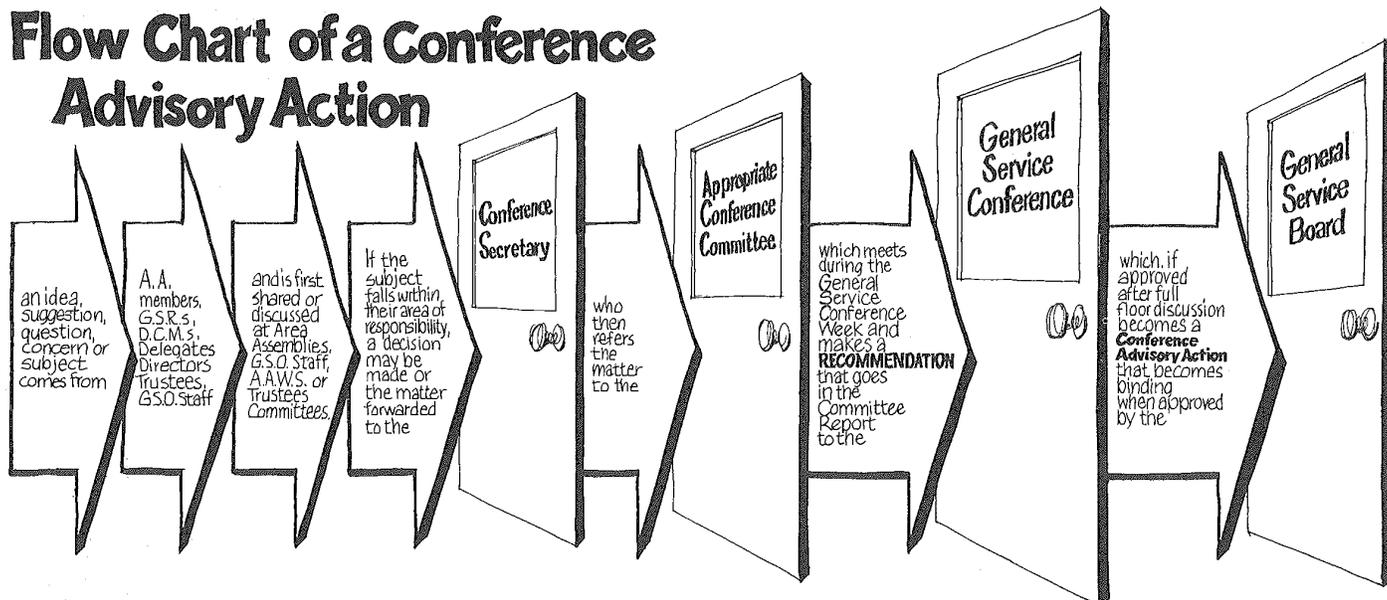
Directions: Exit 190 A or B To Mattoon Stay on 16 until your reach 16th St. Turn Left Red Doors on the Right.

Rte 121 follow signs Rte 16 until 16th St. Turn Right Red Doors on the right.

The Paxton Tuesday, and Friday 8pm meetings have moved to The Paxton United Methodist Church 210 W. Center St.

We meet in the basement (dining room) as before enter from Taft St. (across from Busey Bank)

Flow Chart of a Conference Advisory Action



"Were it not for committees, it is doubtful that any Conference could get over a fraction of the ground it now covers. As the Conference has grown in size and influence, the committees' importance has grown even more." ("The A.A. Service Manual," p. 72)

The flow chart is as printed in the June ~ July 1976 Box 459

August District Highlights

Treasure: We are meeting are prudent reserve and bills are being paid

Corrections: Need about 10 men volunteers that can do the new men's meeting 7:00 PM on Fridays once a month and need used Grapevines

Grapevine: Everyone needs to get the word out about the Grapevine. Groups need to discuss appointing a group Grapevine Rep and looking into a shared subscription or two for the group.

Meeting List: New list have been printed and are available at Fellowship Corner or on the Web

Newsletter: Needs people to email events and sobriety anniversaries to newsletter@aa-eci.org

PI-CPC: Is moving ahead with public service announcements on Radio and TV. Could use a couple volunteers for Champaign County

Treatment Centers: Is working on coordinating volunteers for Orientation and Bridge the Gap at Praire Center and The Pavilion. Need men and women that fit the guidelines for volunteers and providing rides.

Website: Working on creating a searchable meeting list that would allow filtering.

District 12 Officers and Committee Chairs

DCM Mona Lee H. (dcm@aa-eci.org)
 Alt. DCM Michael G. (alt-dcm@aa-eci.org)
 Secretary Katrina R. (secretary@aa-eci.org)
 Treasurer Cheri P. (treasurer@aa-eci.org)
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 Meeting List Liza W. & Mona M.
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 Answering Service Antonia D. and Jake T.
 (answering-service@aa-eci.org)
 Newsletter Martin B (newsletter@aa-eci.org)
 Grapevine Terry S. (grapevine@aa-eci.org)

PI-CPC Russ S. (picpc@aa-eci.org)
 Website Rosemary T. (webmaster@aa-eci.org)
 Archives Mike W. (archives@aa-eci.org)

District 12 holds its meetings on the 3rd Sunday of every month at 2pm in the New Fellowship Corner at 1714 Springfield Ave, Champaign.

If you would like to submit something for publication, or just send comments or questions to the for a Committee, please email newsletter@aa-eci.org. Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month.