

MINUTES OF AREA 40 SPRING 2017 ASSEMBLY

April 7-9, 2017

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Alcoholics Anonymous Area 40

Spring Assembly, April 7-9, 2017 Lewistown, MT.

Friday Session 8-10 p.m.

GSR and DCM Welcome Session - led by Area Delegate, Gerry R.

Area Standing Committee Chair Welcome Session-led by Area Chair, Paul L. and Area Advisor, Libbie L.

Saturday Session 8-10 a.m.

The Assembly was opened at 8 a.m. by Area Chair, Paul L. After some housekeeping announcements and the Serenity Prayer, the 12 Traditions were read by Dave R. from Dist. 12 and the 12 Concepts were read by Rick H. from Dist. 72.

Orientation to the Assembly-Area Delegate Gerry R.

Good morning everyone, my name is Gerry and I'm an alcoholic. It is indeed a privilege to be standing here today, serving this body, as your Area 40 Delegate. To borrow a phrase from your Panel 55 delegate, Scott W., I am honored to be your contribution to the 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. I also very excited to be serving with all of you during the 75th Anniversary of General Service work here in Area 40, but there are several, in particular, who I am happy to see here.

Will all the new GSR's and those who are attending their first Area Assembly please stand. Welcome! Welcome to the middle of AA, one of the most rewarding and invigorating places that I have ever found. I must tell you however that it didn't start out that way. On my first trip to an Assembly, my intention was to catch some fish, steal your coffee, and judge each and every one of you for being AA politicians. I'll tell you the full fishing story another time. Suffice it to say that I've grown a lot since then, and that, if you've arrived here today with even a slightly better attitude than I did, you stand a great chance of being of much more service to this Area than I ever have, and I thank you for that willingness to serve.

Will each DCM please stand? Thank you all for your willingness to take your service work to another level, and for the example that you all set in your respective districts that working in General Service is not a do-it-once-and-your-done deal. I'd like to remind everyone, whether you're a GSR, an alternate GSR, District Rep, or just a visitor, if you haven't already done so, please find your DCM, at the break, and get registered on the Assembly sign-in sheet. It's important that you do that this morning. I'll explain why in a bit. DCM's please make sure you have these sheets to our Secretary, Melinda, by no later than noon today. Roughly put, we are here to establish and gather the informed group conscience of Area 40 pertaining to the matters found on our Agenda for this weekend. Our Area Chair, Paul, will help us to navigate through our consideration of these concerns in an expedient and effective manner. He will facilitate our deliberations according to a loose interpretation of Robert's Rules of Order, an interpretation that he will explain as he goes, and of which, his is the final voice. In other words, when it comes time to decide if we're done talking about something, "Paul makes the call."

Some of the matters that we discuss and decide upon will pertain specifically to Area 40. On those matters, Paul may ask for a vote, and this is where the sign-in sheets come into play. Melinda will take these sheets and tally up the number of eligible voters who are present this weekend. This helps us to establish our quorum, which is two-thirds of the eligible voters registered on those sheets. With very few exceptions, everything we vote on here is decided by what we call "substantial unanimity." What that means is that, as long as we have a quorum, (two-thirds of the registered voters) any item we vote on must receive two-thirds of the counted vote in order to pass. The reason for this is best expressed in Warranty Four of Concept Twelve, where it says;

"That all important decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and wherever possible, by substantial unanimity." This Warranty is, on the one hand, "a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and, on the other hand, it takes notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision."

Will all the past Delegates in the room please stand. Please stay standing. Folks, this year we have the special privilege of celebrating 75 years of AA service in Area 40, Montana. Now we all know old-timers back in our districts who go back 40 or 50 years, and I respect and admire them as much as anyone, but I feel it's important to note that these folks, standing in front of you this morning, have taken the time, and put forth the effort, time and time again, some for decades, to leave their Home Groups, leave their Districts, and leave the Area, to do the work necessary to ensure that the hand of AA, as a whole, is always there to reach back when someone comes looking for help. I feel that they are our best connection to a tremendous legacy of service, stretching back seventy-five years, here in Area 40, which we get to enjoy and participate in today. Please help me thank them for their labors and for their love of Alcoholics Anonymous. I know that each and every one of them would welcome any questions you might have about anything that goes on this weekend.

So, what is going on this weekend? What is our purpose? What is our process?

Please listen carefully; you are eligible to vote on the floor this weekend only if you are a GSR, a DCM, a Standing Committee Chair for the Area, or an Area Officer. Some of you may be District Reps who are a voting member of a committee, but, unless you also hold one of the positions I just named, you do not have a vote out here on the floor. Alternate GSR's vote only if their GSR is not present at the time of the vote, otherwise, they do not have a vote. The same goes for Alternate DCM's. If you have any questions about whether or not you have a vote, please see Melinda or your DCM. Area 40 operates on a committee system that closely mirrors that of the General Service Conference. The majority of the items on our agenda are from the GSC Agenda. On these items we will take no votes, however, after we have had a good discussion about them, I will ask Paul to collect a sense of how our Area feels about some of them, to help me decide how I might vote when they are deliberated at the General Service Conference. **When we are asking for the sense of the Area on any item, everyone in the room is allowed to indicate their support, or nonsupport, of an item by a show of hands.** This is all part of establishing and gathering our Informed Group Conscience.

At times, it will be exciting, while at other times it will seem like we are engaged in a pretty tedious process, but, let me remind you it is important that we practice the principles of patience, kindness, tolerance and love in all our deliberations because the recovery and lives of every newcomer that walks through our doors, including yours and mine at one time, are held in the balance. We have a great deal of fun here, but this is serious work, with a serious purpose.

The agenda in front of you was prepared by our Area Chair/Alternate Delegate, Paul, and it presents the order in which we will conduct our business this weekend. After I finish this orientation, we will hear reports from several folks including the DCM's. We will hear as many of them as we can before we take a break at 9:00. We'll resume these reports later in the day, but after the break, the committees will meet to go over the items on their respective agendas. That material they'll be discussing can be found on the back pages of the agenda, behind the schedule. The committees will meet until noon, and again afterward, if necessary, to complete their business.

For those who are not planning on attending a committee, there will be some great workshops presented by our past delegates Carol B. and Terry S., here in the Sapphire room. After lunch, at 1:00, we will all meet back here for a presentation of the Corrections P.S.A. "A New Freedom," after which we will finish with the remainder of the DCM report.

Once the DCM reports are completed I'll give my Delegate's report, and afterward, we will begin conducting business here on the main floor. Each committee chair will come to the microphone and present what their committee thought about each GSC item on their committee's agenda. Each item will be open for discussion by this body. Paul will ask for a sense of the area on some of them. The Finance and Archives chairs will also report as to whether or not they have any recommendations on any of the Area 40 items that they considered. On these items, Paul will treat any recommendation made by a committee as a made and seconded motion, and will, after a thorough discussion by this body, take that item to a vote. Again, everyone can discuss these items, but only eligible voters can vote.

If you choose to comment on any of the items, we ask that you go to the microphone so everyone can hear. You will not be recognized if you attempt to speak from your chair. If you go to the microphone, you will have three minutes to make your point. It is important that I warn you, if you go past three minutes, Melinda is armed with a beeper, a cow bell, and a Darth Vader-like ability to close your trachea, to get you to stop. Be warned.

If someone has already made the point that you want to make at the mike, and you feel a burning desire to repeat it – please don't. We have a large agenda and you will have a chance, later, to express your support or disapproval of an item by a show of hands. There is no point in our considering an item from one perspective, over and over again. However, if you have a viewpoint that has not yet been expressed, please, we beg of you to share it with us. It is vitally important that we consider each item from as many different perspectives as we can, so we understand it as best we can.

We will continue with committee reports through the afternoon and break for dinner at 5:00, after which, at 7:00, we will resume business.

At 8:45 we will end business for the day and conduct a GSR breakout on one side of the room and a DCM breakout on the other. These will be facilitated by past delegates Carol B and Terry S., and are valuable opportunities for you to discuss with your peers, any matter concerning you about service work, your Home Group, your District, really, any issue you wish to discuss. After the breakouts there may, or may not, be an unofficial, non-conference approved, ice cream social, somewhere in the building, or not. I don't know. I am neither cooperating, affiliating, or incriminating.

Tomorrow morning we will begin with a series of reports from past and upcoming Area Roundups, Area Intergroups, and a report on the recent WSRAASC in Cheyenne. After that we will get to hear reports from our past delegates Carol and Terry. We will then finish any business that we have left to conduct and, if time allows, Paul will open the microphones for General Sharing. I encourage you all to jump in and participate this weekend. You're among friends who welcome and encourage you to give yourself and the still-suffering alcoholic the very best gift you can, your active participation in, and service to, a program that can, will, and has, saved millions of lives

Roll Call and Past Actions-Area Secretary, Melinda W.

AREA 40 OFFICERS		Attendance	Voting Members	Non Voting Members
Delegate	Gerry R	x	1	
Area Chair/Alt Delegate	Paul L.	x	1	
Secretary	Melinda W.	x	1	
Treasurer	Julie R.	x	1	
Archives	Raymona K.	x	1	
CPC	Luke S.	x	1	
Corrections	Hugh M.	x	1	
Grapevine	Jake H.	x	1	
Literature	Lance W.	X	1	
Public Information	Tim K.	X	1	
Treatment	James W.	X	1	
Triangle Editor	Mike D.	X	1	
DCM's				
11	Robert K	X	11	5
12	David R.	X	2	
21	n/a			
23	Steve S.	X	3	1
31	Gene M.	X	2	
41	Dawn B.	X	10	5
42	Kurt K.	X	2	
51	Bryan F.	X	2	5
61	Carol W.	X	9	11
71	Virginia C.	X	6	3
72	Robert E.	X	15	2
81	Ashley J.	X	10	1
91	Kacie N.	X	7	6
93	Nance G.	X	7	
Non-Voting Officers				
Area Advisor	Libbie L.	X		
Area Archivist	Earl F.	x		
Area Webmaster	Brandon M.	x		
TOTALS			98	39
			Quorum=65	

Secretary's Report -- Melinda W.

Good morning! Welcome to the Spring Assembly! My name is Melinda and I'm alcoholic. And I have the privilege to serve as your Area 40 Secretary and Registrar.

I want to thank our past Area Secretary, Julie, for all her help.

Thank you for your patience in with seating... We did the best we could with the information you provided for attendance. If you have more people in your District than there is room at your table, please let the voting members be seated together first.

Each DCM has a folder which includes your district's attendance sheet, which needs to be back to me this morning by the first break. The attendance sheets are used to determine a quorum for voting purposes. Voting members are DCMs or their alternate, GSRs or their alternate, and the Area Committee. Please sign in with your DCM if you are here as a voter or a visitor. Also in your DCM folders are the Group Information Sheets. Each group in your District has a group information sheet in the DCM folder. Please check to make sure the information is accurate. The deadline for getting changes to me in time to be included in these directories is May 1st. But beyond that, incorrect mailing addresses cost our fellowship time and money. Please help me keep this information current. Thank you to all the groups that have already updated this information. I would appreciate these corrections be turned in to me by the end of the Assembly.

I'd like to thank all the Chairs and DCMs who have already e-mailed their reports to me and remind those who have not to please e-mail them or provide 2 hard copies to me before the end of the Assembly. I also ask that each committee meeting, workshop and breakout session leader please appoint a recorder to provide me with the notes or minutes taken during that meeting. If your committee brings a recommendation to the floor, please give me a written copy prior to presenting the motion. Reports are limited to 5 minutes and floor comments limited to 3 minutes. When the timer rings, (ring the timer) please close your sharing...or you will get the cow bell! (ring the bell)

On the tables in the back are two plastic "ask it baskets." Please use these for any questions you have or want discussed tonight during the DCM and GSR break-out sessions. Then tomorrow, please drop off your name badges in the box so we can reuse them in the fall which saves expenses. Thank you!

Lastly, here are the motions passed at the 2016 Fall Assembly:

PASSED ACTIONS OF THIS ASSEMBLY (Fall 2016)

From the Venue Ad-Hoc Committee:

RECOMMENDATION:

"To move the 2017 Fall Assembly to Great Falls." **MOTION PASSED: 71 FOR, 10 OPPOSED**

From the Treatment Committee:

RECOMMENDATION:

"That Area 40 submit the following theme for consideration as the 2018 GSC theme: *"Singleness of Purpose – Insuring AA's Future"*. **MOTION PASSED: 77 FOR, 3 OPPOSED**

From the Archive Committee:

RECOMMENDATION:

"That the Area Chair appoint an ad-hoc committee to review the committee assignment, selection and replacement process, and report back to the Archives Committee for the Spring 2017 Assembly." **MOTION PASSED: 76 FOR, 5 OPPOSED**

From the Finance Committee:

RECOMMENDATION:

"To approve the 2017 Area 40 Budget in the amount of \$33,430." It was moved and seconded to amend the budget motion to cover expenses for the Archivist to attend the Archivist workshop in Winnipeg not to exceed \$1,500. **AMENDMENT PASSED: 71 FOR, 0 OPPOSED**

AMENDED MOTION TO APPROVE 2017 BUDGET IN AMOUNT OF \$34,930 PASSED: 75 FOR, 0 OPPOSED

**Area 40
2017 Spring Assembly
Financial Highlights**



Good morning, everybody! My name is Julie R. and I'm alcoholic. I have the privilege of serving as your Area 40 Treasurer this rotation. I'm pleased to present some highlights of your Area finances today. I want to thank Mary M., our previous treasurer, for her help with all my questions especially when I called her in a panic when I realized I had no clue how to create a Power Point and couldn't seem to figure it out on my own. I felt immediately better having asked for help. The tools work when I use them!

**Where Money and
Spirituality Mix**

Why does a *spiritual* program
need *money*?

I can think of a few reasons...rent for a meeting place, buying literature, refreshments and coffee! Then there's phone lines so alcoholics can reach us, getting information out to the public or professionals who know alcoholics, printing meeting lists and pamphlets, conducting workshops to learn about service and more ways to carry the message. Our Area committee helps coordinate many of these vital activities in addition to our sending a delegate to the GSC in New York each year which helps insure our legacies of Unity and Service.

Here's what our "Self-Support" pamphlet has to say on pg. 5: "*We cannot skimp*" With the realization that AA must steer clear of outside contributions in order to maintain its autonomy and independence came the understanding that the money necessary for AA's survival would have to come from individual AA members and groups. As Bill W. put it in 1957, '*Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility – one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and AA as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.*

'When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.' (The Language of the Heart, p. 221)

How Area 40 Groups Support Services

- Area 40 2017 Budget = \$34,930.00
- Registered Groups in Area 40 = 265

THEN

- $\$34,930.00 / 265 \text{ Groups} =$
\$131.81 Cost per Group
- \$ Cost per Member = \$6.59

58 GROUPS HAVE CONTRIBUTED AS OF MARCH 31ST

Last fall, the Assembly voted on the budget for 2017. The total amount for year is \$34,930.00.

We have 265 active groups in Area 40 which would then average out to about \$131.81 per group if our entire budget is spent. GSO member records estimate we have about 5,300 members, so cost per member is approximately **\$6.59**. Though not all groups participate, * 58 have contributed something so far this year. And it's that principle of participation that is more important than the dollar amount. Thank you!

These 58 groups represent 22% of the total 265 groups in Area 40. The total 1st quarter group contributions of \$7,818 also includes \$115 from individual and District contributions. Compared to last year at this time, we are showing about \$1,100 less in group contributions. If we stay consistent with these 1st quarter income figures, we may need to dip into the prudent reserve. So let's look at some expense figures...

Area 40 First Quarter Comparisons

of Groups Contributing 2017 1st Quarter: 58/265 = 22%

\$ amount contributed in 1st Quarter: \$7,818

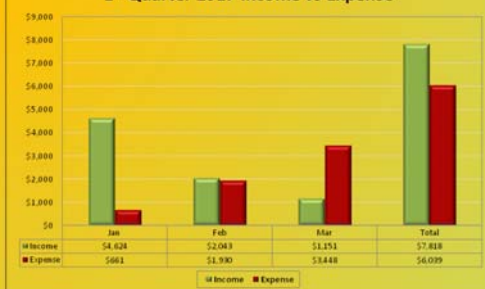
$\$7,818 \times 4 \text{ Quarters} = \$31,272.00$

Area 40 2017 Budget = \$34,930.00

of Groups Contributing 2016 1st Quarter: 62/271 = 23%

\$ amount contributed in 2016 1st Quarter: \$8,946

1st Quarter 2017 Income vs Expense

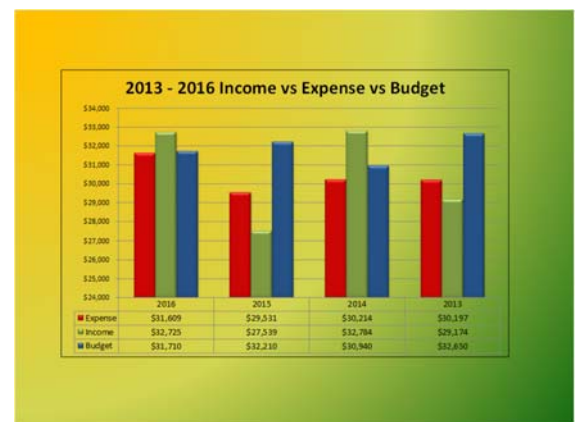


As you can see, with income in green and expenses in red, the totals show we are about \$1,780 ahead of expenses by the end of this quarter. Though some groups contribute monthly or quarterly, our Area expenses spike much higher in certain months. For example, this March we had the WCRAASC travel for the delegate and Area Chair to Cheyenne, WY. This April will see expenses for the Area Assembly. The fall Assembly expense will be reflected in September and we are anticipating about \$2,000 in unbudgeted expense then due to the unexpected change in the hotel's bid.



And here are expense vs. income comparisons for the 1st quarters in the last 3 years. The 2016 **expense** numbers (in red) were a bit higher due to the Hotline and also to paying a deposit early to the Yogo Inn. Also, the 2016 **income** numbers are a bit higher due to some extra contributions from a district and a mini-roundup. The totals are literally “off the chart!”

Over the last four years, we have averaged about **\$30,390 in expenses** and about **\$30,550 in contributions**. Our budgets are a bit higher in odd-numbered years due to travel expense for both the Regional Forum and Regional Trustee visit in the fall. Our current budget of \$34,930 reflects those increases in addition to increased costs for the Answering service and Telephone Directory listings, Archives storage, printing costs and other travel for Area 40 trusted servants. I like to remember that these are all ways that enable us to continue to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the still-suffering alcoholic.



Contributions

*“When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help...
I want the hand of A.A. always to be there...”*

Money in the basket is Twelfth-Step work, too!

*“From dollars in the basket at our home groups * to writing a check to intergroups, areas and districts or G.S.O., * every time we give, we are helping to carry A.A.’s message of hope to alcoholics everywhere.” (GSO)*

*The current financial reports are available on the back table along with a 7th Tradition basket which helps offset our coffee charges. Thank you for your contributions which help us do the work in Area 40 you have asked us to do and for your participation in the service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. Have a great weekend!

Triangle Editor Report-Mike D.

Hello Area 40, my name is Mike D., and it is my pleasure to be serving as your current Triangle Editor! So far with this position I have had a lot of fun learning something new, and I hope that many of you are having a positive experience with your new positions as well. Learning how to do this job has been an interesting challenge for me, and I hope to have it all figured out soon! I am excited to see how we can work together this rotation to serve the fellowship in Area 40, and to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. I'm looking forward to getting to know some new faces, and I would love to get your feedback regarding our newsletter. Please let me know what you like, or don't like about the Triangle, and don't hesitate to share any ideas you might have about what you would like to see in future issues!

Last November I began getting in gear with the transition into my new service commitment. I got a PO Box set up in Huntley, MT for roughly half the price of a box in town, and it was conveniently on my route to work. I started perusing through many old issues of the Triangle to try and get a feel, and began looking for a good program to publish with. I ended up choosing Page Plus because it seemed very user friendly, with lots of great options, and it was only \$25 to purchase! I started playing around to learn how to use the software. Tim M was very helpful in providing me with information on how to do the Triangle. We had several conversations prior to the rotation, and I began having questions for him along the way as I got to work, which he helped me a lot with. I also got in touch with several other past Triangle Editors to ask them how they handled their responsibilities, and how they might have done things differently. This gave me a good idea about how I wanted to proceed with formatting, and production of the newsletter.

Next I worked out a schedule of themes for this year's issues, and began working on issue #1. By past action of this Assembly the Triangle is set to produce 8 issues per calendar year, mailing one hard copy to every group in Area 40 and each committee member. Everyone is encouraged to cover the cost of their subscription if possible, however, we provide the Triangle as a service to the group's regardless of their ability to pay the \$10 subscription fee. If your Triangle says "EXPIRED" above your name and address, and you would like to be self-supporting, and cover your own cost, you can mail me a check to PO Box 364 Huntley, MT 59037. The return address is listed on each issue. You can also set up payment on our website via PayPal. You can also find past and present issues of the Triangle on the website as well.

When I neared completion of my first issue, I began the daunting process of updating the mailing list with current contact info to try and ensure everybody would receive their Triangles. I went through all 331 entries individually cross referencing them with the current FNV database. This took a couple weeks, and set me back from my original deadline. Julie helped me update our permit to mail at non-profit bulk rates, and I reviewed quotes from several print shops in Billings. I decided to have the printing done at Office Depot at roughly half the cost of our most previous printer. I then arranged for the Mail Drop to handle tabbing, and bulk mailing. I am pleased to inform you that by doing so we will be saving between \$800-\$1000 this year alone from what we budgeted for production of the Triangle.

I am going the finish issue #2 over this next week, so that I can have it printed and mailed the following week. The theme is Spiritual Growth, and of coarse I wanted to see if there was going to be anything important this weekend that should be included in our communication to the Fellowship in Area 40. I encourage you to get in touch with me if you have something you would like to be included in any future issues! I would like to thank everyone who has already contributed. I have received 18 returned issues from the first mailing, and will be working with Melinda to try and make sure we have good current contact info for everyone. We will need help from you DCM's and GSR's to keep everything up to date so we can ensure effective communication with the groups in Area 40.

Area Chair Report-Paul L.

It is an honor to stand here as the Area Chair/Alternate Delegate for Area 40. It is not something I really thought would ever happen when I attended my first Area Assembly as a GSR for my home group 8 years ago. Just goes to show how much I know.

I spent time after the election last fall reviewing the Service Manual, re-reading the Concepts, listening to some speakers on the 12 Concepts and reviewing the boxes and thumb drive that Alex bequeathed to me.

I made numerous calls and emails to Gerry with questions I had about my duties, the duties of others, and how does this whole thing work. Nearly every time he replied, "did you look in the Area 40 Policy and Procedures?" I would tell him no I hadn't, that was why I was calling him....! Well we pretty much got that worked out, I am now much more familiar with the Policy & Procedures of Area 40

The incoming and outgoing officers met in Great Falls in January to audit the books for Area 40. We also took the time to do a tour of the Holiday Inn in Great Falls, venue of our next Fall Assembly. Everything looks very good there. They did apologize that one of the meeting rooms was on the 2nd floor, but it was within 50 feet of the elevator. We said, not a problem.

There was a lot of time spent negotiating with the Holiday Inn because the costs were different then we expected when we voted to try another venue at last Assembly. We finally got the price down to a level that I thought that we could live with and we had our first Area Conference call of this rotation. We had over 20 people on the call between DCM's, Area Chairs and Officers. We then held a vote that the Secretary conducted and with substantial unanimity we decided to give the Holiday Inn in Great Falls a chance even though the costs would be more expensive then expected. How to do all of this is in the Area 40 Policy & Procedures.

In March I attended the WCRAASC in Cheyenne, WY. It was my first real exposure to hear what others thought about the Agenda Items. WOW. As always I was impressed by the enthusiasm and exuberance of all of the attendees.

Next I worked on constructing the Agenda. That took many, many hours of computer time. I've never really thought about where the Agendas for the Assembly come from, they always just showed up in my email and on the table outside the door of the Assembly. Now I know how that happens, that too is described in the area 40 Policies and Procedures. At one point in all of this I thought, is this really what I'm supposed to be doing. I'm also the Alternate Delegate, shouldn't I be doing something else??? Well, just last week I came to the conclusion that I was doing just the right thing in the right position. I've always had difficulty asking for help, and with these tasks I had a myriad of opportunities to ask for help. Which I did.

Finally came the Pre-Assemblies. It was good to go to Boulder, Kalispell and Miles City to hear what others thought about the Agenda Items for the General Service Conference. It was good to talk to the other Committee Chairs to see how they were doing in their new service position and to listen to the DCM's as they related what was going on in their Districts and to talk them back from the ledge if necessary.

While attending the Pre-Assemblies I was also able to attend the Pockets of Enthusiasm in Helena and heard an excellent speaker Saturday night from Sandusky, Ohio. While driving to Miles City I attended the Men's noon meeting in Bozeman, the Friday night meeting in Roundup and the Birthday meeting Saturday night in Livingston where I collected my 13 year chip..

It has been a great ride so far, I am looking forward to this Assembly and this rotation. As I have learned from my sponsor, it starts with willingness and is then followed by action.

Thank You.....

9:15-12:00 Standing Committee Meetings

Workshops for those not attending standing committee meetings

Workshop: Safety and AA: Our Common Welfare Led by past delegate Carole B.

Safety is an important issue within AA – one that all groups and members can address to develop workable solutions and help keep our meetings safe based on the fundamental principles of the Fellowship.

AA membership has never been contingent on any set of behavioral or moral standards – beyond those founded on common sense, courtesy and the timeless values of kindness, tolerance and love.

Important to have compassion for newcomers.

How many of our groups practice safety?

Group inventories can be helpful to Safety

Group policies about what to do can make people feel safe

“Strong Sponsorship” can be demeaning and bullying behavior

If your meeting is small, recruit more members

Suggestions about what other groups have done to protect disruptions and safety

Some groups have ‘policies’ in place about safety

Some groups have their own guidelines or procedures to help keep the meeting safe. AA members can speak to those who are acting inappropriately

Illegal and disruptive behavior should not be tolerated

Situations can be discussed at business meetings to come to a group conscious about how to handle a situation.

A last resort could be to ask the disruptive member to stop attending the meeting for a specific time period.

ICYPAA has a great policy on harassment

Sometimes AA members are just dumb

As individuals, AA members are also “citizens of the world” and as citizens we are not above the law.

Thanks to Serena R. for note taking

Workshop: The Traditions: A Tool, not a club Led by past delegate Terry S.

1955: Bill’s Legacy of Recovery, Unity and Service. A code of Traditions to be used as a guide, not a club.

Traditions came from the fall of the Washingtonians who were a group of drunks who got together on the basis that one drunkard could help another drunkard. They started the speaker meeting, what it was like, what happened, and what it’s like now. The only requirement was abstinence from drinking. They participated in everything from parades to politics. In 1844 they had 500,000 members. By 1850 no members. The Traditions came from the failures of the Washingtonians.

#1-Hang together or die separately. If AA disappears, we have no help for the alcoholic.

#3– Denying a chance to the newcomer could be a death sentence.

#4-AA has to be a big tent. Some members benefit from rigid sponsorship-some do not. Bill was no saint.

#5-We need to get along and play nice.

#6-We can fight inside AA but we do not fight on outside issues.

Thanks to Adam C. for note taking

Lunch Recess 12:00-1:00

1:00-1:30 Screening of “A New Freedom” PSA (video) from Corrections

1:30-2:00 DCM Reports (see attached)

Delegates Report

My name is Gerry and I'm an alcoholic. I'd like to thank Paul for this opportunity to share a few thoughts and experiences with everyone this afternoon, also for his very evident labor of love in preparing himself and our agenda for this weekend. I'd also like to thank the Area Committee for their hard work and dedication in their own preparations. Some of you really didn't know what you were getting yourselves into, but you've stayed the course and are here today, ready to serve and to lead. Thank you. I'd like to extend my most sincere gratitude to all the past delegates. You have each inspired, challenged and been such great examples for me. I have only just begun to understand the dedication, hard work and sacrifice that you put forward in the fulfillment of your duties to our Area. Thank you all for your service. Finally, I am grateful to all of you who comprise this body of trusted servants. At my first assembly, eighteen years ago, I had no position here and stood in the back of the room with the dual intent of stealing your coffee and judging you all as AA politicians. (Some of you know that part of my story very well, and I'll share it with the rest of you another time. Just know now that it is a true story.) Over time, you have changed my heart and rewarded my judgmental attitude and caffeine thievery with one of the single highest honors I have received in my life, your trust. Trust is perhaps the greatest salve for any alcoholic's self-inflicted spiritual wound. I cherish yours and thank you from the deepest, truest place I have inside me.

On to my very first Delegate's report. I started slow but things have been steadily picking up steam.

Invited to 1st Regional Conference call in December

Meet and greet panel 66

WCR guidelines revision, NA Inmates question

Also in December, GSO Welcome/Public Information Committee assignment -

Side note - Carol B, Myself, Curt K, Scott R Area 92

Early January, Audit Committee/Hotel Walk thru

Dashboard Password

Requested an Area Conference Call

Meet and greet/WCRAASC prep/ Q&A

participated in Great Falls/Yogo Poll – we need to remember that we are responsible for supporting our financial decisions.

GSB quarterly board meeting Minutes 1/30

Two items presented by members of Area 40 under Trustees

Area 40 Concepts Item to be revisited at 7/17 Board Meeting

Promising financial news - Group contributions up 11.8% & AAWS board report 3/10/17 still doing well. - Lit sales are up.

2/15 Agenda Items – Forwarded to Paul & Brandon

Paul's agenda - a delicate balance of people and presentations, fonts and format

Brandon & Area Dashboard

Questions about our local sharing of background – Dropbox?

P&P is falling behind our “trial run” tech advances (need P&P reviews and agenda items)

Next fall is our only Assembly of this rotation dedicated to nothing but Area 40 agenda items. I encourage you all to think hard about this kind of thing and forward to Paul, by July 1, any ideas or concerns you have that might help either Area 40, or AA as a whole do a better job of serving our Fellowship and the still-suffering alcoholic.

2/19 - 2nd Regional Conference call in preparation for WCRAASC

WCRAASC – Report tomorrow – suffice to say, we were very well represented by many here who not only went to Cheyenne, but also went to the mikes and expressed their thoughts and concerns about various items

Upcoming regional events

Forum - Sioux Falls, SD - Sept. 8-10

WCRAASC – Des Moines, IA – March 2-4

2020 WCRAASC in MT – Districts consider hosting?

2021 WCR Forum in MT

Pre-Assemblies

Boulder, Kalispell, Miles City - Show of hands of attendees

Valuable links in our cycle of communication – Area pays for travel

Great initial discussions of agenda items

We have some challenging items on our agenda, many of which have the potential to, literally, change the face of AA as we know it. If brought to fruition, they could result in significant consequences that could prove to be either a tremendous benefit for AA, or a huge black eye. We need to keep an open mind as we explore them, keeping a slow and thoughtful approach as we proceed. Now is not the time to toss away the principles that have guided us safely for the last eighty-plus years, nor is it the time to shrink from our inherent responsibility of extending our hand in the most effective way toward those who are desperately trying to find us. It is both an incredible honor, and a daunting duty, to be considered as your contribution to that discussion.

In a mere two weeks I am off to enter into that conversation and would dearly love to hear any words of support and encouragement you might have for me.

Conference Contact info

Gerry R.

699 Westchester Ave.

Rye Brook, N.Y., 10573

Delegates Report schedule

Spring Roundup - Billings May 19-21

District Meeting – D91 Kalispell, May 28

Lake Como Campout - D93, June 2-4

Founders Day – Missoula D81, June 10

Grapefest – Helena D61, June 24

I am both glad and honored to answer your call to service. In return, I would now like to extend that same call and encouragement back to you. When I served as your Area Archivist, and again as your Chair/Alternate Delegate, it was my practice during the third assembly of each rotation to encourage people to look inside themselves and look around the room in preparation for the Area elections that would take place during the fourth and final assembly of the rotation.

We are lucky, here in Area 40, to have enjoyed a long history of exceptional trusted servants. After eighteen years of observing them, I can say with some certainty that while a few of them came aboard feeling confident and capable, most of them felt horribly under-qualified for the jobs they were asked to do. One thing they all had in common, is that every single one of them, without exception, came from the seats that you are all sitting in right now.

At our last election, we elected several people by acclamation, which is a trend that is becoming all too familiar here in Area 40, a trend we need your help in correcting. We have been lucky thus far, in that we have had all our positions filled by willing and enthusiastic volunteers, but we should not become too comfortable with relying on luck to provide us our trusted servants. We need to be able to make a selection from a pool of candidates who are willing, despite their fears, to rotate on in our Area service structure, rather than rotating out after merely dipping their toe in it.

I'd like to address my following comments specifically to the DCM's, but they are highly pertinent for every person in this room.

We need you to step up and help us repay our great debt of gratitude that we all share to those who have come before us, and who have ensured that AA was a safe place for us all to find a new life. We need you to help us to meet the great responsibility that we all share to those who are coming after us, those who continue to seek us and to reach out to us for help. We need you to help find answers to the new questions and challenges that have yet to confront us, and to help our Fellowship continue to move in a good, positive direction. It's your opportunity to be part of cause that has done so much for you and so many others, not only to give back, but also to pay it forward.

Rather than wait until the third assembly to encourage everyone to look around and consider who might serve us well in a certain position, or where they, themselves, might serve, I'd like to take this opportunity to ask that, this process begin now. In addition to addressing the work we all have on our respective plates for this rotation, I don't think it is too much to ask you all to take a moment or two each assembly, each district meeting, each workshop or Roundup, to watch, pray, and consider the possibility that you, or someone you know, might have something more to give, and ask yourself and them the question, "Are you willing?"

My final encouragement is that, once that question is asked, be prepared to recognize and move beyond that fear-induced newcomer battle cry, "Yabut, Yabut, Yabut!"

Welcome to the middle of AA folks. We all stand at the beginning of an incredible opportunity for spiritual growth, and I look forward to taking each step along the path with you. What a joy to be sober today, and what a privilege to be of service. Thank you for both.

DCM REPORTS

District 11

Greetings from District 11. The largest city in District 11 is Billings. We cover an area from Highway 200 in the north down to the Wyoming state line. On the west District 11 is bounded by Highway 3 and on the east by Interstate 90. We cover an area of 7,000 square miles. There are approximately 25 groups and over 100 meetings per week. Meeting times range from Brown Baggers at 6:30 a.m. to the 10 p.m. meeting at 510 Cook. District meetings are well attended. We meet once a month on the second Saturday. On average, 20 to 25 persons attend to include GSRs, Committee Chairs, Al Anon and visitors. GSRs from 10 groups consistently attend District meetings. Our District Committee Officers are Bob K. DCM, Jerry D. Treasurer and Nicole E. Secretary. All of our District Committee Chairs are filled except Bridging the Gap and we hope to have that position filled at our next meeting. District 11 sent the DCM to the West Central Regional Conference in Cheyenne. That was my first experience at a Regional Conference and I found it profoundly inspirational to be surrounded by such a large group of dedicated AA members. On March 11, we had a GSR school taught by Past Delegate Bob H. The School was attended by 9 GSRs who were bribed with Pizza to stick around after the District Meeting. At the GSR School, we went over aspects of the Area Agenda based upon the DCMs experience at the Regional Conference. Each GSR attending the School received a CD containing Area Background Materials. District 11 will host the 2017 Roundup on May 19 - 21 and we look forward to seeing all of you in Billings. District 11 will once again team with District 12 for a weekend outing at Fireman's Point on the second weekend in August. We will hear the Delegate's Report from Gerry R. who can be assured food will be provided.

District 12

My Name is Gennifer P. and I am the new DCM for district 12, Dave R. is my alternate DCM and is standing in for me at this assembly. It is my pleasure to be stepping into this position and I am looking forward to new and exciting thing for the district. District 12 covers an area from Harlowton to Red Lodge, Big Timber to Laurel. There are 30 meetings weekly. Our District meets the third Sunday of the month.

Over the last year we have been working together to attract more members to get involved in the service work of AA. It is by attraction rather than promotion that we wish to let others know the rewards of service work. It is my belief that with the help and interactions of the current active members that we can collectively breathe new life into the interest and participation in local and arear level service commitments. District 12 has two events yearly the Mid-Winter Social and Fireman's Point Campout: The Mid-Winter Social was held in Joliet Mt. February 18th and was supported by Districts 11 & 12, as it is every year; We had a Mid-Winter BBQ and Potluck Dinner, Speakers Carole B & Norma A From Billings did a great job sharing their experience, strength, and hope to a full house. In August we will hold our Fireman's Point Campout, fun for the whole family. On Friday Night the Great Spam Cook-off for all the Spam Lovers (last year we had over 40 entries). Saturday Sober Old Biker Poker Run and meeting along the Stillwater River. BBQ and Pot luck Dinner to follow with a Fireside Speaker Meeting & a Resentment Burning

. Sometime during the weekend we will have the Delegate's Report and to close the weekend District 11 Cooks the Best Breakfast around, this you do not want to miss.

I am looking forward to being of service to my district and learning what I can from as many people as I can as to better serve my district and I am excited about the future within my district and to reigniting the fire and desire to be of service at the district and local levels.

Gennifer P. DCM;

Dave R. Alternate DCM

District 23-Steve S.

January 7 we held our first meeting in Sydney Montana starting with a potluck and a meeting to follow. With the start of the meeting we had an ambitious agenda, we started a process of communicating by email with everyone involved at the district level including GSR's and some regular visitors, we worked on a annual budget for the district, and set up committees for the beginning stages of literature racks and also for activities for the district in a self-supporting manner to meet the annual budget.

We have six groups within our district with four of the GSR's attending. We went through group reports and learned that even though some of the GSR's were not present that those groups have meetings that are well attended and that things are going well.

There was also a plan put in place for the DCM to start visiting groups and the first one was on March 6 the Fairview group which may not been the best night as was during a spring blizzard. But as alcoholics blizzards do not stop us from drinking so did not stop us from having a meeting.

On March 25 we held our second district meeting in Glen dive at the serenity House which has the life again meeting with a potluck in the meeting to follow. The Saturday night meeting which starts at seven was attended by several from the district.

Again within a ambitious agenda minutes were read and corrected and approved, a treasures report was given in groups recognize that had donated during the first quarter in the report approved.

Attendance at this meeting was very poor is only two at GSR's attending from groups from the Sydney area. We were also missing our secretary so we had to wing it with the minutes and as of the writing of this are not completed.

Reports were given by the groups GSR's that were there, meetings seem to be going well no reports were given from the groups with no GSR's in attendance.

Committee reports were given, our literature person was not in attendance to give his report, our activities committee chairperson gave their report about the first treasure hunt activity to be held in Glen dive sometime in early spring. Details were explained and hopefully will be in the minutes about how it will work.

Also a barbecue with a possible camp over and firelight meetings was discussed to be held in July, there was unanimous approval to to plan such event for the district.

I plan to visit more groups between now and June before the next district meeting and I look forward to meeting lots of people at my first assembly for area 40.

Steve S.—District 23

District 41

I want to thank everyone in District 41 for allowing me to be of service. It has been a honor and privilege to be of service to AA. We have 3 chairs open at this time: Corrections, PI, and Alt DCM (just stepped down)

I am fairly new to Great Falls (4 years) so I have been enjoying getting out to some of the different meetings in this district; as well as a few just out side our district.

I was able to travel to Cheyenne Wyoming for the West Central Regional Service Conference. This was my 1st time attending this and while I must say, it was over whelming, I loved it! So many different ideas, thoughts and ways to provide help to the still suffering Alcoholic! I was able to meet and spend time getting to know Nancy, Brian and Robert . I like road trips. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of the group!

At this time District 41 has 65 meetings during the week; at leaset 4 each day!

District 41 held/hosted the pre assembly in Boulder Montana on March 18th. Grateful to the other districts who showed up to join us and make it a good day (51, 61, 71, 72). Also, thanks to the Area Chairs who showed up and shared their information with us all. Special thank you to the ladies who came to my house and helped put the food together, making coffee and setting up the food for everyone to enjoy. Thanks to everyone who brought Potluck dishes as well! Note to self...check the calendar before setting dates. We held this event on the same weekend as Pockets.

Some of the things going on in the coming months are;

Founder's Day, in June on the 10th and 11th.

12 Step Study April 29th with Bob D.

Concept work shop in August; date to be announced

Spring Roundup will be held May 4th-6th-2018

I am looking forward to seeing what the next 6 months will bring

Yours in Service, Dawn B.

District 42

All current meetings on State website

East Glacier Grizzly Group...Nice location, great people, stop and see them this summer, Tuesday and Thursday 7:00 PM

Browning...most nights at Treatment Center...7:00 PM located on south side of hospital, difficult to locate, ask at hospital for directional help.

Cut Bank...holding steady, help from Treatment Court

Shelby... Meeting number have fallen, trying to rebuild, help from Treatment Court

Conrad...good numbers, steady turnout

Choteau...Struggling, most nights 2-3

Chester...no meetings

August...good meeting Fri. evening, not registered, will be registering

Dutton, steady turnout, members from both districts

Kevin..Not registered, small meeting, trying to get going

Crossroads...few attendees, 1-3- State side, more on Fed side, usually 6-10.. Hear that they should have stayed in the program, lots of inmates with AA experience.

Steady turnout to most groups, struggling some nights because of low numbers, Treatment Court sends most new attendees

Kurt K.

District 71

Located in the southwestern portion of our beautiful state. We have 24 active groups with approximately 80 meeting a week

A partial list of institutions and penal setting that District 71 cover includes: Butte Pre-release, Connections Corrections, MCDC, Montana State Prison, Start Program, Watch-Dui Program, Warm Springs Forensic Unit located at Galen.

On April 1st, District 71 hosted our first workshop. Earl F., Area 40 Archivist gave a presentation on Early AA in Montana. A good time was had by all and of course the meal was great! Thank you Earl for your Service. We are working on our fall Roundup, October 13th, 14th, 15th, to be held at Fairmont Hot Springs. We are Looking forward to seeing you there.

Yours in Service--Virginia C., District 71 DCM

District 72

We held a GSR panel and workshop for incoming gsr's Jan. 25.

I attended the WCRAASC in Cheyenne Wyo Mar 3-5. Also the pre-assem. On Mar. 18..

Dist 72 is comprised of 46 registered grps. And covers almost 8000 sq. mi. from Cooke City, Silver Gate, Willsall, Emigrant, Livingston, Bozeman, Belgrade, Manhattan, Three Forks, Ennis, Virginia City, Jeffers, Gallatin Gateway, Big Sky, to West Yellowstone. Dist 72 takes meetings to watch, MCDC, and Montana State Prison. We have 16 voting members at the assembly. I would like to thank all the Dist. Officers for getting their info back to me so fast so I could forward it on. I was really overwhelmed at WCRAASC so I would like thank Rick, Libbie, and Casey for helping unwind on the ride back to Denver. I would also like to thank all the area officers for their time and help. Yours in service Dist. 72 DCM Robert E.

District 81

We are located in Western Montana with Idaho bordering us on the west, Highway 2 to the north, Highway 83 to the west, and Highway 12 to the south. This means we have meetings as far west as Trout Creek, north to Polson, east to Seeley Lake, and south to our largest city Missoula with a population of around 70,000 (according to Wikipedia). We have 57 groups, with 101 meetings each week. We recently added a new meeting in Pablo on Tuesdays at 7:00pm, so check it out if you are passing through.

Our district meetings are the 3rd Sunday of the month at the Fourth D Alano Club at 2:00 pm. All our district positions are currently filled and everyone is getting settled into this rotation.

We have about 15 GSRs who consistently attend our district meetings and I am currently in the process of organizing a GSR workshop for some time at the beginning of May. We would love to have more participation from more of our groups and hope that as I travel and connect with more of them we will see that happen. I was able to attend the West Central Regional Conference in Cheyenne and enjoyed the amazing opportunity to learn not only about our agenda items, but also about service and specifically what I am supposed to be doing! I am also so grateful that I was able connect with so many wonderful individuals from our area while I was there. Kalispell hosted a great preassembly for our corner of Montana and we had a good turn out from District 81. The next planned event for our district is Founders Day on Saturday June 10th and will include a panel at 10:00am with the topic "Controversy in AA". This will be followed by the delegate's report, and finally a BBQ at 12:00 at Franklin Park. We hope to see some of you there.

Thank you for letting me be of service! Ashley J.

District 91

My name is Kacie and I'm an alcoholic. I am the DCM for District 91 which is located in the beautiful Northwest corner of Montana. The Alano Club in Kalispell is at the center of our District and hosts several different 12-Step groups. It is home to AA meetings from 6:30 am to 7:00 pm every day of the week with a 10 pm candlelight meeting on Saturday's. From there we stretch to outlying fellowships in Eureka and Coram to the north and Bigfork, Lakeside/Somers, and Elmo to the South with many groups in between. Alcoholics in our neighborhood are carrying the message of recovery into Pathways Treatment Center, Wilderness Treatment Center, and the Summit Preparatory School. Men and Women are making the hand of AA available in the Flathead County Jail and the Juvenile Detention Center with meetings being held on a weekly basis. We have an active District Committee and, as of last month's business meeting with the election of a Treasurer, all of our service positions are filled! Our business meetings held on the final Sunday of the month benefit from between five and eight GSR's attending out of our 17 registered groups.

I was honored that my District gave me the opportunity to attend the WCRSCAA in Cheyenne, WY the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of March. While there I got to hear how the rest of our region is weighing in on the current GSC agenda items. I had the privilege of eating lunch with a few alcoholics from Montana and one of our seven Class A Trustees, Ivan Lemelle, from Louisiana. Experiences like this make it increasingly clear to me that there is no "us" and "them" in AA, just WE. Whether the topic is social media, changes to literature, or pamphlets WE all love AA and all share one primary purpose. WE learn from each other by having conversations, sharing information, and practicing the spiritual principles of this program when making decisions that will affect our whole fellowship. One of my greatest take aways from the weekend was a renewed appreciation for being homegrown in Area 40. A Delegate and alternate DCM shared with me that up until just two years ago the GSR's did not have a vote at their area Assembly, but instead one Liaison who carried one vote for all GSR's. I look forward to the opportunity to grow GSR participation in my District knowing the GSR's voice is how I hear from our fellowship.

We've had some great fun in District 91 already this year and we're just getting started. District hosted Into Action Weekend in February, which emphasizes service work, and enjoyed a scrumptious BBQ Rib potluck. The Whitefish Group held their annual Sober Ski in March. Our local Intergroup pulled out all the stops with Nicole on the bagpipes and a mouth watering Corned Beef and Cabbage St. Patrick's Day birthday meeting. We hosted a Pre-Assembly featuring must-go-back-for-seconds Sloppy Joes. One thing is certain in District 91- we do food right! So, you won't want to miss fellowship opportunities in our neighborhood and we invite you all to stop over and join us! Your next opportunity will be the Founder's Day Campout at Tally Lake the 9th, 10th, and 11th of June. I look forward to serving with all of you this rotation! Thank you for allowing me to be of service and for the amazing quality of my sobriety today!

In Love and Service,

Kacie N.

DCM District 91

District 93

Welcome from District 93- The beautiful Bitterroot Valley! We have GSR"S active at the district level from Lolo to Sula!

June 2-4 is our District 93 Campout at 3 Sisters Campground at Como Lake. Come join us for fun, fellowship and a rousing Delegate Report on Sunday June 4 at 1000 hrs. Gerry, of course will be presenting, although not camping due to a spouse that prefers regular beds! We welcome both with open arms and a soft bed!! See ya at Como! Nance G.

Public Information-Tim K.

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS OF AREA 40:

First, thanks for allowing me to serve you as the Area 40 P.I. chair. I have been quite busy, between the Answer Net hotline calls and reports, emails from other members regarding questions about the AA hotline or P.I. in Area 40 and reading and discussing the background material for the rather lengthy agenda for P.I. at the 2017 General Service Conference. As of April 5, 2017, the hotline has received 56 calls.

January: We received 14 calls. 9 of them, a volunteer was reached by Answer Net or patched through. 4 no volunteers were reached. 1 was a caller in New Jersey and transferred to New Jersey Hotline.

February: We received 19 calls. 14 a volunteer was reached or patched through. 5 calls no volunteers were reached.

March: We had 19 calls. 10 a volunteer was reached by Answer Net, 2 I called around and found a volunteer to contact the caller, 1 was a hang up, 5 were meeting questions or basic questions, and 1 was a landlord trying to get a message to an AA group in Helena regarding building capacity.

April 1-4: We have had 4 calls so far, 3 a volunteer was reached. 1 I contacted a volunteer and connected the caller.

So as you can see, there have been several calls where no one has been connected. The first 2 months I was not sure what to do about this exactly. In March I just started calling around and finding someone to talk to or give the callers name and number to. In my opinion, this is unacceptable. I think we have several issues going on here:

1-AA members information no longer valid whether they are no longer in the fellowship, new phone number, or just not answering or able or willing to answer or return calls.

2-Answer Net information or volunteer lists may not be accurate or updated.

3-Answer Net operators not fully understanding what we expect when someone calls AA Hotline.

4-No volunteers on phone list for Answer Net in rural areas/Dark Districts.

How can we solve this?

What I plan to do after Spring Assembly hopefully with Brandon's Help is make sure we have updated volunteer lists/times available/numbers for Area 40 and be sure Answer Net has this information. I will also ask all District DCM's and PI/Hotline reps to update the lists from their districts and get this information to Brandon or I so we can get this updated. I will also be connecting with Answer Net and even traveling to Billings to meet with them if necessary to get this system working better. I would also ask everyone here to program into their cell phones 406-248-2337 as the AA Hotline so when this number pops up you realize it is the Hotline and can either answer or listen to your message and pass this call on or call them back. Also, announce this in your groups and districts so we all get this service working more accurately. Last when sending around sign up sheets for the hotline, make it very clear to put accurate information when you are available not just anytime if you are not available anytime, etc.

Hopefully we as a collected group can do all we can together to insure anytime anyone anywhere calls the AA Hotline in Area 40 they are connected to an Alcoholic, it is our responsibility!

So Far we have had several phone book renewals, that I have forwarded on to the treasurer-Julie for payment. I have been teaching myself the Area 40 website, so I can help and guide others regarding all the great information that is available on there. I attended the pre-assembly in Boulder on March 18th, and was terrified. It went smoother than I thought, or I may of sounded like and been a complete idiot but the attendees were too spiritual to say anything, so at least I don't know what a fool I made of myself. I have been in touch with a few of my PI committee members prior to the spring assembly and have supplied them all with a copy of the background material since it was available. I want to thank Kaycee from District 91 for filling in for me for the Kalispell pre-assembly and for Gerry and Paul for handling my agenda at the Miles City pre-assembly. I look forward to the next 20 months of serving you at the Area level. I look forward to getting to know all of you, and am available to help out anyway I can. Please call, email or come talk to me anytime!

In Love and Service,

Area 40 PI Chair-Tim K.

PI/REPORT AND CHARTER COMMITTEE REPORT

Here is the PI Committee report for the GSC agenda for April 2017. The committee had 12 members attending and 4 voting members were present. I read my PI report to start off. Then we sent around an attendance sheet. The following members were present:

1-Kacie N. -District 91 DCM (PI voting member)

2-Eleanor W.-District 72 PI (PI voting member)

3-Tim K.-PI Chair (voting member)

4-Nance Gee-Dist 93 DCM (voting member)

5-Annie L

6-Don M.

7-Joe P.

8-Ken S.

9-Brandon M.-Web Master Area 40

10-Dan H.

11-Terri T.

12-Pete F.

I started the meeting off after attendance, discussing the procedure we would follow and identifying the voting members present. I asked Kacie N. to take minutes of the meeting. The first agenda item was

from PI GSC agenda-

A- Review 2016 annual report from the trustees' Public Information Committee regarding aa.org and aa-grapevine.org.

The committee read the item and I read some of the background material and there was no discussion.

B- Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan:

1-Review the trustees' PI Committee report on the Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan.

2-Review 2017 PI Comprehensive Media Plan

3-Discuss suggestion to update the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity."

We reviewed the first 2 from the background material briefly and was no discussion. We reviewed the changes to the pamphlet in item 3 and all agreed the changes were good.

C- Review the distribution and tracking information for the video PSA "I Have Hope"

We reviewed and discussed the purpose of tracking the PSA.

D-Review 2016 report from the trustees' PI Committee on the Usefulness and Relevance of Public Service Announcements.

The committee discussed where you can locate the links to review and get PSA's from the AA website, which can be received in a digital format from GSO for distribution to use in your towns for PSA's. We all agreed PSA's Are very relevant and useful!

E-Review report from the trustees' PI Committee on the Implementation of a Google for Nonprofits account.

We went around the room on the rest of the agenda items to let everyone have 2-3 minutes to share . There was concern discussed over affiliation with pop up ads- several members were concerned by this, we discussed what happens when the \$10,000 ad grant is exhausted. We reviewed tradition 6, about endorsing or lending the AA name, and what our primary purpose really is and if this would affect that. We also decided to not close the door on this item, but to move as slowly as possible and air on the side of caution. A suggestion was made to brand all items carrying a presence online w/ AA's endorsement. Discussion about the negotiation of Terms & Conditions. We discussed the Social media including youtube and Google for nonprofits may be a way for AA to grow again, discussed a fact we found about how AA has declined since 1992 in membership. What are we doing and how can we reach the still suffering Alky in 2017?? This could be a very beneficial tool. We talked about how we are already online and that anonymity breaks are happening all the time-this would allow the GSO to establish a Conference approved-fact based presence. We read in the background information that the GSO PI committee has found no conflict with the traditions at this time, but expressed the need for legal review going forward. The grant money is cause for concern regarding the tradition of outside contributions we felt. A member said his group conscience was that they felt that Google is the Rockefeller's of yesterday and they'd better change the 7th tradition first. A member stated AA needs to stay the course and not just jump in the fads of the day. Another member said we need to trust our trusted servants at the Area Level who are putting the time into this agenda item. The committee was split about 50-50 on this item.

F. Review report from the trustees' PI Committee on the implementation of a Twitter account.

We discussed, who will monitor the twitter feed, What will happen when negative things are tweeted when someone re "tweets" a tweet. We discussed how a informed group conscience is absolutely vital and that kneejerk reactions can be a negative liability for us. We discussed the \$55,000 cost just for the first 4-6 months. We discussed how we need to remain a program of attraction rather than promotion. We discussed that some members felt we had too much background material for this conference, and some members felt that GSO was trying to hide things in the background info to sneak under the radar, and that much background information is too much for any GSR or DCM or any member to adequately read and understand and bring back to the group for a conscience. We felt this much stuff in background material and on agenda was overwhelming and hinders the effectiveness of the inverted triangle. We felt Twitter is boring and would not be of help. One member felt what we are doing with things like twitter would be making it easier for people to avoid coming into the rooms and attending meetings or having contact with alcoholics live by using all the internet/social media stuff. It was stated Twitter is too uncontrollable and very negative. People were confused why so much overlap with social media in all the committees and why we need it in first place. A member stated that they think a lot of these controversial agenda items originated in the same Area's.

The committee was opposed to a Twitter Account.

G-Review report from the trustees' PI committee on the 2017 AA Membership survey.

Had discussion on how groups were chosen to participate in the survey. That it is random and not a realistic reflection of AA membership. One member felt this survey is a conflict of Anonymity, saying we are anonymous but yet we are keeping track of our membership and statistics.

I-Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the annual meeting of the GSC.

Not much discussion, committee was all for this item.

J-Review PI kit and workbook

We went through contents, and members asked how to get one for their PI rep, I guided them to the AA website.

REPORT AND CHARTER

A-Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, scope and proceure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the annual meeting of the GSC.

Again, committee was all for this item.

B-The AA Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, 2018-2020 edition:

1-review list of editorial updates.

2-Consider request to add text regarding area websites to Chapter Four of the AA service manual/twelve concepts for world service.

3-Review request to add the bylaws of AA World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc. as appendices.

4-Review request to add afootnote to Concept VIII to accurately reflect the current ownership of the service corporations.

Committee reviewed these items and were okay with any changes/additions proposed.

C-Consider request that changes to The AA Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service be made available to the Fellowship in years that a revised edition is not published.

Committee would like that to be available.

D-Discuss AA Directories.

We just talked about what they are and how to get a group in the directory.

E-Discuss GSC Final report

NO Discussion.

Before closing I went around room asking each member what PI can do better at any level to better serve the newcomer and the Fellowship. Most members stated we do a great Job, keep up the work. We adjourned at noon for lunch with the responsibility statement.

Thanks for allowing me to serve!

Tim K.

Grapevine –Jake H.

I'm extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to serve as your Area 40 Grapevine chair. I'm a babe in the woods when it comes to what a committee chair is supposed to do, but I've been studying like mad. So far in my rotation, I've covered Grapevine agenda items at pre-assemblies at Boulder and Kalispell and had Paul L. sub for me at Miles City. Now that my feet are getting wet in the position, I'm beginning to come up with some ideas for fulfilling my mission to promote the Grapevine in Montana.

First, as I unpacked the Area Grapevine display for this assembly, I discovered it needs a little work. I plan to refurbish the display and bring the collection of Grapevine books up to date.

I have made myself available to speak and provide the display at Area events. So far I've been invited to attend the Grapefest in Helena June 27th and the Fall Roundup at Fairmont Hot Springs October 13-15th.

I plan on getting the email addresses of all the Grapevine representatives in Area 40 and make sure they all get the monthly newsletters sent from the Grapevine staff in New York.

I am also figuring out ways to get Grapevine's new promotion idea rolling in Area 40. They are asking for submissions of 300 words or less stories from groups or individuals on specific topics from each AA Region to expose more people to the magazine and increase subscriptions. Groups can also include a photo of their meeting place. In the same vein, I'm putting together a packet on how to write your own personal Grapevine story if you really haven't had much experience writing. The goal is to get ten completed stories submitted to the Grapevine from our area this rotation.

Finally, in keeping with my mission as Grapevine Chair, I want to encourage everyone here who doesn't already subscribe to the Grapevine to consider going ahead and pulling the trigger on a subscription. Not only will you be strengthening our sense of fellowship, your contribution will help AA as a whole and that in turn will help the still suffering alcoholic. A subscription is actually a good way to practice the 12th step. There is even a digital subscription available. Just Google AA Grapevine and your on your way.

Grapevine Committee Report and Policy and Admissions Report from Area 40 Spring Assembly 2017

Jake H. – Grapevine Chair

A. Discuss the spiritual value of Grapevine and La Vina in carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Connected w/ Item B. Is the spiritual value the same for La Vina and Grapevine? Do they expect more out of La Vina than the Grapevine? Clarification of what La Vina is, which is the same thing as Grapevine but in Spanish. What is spiritual parity? La Vina subscription costs are cheaper than Grapevine. Participation in La Vina is minimal, not being used to its full potential. Both magazines are equal in their ability to carry the message. Readership is great for La Vina, but most are given freely without payment, whereas Grapevine makes more money which allows the Grapevine to have color and so on.

B. Reconsider the 2010 Advisory Action regarding La Vina.

Refer above.

C. Reconsider the 2004 Conference Advisory Action on outside sales.

Grapevine separate from GSO & wants to increase revenue. Income from Grapevine helps keep AA solvent. Head of Grapevine started connecting with Hazeldon to have them sell the magazines, but he was told by GSO that he couldn't and he resigned. Is Grapevine affiliating by utilizing outside sales? Wouldn't we be better at carrying the message by using outside sales? Are we creating confusion between what's AA approved and outside literature? Is it just about making money or carrying the message? Grapevine in other facilities has helped in carrying the message, like treatment, corrections, and so on. Our main purpose is to carry the message and it doesn't look like we're affiliating. Even now AA groups can do sponsored subscriptions to get magazines into treatment, jails, etc. *Consensus: 8 for, 1 against.*

D. Discuss AA Grapevine, Inc.'s continued exploration of an Instagram account.

Good idea to continue to explore and gather information. Who's to say we're not shooting at a moving target? We may be doing virtual reality in a few years. It would mean making a decision that may be completely invalid. Does Instagram own whatever we post? Once we put it out there, it's out on the internet for life. We have to protect our anonymity. Are we losing money by looking into it? No. If it's not costing anything and they are just looking into it. That's fine. Instagram could be gone like MySpace by the time they consider doing anything. Connection to tech is a when, not an if. How do we go about doing it is the question. We have confidence in Grapevine staff to keep track of any social media sites that are implemented. More people can be reached using social media. *Consensus: 9 for, 0 against.*

E. Discuss AA Grapevine, Inc.'s. continued exploration of a Facebook page.

FanPage can be set up for businesses and can set up a wall and people can't comment. A Blue Check can verify that it is the right Facebook page. 50% of 18 to 24 year olds check Facebook. A private FB page is offered for creating fellowship. *Consensus: 8 for, 1 against.*

F. Discuss AA Grapevine, Inc.'s continued exploration of a Google for Non-Profits account.

Google for non-profits is a suite of business tools. GoogleYouTube facilitates communication. Outside companies currently removing themselves from Google until they create algorithm in ads that are put on a businesses page or in relation to ad. Google AdGrants most controversial. Nothing paid up front, pay for each hit, Google AdGrants gives first \$10,000 free if non-profit. Do they have people out there working to create a number of hits so they make more money? Sounds like a hook. Google decides what pages are relevant when someone searches. Are we selling AA's name to Google? They do own the content. It's very easy to create a look-alike website/media site. How can we differentiate and make sure people are getting us? *Consensus: 8 for, 1 against.*

G. Discuss ways groups can be kept informed about Grapevine and La Vina when they don't have a GVR or RLV. Not a whole lot of reps. District 71 Grapevine Chair requested info about Group GVR from GSO, how many etc. and no info was available. The Area 40 might have that information. His idea was to communicate with groups in his district to encourage groups to participate. Give information at district meetings. Visit groups, if District Chair. Make subscriptions forms available in districts and area meetings. Discuss this at fall assembly with ideas.

H. Consider list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2018 or later.

Considered

I. Review Audio Strategy status update.

Reviewed.

J. Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference.

Considered.

K. Review Grapevine Workbook.

Policy and Admissions

A. Review final report on electronic voting at Conference.

Reviewed. No comments.

B. Review final report on the translation of Conference background.

Reviewed. Each committee would be responsible for their committee translation. Volunteer/Professional translators included. Changes submission for agenda items from Dec. to Sept. Centralizing translation makes sense. Less hassle.

No more comments.

C. Consider request to create a plan for the equitable distribution of the workload of Conference committees by combining and/or creating committees.

Considered. No comments

D. Consider request that an anonymity-protected, digital Final Conference Report be published, starting with the 67th General Service Conference.

Considered. Questions about what's protected through anonymity.

E. Review dates for the 2020 General Service Conference.

Reviewed. No comments.

F. Consider proposing the dates of future General Service Conferences as committee considerations rather than requiring that the dates be considered as Advisory Actions.

Considered. Saves time and effort if left to committee instead of an advisory action.

G. Consider a request that the General Service Conference be held in New York City every other year.

Considered. No questions.

H. Consider a request to allow regional service committees to bid to host the General Service Conference.

Considered. Great idea.

I. Consider a request that the Advisory Action delegating site selection for the General Service Conference to G.S.O. management be rescinded.

Considered. Wouldn't this need to be rescinded to be able to do Agenda items H & I? The conference chair needs to decide.

J. Consider a request to add a "YPAA Subcommittee" to the service structure.

Considered. YPAA wants to be recognized, along with giving perspective from the YP POV for the future of AA. Will there be other special interest subcommittees created? What committee would they be a sub to? Don't know at this time. Young people need a place to connect with each other. Even though we're speaking the same language, there's a disconnect between age, communication, and connection. Older people don't relate. Don't want to create a barrier for any alcoholic coming in regardless of age. YPAA can help AA stay healthy. YPAA very involved in service, very passionate. We can learn from one another. Helps to create a needed fellowship. Concern over special interest groups forming in the future. YPAA not a special interest group, just about age. But all these special interest are part of AA and yet separate and could request their own subcommittee. If they are already part of AA, then why do they need to have a subcommittee? They participate in AA as a whole with all service - maybe their YPAA perspective is already being incorporated. But maybe it comes back to communication and having someone representing YPAA at GSO. They want an official presence. Do they contribute to GSO? Yes, through their 7th tradition. Needs more exploration.

K. Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference.

Considered. No comment.

CPC-Luke S.

The rotation started off with a email from GSO informing me of a National Indian Health board conference. It will be held September 25-29 in Billings. We will have booths there to display and distribute AA literature to professionals, who may have questions about what AA is and what it isn't. I have contacted Terri from the FIGHTING 11th, who is rocking the CPC world, and she is very excited for it. I was able to attend 2 of the 3 preassemblies. I heard very lovely discussion and learned something new at both of the preassemblies. I was told that I was participating in corrections and treatment workshop in Helena on May, 20th and I could not be more excited about it! My car and motorcycle are road ready to come participate in your next CPC event. I'm very lucky to be serving with so many of my AA heroes. My sobriety date is 2/3/07 and why I say this because I have made every possible mistake you can make in AA. Not one time did AA give up on me. It is only because of AA that I am able to stay sober. The service work we do is so important. When I've dropped the ball people have taken the time to say you are doing a good job and encouraged me to stick to it. I can never give back enough to aa. So when asked if I m willing to stand for a aa position, I say I m to busy, just kidding . I say yes I m willing to stand. Only by giving, I will ever truly receive.

CPC Committee Report:

Written in the 60's. doesn't accurely/appropriately reflect current practices in professional fields. It is 46 pages which is hard to read if you are a professional. It doesn't get replaced and we have plenty of CPC materials. Vote was to let it go.

Written 1958 and outdated and the footnote points that out. Is the price right to put this in? Some thought it was necessary context. This may be just rearranging the deck chairs on the titanic. Some thought we should just revamp the whole pamphlet. Just retire and find a new solution.

Where does anonymity come in. Does this adhere to traditions and carry the message and is it necessary. Cpc manual says that we ought nont promote via digital or social media. Background CPC committee believes this is line with our current anonymity policy. Concerns about advertising, can data etc. ever really be deleted. Has face to face CPC work taking a back seat. The committee is not in favor of moving forward with this motion.

How much money will it cost. Background connotation of alcoholics vs problem drinkers. It is consistent with our literature. How many people are we alienating with this title. We don't diagnose! Committee was in favor of the change.

Exploration of how we might better gather information about how to best reach specific groups. Stigma in the armed forces seeking help. Should commanding officers have specific guidelines and warning signs etc? Online grapevine would be helpful. Targeting the VA with CPC work! WE SHOULD ALL BRING THIS BACK TO OUR GROUP. Do we have specialized groups we don t know of.

People are already doing this. Will GSC know better than us on this one. If we want it to be a regular practice, we should have it written down.

User friendly , organized , and we like it. Added AA at a glance and deleted "lets be friendly with our friends."

Trustees GSC

Mailed to committee members only

Mailed to committee members only

Mailed to committee members only

Literature-Lance W.

Hello Everyone

My Name is Lance W. and Im an alcoholic. What a privilege and honor to serve as your Area 40 literature committee chair For the upcoming rotation. Since I have been involved with alcoholics anonymous I had learn that AA Literature is an effective way to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering Alcoholic.

The Transition was made very easy with the past chair, Jake. I was able to attend the pre assembly in Boulder Mt. and came soon to find out how nervous I was. But it was a great experience. Unfortunately I was able to make the other assemblies in Kalispell and Miles city. You can take a look at the literature display. I am very eager to serve as the literature committee chair. Feel free to contact me anyway on how I can best serve you. Thanks again so much for my sobriety . Lance W.

Literature Committee Report

Consider request for revisions to the pamphlet “ Questions and answers on sponsorship.”
Committee has agreed for the changes to the Pamphlet.

Consider request to Retire the pamphlet “ Too Young.”
Committee has agreed to retire the pamphlet. Thought it was indeed to be retired.

Discuss the proposed plan for the annual review of recovery Literature.

Committee Looked over the Plan and thought there wasn't much need for a discussion and agreed for the annual review of recovery literature.

Pamphlet “Too Young.”
Review progress report on the update to the pamphlet.
Review draft language about young people's conferences, for inclusion in the pamphlet.

Committee has reviewed both progress report on the update and draft language about young people's Conference and agreed on both not much discussion.

Review Revised draft pamphlet “AA for the Woman.”
Committee review the draft pamphlet and agreed on it. Not much to discuss.

Review revised draft pamphlet “Finding acceptance: AA for the LGBTQ Alcoholic.” (Formerly titled “ AA and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic”)
Committee Reviewed draft Pamphlet and agreed upon pamphlet.

Review progress report on the development of literature for alcoholic with mental issues and those who sponsorship.
Committee reviewed the report and agrees.

Review draft sample illustrations and corresponding revised text for the pamphlet. “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”
Committee reviewed the report and agrees.

Review progress report on the revision to “Inside A.A.: Understanding the fellowship and Its Services.”
Committee reviewed the report and agrees.

Consider requests for literature and/ or Language regarding safety.
There was some discussion on this item about safety and thought it was important to go either direction on adding or revamping other pamphlets regarding about safety.

Discuss request for revision to the pamphlet “The AA Group.”
Committee agreed upon revision stating that it does need it to keep up with today's request.

Finance-Julie R.

My first official act as your new treasurer was to open a new PO Box for the Area in Bozeman. For anyone who is still sending contributions to Whitefish, please note the new address: Area 40, Inc., PO Box 3878, Bozeman, MT 59772. Mail will continue to be forwarded to the new address until the end of this year.

On January 7th, I met in Great Falls with Libbie, Gerry, Alex, Paul, Mary and Melinda for the biennial audit of the financial records. All was deemed to be in order and after signing the new bank signature cards, we were set for the new rotation.

Through the non-profit organization, TechSoup, which helps other non-profits get technology products and services, we were able to upgrade the 2009 financial software to 2017 at a discounted rate. So I then set to work learning this new software. All the old files uploaded smoothly, but I am still exploring all the ways to use this accounting software which also integrates with Excel spreadsheets. As with all new service positions, there is a learning curve, especially as we have become more technology dependent.

March was a busy month. I attended the back-to-back Pre-Assemblies in Boulder and Kalispell over the 18th and 19th. Thank you to Dawn and Kacie and their districts for hosting these events. Both had fabulous food and good discussions on our agenda items. On a personal note, I was also grateful for the opportunity to visit with my younger son who lives in Kalispell. The next week, I filed Area 40's corporate annual report to the State and the Form 990-N to the IRS. These filings were made easier by the fact they could both be filed online.

Meanwhile, I've been receiving your contributions – THANK YOU! - and dispersing payments for expenses. Just a note on the financial reports: the February payment to AnswerNet was somehow lost in the mail so it was reissued along with the March payment. That is why the 800 number/hotline expenses are showing about twice what they would be for the month. The actual first quarter figure should be \$723.78 instead of \$968.38. This will be adjusted in April after I receive the bank statements making sure the check hasn't cleared. The month-end financial reports go out to the Area Committee each month and are also posted on our website, www.aa-montana.org.

I want to thank Mary, our previous treasurer, for all her help through e-mails and phone calls during this transition. She did an excellent job maintaining the Area's files and records. I look forward to working with the members of the Finance committee this rotation and getting to know all the new faces at the Assembly. Yours in service, Julie R., Area 40 Treasurer

Area 40 Finance Committee Minutes – April 7, 2017

Opened with Serenity Prayer

Voting members present: Julie R., Treasurer; Gerry R., Delegate; Paul L., Area Chair/Alt. Delegate; Tom R., Dist. 71 Rep.; Steve S., Dist. 41 DCM *Attendees:* 10 other AA members

Finance – Area 40

Review assembly report of the Area 40 Treasurer: (see report on page 24)

Consider agenda item from Treatment Chair to attend the BTG workshop in MN -

Workshop is in Mpls./St. Paul, Sept. 8-10, 2017 w/expenses not to exceed \$1,000

Discussion on the importance of BTG given by participants. Concerns about where the money would come from in the budget as it was not a line-item expense. Return on investment was concern. Would there be workshops or training available to different districts and groups available from the Treatment Chair? Discussion on amount of request, many thought it was too low for travel, lodging, meals, etc. Motion brought to committee for vote: Send the Treatment Chair to the BTG annual workshop in Mpls./St. Paul on Sept. 8-10th, 2017, with airfare/hotel/meals not to exceed \$1,500.00 Passed unanimously. Area would want a report at the Fall Assembly, with the Treatment Chair having ideas on how to share the information gathered with districts.

Finance – GSC

Consider request to change the committee's current annual review of the suggested Area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference to every other year.

Consider request to change the committee's current annual review of the Conference-approved level of \$5,000 for bequests to the General Service Board from AA members to every other year.

Consider request to change the committee's current annual review of the Conference-approved maximum annual contribution of \$3,000 to the General Service Board from an individual AA member to every other year.

We discussed items A, B & C together as they all had similar requests and the same background information. Sense of the committee was for these items.

Consider request to add text to the pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" indicating there is no dollar limit to the amount a group may contribute.

Sense of the committee was for this item. No dissenting opinion.

Consider request to add text to the committees' Composition, Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference.

Thoughtful discussion, seemed fairly common sense to everyone that shared.

Review Self-Support Packet.

There was curiosity from several district treasurers present on where to access the packet. It was discussed that the packet did come with both the DCM and GSR kits.

With some extra time, there was discussion on how the Finance Committee can better serve Area 40 and reach the alcoholics who still suffer. Discussion centered on how to support both districts and groups on sending reps to Area 40 Assembly. Also, discussed a district donating money to Area 40.

Corrections-Hugh M.

My name is Hugh and I am an Alcoholic, I am serving as your Area 40 Corrections Chair. I have been busy since taking over in January. Jay and I got together in January and I received all of the inventory of books for the Pink Can Fund and would like to thank Jay T. for being there to help me with my transition. I have been working with Lee G. our MSP (Montana State Prison) liaison on Bridging the Gap inmates leaving the state. We have had more inmates signing up that are leaving Montana in the last three months than all of last year, which really makes me happy. The word is getting out that we can help inmates to transition to the outside AA world, so thank you to all who take the message into our prisons and jails. I also attended the per-assemblies in Boulder on March 18, and in Kalispell on March 19. Thank you to all who put the work into making both assemblies such a great success. I look forward to participating in Helena for the Treatment and Corrections Workshop on May 20th. I would like to thank all of you for allowing me to serve as your corrections chair.

Pink Can Fund Report

I would like to thank all members and groups of Area 40 for all of their contributions to the Pink Can Fund. I have a balance of \$5275.53 now. I will be placing a large order this month, so if you have any special requests please email me in the next two weeks (aa.montana-org/corrections). Attached is a spreadsheet of contributions since the Fall Assembly of 2016. Again thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Corrections Committee Report

1. We had 14 people attending the meeting
2. We reviewed assembly report
3. Discussed corrections correspondence. We are in need of male volunteers. Average wait time for males is 4-6 weeks.
4. Discussed at length carrying the AA message to Native Americans, We are all in agreement that we can only carry the message as an AA meeting, not changing who and what we do. Ex...no sweat lodges, no smudges or any other things that sway is from our traditions. I will be calling all reservations in Montana to see how many jails have AA meetings being brought into them, Will report back to all.
5. Discussed ways to encourage new first time attendees to regional forums. Ex. Sponsor into service work.
6. Reviewed 2030 international convention site/selection procedures. Very well put together, no chance of it ever coming to Montana. LOL

Treatment Committee:

James from district 41 opened with moment of silence and serenity prayer

Treatment facility and corrections will work with bridging the gap

Listed area policy and procedures (fall 2016 revision)

Treatment/Accessibilities – GSC:

Review assembly report of the area 40 treatment center:

Met and saw Jessica on New Year's Eve; Jessica was the former treatment chair

Call on Brandon (webmaster) as well as Paul and Gerry. Asked to go to bridging the gap in September in Minneapolis and was granted permission

Diana L. was filling in for GSO treatment coordinator. Eva will take over after done training. Did speak through PC with Eva

Attended Boulder, Kalispell, and Miles City for pre-assembly (Paul did report in Kalispell)

Wants to find someone for bridging the gap for area 40; as the position is not filled as of now

Accessibility/Special needs

Wants to change the term of "special needs" to accessibility

Accessibility will be a more general and inclusive title for those with divertive needs

Mike brought up the fact that singling someone out (whether it's age, blindness, mental illness, race, ext.) that we all need to work together and not single people out. Janet also mentioned that she feels no matter what it's called, to treat people with love and respect

Discuss the accessibility of the AA.A. message for Armed Services veterans

2016 first time brought up; wanted to explore this more.

Request from district 20 area 50 in OK.

Big concern is for military that are deployed; no are the armed forces throwing people out of the military for drinking and not providing care?

When deployed, is difficult for those in service to find AA overseas

Vets do not really want to be singled out but do agree that because of serving, have different needs

Are those that deployed still able to have a say with their GSOs in the states

James brought up how grapevine can reach those in armed forces. Grapevine was originally printed for WWII armed forces in 1942. Also mentioned that new VA center in Great Falls refused pamphlets; but have a meeting now for vets only

Possibly bring in the ability to write letters to be able to communicate and spread the message (as they already do in jails/institutions/corrections)

No link or directories in the aa.org website. Accessibility on the website is poor. VA meetings are not on the actual AA meeting schedule has becoming an issue.

Each meeting is it's own entity, and is self-supporting. So we need to find a way to get groups that are not on the schedule to want to be on meeting cards and participate in area and district.

Consider request to add text to the committee's composition. Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the annual meeting of the general service conference

- On everyone's agenda; read discussion from manual

- Able to get everyone in one place before and actual in person meeting

- Robert E. mentioned that it had been tried out with his district and was successful

- Wants to be able to meet before the committee to be able to condense the time it takes at an annual meeting of the general service conference

Review Treatment kit and workbook

- Detailed visual review of the kit and workbook

- E-workbooks will be considered at the GSO and will possibly be voted on in the fall

- ON page 6, the word apathy; committee reviewed and does not have enough information to come to a conclusion

Review Accessibilities kit and workbook

- Detailed visual review of the kit and workbook

- Received kit from Jessica; workbook is being considered to change from "special needs" to "accessibility". Has not received the new workbook because of incorrect wording

- E-workbooks will be considered at the GSO and will possibly be voted on in the fall

Agenda – GSC

Review suggestions for the theme of the 2018 General Service Conference idem c;

- 53 suggestions up for review

- 53 suggestions were reviewed. Most liked suggestions:

 - 23: My name is blank I'm an alcoholic ; now what.

 - 41: 12x12x12

- Group agreed that the total number of presentation/discussions at the conference be limited to no more than 6

Discuss workshop topic ideas for the 2018 General Service Conference

Conference Evaluation

- Reviewed summary of the 2016 General Service Conference evaluations

- Reviewed General Service Conference Evaluation Form good

- Group coconscious chose the following 3 topics:

 - #4 – service work keeps us sober

 - #17 – The modern alcoholic

 - #35 – watering down the AA message – sticking to the big book

Discussed report on the conference Agenda Process from the trustees' committee on the General Service Conference

Discussed the process of posting the grid of proposed Conference agenda items on the Dashboard

- Talked about being able to print off the agenda vs being able to email it

- Decided to print out agendas so everyone in committee able to have agenda to follow

Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, scope, and procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the annual meeting of the general service conference

- Will be going over this matter will all committees

A singleness of purpose ; INSURING AA FUTURE

Archives –Raymona K.

My name is Raymona K. and I am an alcoholic. Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to be of service to God and my fellows as your Archives Chair this rotation. It is both an honor and a privilege to serve. My dedication and attitude about service can be summed up in one sentence found at the top of page 20 in the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous, it says;

“Our very lives as ex problem drinkers depends on our constant thought of others and how we may meet their needs”.

I got kind of a slow start in my duties as your Archives Chair, but rest assured, I am in the groove now and excited to dive in deep. I had a little trouble connecting with Mike D. to get any previous material, but we had a brief meeting last night and I am pretty much up to speed. I would like to thank Paul L. for his persistence in getting information to me before the Kalispell Pre-assembly. It was the only one I attended, but it provided me with an effective start on behalf of what will come out of my committee. It also gave me a chance to personally connect with one of my committee members in advance. I look forward to meeting with Earl F. and the other members of my committee and want to extend a special thank you to those who will sit on my committee during this rotation.

One thing I would like to accomplish during my rotation is to continually encourage every DCM, GSR, and other group representatives to document and submit records and stories from your groups to the Area 40 Archives, by contacting either myself or Earl F. , our Area Archivist. Earl has a wonderful packet available which specifically outlines the process by which to do just that. The history of AA and of Area 40 are important to retain for future generations.

Additionally, I am inspired to visit Area 40 group or district business meetings to speak on behalf of the area representing the importance of archive chair positions and their work in the archives department. Please feel free to invite myself, Earl, or both to attend such functions in your district to help us serve in inspiring all of you.

One of my tasks is to distribute, collect, and review evaluations from the assemblies. I have placed a bin on the table in front of me. Please return your evaluations to that bin by the end of the assembly. Your input is vital to the continued success of these assemblies.

Thank you again to everyone, especially the Area 40 committee, for your dedication to service and thanks to the Spirit of a Higher Power among us to guide us in our primary purpose; “to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

Archives Committee Report

Hello, my name is Raymona Keene – Abernathy and I’m an alcoholic, Archives Committee Chair for this rotation. Thank you, God, and the assembly for the opportunity to be a trusted servant. For those who are not aware, in addition to matters affecting archives, my secondary assignment is to Area 40 Structure and Policy. I am grateful there is not a lot coming out of both of those committee assignments for my first time at the helm as the Archives chair.

During our committee meeting today, all our standing committee members were present, giving us a full quorum for matters requiring a vote. There was only one. Also, the others who were in attendance gave excellent input and I thank you for your active participation in committee today. A special thank you to Jessie B. for taking excellent notes. Earl Fink also joined us as our Area Archivist, whose knowledge was invaluable.

Archives - GSC

From General Service Conference, there were 3 agenda items. The first one was;

Consider a proposal for a new publication, **Unity in Action: Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970 (a working title).**

General discussion indicated great support for this proposal and grateful for the opportunity to. Additionally, there was discussion regarding the desire to see these published works stay as true to originality as possible.

There was hope these works might also be available in audio form, both as narratives and via the original voice of Bill W. where possible.

By a show of hands, we were unanimously agreed this proposal be considered at General Service Conference.

(QUESTIONS/COMMENTS)

The second one is has already been covered.

Consider request to add text to the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference.

The text reads;

The committee may meet by conference call in the 60 days prior to the Conference for such things as deciding how to conduct their business including the means of voting within the committee, re-ordering the items on their agenda if needed, and holding preliminary non-voting discussions on what they consider to be priority items.

This indicates these phone conferences would be for discussion purposes and no final decisions would be made.

Are we limiting the functionality of these phone calls by placing a 60-day time frame?

The committee agreed that adding official text to policy is a great idea with the stipulation that the committees may meet by conference call at any time prior to the General Service Conference, rather than only 60 days prior.

(QUESTIONS/COMMENTS)

And lastly, the third;

Review Archives Workbook.

We reviewed the workbook. For any interested in accessibility, this, and all other committee workbooks, can be found on the web at www.aa.org and search under committee name – workbook.

(QUESTIONS/COMMENTS)

Archives – Area 40

I am going to combine items A and B.

Review assembly report of the Area 40 Archives Chair

Review Archivist Report

Both reports were reviewed and approved.

Structure and Policy – Area 40

Ad-Hoc Committee Report; Assignment was to: “Review the committee assignment, selection, and replacement process.

The committee agrees current selection processes are adequate with the following amendment; Create a pool of volunteers willing to serve on Standing Area Committees. * The pool would be generated by submissions from any District who would like to participate. * Names and contact information of individuals to be submitted by their DCM's with a limit of two per district to the Area Secretary. * The list will be recorded by the Area Secretary and dispersed to all of the Districts of Area 40

After much discussion, the committee puts forth a made and seconded motion as follows; The Ad Hoc committee proposes, with the approval of the Archives/Structure Committee, we implement a plan on a trial basis, until the 2017 Fall Assembly, to allow for the groups to discuss this plan and to allow the Finance Committee an opportunity to review this proposal, as it could have significant financial impact.

REFERE TO EARL FOR PRESENTATION

ARCHIVIST REPORT

Greetings, Area 40. My name is Earl F. and I'm an alcoholic. I am also serving as the Area 40 Archivist. I am happy to report that your archives collection is safe, secure and dry. We have plenty of room and sometimes, it does look as if a bomb has went off, but I am working to get things filed and stored where it will be useful to all.

I have been to a few activities this spring and enjoyed the fellowship I have experienced. I rode with Gerry and Connie R. to the West Central Regional Service Conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Gerry tried to lose his guide badge on the trip there, but had earned it back on the trip back to Montana. While at the conference, I was able to make contact with the Wyoming Archivist and met some interesting people who got sober in Montana and then moved to other parts of the country. I got contact information with these people and will try to do an Archival interview with them during my travels, if possible. I was also able to attend the Archives Breakout and gathered experience and shared information from Archives chairs from throughout the region. Our Regional Trustee has put out a request for historical information and records from past Regional Service Conferences. I am sure that I can provide that info to him to help complete the collection. It was fun to listen to the discussions of the Conference Agenda Items and to reconnect with old friends. In mid-March, I was invited to bring a small display to the Pockets of Enthusiasm. I set up the display and since the Pre-Assembly at Boulder was that day, I snuck away and attended it then returned for the evening speaker. While there, I ran into a friend who was very active at the Area level and in our visit he mentioned that he had several tapes from Pockets that he wanted to contribute to the Archives. We already had some of them, but he was able to help fill in the blanks. Last weekend, District 71 invited the April Fool to bring a display and do a presentation on the history of AA in Montana. It was a well attended event and there were great questions and a good dinner and fellowship afterward. I was able to take a few of our Archival items and let people glove up and handle them. I believe everyone enjoyed this.

I want to remind everyone that I am available to do presentations or bring displays to your events, just schedule with me. I will be going to the Spring Round-Up in Billings and am scheduled to head to Great Falls for Founders Day in June. I am also going to the Fall Round-Up in Fairmont and the National AA Archives Workshop this fall.

I would like to call your attention to the display here at this Assembly. AA started in Montana in 1942, which means this is the 75th year of AA in Montana; I think that is the Diamond Anniversary. That is really a long time for a bunch of drunks to stay sober. Information from 1942 is fairly scarce, but it can be found, with help. This process has helped me to reach out to other archivists, libraries, and other research facilities to gather information. I am learning more all the time and have found some great sources for these historical documents. The problem is that I start looking for something and then get sidetracked, and there aren't enough hours in the day. One thing that you can do to help in this process is to write your Group's history. I have scanned a "kit" that explains the process, has helpful suggestions and forms, and I can email, mail or distribute it to you through your DCM. If you are interested in this fun project, make sure I get an email or address from you this weekend. I also have copies with me this weekend.

As always, any information that you have had passed to you in this rotation that you do not need, please give it to me to sort through for additions to the Archives. A lot of the Standing committee chairs have already done this, but I will take anything that you might have accumulated. If you need it, keep it, but please don't throw it away. I also want to remind the DCM's to include me on your mailing list, or email list to make sure that I get copies of your District minutes and other activities and correspondence.

I would like to do some Archival Interviews through the remainder of this year. A lot of our fellowship has passed on and we have missed an opportunity to have their experience recorded. If you have an "Old Timer" who has been active in the program, was significant in starting groups or active in Service in AA, please let me know about them and maybe I could work through you to arrange an interview. Along those lines, please let me know if we have lost a member of our fellowship so that I have an opportunity to get their obit.

This is a really fun position and I am honored to be able to serve in this capacity. Thank you for your trust and the opportunity to continue to be of service to AA.

Happy Trudging,

Earl F.

Area 40 Archivist

THE PURPOSE OF THIS EVALUATION IS TO PROVIDE THE AREA CHAIR WITH INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MEMBERS FEEL THE ASSEMBLY VENUE IS MEETING THEIR NEEDS.

Spring 2017 56 evaluations returned.

1) Main meeting room arrangement of tables and chairs makes it easy to:

move around easily: YES 46 (82%) NO 9(16%)
hear all those speaking: YES 27 (48%) NO 25 (44%)
was seating adequate for your district: YES 29 (51%) NO 23 (41%)

2) Committee meeting room were:

easily accessible: YES 42 (75%) NO 4 (7%)
enough chairs for attendees: YES 42 (75%) NO 3 (5%)
were there outside distractions: YES 16 (28%) NO 32 (57%)

3) ADA requirements met your needs: YES 8 (14%) NO 3 (5%)

4)Yogo Inn facility:

fairly priced: YES 38 (68%) NO 5 (9%)
clean: YES 37 (66%) NO 7 (12%)
guest room adequate: YES 35 (62%) NO 7 (12%)
were you able to get a room: YES 39 (70%) NO 1 (1%)
were the staff helpful: YES 43 (77%) NO 1 (1%)

Analysis:

Of the missing percentages on all the questions, persons either did not fill them out at all or had no comment on that specific section.

On question number 3, regarding ADA 42 (75%) were not filled out or otherwise not applicable.

On question number 4, 16 (28%) either were not filled out for that section or specifically indicated staying elsewhere.

If a person circled yes and no, or left a comment regarding a percentage of satisfaction, it was counted as not satisfactory or a no answer.

The most common complaint was the noise in the Sapphire room closest to the kitchen and the lack of wifi accessibility in that room.

Additional Comments:

Negatives -

Ice machine in kitchen, noise unacceptable.

Beds in a few rooms were bad.

Specific complaints in rooms 119 and 127.

Stayed elsewhere due to previous bad experience.

Wifi not working (mostly in Sapphire room)

Worn out equipment, microphones not very good.

Not enough electrical outlets for the number of electronic devices being used.

No elevator.

Shoddy room décor, worn carpet, holes in curtains.

Positive –

Staff was helpful and friendly.

Always a pleasure.

Loved it!

Coffee was better than average.

Yogo is trying, E for effort.

Motion from Finance Committee:

Recommendation: Send the Treatment Chair to the annual Bridging the Gap workshop in Minneapolis, St. Paul on September 8-10, with airfare/hotels/meals not to exceed \$1500.00

Motion passed

85 voting members present

78 yes 2 no

Motion from the Archives/Structure and Policy:

The Ad-Hoc committee proposes with the approval of the Archives/Structure Committee, that we implement a plan on a trial basis until the 2017 Fall Assembly to allow for groups to discuss this plan and to allow the Finance Committee an opportunity to review this proposal as it could have a significant financial impact.

“Review the committee assignment, selection and replacement process.”

81 voting members present

59 yes 12 no Table until Fall 2017 Assembly

WCRAASC Report

I'm an alcoholic; my name is Nora H. I'm from District 72, the Bozeman Young People Group's GSR.

In early March I was privileged enough to attend the 2017 West Central Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The West Central Region is composed of seven states designated in our AA Service Manual as the West Central Region. Those States are Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota. The states together make up eight areas, with Minnesota being broken into a Northern and Southern Area.

We had four general sessions, each moderated by an Area Delegate with a panel of two AA members from each area. The topics, drawn from the General Service Conference Agenda and other issues affecting AA as a whole, were Growth, Participation, Contributions, and Anonymity. Our own Area 40 delegate, Gerry R, led the first general session on growth. The call I heard was to continue daily to make an investment in my own sobriety, along with the philosophy I heard early in AA: the shower I took yesterday won't keep me clean today. During the Contributions Session, we heard about a Minnesota group temporarily using a [paypal.me](https://www.paypal.me) account where members can, on their smartphone, insert their group name and contribute via card, eliminating the need for a card swiper. The group was trying it out for three months to see if there was a significant change in 7th tradition contributions.

The most heavily discussed agenda items on the floor were those considering the use of social media and whether or not it is in conflict with the traditions. One member spoke of a local college reaching out to their CPC committee and asking AA members to serve on a public task force regarding the significant drinking problems among their students. It would have been a great PI opportunity and it would have been a chance to reach out to still suffering alcoholics. But, AA would be affiliated with the college and members would be breaking anonymity at a public level. The CPC committee aligned with the traditions and have not regretted it. It was noted that social media would be setting newcomers up to break their anonymity and the traditions, without knowing any better. One member came up to the microphone and said, “We woke up on park benches unafraid of exposure. Why are we afraid online?”

There was also passionate discussion of CPC Agenda Item E, which discusses ways of improving communication with professionals who come in contact with Armed Service veterans and men and women currently in the Armed Services. One member described her friend who, when returning from deployment, sought counseling services from the VA. However due to staffing and finances they could not see him right away. He went home and drank himself to death. In tears, she said, "The VA needs to know that we can be there Right Now for suffering alcoholics."

One final touching moment I'd like to share with you: At some point during agenda item discussion, a man came up to the microphone with a different kind of comment. He was a truck driver, sober for some many years, but absent from the AA program for a long period of time. He spent most of his time on the road, rarely found time to make a meeting. But that night was his sobriety birthday, and stopping in Cheyenne he thought he ought to find a meeting. Luck would have it that the hotel he was staying in was where we were gathered for our conference. Stumbling in he found us, held a chip up high, and the room erupted in cheers. In the middle of controversial issues, he was a bright reminder of our primary purpose

2017 Spring Roundup Report

Greetings from district 11 - the fightin 11th! We've been working hard to make sure you have a great time at the spring roundup. We've got great speakers - Charlie C, Candice M, and Don C. We'll also have workshops and marathon meetings as well. Al-Anon has been working along side us to provide a great Al-Anon program.

We're having an ice cream social and bingo Friday night, a barbecue Saturday at noon with live music, a poker run, downtown trolley with shopping, in the afternoon. Saturday night we will dance the night away with a live band.

Several ways to register - www.billingsroundup.com, mail in your registration, and see me today!! I'll take cash, checks, or credit cards.

The Bighorn Resort is the place this event is happening. They have been great.

We have a block of rooms available until April 19 at a discounted rate. Registration is \$35 until April 30 and \$40 afterwards.

A few things to consider. Brandon M area webmaster serves as our webmaster. Is it possible to have a roundup page on the area 40 website?

We're utilizing a secret Facebook group to communicate and schedule planning meetings. It's been a great way to get people involved.

2018 Spring Roundup Report

My name is Cindy D. and I am the 2018 Spring Roundup Chair. Mark you calendars for May 4,5,6. It will be at the Heritage Inn. I put flyers on the back table so save the date and come join us. It will be lots of fun.

Past Delegate –Carole B.

I've served Area 40 in the following positions: DCM District 42, Triangle Editor, Area Chair/Alternate Delegate, and Delegate. I'm currently service as a General Service Trustee and AA Grapevine Director. Previous to becoming a GST, I served on the AA World Services Board as a Non-Trustee Director.

I've served with a few of my fellow Panel 59 Delegates. One was Marty Watters. Marty was a Western Canada Trustee and he served with me on the AAWS Board. Marty was diagnosed with Leukemia while serving as trustee. When he knew he was going to die, he made a decision based on what was best for AA and his family to step down from the AAWS Board. Truly a selfless act.

The AA Grapevine Board seeks applications from both past and current AAWS and AA Grapevine Non-trustee Directors for their General Service Trustee positions. In the fall of 2014, I was asked to apply. I did not. The person the Board put forward was diagnosed with cancer. At the 2015 General Service Conference, I talked to the person being put forward as trustee. He was terminal and did not know long he had to live.

Based on my experience watching Marty, I judged the situation, decided to vote against the slate of trustees, and then sought information from Andrew who was then Chairman of the AA Grapevine Board. When I asked Andrew, he told me they only had one applicant and reminded me that I had been asked to apply.

My lesson here is that I didn't follow what service in AA has taught me. We do everything possible to make informed decisions. My decision to vote against the slate was done so without the necessary information. I judged, acted, and then sought information. AA has taught me to seek information, make a decision, and act. At last year's General Service Conference, I was selected as a General Service Trustee.

My service in AA has taught me much. I've told women I sponsor that I've learned more about working the steps by serving AA than I ever have in a meeting. Service requires that I be current in the steps and I disagree with others serving even to the point of resentment. Thus, service keeps me doing what I need to do to grow spiritually.

I've learned and observed much about AA as a result of my service. Here's some of them.

I/we can't afford to be ruled by fear. What are we afraid of? I/we manipulate and bully people trying to get our way. I/we claim the traditions or policies say something they don't. Why do I/we do this?

I am arrogant. I've spoken down to people from my spiritual hill top. For sometime, I believe I was one of a very few number of women in AA that did the steps as described in the Big Book. I felt I was lucky to understand Big Book. Not many women had the recovery I had. (Pretty, damn arrogant.) I was very judgmental of others in AA. I used to say things like that's BB. I don't know what BB is but it's not AA. Today, I know that I don't get to be the judge of how anyone does AA. I can share with you my experience, but that's it.

I idolized people and the Big Book. My god was a judgmental God. As long I was doing "good" I would be protected from "bad" things from happening. Then life started happening or more specifically, death started happening to people I loved. My higher power has changed.

Here are some things I'd like you to think about:

Are we focused on the right things? Area 40 spends half of their assemblies focused on the GSC. Gerry may get to actually vote on a fraction of these items. Are we spending our time together in a manner that meets our primary purpose – help the alcoholic that still suffers.

Are the demands we put on our trusted servants keeping people from serving? When we take on service positions do I demonstrate my willingness by doing the job? When people are not doing the job, do we see what we can do to help them succeed? If that fails, are we asking people to step down. The trustees PI committee did not reappoint an ACM because she was not a contributing member of the committee. We need to hold our trusted servants accountable. The lives of those to come depend upon it.

The Traditions – A Tool Not a Club: Terry S., Panel 61, Area 40, Spring Assembly 2017

When Paul suggested this topic for me – “the traditions, a tool not a club” – I had a moment of confusion. Why would anybody think the A.A. Traditions formed some kind of a club or cult or social group? I did figure it out after a moment – not a “club” like the Mickey Mouse Club, a club with which to beat somebody else over the head! That is NOT what our Traditions are for. Love and tolerance is our code.

I’m going to share with you today about the Traditions as guidelines for the behavior of A.A. groups and A.A. members, not as orders from the General Service Office and not as commandments handed down from on high for us to worship and obey. I’ve never been very good about taking orders, and I always struggle with commandments, so for any of you alcoholics who sometimes get defiant – you can relax. We are talking about guidelines drawn from the collective experience of A.A. over the years, and we are not talking about RULES THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED. Now, I must admit to you all that I have felt that fear-based anger, set off by a proposal that just feels wrong to me, and I have wanted so much to stop thinking and start condemning and directing. Sometimes I have started to condemn and direct, and the results were never good.

The Traditions were not written for condemnation and direction. As we go through them, I hope we can agree that these really are guidelines, gentle suggestions about how to grow, in spirit and in fellowship. And if we don’t agree, may we all remember to disagree with love and tolerance. We are all in this together, working to make sure that whenever an alcoholic reaches out for help, we want the hand of A.A. to be there. I never want to step past a drunk reaching out for help to argue about a tradition.

Really, many of the underlying principles of the Traditions appeared in the Foreword to the First Edition. In that foreword we can read about anonymity, about there being no dues or fees, about the only requirement for membership being an honest desire to stop drinking. [We dropped the word “honest” later.] In the First Edition Foreword we can also read about non-affiliation and about staying out of controversies.

There is even a statement of a purpose – “We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted” with alcoholism. That statement would be developed into our Tradition about our primary purpose.

In 1955, at A.A.’s St. Louis Convention, Bill shared about A.A.’s three legacies – recovery, unity and service. Bill was always improving things, so in the book *A.A. Comes of Age*, first published in 1957, we have his three addresses to the Convention, one about each of our three legacies, but in that book’s Foreword we can read that the three addresses in that book are Bill’s “three talks, edited and enlarged, on the history of A.A. Recovery, Unity and Service.” His words in this published version of his talk about Unity, whether from his original sharing in St. Louis or as improved by his later editing and enlargement, provide some of our best historical information about how the traditions developed. I’m going to summarize some pertinent parts of that sharing.

After the Jack Alexander article about AA in 1941, there was an enormous increase in the number of inquiries appearing in the post office box for A.A., next door to the tiny office in New York City that had become A.A. “Headquarters” in early 1940. By 1945, letters to and from metropolitan A.A. centers “filled . . . bulging files” in that office. Bill said, “It seemed as if every contestant in every group argument wrote us during this confused and exciting period.” The basic ideas for the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were being refined by this vast correspondence. Again, as Bill reported it, “In late 1945 a good A.A. friend (probably Earl T., from Chicago) suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of principles which could offer tested solutions to all our problems of living and working together and of relating our society to the world outside. If we had become sure enough of where we really stood on such matters as membership, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, nonendorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a set of principles could be written.” Please note, he added, “A code of traditions could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it might act as a guide for our Trustees, Headquarters people, and especially for A.A. groups with growing pains.”

Bill went to work on such a guide, and produced the “long form” of the Twelve Traditions, as they came to be called, which was first published in the April 1946 issue of the Grapevine. A.A. had consisted of about 100 members when the basic text, Alcoholics Anonymous, was published in the spring of 1939. By 1946 A.A. had between 18 thousand and 19 thousand members, world-wide. Most of those members were in the USA and Canada. By 1946, some of the “older” groups to which those members belonged had already faced and survived some of the conflicts and ambiguities which kept popping up thereafter as we continued to grow. Those solutions, as well as those conflicts and ambiguities, were the A.A. experience out of which Bill developed the traditions.

Before the first International Convention in Cleveland in 1950, Bill and Earl T. had each worked on drafts of a short form of the Twelve Traditions. Bill did a final rewrite to fine tune it, “coming up,” he wrote, “with what I hope is a quieter and clearer job – something which would be a more fitting companion to the Twelve Steps

themselves and of just about the same wordage.” The Grapevine carried a Tradition and an article about it in each new issue, to make the average A.A. member “Tradition-conscious.”

There was a mixed reception from the Fellowship for the Traditions presented by Bill and by the Grapevine. According to Bill, “Only groups in dire trouble took them seriously. In some quarters there was a violent reaction against them, especially in groups that already had their own long lists of ‘protective’ rules and regulations.” There was also much apathetic indifference. “Let’s keep A.A. simple” was also a common reaction. Bill W. continued to champion the traditions, as a guide for A.A.’s conduct, but a question remained. Why do we need traditions?

Well, I

et’s talk about the Washingtonians. In April 1840, 99 years before the Big Book was first published, six good drinking buddies were together at Chase’s Tavern on Liberty Street in Baltimore, Maryland. They drank and drank. It’s what they were good at. And they talked and talked about temperance, which was very much a public issue in those days, and they decided that one drunkard could help another drunkard stop drinking better than anyone else could. Just as it would be a century later, the prevailing opinion in 1840 was that nothing could help the drunkard. Once in awhile, a drunkard did stop drinking, but there was still general pessimism over the possibility of rehabilitating drunkards.

Our heroes, the six good drinking buddies, decided to form their own temperance group, of drunkards and for drunkards, and they pledged to each other not to drink any alcohol. They chose the name “Washington Temperance Society,” in honor of George Washington, they elected officers, established a 25 cent membership fee and monthly dues of 12.5 cents, and they agreed to meet again next week, and each bring another drunkard who wanted to join, and when they met next week, with their newbies, they were all still not drinking!

Their little weekly circle began to grow. And it grew and it grew. They left the tavern where they had been meeting (to the great relief of its owner), and began having weekly meetings in a rented hall. At those meetings, each speaker told his own story: “what I used to be like – what happened – and what I am like now.” The idea was greeted with explosive acceptance. It brought a new approach to the entire temperance movement. Total abstinence, sober drunkards helping wet drunkards, had created the miracle of the man at the podium!

In November 1840, the Washingtonians held their first public meeting. Newspaper editors were liberal with coverage, complete with names of members. The audience was standing-room-only. Both drunkards and other drinkers pledged themselves to total abstinence (the only requirement for membership – aside from those dues and fees, that is). The Washingtonians started having big parades, with marching bands and banners. At the end of the parade, there would be a big meeting that bore some resemblance to a tent evangelist’s meeting. There would be testimonials from the podium. There would be calls to the drunkards in the crowd to come on down to the front and join in. It was powerful.

Five months later, Washingtonian membership had grown to over 1,000 “reformed drunkards,” 5,000 members who were not sure whether they were drunkards or not, but who also had pledged total abstinence, plus thousands of temperance advocates who welcomed the Washingtonians crusade. In less than four years from the first meeting of our six drunkards at Chase’s Tavern, Washingtonian membership up and down the east coast grew to at least 100,000 “reformed common drunkards,” 300,000 “common tipplers” who also became total abstainers, and untold thousands who were simply enthusiastic temperance advocates.

The Washingtonian movement broadened its scope. Many Washingtonians stayed focused upon saving suffering drunkards and protecting potential drunkards, the original approach. Other Washingtonians took a new approach and called upon the general public for moral and financial support. Still other Washingtonians called upon Congress and the state legislatures for laws prohibiting sale, purchase and consumption of alcohol, another new approach. These three different approaches were each lead by competing influential men, who soon were fighting, amongst themselves and in public, about which approach was most important.

The Washingtonians’ free-wheeling carnival tactics for promotion, together with a lack of agreed upon spiritual principles, created an atmosphere for spectacular growth. But it also led to battles among big egos, competing for personal prestige and power within each of the three approaches now espoused.

At the same time, some church leaders heard some Washingtonian reformed drunkards proclaiming from the podiums, that they were living Christ’s program – not just giving it lip service, like a lot of pastors they knew. A prominent minister fired back, announcing that no Christian was at liberty to join and follow any new system, organization, entity or means for moral reformation of mankind, except as prescribed by Christ. The church, he

insisted, had been chosen by God and given the one true gospel, as the sole system of truth and the only system to redeem mankind. Now there was war between the Washingtonians and some Christian religious leaders.

That wasn't all. Some of the Washingtonian circuit speakers started charging for their services. Other circuit speakers, and some ordinary Washingtonians, began to endorse other causes, unrelated to temperance, such as the abolition of slavery, as the Washingtonian view. Others still, in applying for a job or in running for public office, included on their resumes that they were Washingtonians, as a means of establishing their solid upright moral character.

A final destructive note came when influential leaders of other temperance groups, political parties and social groups decided that it would be best to leave the drunkards to the care of clergy, physicians, judges, policemen and jailors. The need for ex-drunks to reform other drunks, they all said, was a thing of the past.

In 1844, the Washingtonians had around half a million supporters and members. By 1848, the movement had all but completed its self-destruction and was gone from the public view, except in Boston. With its disappearance, the hope it had held out to the drunkards of that day also disappeared.

Now, in Boston the Washingtonians survived a little bit longer, as the Washington Total Abstinence Society of Boston. It opened a "Home for the Fallen" in 1857 in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. That facility became the Washingtonian Home for Men in 1859. The "Home" still relied upon moral suasion and total abstinence, although the Washington Total Abstinence Society of Boston had withered and was pretty much dead within a decade.

Over the years, this facility that started as a home for fallen men went through a number of changes in name and policy, eventually becoming a more traditional treatment center. In 1939, it reorganized as the Washingtonian Hospital, was licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, and became, by its own account, the first private non-profit alcohol addiction hospital in the country. I have to say, I cannot imagine an alcohol addiction hospital that could possibly have been profitable in 1939. Any medical facility that focused on treating alcoholics was doomed to losing money, not making a profit.

Later, as a growing number of clients needed help for drugs other than alcohol, the hospital morphed into the Washingtonian Center for Addictions in 1970. Under both names, the center provided both in- and out-patient, medical and non-medical care. It was devoted to treatment, education and training, prevention and research in the field of drug and alcohol addiction, carrying on the original Washingtonians efforts to be all things to all men and women with substance abuse problems. It went bankrupt around 1980, after operating for 123 years.

That was the last remnant of the Washingtonians. Long before that remnant finally died, A.A. had found inspiration for our Traditions in the mistakes of the Washingtonians.

When the Cleveland International Convention convened, several speakers presented the Twelve Traditions to the Convention. Bill then summed them up and asked the Convention for final approval. That final approval was given by a voice vote approving unanimous adoption of the traditions. By 1950, when we adopted Bill's short form of the 12 Traditions we had about 96,475 members. The Traditions, with guidelines to approaching many of the problems and challenges that came at A.A. Those guidelines highlighted mistakes prompted by many of our most prevalent character defects, and offered loving and tolerant paths we might follow to avoid the pitfalls of those defects.

But why shouldn't we make the Traditions hard and fast rules? Don't we want to preserve the "purity" of AA's 12 Steps for the benefit of alcoholics who will come to us in the future? Dare we trust the groups of AA, filled with fallible and volatile alcoholics, to work it out for themselves?

Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

In this first tradition rests the goal of all twelve of our traditions. A.A. probably sets a higher value upon the personal welfare of the individual member than any other society, but unless A.A. itself survives, it cannot contribute to any alcoholic's personal welfare. We must hang together or die separately – rather like the outlaw code of "hang together or be hanged one at a time." A.A.'s survival is necessary for us to pass on the gift of sobriety to others. When Dr. Bob died, A.A. went on. When Bill W. died, A.A. went on. IF A.A. falls apart and disappears, like the Washingtonians did, then our individual members will struggle to survive, and our message of recovery is lost.

Over our history, A.A. has endured a great deal of private controversy. We have huge battles over tiny expenditures. We unknowingly rehash arguments already resolved in A.A.'s past, about what is acceptable conduct

for an A.A. member or group or district or area. So far, the brutal reality of our disease has kept sufficient unity amongst us so that A.A. has held together.

Tradition 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Our second Tradition is the first of the eleven specific ways to protect and preserve our unity, our second legacy, upon which the personal recovery of each and every one of us depends. Bill W. was, by his own description, the first of the power-drivers, always sure he was right, happily ready to assume the burdens of leadership and grimly unwilling to share those burdens, let alone to give them up. In our second tradition, Bill, very familiar with the problems that power-drivers cause, offered us a way to have trusted servants, at the group level and on down the AA inverted pyramid, serving for the good of all, without authority over any.

When two or more of us gather together, to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety, then in that gathering the collective conscience of the members of our group, gathered together for our spiritual purpose, will be our ultimate authority, our loving Higher Power, even when I don't agree with it

And I need to trust and support my group's officers, and cooperate in the discussion and decision-making that leads to an informed group conscience, with all points of view voiced and heard, and with any minority voice encouraged and carefully listened to.

And I also need to be absolutely trustworthy, even when nobody else is looking, in every service responsibility I undertake. It's not about getting credit for my AA work or praise for my AA ideas. It is about striving to yield to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it. No matter how long I've been sober, I must be willing to serve my turn at AA chores, and I must be willing to listen to others who may have more experience and knowledge than I've got about some of our business matters, and I must be willing to listen to others with less experience and knowledge than I've got, because today I might hear my Higher Power speaking in the voice of a newcomer.

Tradition 3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

I told you earlier that we took the "honest" out of this statement. Why? Because only the individual alcoholic can count himself or herself IN, as an alcoholic and as an alcoholic with a desire to stop drinking. The rest of you can't decide if I am a member. The rest of you can't revoke my membership. It's up to me to count myself in or to count myself out.

In the early days, as Bill wrote in his essay about Tradition 3, almost every group started out by developing long lists of 'protective' rules and regulations. Fear driven and clutching our recovery as if the rest of the group was plotting to steal it from us, we viewed newcomers with suspicion.

I spent a year in Viet Nam, and the first half of it with an infantry platoon out in the boonies. New guys were barely tolerated, and certainly not welcomed. We didn't know what they would do under fire. We once had a newbie who lost it when the fire fight started. He was on the side of the perimeter opposite where the firing was occurring. In a panic, he whirled around to face the other side of the perimeter, dropped to his belly and started firing, right through the middle of our formation toward the general area where the shooting was at. Fortunately, his weapon was knocked out of his hands. Fortunately, he was aiming his M-16 high while keeping his body low. His wild shots went over our heads, and way over the heads of the VC's shooting at us. That was the only time anybody ever did anything crazy like that while I was there. But it was exactly what the long-timers, the short guys counting days until they were going home, feared from every newbie.

From what I have read, early A.A. was like that. Tradition 3 is our way of getting real and getting sane. Each of us was a newcomer. Each of us was given the choice, by the folks who were already there, to become a part of the group and to join in recovery. Most of us were given multiple invitations to become a member. Why? Because denying a chance at recovery to any newcomer could be a death sentence. What if you had done that to me? I had no place left to go. Why would I ever want to do it to someone else? What we have learned, as Bill wrote it, was that if we must punish or deprive any alkie of membership, if we compel anyone to pay anything, believe anything or conform to anything, we may be killing them, condemning them to the slow and terrible suicide by alcoholic drinking. If we insist upon "pure" alcoholics, we may be condemning other alcoholics. By the way, have you met lots of "pure" alcoholics? I haven't. If we scorn those sent to us by the courts, we scorn our brothers and sisters. If we shun those with mental disorders, we forget how we ourselves needed to be restored to sanity. No dress code, no cuss code – nothing but an open door and a welcome for the newcomer. These are only suggestions. Nobody can force your group or my group to do anything. But which of us believes we are entitled to be judge, jury and executioner of another alcoholic?

That's different from safety issues. When a sexual predator appears in the meeting, the targets of that predator are at risk. Carol just told you about that. It is not an outside issue. Confronting the predators in our meetings (and there sometimes are predators in our meetings) can be necessary to keep our group members safe. It is no more an outside issue than is providing access for mobility limited members, or providing an ASL interpreter for a hearing impaired member. We do have the right to have the predator removed from our meeting. We do have the power to bar the predator from our group for a set period of time, anything from a few weeks to "until Hell freezes over," depending upon the circumstances.

Tradition 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

Ca you see how Traditions 2-3-4 dovetail together to support our goal of unity? Our Group Conscience sets our course, not the will and personalities of our service leaders. Anyone with a desire to stop drinking can join our group. And, each group chooses its own directions and activities, so long as its choices do not impact other groups or AA as a whole. Each gathering of two or more of us can be a group if it says it is, and I can be a member, simply by declaring that I am a member.

IF we do this, then each group, every group, MY group, can come to recognize that there are many, many right ways of doing things in A.A., not just OUR WAY. And also, in doing things OUR WAY, we must be mindful of the rest of A.A., the nearby groups, the loners out in remote parts of Montana and elsewhere areas who don't have the luxury of belonging to a group that meets face to face on regular basis, and the rest of the A.A. groups and A.A. as a whole. Can I be tolerant of others who do things differently, perhaps even learn from them? Am I willing to help a newcomer go to his lengths, not mine, stay sober? Can I share information about what I have learned in A.A. about the steps, the traditions and the concepts, without talking down to you, or bullying you? Can I remember that my group's behavior, and my own behavior, may be what folks around my hometown see as the way Alcoholics Anonymous Acts? Am I ready to propose to my group that we inventory our conduct, and ask whether what we are doing, or better yet, what we want to do, breaks ANY of A.A.'s Traditions? For, truly, it is in our Traditions that we find our proven experience about unity over the last 67 years.

And what about the group that ignores A.A.'s experience and heads out to do it their own way? We do nothing. It tends to work out. Look at pp. 147 to 149 in the 12 and 12, for the "Rule 62" story.

Tradition 5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Mother Nature has developed the human race in such a way that it gives birth to drunks faster than the existing sober drunks can share that sobriety with the active drunks. We can argue passionately for and against our agenda items, but within our Fellowship, after banging heads over whatever is on our agenda, we need to continue to do a pretty good job of shaking hands, or hugging, and then heading out to share ice cream together, after battling mightily against each other on a particular service question. Our primary purpose truly is primary. We must always think and always ask, "How does this help the suffering alcoholic?"

We do need safe meetings, for so long as we tolerate predators in our meetings, we will lose alcoholics who must flee those predators. We do need access for mobility limited alcoholics, and sign language interpreters for hearing impaired alcoholics, and braille literature for sight impaired alcoholics. There is no room in our primary purpose for battles about personalities or egos. There are lives at stake. Your life and my life are at stake.

Besides, the Washingtonians teach us that once we depart from our primary purpose, we have no clear path to navigate, and there is an unacceptable risk that we will go horribly astray from offering our program of recovery to suffering alcoholics, and may even break up and die.

Tradition 6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Some years back, a member of the District Committee I was chairing volunteered to get our event fliers for far less money than we had been paying. He said he had talked to a guy he knew who would give us a much better price. Sounded okay to us. When he showed up with the fliers, they were magnificent, despite the low price we were paying for them! Multiple colors! Glossy print! Artistic lay-out! There was just one little problem. Around the borders of the fliers, there were commercial logos – a soft drink logo; a motel logo, and so forth. It wasn't his fault, really. He was new. Advertising had been his business. Nobody had talked to him about non-affiliation. But we could not use those glorious fliers. And nobody beat him up about it, either.

Again, look at the Washingtonians. Abolition of slavery. Laws against selling alcohol. Imagine an A.A. in which we battle during business meetings, or even regular meetings, about international affairs, or war, or taxes, or elections, or religion. In A.A., there is no race, no gender, no social class – none of the things that could divide us outside the rooms. What if we foolishly start quarreling and plotting to be more important than some other member? How crazy would that be – fighting over being important in A.A. It's a death trap for a drunk.

All we pursue, what we offer, and all we can get is recovery. There is only recovery, offered for fun and for free.

Tradition 7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

It is not an expensive proposition to start and to maintain an A.A. group. We have some expenses, for a place to meet, for literature, for coffee (which some folks insist is not a necessity). If we want to really be an A.A. group, we need to come up the money to reimburse our GSR for going to Area Assemblies, and maybe also for attending district meetings, if there is travel involved. We may need copies of treasurer's reports. As my home group has gotten more active in various ways, we have discovered more expenses we need to meet. The equation is simple. How much is my recovery worth? If my finances are in trouble, I might begin to ask, how much can I afford to contribute for my recovery? My finances have been okay for awhile, and I want to remember that the loose change the person next to me puts in the basket may be a bigger percentage of her income than the couple of bucks I toss in the basket is of my income. Big shot-ism has no place in A.A. finance. What A.A. pays more attention to is that we cannot afford to accept outside contributions. We cannot come to rely upon outside money, or we must dance the tune that the outside money plays.

We do not even accept big sums of money from A.A. members. \$3,000.00 is the maximum annual contribution an individual member can make. There are very few members who actually contribute \$3,000.00 a year.

"A.A.'s far-flung Twelfth Step activities, carrying the message to the next sufferer, are the very lifeblood of our A.A. adventure. Without this vital activity, we would soon become anemic; we would literally wither and die. "Now where do A.A.'s services—worldwide, area, local—fit into our scheme of things? Why should we provide these functions with money? The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters [now the General Service Office] to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe. "Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion—to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength—and that, under our Tradition of self-support, we are all going to foot the bill." Bill W., Oct. 1967 GV (from A.A. Guidelines – Finance).

Tradition 8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

One source for this Tradition was a conflict in 1940 arising out of rumors circulating in Cleveland that Bill and Bob had shared \$64,000.00 in profits the previous year. A "committee" was formed of Cleveland A.A. members, and they invited Bill and Bob to a dinner at which the two men would speak. After the dinner, the "chairmen" of the local groups brought Bill and Bob to a hotel "parlor" where an attorney and an accountant waited for them, and the locals accused Bill primarily and Bob to a lesser extent of taking huge sums of money for themselves out of A.A..

Bill had come prepared for this confrontation. "Fortunately" he would later write, "I happened to have with me a certified audit of all of our affairs from the beginning." A.A. Comes of Age, p. 256. In fact, Bob and Bill had each been assigned royalties from publication of the Big Book. Bob hadn't actually received any royalties, because the money was needed for the "office work." Bill was receiving \$25.00 a week from the publishing company. Bill and Bob were each getting \$30.00 a week as a "stipend" (a fixed periodic payment, like a pension or an allowance) paid out of the Rockefeller money. Clearly, neither Bill nor Bob ever took a red cent for 12th Step work, but the work they did in our literature and in our fund-raising efforts with the Rockefellers and with the other dinner guests were special work, for which they were entitled to be paid.

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In this respect, Father Ed Dowling, citing Bill's responsibility to Lois, with whom he had entered into a marriage and made certain promises, was insistent that doing service work for free was one thing, but doing special work, for which everyone else in the world was paid, could not fairly be demanded for free by A.A. We don't

expect doctors in the Fellowship to treat our physical illnesses for free. We don't expect plumbers in A.A. to fix our pipes for free. We don't expect A.A. contractors to build our houses for free. Bill and Bob had made arrangements with the early creditors of A.A. (the dinner guests for the Rockefeller dinner) loaned money to A.A. to finance its early development of what eventually became our service structure (the beginning was a tiny office in New York City, with furniture). They were entitled to some compensation for those special tasks. A.A. members may choose to contribute to A.A. by donating their time, or donating raffle items for an A.A. event, or in many other ways. A.A., on the other hand, should never expect and never demand that its members provide to A.A. for free the work they do to make their livings.

Tradition 9. A.A. ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Every time I read this tradition, I smile. I can't help it. Most of the time, I think that there no danger of A.A. ever being organized. But then I think of times when the General Service Conference was asked to require revisions of the sponsorship pamphlet to require sponsors to do certain things and prohibit sponsors from doing others, and I remember that we are alcoholics, and will try to finagle "organization," by which we mean a structure that makes people do it our way, whenever possible.

In our inverted triangle, the authority flows down, from the groups all the way to the General Service Board. The responsibility flows up – GSB is responsible to all the levels of service "above" it. Area 40 is responsible to the districts and the home groups. The home groups are responsible to their members. And rotation keeps these directions of authority and responsibility flowing. Remember GSO correspondence with AA home groups and individuals who are reporting that their AA communities are doing things wrong? GSO's responses tend to start, "Of course, you are at perfect liberty to handle this matter any way you please. But the majority experience in A.A. does seem to suggest . . ."

Tradition 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Bill and Bob learned that lesson from the Washingtonians – we are not and never should be at war with each other. We have ceased fighting anything and anyone.

Tradition 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

Tradition 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Traditionally, A.A. members have always been careful to preserve their anonymity at the "public" level: press, radio, television, and films. Today this extends to the Internet and digital technologies. In the early days of A.A., when more stigma was attached to the term "alcoholic" than is the case today, this reluctance to be identified – and publicized – was easy to understand. As the Fellowship of A.A. grew, the positive values of anonymity soon became apparent.

Many problem drinkers might hesitate to turn to A.A. for help if they thought their problem might be discussed publicly, even inadvertently, by others. Newcomers should be able to seek help with assurance that their identities will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Fellowship.

Additionally, that the concept of personal anonymity has a spiritual significance for us – it discourages the drives for personal recognition, power, prestige, or profit. Much of our relative effectiveness in working with alcoholics might be impaired if we sought or accepted public recognition. While each member of A.A. is free to make his or her own interpretations of A.A. tradition, no individual member is ever recognized as a spokesperson for the Fellowship locally, nationally, or internationally. Each member speaks only for himself or herself. A.A. is indebted to all media professionals for their assistance in strengthening the Tradition of anonymity over the years. From time to time, the General Service Office contacts all major media in the United States and Canada, describing the Tradition and asking for cooperation in its observance.

An A.A. member may, for various reasons, "break anonymity" deliberately at the public level. Since this is a matter of individual choice and conscience, the Fellowship as a whole obviously has no control over such deviations from tradition. It is clear, however, that such individuals do not have the approval of the overwhelming majority of members. – A.A. Fact File, M-24, pp. 6-7.

We really need to use every resource available to us to reach the still suffering alcoholics and the folks who deal with them. Digital information reaches more people faster, and usually at a lower cost. But in whatever we do,

we still have to respect our traditions. The fate of the Washingtonians underscores how important our traditions are. Forget our primary purpose, neglect our anonymity, move outside of our primary purpose, and the drunks out there today and tomorrow may never get a chance to share our program of recovery.

Area 40 uses secure portions of our web-site for contact info for our “Bridging the Gap” program, and we are broadening our use of digital data all the time., so members can be put in touch with alcoholics coming out of treatment facilities. Are we within our Anonymity Tradition in doing this? Is our information secure?

I don’t have all the answers, but at all service levels, we maintain contact information, on paper and on computers, in homes, offices and meeting locations. Someone could get into any of those locations, one way or another, and take that confidential information. We don’t burn our lists, or tear them up and swallow them, before leaving the premises each day, to honor the principle of anonymity. We simply secure our lists. We are doing the same with digital information. So, is taking appropriate precautions to protect personal information, whether on paper in our meeting room or in digital data storage on our web site, good enough to observe our anonymity tradition? Not for me to say, but you may be asked to answer that question.

In the past, we’ve used highway billboards to provide hot line contact numbers, telling the all the world how to get in touch with us when and if any of them find alcohol has become a problem. More recently, we have used Public Service Announcements for the same purpose, on radio and TV. Now we are trying to figure out how to do the same on the internet’s social media sites. Can we do that? Is there something inherently different, because when we look at billboards and PSAs, they don’t look back at us and find out who we are? The interactive nature of digital information poses new challenges for us. The billboard and the PSA are both passive. Neither of them takes my information when I get information from them.

We need to be clear about how any digital process works, AND then make some informed decisions about what is and is not consistent with anonymity. Without fear. Calmly. Sanely. With patience and tolerance.

In doing the research and writing this presentation, I came across the following statements, which express my experience as well as the experience of the writer. “In researching this presentation, my thoughts have kept returning to this question: After the movement destroyed itself, what happened to all the thousands of alcoholics who had found sobriety through the Washingtonians? It becomes a personal question when I add: What would have happened to me?” Our respect for the Traditions, not any overzealous enforcement of them, protects AA from its gravest danger – we alcoholics ourselves. And finally, here, as always, are my five service leadership suggestions:

Service Leadership No. 1 -- SUIT UP!

Sometimes “SUIT UP” is used to mean the whole ball of wax, “participation,” but it really refers to the very first aspect of participation, which is preparation. Obviously, SUIT UP means get dressed appropriately for where I am going and what I am going to do. In the military that meant more than just get into uniform – it encompassed all the things we carried, all the gear we might need. When I stepped on the runner of the chopper and climbed aboard, it was in everybody’s best interest that I was carrying everything that I might need, that we were all carrying everything that any of us might need.

Now in that same broader sense, at work, at play and in A.A., SUIT UP means to do the ground work necessary for participation. First I have to get ready – do the prep necessary to enable me to participate fully in the mission, in the Assembly, in the picnic – in whatever it might be.

Before we all came to this Assembly, we had the opportunities to get a copy of the agenda and read and digest it, to read the background material, to talk it over within our home groups, to visit with our sponsors, sponsees, service friends and mentors, to do some independent reading and research. To get ready. Before making any decisions and taking any action, it is always a good idea to consult widely. To get ready – to SUIT UP.

In A.A. suiting up also includes prayer at the beginning of that ground work, and throughout doing that ground work. It includes reading Bill’s leadership essay again, so I am reminded to listen carefully to those who disagree with me and truly consider what they are saying before responding. It includes that last minute note to myself before I share to LEAVE OUT that snarky insult that would fit so well into my comment.

THAT’s suiting up.

Service Leadership No. 2 -- SHOW UP!

A requirement for leadership, in AA or anywhere else, is to SHOW UP. A.A. depends upon our participation. One alcoholic sharing with another, in casual conversations, in our A.A. meetings, on or off our A.A.

schedules, in sponsorship, in group, district and area business meetings, in workshops, roundups and other celebrations, large and small – to be a part of any of it or all of it requires that we SHOW UP.

Showing up without preparation first makes it harder to get anything accomplished. We have to invent the wheel over and over again. But doing all the prep in the world doesn't matter if I don't come to the meeting. I can't contribute to the group conscience by telepathy or mind control. I have to SHOW UP. It is difficult to be part of this "we" this weekend, by out of body experience. We do have far more sophisticated ways to participate than we have ever had before, but, one way or another, you just gotta SHOW UP.

I know I am preaching to the choir on this one, because you're all here. However much prep you have been willing and able to do, you have taken the trouble to be here for this assembly. And here's a news flash for all of us – our leaders are us. Those who SUIT UP. Those who SHOW UP.

Out of all of the members of A.A. across Area 40, the ones who grappled with the questions we have for this Assembly, who have been building an informed group conscience, are the ones here this weekend. All the folks who provided us with input before we got here have shared in our process, as have all the folks who find out afterwards what happened here and provide feedback, but the decision-making happens here. And it often happens with very little drama and conflict.

One of the ways I recognize service leadership in others is in how they begin their responses to virtually every question, comment or challenge presented to them by others. "That's a good question," "I'm glad you brought that up," "Valid point," or at least "Thank you for sharing." Showing up includes remembering and affirming, at this Assembly or any other service gathering, that A.A. is inclusive, that every participant brings to the table their own experience, their own recovery, their own troubles and shortcomings, and their own concerns about how best to offer A.A. recovery to the still suffering alcoholic.

Even very prideful or angry people can be absolutely right while the peaceful and loving voice can be absolutely mistaken. I need to be ready to listen to the message instead of judging the messenger. Even at the end of a long day and evening, I need to remember to ask my Higher Power to help me keep my mind open about the item we are considering, and to ask also for willingness to take another fresh look, in light of what I hear next. That's showing up.

Service Leadership No. 3 -- SPEAK UP!

When something is being discussed, and there is a question that nags me, or a suggestion about what else needs to be covered, or about a simpler way to address the matter, unless somebody else has already said it at the mike, it's up to you and up to me to get up and go over to Mr. Microphone, who is our friend, and share it.

We've shown up, so we can hear what is happening and see what is happening. We've done the prep, so that, with the help of that unsuspected inner resource which we presently identify with our own conceptions of a Power greater than ourselves, we can grasp what direction our deliberation is going, and what else could be important to know in making the decision. None of that can be of any use to the group conscience unless each one of us musters our courage and participates in the assembly.

If I'm afraid I won't say it right and you'll misunderstand or dislike me; if I'm worried about how many times I've already been to the mike; if I'm hesitant to say something that disagrees with most of the voices so far – I need to SPEAK UP and say it anyway! A group conscience needs all the voices, not just the brave ones or the loud ones or the really well-spoken ones, or the respected ones. We need all the voices.

We don't know yet what voices will manifest the will of our Higher Power on the issues addressed here, but our group conscience will be shaped by our sharing during this Assembly. Our leaders SPEAK UP. The voices don't have to come from the front table – they often come from the floor of the Assembly – but only if we SPEAK UP.

And don't wait, holding back your killer argument for the minority report. Share it NOW, so we can have all the information available for the initial decision. This isn't about winning, it's about reaching a group consensus, a group conscience. Our traditions are very, very clear – in our group conscience we can find the will of a loving God expressed. Our leaders, our trusted servants, help us get there, but it is in the group conscience that we can find it. So, after we SUIT UP and after we SHOW UP, participation in the group conscience occurs when we SPEAK UP. We need that participation. We need to SPEAK UP.

Service Leadership No. 4 -- STEP UP!

After we prepare, attend and share, we're done, right? Not quite. When the time comes for folks to offer to serve in a position, to participate in an ad hoc committee, or when some other project we have approved needs volunteers, it is time to STEP UP.

Let's not be sitting and thinking, it would really be good for Judy or Joe or somebody else to serve in that position, they would grow so much. If we have done the prep, and come to the gathering and participated in the decision, then I want to suggest that we also have some obligation to STEP UP and offer to serve in implementing the decision. Let's not let somebody else do it for us, whether it's a new person who is still figuring out what is happening, or it's one of the usual suspects ready and willing to take on yet another service job. STEP UP.

Be a part of the action on the item, as well as part of the decision-making about the item. Participate. Bill said it clearly: "True leadership, we find, depends upon able example . . . [12&12, Step Twelve, p.124, stopping before "and not upon vain displays of power or glory"]. If you have the experience for the job, if you have the time for the job, if you haven't already done the job or already gotten a job for next rotation, say a quick prayer for the willingness and then STEP UP and ask for the chance to do the job. Lead by example, by action. If you are not sure, talk to one of the old hands about what is involved and find out. Do not wait to be asked, STEP UP. It is an experience that you really should not miss, believe it or not. A.A. can save your life, and A.A. service can change that new life for the better!

Service Leadership No. 5 -- SHUT UP!

The time to rotate on does come. Chances to be of service, in recovery, in fellowship and in the outside world, never really end. But formal general service work does eventually end. And when it does, the person rotating on has two choices. Bill described them as either elder statesman or bleeding deacon. Bleeding deacons are "prodded by unreasonable fears or anxieties into making a life business of winning . . . what we thought was leadership." [Step Twelve, p.123, omitting "fame, money, and"]

You know, most of us have bled enough over the years so that you would think we might be willing to sit back and wait to see what happens, being elder statesmen and stateswomen and truly rotating on, letting others take their turn at leading. Bill underscored the virtues of rotation – "We need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere." [The Language of the Heart, p. 78]

It was my pleasure and my privilege to serve a rotation as an Area 40 delegate. It really did change my life, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. But there comes a time when we do rotate away from general service, at whatever level we have been doing it. When that time comes, there is a final leadership task we face, as we step down and open up service positions for new trusted servants. It is really pretty simple. My last suggestion, No. 5? SHUT UP. It's time for other voices. If you need my experience, strength and hope, you will let me know. For now, though, thanks for your kind attention, and thanks for the gifts of sobriety. It's time for me to SHUT UP.