



# Seeds of Service

## Am I Giving Back to A.A.?

Teresa K., Area 60 Registrar

People don't like to talk about money, but we have too. Folks have complained about it for years, but we need to have these discussions. Bill W. wrote extensively about this topic; he even wrote an entire Tradition about it.

He talks about helping a hung over drunk by giving him five dollars (*which was a seventh of his weekly income*); but when it came to adding to the basket at the meeting that night he only threw in a dime. Bill realized that his ego was not in check, and his priorities were not in the correct order. I need to ask myself the same question—*are my priorities in order?*



You always hear the words in meetings “*we are self supporting through our own contributions.*” For me, the key words are WE and OWN—which means all of us. So here’s the big question I ask myself ... *Am I giving back to AA?*

Contributions in AA mean many things. Do I contribute to the meeting that I’m at? The seventh tradition is more than just throwing a buck or two in the basket. Self support means that I carry my own weight, I pay my bills in a timely manner, I give back to a program that has freely given to me, I help other alcoholics as best as I can.

Some of the things I do are - step up to

chair my home group, come early to help setup, (*the meeting before the meeting*), cleanup after myself, pickup ashtrays (*when you could still smoke in a meeting*), pickup coffee cups, push in chairs, and most importantly throw a couple of dollars in the baskets. That buck keeps that meeting I am sitting in open for the next alcoholic.

When I was newly sober I came to meetings, unemployed and unemployable — a broken person with nothing to give. I didn’t have two nickels to rub together; but I had pennies, so I threw them in out of gratitude for that meeting. It was not just at my home group but every meeting. The saying “*90 meeting in 90 days*” meant that I contributed 90 times in 90 days.

(Continued on page 10)

## Why Participate in the Basket?

Jan H. Past Delegate Panel 57

After a few months of attending meetings and putting quarters in the basket as it passed, I asked how much should I put in and what was I paying for?

I had seen some people actually put a dollar in the basket, so I didn’t want to not be paying enough for whatever it was! I had heard the phrase that there were “no dues or fees for AA membership,” so I knew that the money couldn’t have been about that!

This was one of the questions that I asked in my beginning that caused--what seemed to me--a prolonged period of silence. I liked this “AA,” and I didn’t want to blow it by asking the wrong questions. Then the answers began; again, I was in awe of how something so simple as the passing of the basket was so important.

They explained that the money in the basket is our way of participating in the health of the group. A healthy group is able to help others by offering literature, pay the rent to keep the meeting place, make the meeting welcoming by offering coffee and maybe goodies for those attending, and, something that I did not know then, support our General Service Office in New York, our Area’s service, and Intergroup. They explained that every group strives to be fully self-supporting. I began to understand the extreme importance of my “*participation in our common welfare through contributions*”.

“*Long ago, Bill W. observed, in the groups and in himself, the peculiar phenomenon of our tight-fisted approach when we pass the hat.*” (GV article August, 1989) Seventy plus



years later, we ‘tight-fisted’ alcoholics, after inflation times four, “still see the one dollar bill as the *upper limit* of our contribution to the basket.”

My mentors suggested in my beginning to consider that AA is saving my life and that I could as a minimum contribute the cost of the coffee I drank plus the goodies that I consumed. I somehow always found the money to buy my booze, I thought. This was another gently taught valuable lesson among many.

As I have grown up in AA, the long form of the Tradition Seven has become very clear. In order for the Fellowship to continue to grow and maintain its effectiveness, our

(Continued on page 10)

## ON MY BOOKSHELF

Jean M., Past Delegate, Panel 61 Area 60 WPA

My first encounter with a “Service Manual” was a timeworn paperback book that had (obviously) been tossed around endlessly in a storage container at my home group. I had no idea what it was, and no interest in opening it to find out.

When my home group asked me to be the GSR, I received one of those strange books in the mail as part of my “GSR Kit”, and the only introduction that I was given by my peers was that it was a fine cure for insomnia.

Eventually, and gratefully, I decided to find out for myself what it was all about.

I have compared the Service Manual to a reference book, like a dictionary or encyclopedia, not a novel, like Stephen King. Actually, it is a little of each: some reference, some history and some instruction manual.

*The A.A. Service Manual Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service* by Bill W. is a history of A.A. services, an explanation of the Conference Structure and the Twelve Concepts, along with the essays that Bill W. wrote on each one. It has our Preamble and the Unity and Responsibility Declarations. It lists both the Short and Long forms of the Traditions. It contains charts that



illustrate our Conference Structure and where the Groups and Areas fit in it; there are maps showing what and where the Delegate Areas and Regions are. It defines many of the service positions that we are familiar with and contains a glossary of terms.

And sometimes, tucked away where you would least expect it, is the answer to a question that no one seems to know the answer. I stumbled over one of those, more than once. Hence, my book is marked up, good and proper.

- Why do some people sell A.A. literature for more than they pay for it? Read Concept XII.
- How many Trustees are there? Chapter 9.
- What does a G.S.R. do? Chapter 2.
- What’s a District? Chapter 3.
- Why do we need a “Service Manual” (or Guidelines, Rules and Traditions) anyway? See Bill W.’s Introduction to the Concepts.

What goes on at the General Service Office? Chapter 11. Today, some few years later, that book has become my trusted companion, friend and final authority. It goes with me to all my service commitments. It has been highlighted, tabbed and written in. The one that I use today is not my original book; that one was passed on long ago. Actually, there have been several more that have been lovingly used and then retired.

I remember fondly when I finally faced the reality that my beloved Service Manual had become outdated. Each Conference reviews the book for changes that need to be updated. Those changes are listed after the index of the Service Manual portion of the book. For instance, when the Conference increased the amount a member can donate to G.S.O., the Service Manual was changed. So I sat down with my Service Manual and a new one, the highlighters, tabs and pencils, and set to work.

If you share my passion for the Service Manual, good for you! Maybe some of you already have a Service Manual that is highlighted, tabbed and written in. Or perhaps I have sparked an interest in our Service Manual for you. I invite you to get out the highlighters! ▲



Grapevine Cartoon Contest Winner  
June 2012—Fred F., Albany, N.Y.

*"Uh, I don't think you can add the liquor store as a dependent..."*

## A New Book From AA Grapevine Grapevine Daily Quote

This pocket-sized book captures the first 365 days of the Grapevine Daily Quote, which first appeared



in June 2012. The quotes—contributed by AA members, with many written by AA's co-founders—were selected by the GV staff. All of these passages first appeared in the pages of Grapevine as part of members' stories and other submissions, and many of them can now be found in Grapevine's themed book anthologies.

## Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix

Excerpts from AA's Pamphlet F-3 on Self Support

**T**radition Seven (*long form*). The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members.

We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise.

Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

*"The first time I had to talk about finances at a district meeting when I was my area's treasurer, a fellow in the back of the room yelled out: 'Why in the world are you always talking about money when this is a spiritual program?' The guy threw me and I didn't know how to answer him."*

From its earliest beginnings, A.A. has always incurred expenses — whether it be the cost of a pot of coffee or the price of a place to meet. In the early days, these costs were often absorbed by individual A.A.s or non-alcoholic friends who offered their parlours and living rooms for A.A.s to meet in. However, as A.A. outgrew the generosity of these early friends and members, the Fellowship's need for income became more and more apparent.

Bill W., A.A.'s co-founder, and some of the early A.A. members initially felt the only way for the Fellowship to survive was to solicit financial support from philanthropic institutions or individuals outside A.A. These "high rollers" could then supply the funds the Fellowship would need to carry out the vital

Twelfth Step work the early A.A.s envisioned — to bankroll the army of paid missionaries, the chain of A.A. hospitals, and the library of books they were certain to write.

One potential A.A. patron, however, when approached by the pioneering members for money, instead helped to lay the groundwork for A.A.'s Tradition of self-support: "I am afraid that money will spoil this thing," said John D. Rockefeller Jr., while at the same time endorsing the work of the fledgling Fellowship.

This marked a turning point in A.A. history and, as the reality of Mr. Rockefeller's statement sank in and A.A. members began to see the truth in the old cliché, "*Who pays the piper calls the tune*," the seed of the Seventh Tradition took root.

### The Bottom Line.

*"Now that we are sober in A.A., the word 'support' has to do with sharing, people, self-respect, gratitude, and what we are privileged to give — not take — in material terms."* While the Fellowship has always faced problems of money, property, and prestige in one form or another, through the wisdom of the Seventh Tradition we have never been diverted from our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers — wherever he or she may be. This is the fundamental work of Alcoholics Anonymous, and to ensure that the hand of A.A. will always remain outstretched, money and spirituality must continue to mix. And for that, we are all responsible.

that individual groups, through an informed group conscience, adopt a specific contribution plan tailored to meet the group's financial situation. Once the basic group expenses have been taken care of, for example: (rent, refreshments, A.A. literature, Grapevine literature, local meeting lists, G.S.R. travel expenses to attend service functions), and a "prudent reserve" has been set aside to cover any emergency contingencies that might arise, the group may decide to further carry the message by sending money to the following A.A. service entities.

- **The local district**, which communicates directly with the groups, providing the district group conscience for the area assemblies, and serving as a link between the area delegates and the G.S.R.s.
- **The area committee**, which coordinates vital A.A. activities over a broad geographic area; sends a delegate to the annual General Service Conference; holds area assemblies to determine the needs of the Fellowship; and provides information at all levels of service.
- **The local intergroup or central office**, which may provide phone service for Twelfth Step calls and other inquiries; coordination of group activities; A.A. literature sales; institutions work; public information and cooperation with the professional community activities.
- **A.A.'s General Service Office**, which functions as a storehouse of A.A. information, communicating with members and groups around the world; publishes A.A.'s literature; and supplies information and experience to professionals and others interested in A.A. ▲



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### Some Questions and Answers About A.A.'s Finances

**How can groups participate?** To help support A.A.'s essential services, the General Service Conference suggests

## Editorial On the 7th Tradition

*"Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."*

by Bill W. A.A. Grapevine, June, 1948

The A.A. Groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contribution of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve its ideal: that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise.

Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

Our growth continuing, the combined income of Alcoholics Anonymous members will soon reach the astounding total of \$250,000,000, a quarter of billion dollars yearly. This is the direct result of A.A.

membership. Sober we now have it, drunk we would not. By contrast, our overall A.A. expenses are trifling.

For instance, the A.A. General Office now costs us \$1.50 per member a year. As a fact, the New York office asks the groups for this sum twice a year because not all of them contribute. Even so, the sum per member is exceedingly small.

If an A.A. happens to live in a large metropolitan center where an intergroup office is absolutely essential to handle heavy inquiries and hospital arrangements he contributes (*or probably should contribute*) about \$5.00 annually.

To pay the rent of his own group meeting place, and maybe coffee and doughnuts, he might drop \$25.00 a year in the hat. Or, if he belongs to a club it could be \$50.00. In case he takes The A.A. Grapevine he squanders an extra \$2.50!

So, the A.A. member who really meets his group responsibilities finds

himself liable for about \$5.00 a month on the average. Yet his own personal income may be anywhere between \$200. and \$2,000. a month -- the direct result of not drinking.

But, some will contend, "our friends want to give us money to furnish that new club house. We are a new small group. Most of us are still pretty broke. What then?"

I am sure that myriads of the A.A. voices would now answer the new group saying, "Yes, we know just how you feel. We once solicited money ourselves. We even solicited publicly. We thought we could do a lot of good with other peoples' money. But we found that kind of money too hot to handle. It aroused unbelievable controversy. It simply wasn't worth it. Besides, it set a precedent which has tempted many people to use the valuable name of Alcoholics Anonymous for other than A.A. purposes.

While there may be little harm in a small friendly loan which your group really means to repay, we really beg you to think hard before you ask the most willing friend to make a large donation. You can, and you soon will, pay your own way. For each of you these overhead expenses will never amount to more than the price of one bottle of good whiskey a month. You will be everlastingly thankful if you pay this small obligation yourselves.

When reflecting on these things, why should not each of us tell himself, "Yes, we A.A.s were once a burden on everybody. We were 'takers.' Now that we are sober, and by the Grace of God have become responsible citizens of the world, why shouldn't we now about face and become 'thankful givers'! Yes, it is high time we did!" ▲

# HEARD AT MEETINGS



### HUMOR

Build a man a fire and he will be warm for a night, light a man on fire and he will be warm for the rest of his life

### SLIPS

I never did anything in moderation...except maybe the steps.

### INSIGHTS

Happiness is not a place you arrive at, it is a way you travel.

### THOUGHTS

I alone can do it...but I can't do it alone.

## Pass it On

Patrick M., SCI Fayette

I have been to AA meetings on the streets. I would always try to put a dollar or two in the basket when it's passed around. To me that was one way for me to contribute. Here on the inside, we don't have a basket for donations; but I do find many other ways to participate through contributions. I will stand at the front door greeting the new comer, or I'll help set up the tables and chairs, pass out pamphlets and literature that needs to be read.

I'll share my story with anyone that I believe it may help. I've been asked to

chair meetings; however, I've not been asked to sponsor anyone yet. But when that time comes, I will be ready and willing to take that on too.

There are many other ways to contribute. One simple way is by showing up and giving away what was so freely given to me...passing it on and being of service whenever possible. We have a very strong AA fellowship here at SCI Fayette. We believe in participating in our common welfare. Our methods may be a little different, but they work for us here on the inside. Pass it on. ▲

## A New Way to Live

Scott, SCI Fayette

The contributions that can be made for the AA group inside SCI Fayette are numerous. For me, it is first about showing up, even on nice days – and skipping time in the yard. Just by being there, I add something. I can also speak on topics that I can relate to or have experience with. Even after almost five years, I know very little – so I always listen and pay attention.

Also, someone has to set up the chairs, tables, put out literature, read the opening, the steps, traditions, more about alcoholism and sober time. By participating with the beginning of the meetings, you add to our group. Talking to good brothers

during the week, offering uplifting words, writing articles for newsletters, offering sponsorship, giving back what was given to us. I volunteer to be a speaker at our TC program, spreading the AA message by sharing my experience, strength and hope.

One contribution I am thankful for are our outside volunteers – Ms. Sue and Andrew and from time to time guest speakers. We can't do it by ourselves, so we have strength in our fellowship. We are lucky here. We always have a good crowd. I am thankful for all the contributions mentioned because it helps me to stay sober and shows me a new way to live. ▲

## Whatever I Can Do To Help...

Norm S., SCI Fayette

I'll start with a little about myself. I had a problem with alcohol since 1984 and was introduced to the program in 1985. I never took any suggestions. I have been in and out of jail, rehabs, and mental hospitals since 1988.

Well, it's now 2014 and I am taking all suggestions. There are many contributions I can make here at SCI Fayette. I can be on time, I can also set up, I can share, I can be kind to all the members. I am really starting to get this recovery and am seeking it with all my heart. Today, I share honestly at the meetings. I go to both

fellowships here because I need all the meetings I can get. I see the contributions my fellow members are making like chairing the meeting, and sharing their experience, strength and hope. I have a sponsor, I work the steps, I contribute through my honest sharing, shaking the new comer's hand, and reading.

Whatever I can do to help, that's what I'm going to do. I can't believe the alcohol took away 25 years of my life; but it did. I am getting it back now and plan to be the guy that put's his hand up at my first outside meeting, when I get out. ▲

## 2015 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

JULY 2-5, 2015 ATLANTA, GEORGIA  
*"80 Years – Happy, Joyous and Free."*

*It's not too soon for GSR's to begin announcing the International Convention during their regular GSR reports.*



A.A. members and guests from around the world will celebrate A.A.'s 80th year on July 2-5 in Atlanta Georgia. Preregistration is \$100 USD; and \$110 after May 12, 2015. Your registration badge entitles you to attend all Convention events, including:

- Thursday night Party in the Park
- Stadium meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in the Georgia Dome
- All of the marathons, panels, workshops, and topic, special interest and other meetings at the Georgia World Congress Center and nearby hotels

Varied meeting topics will excite many A.A.s who look forward to hearing the experience of members from other locales, and as Convention-goers partake in the many meetings and workshops scheduled, more than a few will find their imaginations fired and their enthusiasm for carrying A.A.'s message renewed.

**Housing reservation** information, including the Housing Bureau's contact information, will be included with your registration confirmation, and will be on a first-come, first-served basis; however, you must be registered for the Convention before you can make your reservations.

## If Nothing changes ... nothing changes

Walter G., DCM District 17

Editor's Note: *The following is a wonderful example of a DCM reaching out to his fellows in service. The message is simple and to the point, and might be helpful to groups and districts that struggle with participation.*

Well my first seven months as DCM has past and I have learned a lot. I have been in touch with most of the groups in our district and find that the needs are all about the same. Many groups are running with only a hand full of members - which makes it hard to keep the doors open. In order for our groups to grow we, as service members, need to spark an interest in service work.

By taking pride in what we do and speaking up at meetings is the beginning of getting others to be interested what it takes to keep the doors of a meeting open. We need to announce upcoming events express the need for help within our home groups and the district so that they both can survive. If we sit back and do not express our needs to others then how can we expect anything to change?

It has never been enough for me to sit in meetings and hear the same thing day after day. I have always been active doing something with in my home group at the least. By staying involved I feel a sense

of belonging and being needed, which makes me quite different than before.

It is good to push a new comer into group service work so he or she can feel that same need. Many of us, me included have taken on group task and held the positions for times way beyond the suggested time frame. What that does is to take away from the new comers chances to become needed, and develop a sense of responsibility.

*By staying involved I feel a sense of belonging and being needed, which makes me quite different than before.*

It is our own responsibility to take charge of our own recovery as well as to pointing the new comer in the right direction. We must lead by power of example so the new comer will want what we have and see what service work has given us. Nothing changes over night so it will take time to get our groups up in numbers. Just remember; Nothing changes, if nothing changes!!▲



March 3, 2014

*"Ever deepening humility, accompanied by an ever greater willingness to accept and to act upon clear obligations -- these are truly our touchstones for all growth in the life of the spirit."*

January 1966, Bill W.

*"The Guidance of AA's World Affairs"*  
**The Language of the Heart**

July 17, 2014

*"Self-centeredness is a poison to my emotional system. It frustrates my every effort toward a comfortable and happy existence. A terrible chain reaction begins. Fear sets in. Anger, resentment, and self-pity become my guiding forces. My only escape is to put this awful selfishness aside and become involved with the world around me."*

December 1979

*"The Root of Our Troubles,"*  
**Emotional Sobriety**

## 75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*

A.A. World Services, Inc. is pleased to announce the publication of the only authorized reproduction of the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. \$12.

The official publication date of the first printing of our Big Book is April 10, 1939. There were 4,730 books printed, with red cloth binding, wide columns, thick paper (why it was called the Big Book), and a red, yellow, black and white dust jacket, which came to be known as the "circus cover." To commemorate this historic printing—the 2013 General Service Conference approved the creation of a faithful replica of the original, to be published in April 2014. Starting November 15, 2013, you may preorder copies (Item B-0). (Preorder period ends on February 28, 2014.)

## SAVE-THE-DATE AREA 60 ELECTION ASSEMBLY—PANEL 65 Sunday October 19



The Area 60 Election Assembly is charged with the duty of electing a Delegate to the General Service Conference, an Alternate Delegate and the following Area Officers: Area Chairperson, Alternate Area Chairperson, Area Secretary, and Area Treasurer. This assembly occurs in the fall of each even numbered year.

DCM's and GSR's, Don't miss the opportunity to participate in our Third Legacy Process and carry the voice of your groups! DCMs and GSRs rotating out can stay involved in Area service by presenting themselves for Coordinator and Alternate positions!

## "7th Tradition AA Word Puzzle

*Feel free to send suggested words for the next word puzzle  
to [newsletter@wpaarea60.org](mailto:newsletter@wpaarea60.org)!*

*Answer on Page 10*

T Q X G N X G U R I Q G J E R X H P S  
 D O W R S V A V E R V I H A T F U F E  
 G O N Y P O R B N C F V L B Q L X S L  
 R T W B V N E C T U S I A G A I N P F  
 E I R N A L A R I U T N N O L P U I S  
 E S Q C T Y O Y Y W D G C Z O N E R U  
 N U Q G P O E G V O L U N T A R Y I P  
 C R P V D N W M O W L O V E U R G T P  
 A D B N O C O N T R I B U T I O N U O  
 R M E M S C X S B B P K A D V D D A R  
 D P M Y J H D V E U I R K S R S L L T  
 O I D T O R E O O R E L D Y K E N I I  
 S N S X V E M R N T V M L Z K E F T N  
 E L S T F M G T I U B I F W N Z T Y G  
 V F F F R E R L K J T E C Y M T E R N  
 E C O X M I R A I D K S T E W D D S W  
 N C U O C A C T R E S P O N S I B L E  
 T B H P E P P T R A D I T I O N P X E  
 H K S R S N S C S H B I G B O O K S D

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|              |                 |            |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| AREA         | BASKET          | BIG BOOKS  | BILL W     |
| COFFEE       | CONTRIBUTION    | CUPS       | DISTRICT   |
| DONUTS       | DOWNTOWN        | GIVING     | GREEN CARD |
| GSO          | HAT             | HOME GROUP | LITERATURE |
| LOVE         | MONEY           | OPEN DOOR  | RENT       |
| RESPONSIBLE  | SELF SUPPORTING | SERVICES   | SEVENTH    |
| SPIRITUALITY | TRADITION       | VOLUNTARY  |            |

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March 1996

*Not wanting to be short-changed, a member considers tossing in another dollar or two.*

I'm not going to write about how poor I was when I showed up at AA's doorstep. Neither is my purpose to preach from some moral high ground. What I do want to reveal, though, is evidence of my own flawed thinking when it comes to money and value, in the hope that some of my fellows might relate.

I've always been pretty good about putting my dollar in the basket at meetings. This is partly because I felt a sense of reasonable obligation, and partly due to a sense of shame if I didn't pitch in. Besides, what if people noticed and talked about me?

Yes, I could see the obvious benefits of AA in my life. And putting a dollar in the basket was important if for no other reason than for the sheer entertainment value of the meetings. But when I saw other members put in two or even three dollars, I would think, Sure, that's fine for them, they have more to give than I have. Or, I give by putting time in at my service position. That kind of thinking works fine until you see another member with a service position contributing multiple dollars to the basket.

So I began to actually "shine a light" on this defect, as one of our members likes to say. In examining my defect, I had to ask myself why it was that I felt such an aversion to the idea of adding another dollar to my contribution. Immediately, my old friend, fear-based rationalization, chimed in (or rather, clanged in): "Not now! I can't afford it. I only just recently started working full time. It wouldn't be prudent!" But the smaller voice of reason, seeking equal time, said, "Doesn't the program have something to do with the fact that I am employed full time and I can make it to work every day?" I couldn't argue with that. "Still," the blatant, dishonest voice of justification argued, "almost everybody else only gives one dollar, and some don't give anything." "Eewwww!" as my daughter would say. I heard myself. Then the voice of sobriety countered back, "Aren't you grateful that you're in a position to be able to contribute more?" Yes, I was, but ... oh darn it, I got tired of arguing with myself! I had to concede.

So now that I had surrendered to reasonable thinking, I began to do some research to support it. I wanted some facts to bolster the argument against my own rationalization. According to the Consumer Price Index calculator

(available through the U.S. Dept. of Labor), one dollar pitched into the basket in 1950 was equivalent to \$9.67 in 2013. In 1984, I was court-ordered to attend AA (it didn't stick; or I should say, I didn't stick). Donating a dollar at that time (which most of us did) would be like putting \$0.45 in today. Forty-five measly cents! I also thought about how much money I spent in bars and liquor stores, and more important, how much money I've saved since I came into AA.

By employing honest introspection, one of the tools from my AA toolbox, I was able to see that I was once again trying to get "more bang for my buck" than I probably deserved, and most likely short-changing myself in the process. Because I believe I get out of AA what I'm willing to put into it—and vastly more.

So a couple of months ago, without telling anyone, even my sponsor, I decided to double my standard one dollar contribution at each meeting I attend. You might wonder, after all the soul-searching and research I have done, why I don't increase my donation to three dollars. It's a good question, but the answer is familiar: Not now. I can't afford it. It wouldn't be prudent! ▲

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## Going Forward With Gratitude

Box 4-5-9, Winter 2011

your own group. However the group doesn't vote on whether to accept the Plan—that's an individual, voluntary thing."

The effects of this idea were immediate. Within a year, contributions to G.S.O. from Oklahoma had nearly doubled and by 1956 the idea had spread around the state. By 1961, the Birthday Plan was recommended at the General Service Conference and today it is a worldwide practice, though still very much an individual, voluntary thing." It is a solid example of what Bill W. once referred to as the place "where spirituality and money can mix." While this method of celebration has continued since Ab's initial suggestion, it has also been helped along by enthusiastic members. In the

1990s, at the General Service Conference in New York, South Florida delegate John K. talked about "how effective the Birthday Plan used to be."

He returned to his home group, and that summer he and his wife set up a Birthday Plan committee at the quarterly A.A. assembly in Sarasota, Florida. With great flourish, the couple set up a booth with candy, birthday hats, whistles and balloons, along with Birthday Plan envelopes addressed to G.S.O. Envelopes were distributed to 1,500 members in one day. As John's wife Joyce explained, "The Birthday Plan gives us an opportunity to express personal gratitude and at the same time support the A.A. support system. A.A. is self-supporting through its own contributions — and that's us."

*(Continued on Page 10)*

The Birthday Plan is a longstanding A.A. method of celebrating sobriety. To mark an A.A. anniversary, many A.A. members contribute one dollar or more for every year of sobriety to the General Service Office. Some A.A.'s have been known to have a "penny a day" fund to express gratitude for their sobriety. The Birthday Plan originated in Oklahoma City in 1954. Ab A., a delegate from Tulsa, came up with the idea while in conversation with fellow member Ted R. As Ab later recalled, the two members thought, "Wouldn't a lot of A.A.'s be glad to contribute a dollar a year to G.S.O. for each year of A.A. life?" (*As a sign of those times, Ab added, "Up to a limit of \$10.00?"*) Ab explained further that, "The idea is that you talk about this in

# Traditions Checklist

From the A.A. Grapevine (MS20)

*These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.*

## Practice These Principles....

**Tradition Seven:** Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug

companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?

3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

*Editor's Note: The Checklists are available in packs of 50 for \$5.50. Some groups find them useful during regular group conscience meetings.*

## SELF-SUPPORT (F-42)

The Seventh Tradition states: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

While contributions cover each group's rent and other expenses, the Seventh Tradition is essential at every level of A.A. service. It is both a privilege and a responsibility for groups and members to ensure that not only their group, but also their intergroup/central office, local services, district, area, and the General Service Office remain self-supporting. This keeps A.A. free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose — to help the alcoholic who still suffers. The amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world.

## SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

### Some facts:

- Less than 43% of groups contribute to the General Service Office.
- Costs of Services provided by G.S.O. are \$6.32 per member per year.
- A.A. literature sales account for 56% of G.S.O.'s income.

### Personal thoughts:

- What is the value of your sobriety?
- Does your group know that contributions may be made online at AA.org
- Give until it feels good.

## Member Services & Statistics

|  | 2010           | 2011              | 2012              |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Cost of Service per member per year      | ---\$6.29      | -----\$6.32       | ----- \$6.43      |
| Cost of Service per group per year       | -----\$137.45  | -----\$137.01     | ---- \$138.69     |
| Number of members reported               | -----1,373,681 | ----1,384,699     | - 1,388,727       |
| Number of groups reported                | -----62,873    | -----63,845       | ---- 64,414       |
| <b>Percentage of Groups Contributing</b> | <b>--44.9%</b> | <b>-----42.4%</b> | <b>---- 42.4%</b> |
| Contributions per member per year        | ----\$4.54     | -----\$4.47       | ----- \$4.67      |
| Contributions per group per year         | -----\$99.24   | -----\$96.95      | ---- \$100.69     |
| Cost of services NOT covered*            | -----\$1.75    | -----\$1.85       | ----- \$1.76      |

\* contributions that must be made up using literature profits – per member per year

## GSO Services ... Keeping the Doors Open

- Archives
- Conference
- Cooperation with Professional Community
- Corrections
- Directories
- Group Records
- Group Services
- International
- Literature
- Public Information
- Regional Forums
- Special Need – Accessibilities
- Treatment
- Website

**Am I Giving Back to A.A.?** : (Continued from page 1)

Teresa K., Area 60 Registrar

I was taught very early on that giving back to a meeting meant cleaning up after myself, putting money in the basket, extending a hand to the newcomer or buying them a big book. Contributing in all of these ways does more for me, it gives me self esteem, and the feeling I belong to AA and humanity. I can look people in the eye today, and I can also pass on what I was taught.

Today, I do as best I can on any given day. I live on a fixed income, so after paying my bills, I take out so much cash for meeting money for the month. That way I can contribute financially to all the meetings I attend. I get coffee and once in a while a donut (*my weakness*). I know that there are regular costs for every home group to provide coffee, cups, donuts, literature, rent for the space and the list goes on....

Over the years, I've had a few sponsees not contribute to the meetings they attend. When asked, I've gotten answers such as "*I give at*

*my home group*" or "*I gave last week.*" I've pointed out to them that they smoke store bought cigarettes, have nice cell phones (*which they can't seem to get off of ☺*), go to "Starbucks" for coffee or buy five dollars in 50/50 tickets...but they don't understand the importance of throwing in a dollar or two in the basket. As you might imagine, this irks me to no end. I then give them "the talk" – about how it is so very important to give back to AA, and how their dollar will help the next drunk coming in. We saved *them* a seat... so let's save a seat for another alcoholic by helping to keep the doors open. When the willingness is there, they come to see the bigger picture and make the changes necessary to stay sober one more day.

I know that I can not change anyone but myself, and passing judgments on others is a character defect of mine. So I attempt to show by example. If we as sponsors do not teach our sponsees, then who will? I hate to see meetings close because they can't pay the rent. If we don't step up then who will? ▲

**Why Participate in the Basket?**

Jan H., Past Delegate (Continued from page 1)

willingness to share in the financial costs within the spirit of the Seventh Tradition is paramount. My voluntary sharing in the costs according to my own abilities and conscience brings a sense of belonging, fairness, serenity, satisfaction of being part of a fellowship that I have helped to "foster" and nourish, and provides a positive example to others. It works in my personal life as well. This Tradition suggests self-reliance as a cure for overdependence. I needed to act more maturely, accept my own responsibilities, and take care of myself in several faltering areas including the financial.

*"Let's all of us who owe our lives to AA give more as we grow more. We ought to, not only because more will be needed for the AA job that lies ahead, but because it is up to us alone to see that AA does not fail that responsibility. AA was there for us when we came, so let's be sure that others in the same desperate straits have the same chance to be helped by AA."* (F.F. GV, October 1972) We can do our part for our groups and AA as a whole! ▲

**Going Forward With Gratitude**

Box 4-5-9, Winter 2011 (Continued from page 8)

By the same token, November has long been considered to be Gratitude Month in A.A. (In Canada October is Gratitude Month.) Bill W. had thought that his sobriety began in the month of November, though later realized his sober date was December 11th.

In the 1940s, the General Service Board began having small Gratitude dinners. In 1956, at the Sixth General Service Conference, delegates approved a motion to have a Gratitude Week, to coincide with Thanksgiving week, noting, "this action be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help support A.A.'s worldwide services." This grew into the Gratitude Lunch, a tradition held throughout much of the 1960s at New York's Roosevelt Hotel for friends of A.A., including members of the media.

(Being mindful that many of A.A.'s friends still drank, cocktails were served at the event for our drinking friends.) The event was discontinued in 1968, though the spirit remains intact. As Bill W. wrote in a letter in 1959, "Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward. In other words, if you carry the message to others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you."

**To request a supply of "Birthday Plan" envelopes,** contact G.S.O. at: General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 459, New York, NY 10163; (212) 870-3400. Contributions may also be made online: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). ▲

**7th Tradition Word Puzzle**

**Answer Key**

from Page 7



## Living Proof—Life After Death

Matt L., SCI Fayette

Hello, I'm Matt L., an alcoholic and an addict too. I never used to believe that statement. I'm 51 years old now, and it took decades and multiple disasters in my life to come to believe that because I would never admit I was powerless.

As I share in meetings these days I can hardly believe where my life has led me from where I once was! This is my very first time writing an article. My sponsor, Larry L, Jr., has always suggested that I give back what was so freely given to me. He says I ought to be of service with three years of sobriety.

Wow, three years. I remember the times when I couldn't get three days. My sobriety date is March 18 2011—which started upon my second arrest for my second DUI vehicular homicide. I'm ashamed that this is not my first. I did some time for the charge, got out, and continued to stay in denial

I have a serious problem with alcohol and other chemicals that I've used to escape reality. I never met the woman who lost her life because of that first incident. I only pray for forgiveness on that matter of her death.

Since the topic for this issue is participating in our common welfare through contributions, I can only pray "my" contribution will help some newcomer (*or old timer*) from a relapse and ending up in my situation.

As I said before, I got out of prison, some time passed, and then my drinking and getting high together affected me directly. This time my DUI took a very dark personal toll on my life. As a result, I refused to let my sister Kelly drive who "was" in recovery from

addiction. I said to her "I've got this!" due to my manipulative and controlling disease. She died that day and my mother wound up in a personal care home. I was in a hospital in a coma near death not knowing what had happened to my family who were my passengers.

The horror, shame and guilt I awoke with and had to live with almost made me suicidal. Someone here suggested A.A. and I thought of Kelly and all the meetings she had taken me to—trying for years to get me sober. I did not stick around for the miracle to occur since I enjoyed my insanity too much.

Now I carry her spirit in my heart as I share at meetings, taking my sponsors suggestion that "I've a purpose, that God saved me to carry Kelly's message of hope that there is life after death for those who want it." I hope my message hits home to prevent a catastrophe in someone else's life.

Our home group's name here is "Life or Death." Today I choose life, working the steps with my sponsor, and now I've become living proof that miracles do occur. Step one, I surrendered, two I came to believe God would forgive and help me, and three, I'm learning to do his will and am now on Step four. Again, I'm living proof that there is life after death—thank God, may you find him now, today! Don't wait like me for a prison sentence to carry the message! ▲

Sincerely Matt L., SCI Fayette.



# AAGRAPEVINE

The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous

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2. The Keys to Serenity
3. The January 2012 Grapevine is Here
4. The October 2011 Grapevine is Here

### Most Commented On Stories

1. Gold Chip Sobriety?
2. Web Exclusive: To Share Or Not to Share
3. What Are the Requirements?
4. Web Exclusive: Confessions of a General Service Geek

Grapevine Turns 70  
this Year  
Join the Celebration  
since 1944



## The Laugh's on Us

Submit a caption for this cartoon at:  
www.aagrapevine.org



OR vote on last month's captions  
and view previous winners!

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**Newsletter**

Editor - Barb G. newsletter@wpaarea60.org  
Themes & Dates: The SOS follows the General Service Conference current theme "Communicating Our Legacies – Vital in a Changing World."  
 Nov 14. Inventory – A Guiding Tool to Our Future

**Website**

Webmaster - Greg G. webservant@wpaarea60.org  
 There are a variety of resources for you and your group on the Area 60 website, including: back issues of the newsletter, flyers for Days of Sharing, the Area 60 calendar, pamphlets, service documentation, and more. Direct questions or suggestions the Website Coordinator at website@wpaarea60.org



**DONATIONS TO AREA 60**  
 Support from groups and individuals is always welcome and appreciated!  
 Make check payable to:

**AREA 60 TREASURER**  
 P.O. Box 152, Conway, PA 15027

**2014 Calendar of Events**

*Area 60 meetings are held at the  
 Comfort Inn, 699 Rodi Road Penn Hills, PA*

| DATE                | TIME   | EVENT  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Sunday<br>August 17 | 8:30 AM - Registration<br>9:00 AM - Workshop<br>10:15 AM - Meeting | 3RD QUARTERLY MEETING<br>Comfort Inn, Penn Hills                                 |
| Saturday, Sept. 13  | 9:00 AM—3:00 PM<br><i>Covered Dishes Welcome!</i>                  | District 19 Day of Sharing<br>Glade Fire Dept.<br>14 Hohman Rd. Warren, PA 16365 |
| Sunday, Sept. 14    | 9:00 AM  | Officer and Coordinator Meeting<br>Comfort Inn, Penn Hills                       |
| Sunday Oct. 19      | 8:30 AM - Registration<br>9:00 AM - Workshop<br>10:15 AM - Meeting | Election Assembly<br>Comfort Inn, Penn Hills                                     |
| Sunday, Nov. 2      | 9:00 AM  | Officer Coordinator Meeting/<br>GAW Planning                                     |
| Sunday, Dec. 7      | 8:30 AM - Registration<br>9:00 AM - Workshop<br>10:15 AM - Meeting | 4TH QUARTERLY MEETING/<br>Comfort Inn, Penn Hills                                |
| Sunday, Dec. 21     | 9:00 AM  | Officer Coordinator Meeting/<br>GAW Planning                                     |

**Seeds of Service.** The WPA Area 60 newsletter is published quarterly by the Area Committee. It is for A. A. members only. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily that of the Area Committee or AA as a whole. The newsletter is a useful reference for GSRs reports.

**Newsletter Distribution.** Paper copies are distributed to DCM's at each quarterly meeting for redistribution to A.A. groups through their GSRs. A digital copy (PDF) of the newsletter is available at www.wpaarea60.org; and **will also be sent to DCMs and GSRs, if the Registrar has a correct email address.**

**Newsletter Submission Guidelines.** Suggested length is 500 words or less. Material should be generally relevant to the theme, and may be edited for clarity and length. All material submitted on time is reviewed, selected by topic and appears on a space available basis. The newsletter does not publish song lyrics, tributes to individuals, prayers, plays, or anything unrelated to AA or that violates the principles of AA. Please include first name/last initial, home group and district. Submissions may be emailed to newsletter@wpaarea60.org.