

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Panel 56 Delegate's Report to Area 86 Hello and warm greetings to all members in Area 86 Western Ontario. We are now well into the second year of our panel 56 term of general service and I hope that we are all a little more comfortable and secure in our responsibilities and duties in service. The duties of the Delegate seem to be ever-changing, and I would like to share a different and unique opportunity in which I was privileged to serve this past January. At last year's General Service Conference I was honoured to be elected by the members of our committee to serve as the 2007 Delegate Chairperson for the Conference Committee on Report and Charter. My additional duties include chairing all of our closed committee meetings at the Conference, where we deliberate on all of the items on our committee agenda for this 57th Conference. After we have completed our discussions and have taken a vote, we make recommendations to the Conference as a whole on each item and vote by a two-thirds majority of the committee to merit action as future AA policy. The entire Conference has the final vote and authority over any actions that the committees recommend. It is also my job to get up before the whole Conference and present our committee's recommendations for discussion and vote. If the Conference as a whole, after thorough discussion, questions, and debate, agrees again by a two-thirds majority vote, then our recommendations become Conference Advisory Actions and are then general AA policy for the future. Conference Advisory Actions are traditionally binding on the General Service Board of Trustees to implement as soon as possible.

In order to help facilitate the duties of a Conference Chairperson, the thirteen Delegate Committee Chairpersons and our Conference Delegate Chairperson were all invited to an orientation day and to attend as observers to the General Service Board weekend in January at New York. On the Friday, we had general orientation on the Conference Committee process and our duties as Chairs, and the afternoon was spent with the General Service Office Staff Member who acts as secretary to each committee. I spent several hours at the GSO with Warren S., who sits on the Group Services assignment and is secretary of our committee. The Staff Members rotate Conference Committee duties every two years when their assignments at GSO rotate in the fall. Warren and I were able to go over the final agenda items for our committee and look at some of the background material and also discuss an approach to some of the issues on the table. We discussed in depth the scope and procedures of our committee duties and also met with another GSO staff member to talk about some of the items and how the Service Manual and the Final Conference Report are prepared and published. This day gave me another entirely different view on how your General Service Conference works for the good of AA. We were also able to attend the Friday morning AA meeting at GSO and there was some time left in the afternoon to talk with some of the other Staff Members. I also spent some time in the Archives talking with our Archivist. Friday evening the Delegate Chairs were invited out to dinner with some of the Directors of AAWS.

Saturday and Sunday we were allowed to sit in as observers to the Trustees' Committee Meetings. Those Conference Committee Chairs that have corresponding standing Trustees' Committees sat as part of their committee, but since the Report and Charter Committee has no counterpart with the Trustees, I was allowed to free-float amongst the other committee meetings. I attended the Trustee's committees on the Conference, Public Information, Nominating, Archives and Finance. The Trustees Committee Meetings concentrated on finalizing conference agenda items, discussing background information and reports, staff reports and experience and sharing from the Fellowship. In some cases, there were also in attendance, professional contractors that were hired by GSO to provide services for us. One of the most interesting things was seeing a draft version of the new public service announcement for TV in the PI meeting.

See Page 8

CONTENTS

- P2 "Poem" Alcohol
- P1 Concept VII
- P2 Editors Focus: Grape vine Articles
- P3 Focus: Tradition 1
- P3 Editors Focus: ODC Meeting
- P4 Focus: Grapevine
- P4 Back to Basics
- P5 Group Anniversaries
- P6 Focus: Archives
- P7 Concept IX
- P8 Concept VIII

editor's focus:

Greetings to you all from your Newsletter Chair and Editor of your Area 86 Newsletter. Some of you were asked to compose articles for this edition and here they are for everyone to read. The articles are all well written with excellent research and I appreciate the effort and time taken to compose. In order to keep the articles authentic only slight grammar and spelling changes were made. I need feedback and comments, whether good and bad so please send by email only to: mww594482@hotmail.com

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.

"Items of current interest or under consideration within Area 86". Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of AA as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

ALCOHOL

Standing on your feet
 The mind, too heavy
 Falls apart
 Alcohol a hidden poison
 Systems synapse, out of control
 Isolated from what is known
 Thrown into a foreign country, free will taken
 Faces come to visit
 Afraid of the creature shown?

Kneeling on your knees
 The heart too broken
 Falls apart
 Alcohol that drifted through the body
 Corroding cavities, chemistry out of control
 Adapting to the plaster forest
 Dwelling amongst bureaucracy and organized confusion
 People come to visit
 Empty shell not glorious

Leaning on your hopes
 The soul healing quickly
 Springs anew
 Alcohol the creature defeated
 Anxious anxieties, future out of control
 Grasping at realities, finding it within
 Faire souivre walking into familiar stigma
 Peers stand by
 Inviting, but not restricting the spirit

Ellen C. (1984) in the throes of our disease

would adversely affect Alcoholics Anonymous. If on the other hand, the General Service Board decided to make some changes and the delegates decided that it was not in the best interests of Alcoholics Anonymous, they could recommend strongly that changes be made. As a last resort, they could recommend to the groups that they stop sending money to the General Service Office. In practice this balance of the power of tradition, money, and law has worked quite well.

Concept seven does not say that the General Service Board or the General Service Conference must use its powers, whether it is legal power or the power of the purse and tradition. All it does is state that they have the option to use those powers when they deem it necessary for the protection of the fellowship. The checks and balances within the Traditions and Concepts allow each of them to take care of the business at hand, while encouraging cooperation for the best of the fellowship.

DCM, District 16, Bob J.

editor's focus: Grapevine Articles

High Praise for the Charm of Recovering Alcoholics (Fulton Oursler)

There are times when I wish I were an alcoholic. I mean I wish I were a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. The reason is that I consider the AA people the most charming in the world. Such is my considered opinion. As a journalist, it has been my privilege to meet many people who are considered charming. I number among my friends stars and lesser lights on stage and cinema; writers are my daily diet; I know ladies and gentlemen of both political parties; I have been entertained in the White House; I've broken bread with kings, ambassadors and ministers; and I say that I would prefer an evening with my AA friends to any person I've indicated.

I asked myself why I considered so charming these alcoholic caterpillars who have found their butterfly wings in AA. There are more reasons than one, but I can name a few. The AA people are what they are, and they are what they were, because they are sensitive, imaginative, possessed of a sense of humour, an awareness of the universal truth. They are sensitive, which means they are hurt easily, and that helped them become alcoholics. But when they found their restoration they are as sensitive as ever; responsive to the beauty and the truth and eager about the intangible glories of this life. That makes them charming companions.

See Page 7

Concept VII When I was asked to do concept seven, I knew I was going to have to get my dictionary out because I was not sure that I knew what the meaning of charter or bylaw was, as defined by the dictionary. This is what I found.

Charter is "any deed or instrument executed with form and solemnity bestowing or granting powers, rights, and privileges". Both the General Service Conference and the General Service Board have charters. The General Service Board is incorporated and incorporation gives them legal rights. The General Service Conference has a charter but it does not have any legal rights.

Bylaws are "a standing rule of an organized group, created for the regulation of its internal organization in the governing of its members". As with the charter both the General Service Conference and the General Service Boards have bylaws that set out who their members may include, term of office, requirements and duties.

The General Service Board is fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the World Service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. They could completely ignore any recommendations from the General Service Conference and do whatever they wanted, legally. That's the way it would work in any other organization but not in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The General Service Board is to follow the guidance of the 12 Traditions and the spirit of the 12 Concepts for World Service. It seems to me that this would mean that they must be mindful of the "primary purpose" as well as the "singleness of purpose" of Alcoholics Anonymous and in fact their bylaws request that they protect the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts from any undue changes that might affect the success of Alcoholics Anonymous in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

If the General Service Conference recommended a wrongheaded idea, the General Service Board could veto the recommendation, and in fact should veto it, if it

focus: Traditions

Tradition One

The First Step of Alcoholics Anonymous starts with the word "We" and the Twelfth Step ends with "unity." Thus even a cursory reading of the Steps tells us that the programme of recovery upon which we are embarked will not be undertaken alone. Amplifying that concept, the First Tradition reads "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity". This sentence begins with "Our" and again ends with "unity". It seems to this writer that the wording is not accidental. Rather, that "we" are fundamentally linked with "unity" in Step and Tradition.

I therefore ask you to imagine, if you will, a world in which Bill W. did not make that phone call in 1935 to Henrietta Seiberling, never had the famous long talk with Dr. Bob and never came to the realization that the best medicine an alcoholic can take for his disease is to share his experience, strength and hope with another alcoholic.

One hundred years after that talk between the two founders brings us to 2035. By then, how many alcoholics will be in recovery? What help will be there for them? It is possible that the doctors would merely direct them to a plenitude of websites from which they could learn the physical nature of the disease of alcoholism. But what about the emotional aspect? Even more important, would the need for a spiritual foundation for life ever be mentioned? Would "God" be considered a necessary adjunct to recovery?

In the year 2035 what would alcoholics do when they feel desperate? For rest assured the disease will not be sleeping at the switch. We of today know how important it is to talk to another alcoholic, to get a sponsor. Meetings abound around the world where we can both listen to and learn from the experience, strength and hope of others who share our disease. There is an atmosphere of trust, because we have all gone through similar events and felt similar shames.

Without AA, alcoholics would have no safe place to gather. Without meetings how would we acquire those all-important phone numbers to call when we feel worthless or the craving to take a drink flares up or we doubt the existence of a Higher Power? Without some kind of service structure, how would we find a meeting? It takes people talking together and learning to work together for those meetings to exist, the meetings we need for "our common welfare".

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Which comes first when we work the First Tradition, AA unity or personal recovery? I do not know the answer to either of these questions. But I do know that if I do not work the Twelve Steps in my daily life with the guidance of my Higher Power, the quality of my recovery will suffer. The Group will also suffer as my contribution becomes weaker and in the end its unity too will suffer. To avoid these sad outcomes I must remember the words of the Responsibility pledge: **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.**

Alt., DCM District 14, Beryl A.

editor's focus: ODC Meeting

On March 2nd through 4th the Ontario Delegates Committee or ODC met in Cambridge at the Hilton Garden Hotel.

Every year the four Delegates and Alternate Delegates from Ontario meet in each other's area. This year the host was Western Ontario and the duties were given to John S. and his Committee from District 18. Past Delegate Jan L. (Panel 55) chaired the Meetings and Nancy J. our present Chair of Area 86 was the recording Secretary.

The ODC is primarily an information sharing group so as a rule no voting takes place. However should there be a need for a vote it would require unanimity from all four areas.

The Delegates are from Area 83 Eastern Ontario, Area 85 Northwestern Ontario, Area 84 Northeastern Ontario and our Delegate from Area 86 Western Ontario. Also in attendance was the Trustee at Large Canada, Murray McL., in the absence of Eastern Canada Trustee Denis V. who passed away last fall.

Each Delegate gave a report on his or her Area in detail while the Alternate Delegates each gave a presentation on the 57th General Service Conference Theme "Our 12th Step Responsibility — Are We Going to Any Length?". Both Tom V. and Martin A. gave excellent reports and presentations on behalf of the Area.

The Delegates also gave us a preview of what Committees they will be taking part in while attending the General Service Conference in April which I found to be very informative.

A beautiful presentation on Archives and the history of Ontario from the early days with just one Delegate for the whole of Ontario through to today. The ups and downs of keeping archive material intact as well as how just recently Eastern Ontario has their first Archivist was thoroughly presented by Maire O'B. from Toronto.

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.

Area 86 Focus

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Editorial Board:

Delegate	Tom V.
Alt. Delegate	Martin A.
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Area Sec/Reg.	Marg C.

Editorial Staff:

Newsletter Chair	Mike W.
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Contributors:

Tom V., Jim C., Jo F., Bob J., John C., Beryl A., Ken M.

Contact the focus:

Email only please
mww594482@hotmail.com

Anonymity in Japan is treated very differently. An AA member **did you know?** assumes a different attend-meeting back to their "real" name upon leaving the meeting.

Ralph and Myrtle were fond of frequenting a local gin mill. They went in one night, and Myrtle ordered six double shots of bar whiskey. After downing the sixth, she promptly fell off her bar stool and passed out cold on the floor. As she lay there unmoving, her husband gazed down at her fondly and said, "That's Myrtle for you! She always knows when to stop".

focus: Grapevine

Hello. I am an alcoholic, member of the Downtown Discussion group in Burlington and currently serving Area 86 as *Grapevine* Sub-Chair. It is an honour and privilege to be able to give back to Alcoholics Anonymous. I have found the more I do the more I receive. I am not talking about material things but spiritual and life skills. I've never had either when I first came to AA. The three legacies of AA really do provide wisdom and spiritual growth for those of us who had neither when we arrived here. I truly am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your *Grapevine* Sub-Chair.

I would like to take some time to share a little about the *Grapevine*. The magazine started as a result of six AA members agreeing that the groups needed a way to communicate with one another on things like group issues and ways to practice the steps. This was in 1944. Sections included topics such as "How to use a closed meeting", "AA telephone technique", and "How to spot the Danger signals". In the September 1944 issue it was suggested by a member that special meetings be formed for "old-timers" who had been sober one or two months.

In 1945 after receiving "pressing questions" Bill wrote *Grapevine* articles reflecting group experience. In 1946 he began the ground work for the traditions we know today. In April 1946 Bill wrote an article "Twelve Suggested Points for

In AA, first we apply the anesthesia, and then we operate.

focus: Back to Basics

An interesting article on the person responsible for getting the "Back to Basics" AA groups started. Apparently, James Houck started the "Back to Basics" AA group format after taking his grandson to an AA meeting in the early 1980s and being appalled at the state of AA meetings.

Sometimes there are no easy answers even when the questions seem to be simple and straightforward. This is certainly the case when trying to explain the relationship of James Houck, the *Back to Basics* Beginners' Meetings, and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Although there are now more than 2,000 *Back to Basics* Beginners' Groups throughout the world which have produced more than 100,000 recoveries, there are still people within the AA community who are unfamiliar with this "original" meeting format or the role James Houck has played in bringing this highly successful "design for living" back to the fellowship. James is the last living link to the spiritual roots of the Alcoholics Anonymous program that produced a 75% recovery rate from alcoholism.

Many people today know very little about the early days, except for what they have read or what they have heard from some "old-timers" (actually newcomers compared to James Houck) who sobered up in the 1970s. They don't realize that the program of the 1970s was quite different from the "original" program of the 1940s. The program has continued to change over the years and has reached a point where today AA has only a 5-10% recovery rate, depending upon which study you read.

Figures published by GSO show that the fellowship peaked in 1992 at 2.2 million members and has declined 20% since then. Prior to the 1990s, the fellowship doubled in member-

ship every ten years. The objective of *Back to Basics* is to reverse this decline by reintroducing the "original" Beginners' Meetings that worked for three out of every four people who entered the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

James Houck is truly a unique individual. He is ninety-five years old, sixty-six years sober, and one of the greatest "life-changers" of the past one hundred years. Just like Bill W., Dr. Bob S., and the other "Big Book" authors, James Houck found God and sobriety in the Oxford Group. And, just like Bill W., Dr. Bob S., and the other "Big Book" authors, James had his spiritual awakening as the direct result of taking the Oxford Group Four Steps of Surrender, Sharing, Restitution and Guidance.

James attended Oxford Group meetings with Bill W. in Frederick, MD from 1935-1937. The Oxford Group considered all addictions to be equally detrimental in terms of cutting a person off from God. There was no more emphasis on alcohol than there was on smoking, womanizing, or drug addiction. All of these behaviors left us in the dark relying on self-will, rather than God's will to solve our problems. The Group believed that self could not overcome self. Only God could remove our addictions and afflictions, provided we established an intimate two-way relationship with Him. In 1937, Bill left the Group to work full time with alcoholics.

As James explains it, when Bill W. left the Oxford he didn't take all the drunks with him. James remained in the Oxford Group, as did Rowland H., Cebra G., Victor K., and Charles C., among others. In fact, Dr. Bob didn't leave the Group until 1940; almost a year after the "Big Book" was written.

James is the only person alive today who has first hand knowledge of the material Bill W. and the other "Big Book" authors used to write the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. On numerous occasions, he has stated that the "Big Book" is Oxford Group literature written for a specific segment of the Oxford Group fellowship.

Grapevine Chair, John C.

Continued from Page 4 - Focus: Back to Basics

Although James stayed in the Oxford Group, he did have contact with the early AA fellowship through Sam Shoemaker, a mutual friend of his and Bill W.'s. Sam Shoemaker was the rector of the Calvary Church in New York City, which was the United States headquarters of the Oxford Group. Bill W. attended Oxford Group meetings at the Calvary Church and Sam was instrumental in assisting Bill W. with the writing of the "Big Book". Bill acknowledged this linkage when he wrote on page 39 of *AA Comes of Age*:

"The early AA got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Groups and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in America, and from nowhere else".

Since the Oxford Group had been responsible for his spiritual awakening, James remained with the fellowship even after it changed its name to Moral Re-Armament in 1938. He didn't attend AA meetings until the 1980s when he was working with a grandson who had a drinking problem. At these meetings, he saw people practicing a program that did not even remotely resemble the "original" program of the 1940s. That's when he started to speak at AA events about the early days of the fellowship.

James Houck does not consider himself to be a recovering alcoholic. The term "recovering" is belittling, it refers to someone still struggling with the problem rather than living in the solution. It is an expression that evolved from the treatment centers in the 1970s. This is how James describes his recovery:

"To me 'recovering' means you haven't made the grade yet. You're still not sure of your position".

"I am absolutely sure of my position. God took alcohol out of my life on December 12, 1934, and when God took alcohol out of my life, He took it out forever".

James is a **recovered** alcoholic, which is the term used by Bill W., Dr. Bob S. and the AA pioneers. The word can be found seventeen times in the first 164 pages of the "Big Book". In addition, James sometimes refers to himself as an **ex-alcoholic**. This expression was used in the first ten printings of the first edition of the "Big Book". In 1947, **ex-alcoholic** was changed to **ex-problem drinker**.

James does not identify himself as an alcoholic from the podium. Here again he follows the precedent set by Bill W., Dr. Bob S. and the AA pioneers. Neither Bill nor Dr. Bob ever identified themselves as alcoholics when speaking at AA meetings. To verify this all you have to do is listen to the audio tape recordings of their speeches. The ritual of identifying oneself as an alcoholic, followed by a chant from the audience of "Hi _____," also came from the treatment centers decades after the fellowship came into being. It is not a part of the "original" AA program.

James does not claim to be the oldest living member of AA because he does not want, in any way, to overshadow those who have maintained continuous sobriety after the fellowship was formed in the spring of 1939. Therefore, Duke P. of Jacksonville Florida is the oldest member of AA with a sobriety date of 8/15/40, even though Duke's sobriety date is almost six years after James.

This is also the reason James uses his last name when speaking at AA events. He downplays his membership in AA to avoid being considered the oldest living member of the fellowship.

Keep in mind that James Houck, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. all found permanent sobriety in the Oxford Group. If we say that James Houck's sobriety date isn't important because he sobered up in the Oxford Group, then we must say the same thing about Bill and Dr. Bob.

- This has been a lengthy explanation of several very simple questions. In summary:

Is James Houck an AA member? Yes, he is as much a member of AA as anyone else who has a desire to stop drinking. However, for James the compulsion to drink was successfully removed on December 12, 1934. He has not had a drink of alcohol or taken a mood altering substance (including nicotine) since that day. James has an AA home group. It meets on Thursday nights at the Towson, MD Methodist church.

- Is James Houck a recovering alcoholic? No. James Houck, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. all had drinking problems, which they overcame in the Oxford Group as the direct result of taking the Four Steps of Surrender, Sharing, Restitution, and Guidance. Since December 12, 1934, James has been a **recovered alcoholic** or **ex-alcoholic**.
- Is James Houck a member of the Oxford Group? James Houck was a member of the Oxford Group in the 1930s and is a member of Moral Re-Armament today. He is also a member of the Hunt Valley Rotary Club and the Towson, MD Methodist Church.

Although the Oxford Group, as such, does not physically exist anymore, the principles of the Group are just as valuable as a "design for living" today as they were in the 1930s. Both James Houck and I apply the Four Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love to our thoughts, words and deeds; use Restitution to become life-changers; and rely upon the Guidance of God to direct every area of our lives. In this sense, the Oxford Group is alive within each and every person who practices the "original" AA program in order to witness once again the miraculous results obtained by our AA pioneers.

Wally P., Archivist, Historian, and Author, Back to Basics
(Source: <http://silkworth.net/aahistory/jameshouck.html>)

Group Anniversaries in Area 86

I attended a couple of Group Milestone Anniversaries in December of last year. The United Group in Welland celebrated 52 years of carrying the message as well as the Grimsby Group who celebrated 55 years.

Both Anniversaries were well attended with the United Group asking different members to speak briefly about the Group while the Grimsby Group went the more traditional route with a well known speaker from Hamilton, Joe O'B.

The food (which is always a favourite) was excellent at both functions and I will have to say that both were equally wonderful for fear of offending either of these two fine Groups.

I truly believe that the very fact that these two groups have been in existence for this long, kept their doors open and carried the AA message to so many members, both past and present, is to be commended. And for those of you who need to know, it is 2704 and 2860 meetings for the 52 and 55 years respectively.

Also a reminder to everyone ... make a note on your calendars for the 50th Group Anniversary of the Georgetown United Group in District 25. The meeting is on Friday May 18th, 2007 at 8:30 p.m. Let's support this event taking place in one of our newest districts.

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.

focus: Archives

It just seemed that I was on a special journey the week of June 5, 2006. I left Leamington, Ontario late Monday night. I drove almost straight through



stopping only for two hours of sleep, I arrived at East Dorset, Vermont the birthplace of Bill W. on Tuesday afternoon. I visited the Wilson House where Bill was born and lived for about two years until his sister joined the family. They then moved across the road to live with their grandparents, the Griffith family. Bill lived there until he was eleven years old. This house is now called the Griffith Library. Bill's bedroom still looks the same. I then stopped by Bill's grave, it is a nice tribute that people stop by and leave medallions and other mementos. Then back to the Wilson House for a country chicken dinner. We had an AA Meeting at 8:00 p.m. Each week they hold ten AA meetings and three Al-Anon meetings.



The rooms were sold out so off I went to Bedford Hills, New York to visit Stepping Stones, the home

of Bill and Lois W. This time I slept about three hours. I arrived at 6:30 a.m. My appointment for the tour was at 1:00 p.m. Being too early I decided to go to New York City to visit our General Service Office. I had a great tour. I gathered all the pictures from the Archives that I could. I also had a tour of the *Grapevine*. Now it was time to go back to Stepping Stones. I really enjoyed this tour. I was amazed at the number of books in Bill's library. In the kitchen they still have the original little table and chairs from 1934 when Ebby came to visit Bill to share a spiritual solution for alcoholism and introduce Bill to the Oxford Group.



I then visited Wit's End, the cabin out back that Bill built so he could have a place of peace and serenity. This is where Bill did a lot of his writing. As I sat at Bill's desk I looked up at the wall and saw the original painting of the third man on the bed and the moment was right for meditation. With my first breath in I mentally said "God's Will" and on the breath out I said "my will". With the second breath in I mentally said "God's Way" and on the breath out I said "my way". With my third breath in I mentally said "in God's time" and on the breath out I said "in my time". Then I mentally said to the Lord "OK boss what do you want me to do now?" Clear as a bell I heard "Enjoy the journey, just enjoy the journey".



Now I am off to Akron, Ohio for Founder's Day weekend. This time I stopped along the way at a motel to catch up on my sleep. I arrived in Akron on Thursday at noon. First I went to the Akron Intergroup office to see the stained glass window of the third man on the bed. I then went to the Mayflower Hotel to see the replica of the church directory and telephone which Bill used in May 1935 when he called Rev. Tunks

who gave Bill, Henrietta Sieberling's phone number, which Bill called. After meeting Bill, Henrietta set up the meeting between Dr. Bob and Bill W. at the Gatehouse Lodge of the Sieberling's Estate where she was living. I then visited the Gatehouse lodge.

Now it is time to visit 855 Ardmore Avenue, the home of Dr. Bob and Ann S. I always get a warm feeling sitting at the kitchen table and having a coffee. Dr Bob's archives are on display at the house next door. Here I met Ben H. and a few others from Windsor. Ben and I volunteered to shuttle people back and forth from the University. During the weekend 4,000 people toured Dr. Bob's House.

On Sunday morning a parade started at the University; 2,000 motorcycles, 70 cars, 7 big city buses and a bicycle. We ended at

the gravesite of Dr. Bob and Ann S. for a wonderful ceremony in their honour led by Harmon V. Ending the ceremony a biker named Joey from Dayton, Ohio played *Amazing Grace* on the bagpipes three times; one for Dr. Bob, one for Ann S., and one for the Fellowship. Needless to say I was deeply moved, I have a whole new respect for bikers now. Later in the day Ben and I met Jim F. a long-timer who showed us Dr. Bob's office, the bar he used to drink at, the café where he often ate lunch, Dr. Bob's Group at Rev. Tunk's Church (where the King School Group now meets), and Sister Ignatia's chapel at the St. Thomas Hospital.



Archives Chair, Ken M.

(Photographs kindly provided by Ken M.)

Concept IX Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods for choosing them, will at all levels be indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of AA must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Leadership can be a continuous problem. They can be here today and gone tomorrow. We must continue to find the right people for our many service tasks.

The base of our structure is the many thousands of General Service Representatives. They provide the essential link between our fellowship and its world service. They are the primary representatives of AA Group conscience. Without their support we could not operate at all. Remember it is only the GSRs that can vote at our Area Assemblies for the Area Committee and the Delegate. The group must take great care when they choose their GSR. Thoughtful consideration about who the best people that we can vote for should be their primary goal.

The third legacy procedure for voting for Delegates by a 2/3 vote, or from the hat, has proved highly effective. This usually produces people of a high level of dedication and competence.

Bill W. wrote "The time approaches when I shall have to withdraw from nearly all world service activity. This is why I feel a great interest now in doing everything possible to strengthen the administrative composition and AA leadership of our General Service Board, so that future Trustees may be better able to cope with the problems and dangers which time will no doubt bring. My admiration for what AA's alcoholic and non-alcoholic Trustees have done for us all is boundless." Bill continues to describe the necessity of a World Conference, as they realized that the relatively unseen and unknown Board could not continue without a permanent linkage to AA. This change, to hold the world conference, altered the position of the Trustees. Their former authority was modified; and they were firmly linked to AA and were thus made directly accountable to our Fellowship.

Specific Personal Qualities a leader ought to have – from the 1959 issue of the *Grapevine*, and relevant today.

- "Act for us, but don't boss us."

- Consults widely before taking decisions and actions.
- Never passes the buck – provided that such actions are within the framework of its authority and responsibility.
- An individual who can discriminate where and when not to take action or make decisions.
- True leadership exercises careful discrimination and soul-searching.
- Give and take – the ability to compromise *cheerfully*. Progress is nearly always characterized by a series of improving compromises.
- Leaders are often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. Always there will be constructive and destructive criticism. The destructive critics are usually power drivers and accusers, using rumors and gossip to gain their own ends, and all for the good of AA! These folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending on how we relate ourselves to them.
- Vision – the ability to make estimates for the immediate future and the more distant future. God has given us human beings foresight and he expects us to use it.

We shall be in continual need of these same qualities – tolerance, responsibility, flexibility, vision – among our leaders of AA service at *all levels*. The principles of leadership will be the same whatever the size of the operation. We ought to select our leaders on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find.

This Concept can be useful to anyone who takes an active part in our society. Remember that every sponsor is a leader. The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance.

I thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in all its affairs.

DCM, District 22, Jo F.

Continued from Page 2 - Focus: Grapevine Articles

glories of this life. That makes them charming companions.

They are possessed of a sense of universal truth that is often new in their heart. This fact that this at-one moment with God's universe had never been awakened within them is the reason they drink. They have found a power greater than themselves which they diligently serve. And that gives them a charm that never was elsewhere on the land and sea; it makes you know that God is charming, because the AA people reflect his mercy and forgiveness. They are imaginative, and that helped make them alcoholics. Some of them drank to flog their imaginations onto greater efforts. Others guzzled only to block out unendurable visions that arose in their imaginations.

But when they found their restorations, their imagination is responsive to new incantations and their talk abounds with color and might, and that makes them charming companions, too. They are possessed by a sense of humour. Even in their cups they have known to be damnably funny. Often it was being forced to take seriously the little and mean things of life that made them seek their escape in the bottle. But when they found their restoration, their sense of humour finds a blessed freedom and they are able to laugh at themselves, the very height of self-conquest. Go to their meetings and listen to their laughter. At what are they laughing? At ghoulish memories over which weaker souls would cringe in useless remorse. And that makes them wonderful people to be with by candlelight.

Fulton Oursler was a well-known author and playwright who was also senior editor of the *Readers Digest* when AA was getting started. In that position, he ran several articles favorable to the fledgling organization. In 1951, he was elected as a non-alcoholic trustee for AA.

"Fulton Oursler--Senior editor of the *Readers Digest*. Enjoys world-wide renown as an author and public relations expert. Thousands of AAs have read his "Greatest Story Ever Told." There is no more lovable and ardent AA fan than Fulton."

From the July 1944 Grapevine (Vol.1 Issue2) and Grapevine (1951) by Bill W. "Meet the Non-alcoholic Trustees" with permission from the AA Grapevine.

The Back Page

Concept VIII The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

Seems pretty heavy? That is because it is. The Trustees have been asked to take on the monumental responsibility for the "good conduct of all our world service affairs".

The focus of this concept seems to be that of prevention through experience. The Trustees are asked to concern themselves almost entirely to the matters of "policy, finance, group relations, public relations and leadership. They are not asked to deal with the day to day operations of AA World Services Inc. or The AA *Grapevine*. They oversee these operations by delegating the work and responsibilities to qualified people elected by the Trustees.

The service manual explains in great detail, two reasons why the General Service Board is structured this way. One is that the logistics, of having the Trustees tied to the daily functioning of the two service corporations, don't work. Currently 95% of the Trustees don't live in New York. Another important consideration is that the head of this board is usually a Non-Alcoholic who could not commit the time required and as a Trustee could not be paid for being the "top executive of all our services". Lastly a person qualified to lead our ever growing and active corporations would be very hard to find, and difficult to replace.

The second reason is concerned with the concentration of funds. Early experience found that trying to run the General Service Office and the AA Publishing Company through loosely defined committees was unsuccessful. Too often it was found that decisions were being made by the people in charge of the money instead of the employees and volunteers who had a better working knowledge of the issues. They found that it clearly worked better when each entity had its own capital, people and facilities along with executives and directors with legally defined positions and a "vote in proportion to their actual responsibilities".

The General Service Board is described as a "holding company". An entity that oversees the operation of our service corporations which have their own management. This structure is common to many large corporations. As is always the case, this structure is only suggested. We alcoholics will always have to make the decision to carry it on, but once again the founders have asked us to consider their experience before making any drastic changes to it.

focus: Opinions

Got an opinion? I'd like to hear it.....email to
mww594482@hotmail.com

DCM, District 2, Jim C.

Continued from Front Page Panel 56 Delegate's Report to Area 86

There was much discussion and input, positive and negative, on the PSA content and production. AAWS has contracted a Canadian firm to produce our public service announcements and the professional input from those folks was very enlightening. In the end, a few changes were proposed by the committee members, and I am sure we will have a very fine production available at the Conference in April. It was fascinating to see the committees of alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees, staff and professionals all working together to do the very best that we can do for Alcoholics Anonymous. I was able to see and hear the Traditions and Concepts at work all weekend, just as they are often described in the Service Manual and in the Long Form of our Twelve Traditions. At Saturday afternoon's lunch and General Sharing Session, I was invited to give a ten-minute presentation on Concept IV: Right of Participation - Equal Partnership. Another special and humbling experience granted me by my higher power and Concept IV! Saturday night we all had dinner together and an excellent AA meeting, with leads given by a Trustee, an AAWS Director and an Area Delegate. Sunday night a bunch of us went out for real New York pizza! I also had the privilege of having lunch on Sunday with Past Chairman of the Board, Class "A" (non-alcoholic) Trustees Michael Alexander, Jim Estelle and Gary Glynn. That was truly an interesting and insightful conversation. I am amazed at the time and dedication, and love for the Fellowship of all our Class "A" Trustees.

Sunday morning was reserved exclusively for the General Service Board Quarterly Meeting. The Board meeting itself was like any board of directors meeting for any large organization or corporation and it is a legal requirement for running the "business part" of AA - publishing our books and literature, the *Grapevine* magazine and operating our General Service Office. It was again a special privilege to be in attendance and see the Trustees in action in the very capacity that they are legally and traditionally empowered to act by the AA groups. This weekend is another highlight of my service and my life. It is my humble honour to serve Alcoholics Anonymous, and I thank you for that.



Delegate, Panel 56, Tom V.

AREA COMMITTEE

Area Delegate:

Tom V.

Area Alt. Delegate:

Martin A.

Area Chair:

Nancy J.

Area Treasurer:

Jack C.

Area Secretary/Registrar

Marg C.

Comments, feedback or articles contact
mww594482@hotmail.com

Website address:
<http://www.area86aa.org>