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General Services Are Vital To A. A.'s Existence and Growth" By Bill

Our Twelfth Step-carrying the message-is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore A.A. 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.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer-ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation and Intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books and good publicity of almost every description. They require committees, delegates, trustees and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions.

These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, Areas or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question, "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A.

For Worldwide Unity

The most vital, yet the least understood group of services that A.A. has, are those which enable us to function as a whole; namely, the A.A. General Service Office, the A.A. World Services, Inc., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and A.A.'s Board of Trustees, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times is directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities. Until 1950, these over-all services were the sole function

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Responsibility is Our Theme

"How much and how often did we fail?" Written by Roger C., submitted by Doris A. Bill W spoke at the General Service Conference held in New York City in April, 1965. The Conference theme was "Responsibility To Those We Serve."

AA was thirty years old. Bill was 70 years old. It was a period of reflection for him. "We old-timers are a vanishing breed," he said of the early members of AA. "The greater part of us have gone out into the sunset of this world."

He expressed the hope that the disappearing early AAers had left the members of the day a heritage sufficient to their needs, one which could be "enlarged and enriched."

Bill was preparing for the 30th Anniversary International Convention to be held later that year in July in Toronto. Much of the spirit of the Conference would also prevail at the Convention, where the theme would be, simply, "Responsibility," and Bill would repeat much of this speech.

Bill looked back over the years; he did a bit of an inventory of AA's history, "the better to reveal the areas in which we can improve ourselves."

"Without much doubt, a million alcoholics have approached AA during the last thirty years," he said. Estimating that "350,000 of us are now **continued on page 3**

Big Book Trivia

March Answers: On page XX of the first printing of the Second Edition printed 1955 has typographical error really (should be really)

Extra Credit: On page 16 of the Third Printing of the Second Edition it specifies 1959.

April Question: Beginning with which edition. The choices are 1939, 1955, 1976, or 2001 Edition of the Big Book were references to religion removed from the Personal Stories

Extra Credit: Which edition of the Big Book has a Personal Story written by someone born in Urbana and who later, as an alcoholic attended grad school at the U of I

Did you know?

That it is April again. Every April the delegates from the United States and Canada meet for the General Services Conference. It is at this time that collective group consciousness of A.A. meets to insure that A.A. what it needs to continue carrying the word to alcoholics.

Service Sponsorship

. . . From the Pamphlet The AA Group. P-16... A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service. — The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, page S1.

Sponsorship in A.A. is basically the same, whether helping another individual's recovery or service to a group. It can be defined as one alcoholic who has made some progress in recovery and/or performance in service, sharing this experience with another alcoholic who is just starting the journey. Both types of service spring from the spiritual aspects of the program.

Individuals may feel that they have more to offer in one area than in another. It is the service sponsor's responsibility to present the various aspects of service: setting up a meeting; working on committees; participating in conferences, etc. In this matter it is important for the service sponsor to help individuals understand the distinction between serving the needs of the Fellowship and meeting the personal needs of another group member.

A service sponsor is usually someone who is knowledgeable in A.A. history and has a strong background in the service structure. The A.A. member is introduced to a new language: G.S.R., D.C.M., area assembly, minority opinion. They will become familiar with the Traditions, Concepts and Warranties, as well as The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age and other A.A. literature.

The service sponsor begins by encouraging the member to become active in their home group— coffee, literature, cleanup, attending business or intergroup meetings, etc. The service sponsor should keep in mind that all members will not have the desire or qualifications to move beyond certain levels and, thus, the service sponsor might help find tasks appropriate to individuals' skills and interests. Whatever level of service one performs, all are toward the same end — sharing the overall responsibilities of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Eventually, the service sponsor encourages the individual member interested in this form of service to attend district meetings and to read about the history and structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. At this point, the individual beginning this work should begin to understand the responsibilities of service work, as well as feel the satisfaction of yet another form of Twelfth Step work. Such individuals should be encouraged to take an active part in district activities and consider being elected to alternate positions in the district so as to learn about the responsibilities of various jobs in the service structure.

During this process it is important for the individual to continue to learn about the Three Legacies — Recovery, Unity and Service, and to understand that the principle of rotation not only allows them to move on in service, but also gives newer members the privilege of serving. Rotation also allows them to understand that no one **Service Sponsorship continued on page 4**

recovered from our malady" through the fellowship of AA, he continued, "So we can very soberly ask ourselves what became of the 600,000 who did not stay."

No doubt some alcoholics "cannot be reached because they are not hurt enough, others because they are hurt too much. Many sufferers have mental and emotional complications that seem to foreclose their chances," Bill acknowledged.

But what about all the others?

"How much and how often did we fail them?" he asked.

"Our very first concern should be with those sufferers that we are still unable to reach."

He had some sense of the failings of the fellowship he had helped launch and which he still clearly revered. One of the themes for his talk was one he had broached before: a growing rigidity in AA.

He referred directly to a contingent within the fellowship which, often unwittingly, made it difficult for an increasingly large number of people to feel comfortable in the rooms of AA. "It is a historical fact," he said, "that practically all groupings of men and women tend to become dogmatic. Their beliefs and practices harden and sometimes freeze. This is a natural and almost inevitable process."

He discussed some of the ways that this rigidity could harm the fellowship.

"In no circumstances should we feel that Alcoholics Anonymous is the know-all and do-all of alcoholism," Bill said, referring to the work of other organizations in the United States and Canada engaged in research, alcohol education and rehabilitation.

"Research has already come up with significant and helpful findings. And research will do far more."

"Those engaged in education are carrying the message that alcoholism is an illness, that something can be done about it."

Bill then talked about the growth of rehabilitation facilities in North America and the number of alcoholics treated by these agencies. "True, their approach is often different from our own," he said.

"But what does that matter," he asked, "when the greater part of them are or could be entirely willing to cooperate with AA?"

"Too often, I believe, we have deprecated and even derided these projects of our friends."

"So we should very seriously ask ourselves how many alcoholics have gone on drinking simply because we have failed to cooperate in good spirit with all these other agencies whether they be good, bad or indifferent. Assuredly no alcoholic should go mad or die simply because he did not come straight to AA in the first place."

Bill was of the view that hardened or frozen beliefs and practices were dangerous in AA. "Simply because we have convictions that work very well for us, it becomes quite easy to assume that we have all of the truth."

"Whenever this brand of arrogance develops," he warned, "we are sure to become aggressive. We demand agreement with us. We play God."

"This isn't good dogma. This is very bad dogma. It could be especially destructive for us of AA to indulge in this sort of thing."

Bill defended the right of all AAers to have their own beliefs and to be able to freely express them.

"All people must necessarily rally to the call of their own particular convictions and we of AA are no exception." Moreover, he continued, "all people should have the right to voice their convictions."

Bill then returned to the subject of those who had come into AA but not stayed. "Newcomers are approaching us at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable."

"We have atheists and agnostics," he said. "We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion."

And then Bill got to the heart of his message of responsibility.

In AA we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a universal suffering. Therefore the full liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy should be a first consideration. Hence let us not pressure anyone with individual or even collective views. Let us instead accord to each other the respect that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way towards the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of AA, so long as he or she so declares.

Towards the end of his address, Bill commented on how difficult it has been for AA to grow at important moments in its history. "Our fears and reluctances and rebellions have been extreme each time we have been faced with great turning points in this society," he said. "Let us never fear needed change," he concluded. "Once a need becomes clearly apparent in an individual, a Group, or in AA as a whole, it has long since been found out that we cannot afford to sit still and look the other way."

Much of this address - with only minor changes - is reproduced in an article by Bill that was published in July 1965 in the AA Grapevine, Responsibility Is Our Theme. As already noted, the theme of AA's 30th Anniversary International Convention held later that year was "Responsibility." It was in response to the concerns raised by Bill that those present adopted the Responsibility Declaration. In an extraordinarily moving event after Bill's speech on July 3, 1965 at Maple Leaf Gardens in downtown Toronto, more than 10,000 delegates, trustees and AA representatives from 21 countries rose to their feet, joined hands and, led by Bill, recited the new AA declaration with one voice: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible." Inspired by this unconditioned affirmation of inclusivity, agnostic AA groups invariably end their meetings with this declaration.

Roger C. lives in Toronto and has written/edited several articles and books about recovery and AA; he has a particular interest in A.A. history.

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of a few old-time A.A.'s, several nonalcoholic friends, Doctor Bob and myself. For all the years of A.A.'s infancy, we old-timers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous. At last we realized that A.A. had grown up; that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for change. Since we old-timers couldn't live on forever, newer Trustees would be virtually unknown to the A.A. groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without direct linkage to A.A., future Trustees couldn't possibly function alone.

To Assume Direct Responsibility

This meant that we had to form a conference representing our membership which could meet yearly with our Trustees at New York, and thus assume direct responsibility for the guardianship of A.A. Tradition and the direction of our principal service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown Board of Trustees and our too little understood service headquarters operations would someday be bound to face collapse. Suppose, acting quite on their own, that future Trustees were to make a serious blunder. Suppose, with no linkage to A.A., that they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or crisis. With no direct guidance from A.A. as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top services would then be inevitable. And if, under such conditions, our world services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed? These were the conclusions that led to the formation of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, a body of about 90 elected Delegates from the states and provinces of the United States and Canada. On a trial experimental basis, these Delegates commenced in 1951 to sit yearly with our Trustees and General Service Staff Members. The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous has proved itself an immense success. Its record of achievement over the years has been completely convincing.

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should hold on to a position of trust long enough to feel a proprietary interest and thereby discourage newcomers from service.

Co-founder Dr. Bob said, "I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip."

The basis of all sponsorship is to lead by example. Service sponsors can impart to their sponsees the pleasure of involvement in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is best done by stressing the spiritual nature of service work and by pointing out the usefulness of simple footwork and faith.

Now, through knowledge and experience, the newer member is aware that service is our most important product after sobriety. With this knowledge, the individual is able to share their vision with others and ensure the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Summary

Most present members of Alcoholics Anonymous owe their sobriety to the fact that someone else took a special interest in them and was willing to share a great gift with them.

Sponsorship is merely another way of describing the continuing special interest of a seasoned member that can mean so much to a newcomer turning to A.A. for help.

Individuals and groups cannot afford to lose sight of the importance of sponsorship, the importance of taking a special interest in a confused alcoholic who wants to stop drinking. Experience shows clearly that the members getting the most out of the A.A. program, and the groups doing the best job of carrying the A.A. message to still-suffering alcoholics, are those for whom sponsorship is too important to be left to chance.

By these members and groups, sponsorship responsibilities are welcomed and accepted as opportunities to enrich personal A.A. experience and to deepen the satisfactions that come from working with others.

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Service sponsorship is a core value of Area 21 and of many A.A. Groups across the country and around the world. Many see it advantageous to have one sponsor working with the steps and spiritual aspect of the program working with them on the Legacy's and Concepts.

Guidelines to Volunteers for the District 12 AA Answering Service



The Answering Service, aka Hotline, has been the foundation of A.A. for decades.

The District 12 Answering Service co chairs have recently formalized the answering service guidelines. The Answering Service is also looking for volunteers. Answering Service: Antonia D. and Jake T. (answering-service@aa-eci.org)

First and foremost, Thank you for signing up to do the incredible commitment of answering the phone when an alcoholic in need reaches out for help! It is one of the most rewarding ways to "give back what has been so freely given to us."

As a local Hotline Phone Volunteer, your commitment is very important. Please read all the instructions below and call Jake T at or Antonia D.

-Please save the Hotline number in your phone. It's [217-531-3259](tel:217-531-3259)

-If your number or availability changes or you wish to be removed from the list please email: answering-service@aa-eci.org or contact Jake T or Antonia D .

-If the hotline calls and you are unable to assist it is fine to pass, do not attempt to find someone else to assist the caller.

-For 12 step calls be clear to establish if the caller has a desire to stop drinking. Do not be afraid to call 911 if you think the caller is going to bring physical harm to themselves or is in need of immediate medical attention. If the caller is intoxicated and the situation is not that urgent, try to keep the call short. You will know when someone genuinely wants help. If they do not, have a desire to stop drinking compassionately cut to the chase and end the call.

-Remember, there is a difference between carrying the message and carrying the alcoholic.

-Make sure to encourage them to go to meetings as well get others contact information at the meeting; the hotline is for emergencies only but encourage them to get numbers at meetings for people to talk to and continued support.

-We suggest when giving rides and go on meet someone on a 12 step call to someone you don't know to bring someone else with you.

-If you have an issue with a caller or someone abusing the hotline please give one of the co-chairs their name and number.

- If your number is disconnected then the answering service will remove you as a volunteer so please let us know if you are having phone issues.

To learn about service opportunities contact any District Chair or use the web sites contact page <http://aa-eci.org/contact/>

Announcements

By unanimous vote District 12 pass a motion not to list on the printed schedule or on the web site any meeting that is not chaired by a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. List of meetings is a courtesy and the GSR's in attendance voted that to be listed as an A. A. meeting the meeting must be chaired by an A.A. member. Meetings chaired by Alanon's, Medical Professionals, Therapists or another non A. A. Member would not be public listed by District 12 as an A.A. meeting.

This is motion is in full accordance with the Conference Approved processes and reflects what is presented in Pamphlet P-16 The A.A. Group which on page 15 which states.

The Difference Between Open and Closed A.A. Meetings

The purpose of all A.A. group meetings, as the Preamble states, is for A.A. members to "share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism." Toward this end, A.A. groups have both open and closed meetings.

Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and "have a desire to stop drinking."

Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous' program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.

*At both types of meetings, **the A.A. chairperson** may request that participants confine their discussion to matters pertaining to recovery from alcoholism.*

In December 2016 our District is hosting the Area 21 Assembly. District will need volunteer's to assist in all aspects of the Assembly. This is an excellent opportunity to gain a better understanding of how AA works. Ask your GSR for more details on volunteering!

District 12 Meeting Reports December 20, 2015

- **DCM** – Mona Lee H. (dcm@aa-eci.org),
- **ALT-DCM** – Mike G. (alt-dcm@aa-eci.org) Urbana Civic Center is reserved with 50% down and remaining 50% due within 10 days of the event; Antonia D. is working with Eastland Suites on a reasonable rate and Mark G. is working on catering
- o • **Treasurer** – Cheri P. (treasurer@aa-eci.org) **No Report**

Committee Reports

- **Answering Service** – Antonia D. (answering-service@aa-eci.org) and Jake T.– NO REPORT
Committee Purpose: To take emergency calls and if resources permit assist with providing rides; Goals: Review phone numbers; Committee News: 262 minutes used in December
- **Archives** – Mike W. (archives@aa-eci.org)– NO REPORT
Committee Purpose: N/A; Goals: N/A; Committee News: N/A; Service Opportunities: N/A; Spread the word at meetings, etc.: N/A
- **Corrections** – Mike K (corrections@aa-eci.org) – NO REPORT Committee Purpose: To bring AA into the Jails; Committee News: N/A; Service Opportunities: N/A; Spread the word at meetings, etc.: N/A
- **Grapevine** – Terry M. (grapevine@aa-eci.org) – NO REPORT
Committee Purpose: Make Grapevine information available to the District; Committee News: New Supply of Grapvines, sign up to take ba
- **Meeting List** – Liza W. (meeting-list@aa-eci.org) Committee News: Changes/updates for the upcoming printing include: : Bottoms Up meeting changed its name to “We Do Recover” and there is an Open Big Book meeting on Sundays at 10:00 AM at the Serenity Shack in Rantoul called “Primary Purpose”;
- **Newsletter** – Martin B (newsletter@aa-eci.org)Committee Purpose: Publish an informative and entertaining monthly newsletter
- **PI-CPC** – Russ S. or (picpc@aa-eci.org) Committee News: Lakeland Community College is covered and all else is okay; Service Opportunities: Need Piatt and Ford County volunteers
- **Treatment Centers** – Mark G (treatment-centers@aa-eci.org) and Sherri G. News: Tuesday 8:00 PM positions at Prairie Center are open and Mark is looking for women who can commit to one evening per month ;
- **Website** – Rosemary T. (webmaster@aa-eci.org) Goals: Look into creating a searchable meeting list on the website which would allow sorting/filtering by location, day, time;

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)
 Corrections Mike K. (corrections@aa-eci.org)
 Treatment Facilities Mark G. & Sheri G.
 (treatment-centers@aa-eci.org)
 Meeting List Liza W. & Mona M.
 (meeting-list@aa-eci.org)
 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.