

Looking Forward

**Area 40
Triangle**

Looking Forward

My first service position after serving as GSR for my home group was District 61 Archives Chair. It didn't take long in my new position before I was elbow-deep in the historical record of AA in both Helena and the state of Montana. In addition to giving my report at each district meeting, I would bring a copy of the district newsletter from the same month, twenty years earlier. Something interesting that became evident early on was that each issue had at least one item in it that would describe a situation or event that was currently an ongoing issue for the district. Each spring and fall there were stories dealing with either getting ready for Area Assembly, or discussing what had happened at the most recent one. Budgets were a regular topic, as were elections, corrections work and literature sales. In fact, if it weren't for the date on the front of some of the newsletters, you would swear it was a current issue – except that the newsletter had been discontinued several years earlier.

What I learned from this experience was that there are very few new issues that we deal with in AA service work. For the most part, if you want to know what dilemma we might be dealing with next, all you have to do is consider what we've dealt with in the past. For instance, in the upcoming Spring Assembly, Area 40 will be reviewing the report of an ad hoc committee charged with considering if we should change where we hold our assemblies from Lewistown to another location. This might sound quite out of the ordinary but, as part of its discovery process, this ad hoc committee will be utilizing material generated by another ad hoc committee, this one assembled in 1999 to consider moving the assembly location back then.

The annual General Service Conference Report is another example of looking forward through looking back. If you want to know what will be on the next Conference agenda, a quick review of this document will give you a great idea of matters that will be considered at the next gathering.

Think about it. Where would we be, both as a fellowship and in our individual recoveries, if all we shared was "Strength" and "Hope" with each other? We need to also share our "Experience" with one another, both individually and collectively, to provide helpful guidelines within which we can proceed safely on our way to achieving our primary purpose of recovery for both ourselves and the new person still trying to find us.

If you're anything like me though, you've no doubt taken many a bumpy ride on your way to the realization that there's really no reason to try to reinvent the wheel. I've learned the hard way that what has worked so well for so many before me will also work for me, if I am but willing to consider it.

Gerry R.
Area 40 Chair/Alternate Delegate

“We don’t rotate out, we rotate on”

Some years back, I thought I had rotated out of A.A.’s service structure. I was my District’s Alternate D.C.M., but increasing demands from my day-job, together with my spouse’s worsening illness, left me with too little time and too many commitments. I had to resign from my service position before the end of the two year rotation. Part-way through the next rotation, the new alternate had to resign the position. My job demands had returned to normal and my wife had gotten better, so I was able to make amends to my District by volunteering to finish that current rotation as the alternate. My offer was graciously accepted, and my early retirement from the service structure ended.

The long form of Tradition Nine says it clearly. “Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best.” Rotation is one important way that we can avoid the intoxicating effects of power, prestige, and personal recognition. Besides, until an A.A. position is empty, no newcomer needs to step up, because somebody else is still doing it!

In January 2013, when our newly elected trusted servants began their current two year rotation, I felt a certain amount of sadness, and some relief, too. But at first my strongest feelings were of love for the folks starting their rotations. They had found hope in A.A. and were willing to step up and pass it on. Then, ego crept in. A former G.S.O. general manager once asked a serious question about rotation: “When [we] rotate out of office, we obey ‘the letter of the law,’ but are we really following ‘the spirit of the law’ if we still try to run the show?” I read his comments as I began to write this article, and I saw myself again, as I was back at the beginning of this new rotation, when I was getting into conflicts with one of our new trusted servants. He was doing nothing wrong – indeed, he was (and still is) doing a great job – but in my envious eyes, he could do nothing right. My inability to let go became something like an illness. Finally, I had to inventory what I was doing, with the help of my sponsor (who took time from what turned out to be his terminal cancer to make some gentle suggestions). Then, I was able to offer amends and let my hands be pruned off what now was somebody else’s job. Letting go can really be hard! Rotation is practiced not to put somebody out of a job, but to ensure that the selfish ones do not hold on, and to make room for all who are willing to serve. Rotation also sets some limits on the opportunities for some of us who serve to mess things up!

Rotation also gives us more informed members of our fellowship. More informed members can carry our A.A. message faster and stronger. At the end of every rotation the fellowship gains more informed members, fresh from their latest service jobs, to share responsibility for carrying our message and to share from their recent experience the meaning and importance of our Third Legacy – Service. The A.A. message is far more important, than the A.A. messenger. It is the spirit of rotation that keeps our message fresh and on point, and our Fellowship alive and well.

Out in what we laughingly call “the real world,” organizations and institutions are set up to recognize and to reward the “go-getters.” “Go-getters” earn power, prestige, seniority and influence. For us recovering alcoholics, those ego boosts can be toxic for us as well as for our Fellowship. It isn’t only anonymity that saves us. Putting a time limit on every job, whether it’s making coffee or serving as a G.S.R. – rotation – is another cure for swollen egos and power driving. At every level of our service structure, rotation offers more chances to serve, encourages more participation, and ensures that no one starts substituting his or her personal values for A.A.’s principles. Our Conference Charter, Article 8, recommends two-year terms of office for G.S.R.s, area committee members and delegates. Long ago, our General Service Office adopted rotation for A.A. staff assignments. Bill W. reportedly wanted staff rotation so that if anything “happened to” one person, the office could continue to function smoothly. Rotation is also healthy at every level of service, so that no one individual becomes entrenched in a particular position. Look at Article Three of Concept XI in our Service Manual: “We once had the conventional system of one highly paid staff member with assistants at much lower pay. Hers had been the principal voice in hiring them. Quite unconsciously, I’m certain, she engaged people who she felt would not be competitive with her. Meanwhile she kept a tight rein on all the important business of the place. A prodigy of wonderful work was done. But suddenly she collapsed, and shortly afterwards one of her assistants did the same. We were left with only one partly trained assistant who knew anything whatever about the total operation! . . . Thereafter we installed the principle of rotation in a considerably larger staff.”

My personal experience confirms that rotation is “anonymity in action” and certainly has helped me (one more time again) learn some humility. Rotation does more than prevent old-timers from taking permanent possession of service jobs, or stop small cliques from running the show year after year. We had to have hundreds of A.A.’s at the beginning, and then thousands and thousands more in recent years, to nurture and protect our Steps, our Traditions and our Concepts so that we could become a strong and healthy fellowship. Without rotation, there wouldn’t have been room at the table for all of us! With trusted servants and no rulers in this spiritual democracy, we have needed and will always need an ever larger table, for more and more people to join us. Continued page 3...

We Don't Rotate Out Continued...

The most important values we trusted servants can preserve at our big table, and freely hand over to the new folks who just sat down, are our principles – our reliance upon a Higher Power, our adherence to our primary purpose, our allegiance to maintenance of the right of decision (to mention just three of our principles). That's just another way of speaking a truth in which we all believe – Principles Before Personalities.

If it's your turn to serve at your group's business meeting, or at District, or Area or Region or at the General Service Conference, welcome and thanks! When you get there, please say hello to my friends there. They'll be easy to recognize – they are you and they are me and they are all of us.

Terry S., Area 40 Advisor

Then and Now, Reflection and Goals of DCM for District 41

As I reflect upon the last year, as DCM for District 41, I see how much service work has allowed us to grow. In the past year our district has been through some changes. First and foremost, is the continued growth of our Bridging the Gap (BTG) Committee Chair position. The BTG chair was created, with the spirituality of our program in mind, to reach out to those alcoholics who are still suffering and coming out of treatment. Secondly, we created a position which is the running of our District bookstore. This is a non-voting and non-rotation position in order to free up our literature committee chair position to become rotating again. Our previous literature chair has spent many years making his time available for those who are seeking Big Books and other literature. Finally, we started out the year with strong involvement from many of our home groups. We currently have increased that involvement and look forward to more groups coming to participate. The next year brings on some great opportunities to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Our Corrections Committee Chair is trying to schedule a meeting with the Cascade County Sheriff in hopes of making it possible to allow persons who have a felony to take meetings into the regional jail. Currently, the policy is that those who have felonies cannot go in the jail. We are continuing to grow our Cooperation with Professionals Committee to include a luncheon and activities in hopes of reaching out to more professionals. In the past few years we have invited professionals to our Founders Day celebration. This upcoming year our Cooperation with Professional Community (CPC) Committee Chair is planning to hold a luncheon in the upcoming months to reach even more professionals in our community. As DCM I have been a part of a team of individuals who are dedicated to making sure we are available to the still suffering alcoholic. We work as a team and have seen our numbers grow as a direct result. These individuals have done so much to help me grow in this program and spiritual progress is evident in every meeting. I am blessed with the continued support of those who are participating in service in District 41—they teach me more and more at every meeting.

Chris W., DCM District 41

Corrections Chair Update

I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. I attended the prison meeting a couple of weeks ago and was again reminded of the importance of our work, both for the inmates and for our own sobriety.

I wanted to forward on this information I got from GSO. In the Corrections Resources section it mentions that GSO provides a Corrections Workbook to all new district corrections chairs. So if you haven't requested one from GSO, contact Eva by mid-January when she rotates out of the Corrections Desk. You can contact her at corrections@aa.org or call 212-870-3400. You can also purchase the whole Corrections Kit from GSO. Another heads up is the link to the "Sharing From Behind the Walls" bulletin. It comes out four times a year and is available for download from the AA website.

Help Wanted: Additionally, check out the Corrections Correspondence section. There are currently 80 male inmates waiting for an AA to volunteer to write them. It's disturbing to me to know that there are alcoholics requesting help and we don't have enough AA's stepping up to write them. Please pass the word that inmates need help. It's very easy to get involved in this effort. The corrections correspondence pamphlet has the information people need to get involved in this great service opportunity. **Contact: corrections@aa-montana.org for more info or to volunteer.**

Finally, GSO is collecting shared experience of what's working in corrections. If you have any local successes that should be shared with the fellowship as a whole, please pass it on to me or directly to GSO.

Yours in love and service, Lee G.

Looking Forward

Greetings and Wishes for a sober, active 2014!!

Thinking about the topic for this first issue of 2014, I can't quite believe that the rotation is halfway through. The holidays used to be such a difficult time for me. Towards the end of my drinking, I couldn't even participate in the ritual of making resolutions and had no hope that my life would ever be anything different, let alone better.

This year is different!! In fact, I've had a number of years that are different! This year, going into the second year serving as your delegate is pretty good! This time last year, I was pretty afraid. I am less afraid this year, more the niggling anxiety of making sure I am organized and understand and able to communicate with others about the decisions we will be making. I've received my communications kit from GSO, so have a list of things to be doing to prepare for the conference: airline tickets, hotel reservations, and a number of other administrative details. Since I am a conference committee chair, I will be going to New York for February General Service Board weekend and most of the details for that trip have been taken care of.

The West Central Region Service Conference is February 28 – March 2 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I will be attending and hope that some of you will be able to be there or that your DCM and, perhaps, GSR will be there, too. This annual conference is an opportunity for A.A. members in the West Central Region (Iowa – Area 24, Minnesota – Areas 35 & 36, Montana – Area 40, Nebraska—Area 41, North Dakota – Area 52, South Dakota – Area 63, and Wyoming – Area 76) to meet and share experience, strength and hope with each other and to begin discussing agenda items on the 2014 General Service Conference (GSC) Agenda. No decisions are made at this regional conference; it is a forum for open sharing and discussion and is a great way to participate in A.A. as a whole.

March will be a busy month for many of us, especially for many of the Area Committee members. The districts will be hosting some pre-assemblies where we will further discuss and become informed about the Area 40 agenda items as well as the GSC agenda items. I am hopeful that we will have at least 3 pre-assemblies and perhaps have opportunities for video conferencing A.A. members who may not be able to travel to one of the meetings.

April is the Spring Assembly (April 11-13) and I am looking forward to another full agenda with lots of lively discussion and debate; the welcoming sessions on Friday night have been very fun for me and a nice opportunity to meet and visit with each other, so I am hoping there will be a good turn out again. The GSC is April 27 – May 3; I will return and begin travelling around the state giving my delegate's report through August, a great opportunity to spend time with you.

As I write this, I realize most of the year is pretty well lined out for me. I learned a lot last year and will be doing my best this year to help us focus on issues that are important to us and those items on which we have some opportunity to have a voice.

Thank you for trusting me to serve you! I am full of gratitude for the life I get to have and never dreamed possible. Serving you and A.A. are key elements to my sobriety. Thank you for trusting me!

Sharon S., Area 40 Delegate Panel 63



From The Archives: Past Delegate Report, Robbie S. Area Assembly Spring 1998

Group Participation At Every Level

It is Sunday morning and each of you here today is no longer a newcomer to service. This is the way of Alcoholics Anonymous. When you have been given something, you move forward to give that away.

As we return home, we will go back to our home group in time to be there when the new guy or gal enters through the door. We will sit down next to the person who has not heard of an Assembly or does not understand what the letters GSR stand for, you will have a message to carry. You have been given a gift in the past 36 hours or so. You will share that gift.

Of course we cannot give away what we do not have. But perhaps with a "disease of perception" we are handicapped and do not realize what we have unless we take inventory. We have three legacies in Alcoholics Anonymous. Legacy- a heritage passed on from one generation, an inheritance. Share this news with everyone you meet in Alcoholics Anonymous. Next time you tell a newcomer. "It gets better." Define it!

Let them know of this inheritance. Let them know this is an inheritance which is held in trust for them. We are all Children of a Higher Power I call God. We all have this three-fold legacy here for us. Share your recovery, share the principles of the Twelve Steps that change the mind so that an individual need not exist in that seemingly hopeless state of active alcoholism. Tell them what they can inherit.

Share the legacy of Unity. Share the meaning of Unity—the condition of being one: oneness. Singleness—the bringing together into a whole. Fellowship with them. Allow the healing of the body that comes from a hand extended, a hug or the support that comes from sitting close to Another, shoulder-to-shoulder during challenges to our faith. Let them know of the inheritance found within the principles of the Twelve Traditions. Show how this legacy of Unity is the first level of our inheritance. When we bring our body to our very first meeting, we are surrounded by the strength of the Traditions in action. That is why the door is unlocked, a chair is waiting and the message of the group meeting there is dependable.

And most of all share the legacy of Service. Show them how AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer. From phone calls and cups of coffee all the way to our General Service Office for national and international action. Each is Service-to work or care for, to attend to spend time, to meet a need, to perform duties for another.

Just as we would not extract a few steps from the group of 12 when we pass on the program of Recovery, do not keep 1/3 of another's inheritance from them by failing to give them the legacy of Service, Give them the opportunity to embrace the principles of the 12 Concepts. To inherit that which make our spirit soar and our soul heal- the work we do for another.

We have a three part disease miraculously healed through a three part legacy. Recovery, Unity and Service—each guided by a set of 12 principles in groups we call steps, traditions and concepts. These groups of 12 seem to be crafted in the same way. In the first principle we see the challenge or the problem. In the second principle we see the solution. And our inheritance is given to us in 3 through 12. Coming to us more fully as we grow in this way of life. The first step of recovery tells us the problem. The second step tells us the solution. Steps 3 through 12 allow us to inherit the solution.

Robbie S., Past Delegate 1998

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Area 40 Financial Information December 2013

Check Book Balance	16790.15
Prudent Reserve	10883.33
Archives Account	567.64
Operating Balance	5339.18

2013 and 2014 Events

- **MSP Volunteer Orientation, MSP Deerlodge, January 18th
- **Mid-Winter Social, Joliet, February 15th
- **Into Action Weekend, Whitefish, February 21-22nd
- **West Central Regional AA Service Conference, St. Louis Park MN, February 28-March 2nd
- **Sober Ski, Whitefish Mountain, February 28-March 4th
- **Northern Rockies Pockets of Enthusiasm, Helena, March 14-15th
- **Spring 2014 Area Assembly, Yogo Inn, Lewistown, April 11th-13th
- **Spring 2014 Round Up, Fairmont Hot Springs, Anaconda, May 2nd-4th
- **Fall 2014 Area Assembly, Yogo Inn, Lewistown, September 19th-21st

For flyers and information see the calendar on aa-montana.org.

If you'd like your activity to be included in the Triangle (and on the Area 40 website) please email it to calendar@aa-montana.org.



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WHERE TO MAIL

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