



# Seeds of Service

## Is Anonymity Important in These Electronic Times?

Jan H. Past Delegate, Panel 57

Anonymity is mentioned in four of our Traditions—numbers six, eight, eleven, and twelve.

In Tradition #6, it is mentioned in relation to an A.A. member asked to break his anonymity as part of his job; in Tradition #8, in regard to using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous for publicity or money-raising purposes; in Tradition #11, regarding development of our public relations policy, the principle of attraction rather than promotion; and finally in Tradition #12 explaining the spiritual substance of anonymity—sacrifice. The Twelve Traditions continually ask us to give up personal desires for the common good.

The key word which accompanies anonymity is public. “We observe all A.A.’s principles and Traditions on A.A. public media such as the Internet. In 2014, a 63rd General Service

Conference Advisory Action affirmed that *“the internet, social media, and all forms of public communications are implicit [implied] in the last phrase of the short form of Tradition Eleven, which reads: ...at the level of press, radio, and films.”*”

People who are new to AA should be able to seek help with complete assurance that their identities will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Fellowship.

As Bill W. wrote: At this altitude [public], anonymity—100 percent anonymity—was the only possible answer. Here principles would have to come before personalities without exception.” [AA. Guidelines – Internet] (NOTE: Guidelines are available

*through the G.S.O. website or by request from the General Service Office.)*

As AA members, it is very important that we take care to preserve our own and others’ anonymity at the “public” level. People who are new to AA should be able to seek help with complete assurance that their identities will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Fellowship.

The Internet and social media presents challenges to anonymity preservation of which we have to be vigilant. My anonymity was broken inadvertently when I was photographed at an International Convention. I wasn’t paying attention, so I am partly to blame. The photograph was taken with my ID tag hanging around my neck and in front of an Alcoholics Anonymous circle and triangle.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Anonymity and the 2015 International Convention

Reprinted with permission from Box 4-5-9 , Spring 2015

**Editor’s Note:** Box 4-5-9 is published quarterly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is an invaluable resource for members wanting to learn more about general service, events, sharing from groups, and service committees throughout the U.S./Canada. You can ask your GSR to share their paper or digital copy with your home group members. I’m including this article because it’s an excellent review of anonymity issues and the use of modern technology.

No doubt about it — a great deal has changed in the way many A.A. members communicate since 2010 when over 50,000 members gathered in San Antonio for our previous International Convention. Devices have changed. Platforms have changed.



However, our principle of anonymity has not changed. Why has anonymity remained so vital to the well-being of our Fellowship? While the reasons are

numerous, of particular importance is that anonymity provides a safe way for someone struggling with alcoholism to seek help from A.A. without worrying that anyone else will know. Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee Frances Brisbane has referred countless alcoholics to A.A. in her years working as a professional in the field of alcoholism, and insists, *“Of all the things I tell them about A.A., it’s the principle of anonymity that most encourages them to venture to their first meeting.”*

Of course, this does not mean that A.A. is a secret organization, and A.A.’s International Conventions are far from secret events! While A.A. members do not disclose full names or faces when sharing information about A.A. through public media, our members still find many ways to cooperate with our friends in the press, in order to let the world know that we have found a solution to the fatal problem of alcoholism. Our online Press/Media Room on the A.A. website, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), offers a wealth of information for media professionals about our program of recovery, our worldwide fellowship,

*(Continued on page 8)*

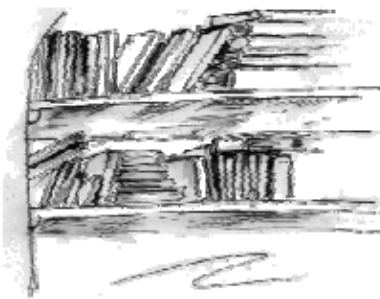
## ON MY BOOKSHELF

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

“The A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.”

A set of the A.A. Guidelines is provided at no charge to new DCMs and to new Groups when they register with the General Service Office. The A.A. Guidelines are also available on the A.A. Web Site, [aa.org](http://aa.org); or on the Area 60 Web Site, [wpaarea60.org](http://wpaarea60.org).

“Fair Use” allows us to print one copy from the web site for our own use at no charge. G.S.O. will provide one set upon request at no charge, or they can be ordered through our Literature Coordinator. When I was the Alternate Treasurer, I ordered copies of the Finance Guidelines for the Finance Committee and extra



copies for anyone who wanted one. Many of the questions I have been asked by members have been answered in the Guidelines.

For instance:

Is it alright to spend the group treasury on an anniversary party? See mg-15 Finance Guidelines for that answer and also why a group or district usually isn't a non-profit. What should we do about literature not distributed by the General Service Office? That and other literature related questions are found in mg-09 Literature. My district wants to start an answering service for 12-step calls. Refer to mg-12 Answering

Services for how to do that. Why do we need Archives? That question is answered in mg-17 Archives Guidelines.

There are 17 different Guidelines, from helping a group or district “carry the message” with Corrections, PI, CPC, Treatment or Special Needs to answering questions on Central Offices, Clubs and Conferences. You can find out about Al-Anon, why we cooperate with the Courts and what about those people who are members of A.A. and work in treatment centers? The newest Guideline is mg-18 Internet; it has a lot of useful information about social media, web sites and email.



The A.A. Guidelines are another way that the General Service Office assists our membership in reaching an informed group conscience and to help to keep our message consistent.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be of service. ▲

## HEARD AT MEETINGS



### HUMOR

When I got here, I was not a vision for you.

### INSIGHTS

Acceptance: Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want.

### THOUGHTS

There is no chapter in our Big Book called “I nto Thinking!”

### SLIPS

Relapse after long-time sobriety—too many years and not enough days.



“Isn't your program based on attraction rather than promotion?”

Grapevine Cartoon Contest Winner  
July 2013—Anonymous



**Editor's Note:** Given the usefulness of the Traditions and Concepts checklists to the health and continued growth of the fellowship, we will continue to reprint portions in each issue of our Area 60 newsletter. The last issue started with Tradition One. They can also be found online at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) for a complimentary single print or to order copies.

## TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Reprinted with permission from the A.A. Grapevine

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 TWO:** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge? ▲

## CONCEPTS CHECKLIST

Service Material from the General Service Office



This is a service piece for home groups, districts, areas. Some of these discussion points were originally developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees' Literature Committee to be distributed by the General Service Office. While this checklist is intended as a starting point for discussion by groups, districts or areas, individual A.A. members may find it useful along with our co-founder Bill W.'s writings, a service sponsor if you have one, and reflection on your own service experience. Additional information about the Concepts can be found in The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated" pamphlet. (Concepts stated here are in the short form.)

**CONCEPT I:** Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

1. Does our group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)? Do we feel that our home group is part of A.A. as a whole and do our group's decisions and actions reflect that?
2. Do we hold regular group conscience meetings encouraging everyone to participate? Do we pass that conscience on to the district, area, or the local intergroup meetings?
3. Is the "collective conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous at work in my home group? In my area?
4. Where do we fit in the upside-down triangle of A.A.?
5. Are we willing to do what it takes to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions?

**CONCEPT II:** The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

1. Do we have an understanding of the history of the General Service Conference (the "Conference")?
2. What is a Conference Advisory Action? Does our home group's G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate report back to the group on the highlights of the Conference and Conference Advisory Actions?
3. Is our group meeting its wider Seventh Tradition responsibilities? ▲

## Area 60 Corrections Welcomes Your Requests

Ken E., Area 60 Alternate Corrections Coordinator

Earlier this year I began a new journey in recovery serving as Area 60's Alternate Corrections Coordinator. As I reviewed the relevant literature, I reflected on the past consequences of my active alcoholism at its depths.

I was an inmate in a county jail. Local AA members brought in meetings, but I was too ashamed to go and face them. Whenever time came for mail call, I would become very depressed if there were no letters came from my family.



Unbearable loneliness set in, and I isolated.

Many alcoholics on the inside experience the same thing; and drink the very same day that they are released only to find themselves back in prison, again and again.

Unless this cycle of relapse is broken, many will continue to suffer. This does not have to happen. We can each help at the individual, group and district levels. To me this means awareness, willingness and action. Awareness is as simple as having literature available at meetings Bridging the Gap, having a pre-release

contact and corrections correspondence. I have been to many different meetings in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and have noticed a trend towards not displaying this literature.

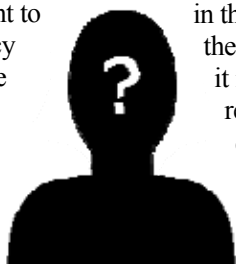
If districts were to ask themselves one simple question, this trend would become less prominent. That question is *"Is our District being of maximum service to our fellow alcoholics behind prison walls?"*

If the answer is NO or WE DON'T KNOW then please do not hesitate to contact the Area 60 Corrections Coordinator (Ron C.) or myself for assistance. ▲

## Does Privacy Mean Anonymity?

Leslie E. Alternate DCM District 23 & Area 60 Alternate Newsletter Editor

Does privacy mean anonymity? Being a literal person, I went to the dictionary for answers. Privacy means to be secluded or not in the view of others. Yet anonymity means to be unnamed, nameless. Certainly sound like they mean the same thing, yet they are not synonymous in the dictionary.



Now applying what I learned to my daily life. My neighbors may not know my name yet they do see me. I am anonymous to my neighbors, but not private. My mailman knows my name, but rarely sees me. To my mailman I am private, not anonymous. Sometimes to put things in a real world application makes more sense.

So are anonymity and privacy synonymous on the internet? I have been doing a lot of research on anonymity and privacy recently. The district I am a member of is sponsoring an anonymity workshop.

Wow ... I can not even begin to tell you the information and mis-information that is out there in the media about AA. It doesn't work, it has a low success rate, it's a cult, it's a treatment program, it's a secret society, it's "alcoholics anonymous" and it saved my life.

Facebook seems to be a great player in this controversy. Have you seen their privacy policy? In it's entirety it is over 23 pages. Have you really ever read one or just clicked next like I've done? Here is but a small piece of their "data policy:

*"We also collect content and information that other people provide when they use our services, including information about you, such as when they share a photo of you, send a message to you, or upload, sync or import your contact information. Your networks and connections. We collect information about the people and groups you are connected to and how you interact with them, such as the people you communicate with the most or the groups you like to share with. We also collect contact information you provide if you upload, sync or import this information (such as an address book) from a device."*

I had to read and re-read this several times. They "collect information about the people and groups you are connected to and how you interact with them" Does sound like anonymity?? How about this one ... *"We also collect contact information you provide if you upload,*

*sync or import this information (such as an address book) from a device,"*

There is a lot of information out there, for which I am grateful. But when I can take someone's name along with bits and pieces of information from their profile, go to Google and find them; I don't know about you but I feel my personal privacy has definitely been violated.

Now the big question is Facebook the press? A definition of press is *"the communications media considered as a whole, especially the agencies that collect, publish, transmit, or broadcast news and other information to the public."*

Draw your own conclusion on this one, personally I say "Yeah, it's press." In AA we are taught to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. That is what I have done. I have given you some information, some things to think about, perhaps change how we act or interact with others on the internet.

The choice now is yours, to learn from our predecessors and others mistakes or make our own. I made a choice and today I choose "the road of happy destiny", along with my higher power and the fellowship of AA. It worked for Bill and Bob it works for me. ▲



# What Does 'Crosstalk' Have to Do "With Our Primary Purpose?"

Reprinted with permission from Box 459, Holiday 1994

**Editor's Note:** I recently had the honor of observing a home group conduct a group inventory. One of the topics they discussed was the meaning of "cross talk," the role it played in their meeting and the impact it had on newcomers. Just the week before at my own home group we were joking at the end of our meeting about changing our name to "Cross Talk N'At. Certainly, the ease of exchanges between people so familiar with each other can seem natural. It doesn't feel out of place, until you notice a confused look on the face of a newcomer— when they're not sure which end is up. Although G.S.O. has never issued guidelines on "cross-talk," I found this article enlightening, and I'm thankful to have had the opportunity to listen and learn.

**Just** what is this thing called "cross-talk"? Why are concerned A.A.s writing to the General Service Office for clarification about it? And what does it have to do with our primary purpose: "to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety?"

The word has been with us at least since 1887. Webster's 10th Edition defines crosstalk as "unwanted signals in a communication channel caused by transference of energy from another circuit" - as when, for instance, two members sitting side by side at an A.A. meeting carry on a private, yet not so quiet, conversation ... or when one member interrupts another rudely or inappropriately.

But this is not the kind of crosstalk that members are asking about; specifically, it is traceable to a list of guidelines for behavior at A.A. meetings -erroneously attributed to "World Service"- that appears in 1992 in a central office newsletter and has since been reprinted and circulated more widely.

The guidelines state, in part, that "Any comments, negative or positive, about another's share, experience, life, program or remarks are crosstalk- that is interference... "The only appropriate comment about anyone else's share - a speaker's or another member's - is "Thank you for your share." "A member may talk about his or her own experience as it relates directly or indirectly to another's share, but should not refer to that person's share. Even comments such as "When you talk about ... it reminded me of my own experience are possibly inappropriate."

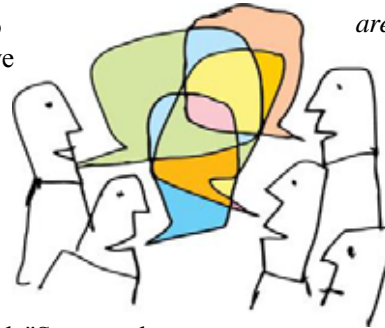
The so-called guidelines did *not* emanate from the General Service Office. What random investigation reveals is that they may have filtered into some A.A. groups through

members who also attend other Twelve Step recovery groups. For example:

1. In its literature, one fellowship includes a boxed item head, "Suggested Announcement Regarding Crosstalk and Feedback (adopted 12/13/87)." It reads: "In sharing during meetings, we proceed in an orderly, respectful manner. The chairperson (or speaker) will *call* on people to share. We do not interrupt one another or engage in discussion-this is called 'crosstalk.' While we encourage expressions of identification with a speaker and appreciation for speakers, we also do not judge or comment on what people say or tell them what to do-this is called 'feedback.'"
2. Another anonymous organization, in its "Suggested Meeting Format," asks attendees "to please not interrupt someone else's sharing, not to make comments about other people's statements. ... And to talk only about yourself."

Although many self-help groups emulate A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, their practices often differ from ours in other respects. As they may have discovered in adapting the A.A. program to their own needs, what's sauce for the goose may be poison for the gander. Says Anne T., of Rome, New York, who belongs to A.A. and also attends meetings of a different fellowship:

*"From the very beginning, one drunk talking to another has made the A.A. program go round, but in meetings (of the other fellowship), I feel, it makes sense to refrain from crosstalk. People*



*are trying to free themselves from extraordinary shame, when someone shares in response to something I've said, that's okay, but only so long as there's not even a hint of censure, belittlement, scolding or preaching, all under the guise of sharing. Knowing there's no risk of judgment makes me feel safe."*

Looking at the subject from an A.A.'s point of view, a G.S.O. staff member, says, "Comparing notes, many of us realized that nonjudgmental suggestions we had received in meetings, in response to something we had shared, was very beneficial to our recovery. It is how we learn, and that's what 'sharing experience, strength and hope' is all about. Also, there is a thin line between guidelines and rules; and experience suggests that in A.A.'s 'benign anarchy,' rules, rigidity and attempts to control don't work very well." Whether an individual or A.A. group chooses to include the crosstalk 'guidelines' in its meeting format is entirely up to its group conscience to determine, of course. But please do not say that such guidelines came from the General Service Office. ▲

## GRAPEVINE Quote of the Day

June 27 2015

*"Last summer I visited the Akron cemetery where Bob and Anne lie. Their simple stone says never a word about Alcoholics Anonymous. This made me so glad I cried."*

AA Co-Founder, Bill W.  
January 1955

"Why Alcoholics Anonymous  
Is Anonymous"  
Best of the Grapevine, Volume 1

## How It Works at Area 60 Meetings—Quarterly Meetings and Assemblies

**Editor’s Note:** It can be confusing for people new to general service at Area meetings. When I first started to attend, I didn’t know the difference between quarterly meetings and assemblies, who was able to vote or speak at the microphone, where the agenda came from, etc. Following is a description of how it works in Area 60. Although GSR’s and DCM’s play an important role, everyone is welcome to attend and learn about what’s going on with the fellowship throughout Western PA.

**Quarterly Meetings.** Meetings of the Area Committee are held four times each year to conduct Area business, to update members on Area activities, to share ideas, to assist with any District difficulties and to educate and inform through workshops.

### **Voting Members at Quarterly Meetings:**

- The DCMs of all Area 60 Districts
- The elected Area Officers (Delegate, Alt. Delegate, Chairperson, Alt. Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer)
- The appointed Area Officers and Service Coordinators
- Area 60 Past Delegates

**Area Assemblies.** In the beginning, General Service Assemblies were held only to elect Committee Officers and the Delegate to the Conference meeting, and without such meetings, there might be no Area service structure today. Now, Assembly meetings consider a variety of issues, from General Service Conference problems to Area problems and solutions and financial affairs. Area 60 holds up to four assemblies a year.

### **Voting Members at Assemblies:**

- Current GSRs of all registered AA groups in Area 60
- Current DCMs of all general service Districts in Area 60
- Current Area 60 Elected Officers, Appointed Officers and Appointed Service Coordinators
- All Area 60 Past Delegates

Area 60 uses the suggested “one person, one vote” concept. Each Assembly member is entitled to one vote regardless of whether they serve in more than one General Service position. Alternate GSRs and Alternate DCMs may vote only when the GSR or DCM is not present. While limiting votes to assembly members, it should be emphasized that Area 60 Assemblies are open to all AA members of the Fellowship. Non-voting participants are particularly needed at the Election Assembly. Trusted Servants of Area 60 General Service should always encourage its AA groups to support and participate in each Area 60 Assembly.

**Election Assembly:** The Area Election Assembly is specifically 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. The election assembly occurs in the fall of each even numbered year.

**Pre-Conference Assembly:** The pre-conference assembly is held every spring following the Get Away Weekend. The purpose of this assembly is to provide the delegate with the area’s group conscience concerning the agenda items for the General Service Conference.

**Post-Conference Assembly:** This assembly is to provide the Area with a report of the General Service by the Area 60 Delegate, and is usually held between the 2nd and 3rd Quarterly meeting.

**Fall Assembly:** This assembly is for the purpose of voting on changes that may affect the structure of Area 60. This assembly also approves the districting and redistricting of AA Groups in Area 60.

**Absentee/Proxy Votes:** Absentee voting or proxies shall NOT be valid at Area Committee meetings and Assemblies. ▲

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## Robert’s Rules of Order Simplified

Area 60 Guidelines state that committee meetings are conducted using Robert’s Rules of Order (page 6). They are perhaps the best known and widely used type of parliamentary procedure, and are just a common sense method of maintaining an orderly consideration of a question by a group. The procedure helps keep order by clarifying what the topic under discussion is, keeping it on track, and protecting the rights of both individuals and the organization. In particular it guards:

- The right of the individual to be heard.
- The right of the majority to decide.
- The right of the minority to be heard.
- The rights of absentees. (giving advanced notice of meetings)

In the pamphlet “The AA Group,” (P-16, page 30) it states that “AA business meetings tend to be informal, but custom varies from group to group. Some groups have tried observing Robert’s Rules of Order, only to find that many members are inexperienced in the procedures and feel too intimidated to speak up. Besides, there is the spiritual nature of our Fellowship, embodied in our Traditions and Concepts, which give ample guidance.” It’s up to the conscience of the district or group to choose to use Robert’s Rules of Order. More information can be found in book stores or on the internet. ▲

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## I’m a GSR—Now What?

Being a G.S.R. is an important job. You carry the voice of your group to the rest of the general service structure at district and area meetings; *and* you bring information back. More importantly, you are the keeper of the traditions in your group. You are also the principle source of information about local and regional events, news from GSO, etc. There is always something to report. Here are a few resources to help you better communicate with your group.

- **Box 4-5-9**, the bimonthly publication of the General Service Office.
- **Markings**, the quarterly archives newsletter from the G.S.O.
- **Seeds of Service**, the quarterly publication of Area 60. Back page includes upcoming area meetings, and regional events, including Days of Sharing hosted by districts throughout WPA. ▲

# Safeguarding Our Traditions Through Modern Technology

Andre L.T., SCI Greene

In this day and time in recovery, modern technology has afforded us with cell phones, Skype, Google, chat rooms and meetings on the phone. There are lots of apps for us to help get the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers.



group meets on Mondays at 6:00 pm, but I won't always be able to attend in person. I'm going to drive trucks from state to state. With Skype, and the permission of everyone in attendance, it's possible that my sponsor could take his lap top to the meeting. This would allow me to watch the speaker share and hear the message of recovery. Once the meeting is over, my friends could also come and chat with me for a while. Thousands of miles away from home and I would still be able to be a part of my home group.

We are concerned with protecting ourselves from ourselves. Our second tradition is an example of this. By nature, we are strong willed, self-centered people who are thrust together in A.A. We are mis-managers and not one of us is capable of consistently making good decisions. We must live and work together as a group to ensure that in a storm our ship does not sink and our members do not perish. With faith in a power greater than ourselves, hard work and unity, we will survive and continue carry

the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Understanding our Traditions comes slowing over a period of time. They are the guidelines that keep our fellowship alive and free. Many of our problems are like those our predecessors had to fare. Their hard won experience gave birth to the Traditions. Our Traditions protect us from the internal and external forces that could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together. It is only through understanding and application that they work. True spiritual principles are never in conflict, they complement each other. The spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our traditions: The message is that an alcoholic, any alcoholic, could stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers because that is all we have to give. ▲

## Anonymity at the Public Level — Area 60 Members Present at Regional Conferences

Two members of Area 60 were asked to give presentations on the topic of anonymity at the public level at conferences this spring. We reprint portions of the presentations here given the tremendous amount of attention this topic has received in recent years.

### Area 60 23rd Annual Get Away 2015 Weekend. Penn Hills, PA. Presentation: Anonymity at the public level.

In studying Tradition 11, in the Twelve and Twelve, we are reminded more than once that being in the public eye is hazardous to many of us who by temperament seek the limelight, and love to promote ourselves and our activities. One paragraph actually reads, "...the prospect of a society composed almost entirely of promoters was frightening. Considering this explosive factor, we knew we had to exercise self-restraint."

By the early 1940's Bill was crafting the traditions and writing articles on the *12 Suggested Points for AA Tradition* in the *Grapevine*.

In January of 1946, he wrote in the *Grapevine* that "anonymous has for us an immense spiritual significance. Subtly but powerfully it reminds us that we are always to place principles before personalities; that

we have renounced personal glorification in public."

Bill suggests numerous reasons why we should remain anonymous at the public level, including his own experience, where he admits that he was "for two or three years A.A.'s number one anonymity breaker." As time went on, and he was making headlines in the newspaper dissension was growing amongst our own ranks. A.A.'s skeptics were becoming critical, and Bill was stung; especially by the suggestion that all the publicity might go to his head and he might get drunk. He felt that he was doing good work for the fellowship, he loved being in the limelight and he felt that AA would prosper from his good works. Other prestigious A.A.'s now felt they were exceptions to the anonymity rule too, and were jumping on the band wagon; being filmed with politicians and appearing in papers. What happened next could have landed us in serious trouble.

Bill and some of the elder statesman gave

permission to an A.A. to attach her name to a prestigious university's alcohol educational program. She worked promoting the program, and letting everyone know of her experiences in A.A.

The short term benefit was great, but the long-term benefit turned into a serious problems. Other A.A.'s began writing tracts and papers and associating themselves with educational programs in churches and other venues. Often the message was not purely A.A. Then the University had a fund raising campaign for the educational program. Because of our lady A.A.'s prominence with the University program many of our friends thought they were donating to A.A., and many thought A.A. was an educational program; so, just when we were telling people that we took no outside money, it looked like we were asking for outside money. Our lady A.A. saw the problem and sacrificed to regain her anonymity which was no small job. But this was the

(Continued on page 9)

## Anonymity and the 2015 International Convention (Continued from Page 1)

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and how A.A. members are available to cooperate with the press.

Likewise, a fully staffed (and very busy) press room will be part of our International Convention in Atlanta. Let's face it: a gathering of more than 50,000 formerly hopeless alcoholics who will come together in sobriety to celebrate 80 years of being happy, joyous and free is newsworthy. As Jim M., the Public Information coordinator at the General Service Office, explains: "We want the press to know that 'we' are in Atlanta to celebrate 80 years of A.A., without revealing through public media any personal identities that make up that 'we.' This is how we keep the focus on our message, rather than on any one messenger."

As chairman of the General Service Board, (nonalcoholic) Terry Bedient sees anonymity not as an act of self restraint, but as an active demonstration of love and service. "Anonymity is a gift each member makes to the Fellowship. It is humility in action, a voluntary decision made by A.A. members to set aside personal recognition so that the A.A. principles and program can have center stage instead."

Today, the ability to share photo and video content via handheld devices is almost instantaneous. And A.A. members are all about sharing, right? When it comes to decisions about the individual practice of anonymity, a slightly paraphrased line from our Big Book provides a helpful suggestion: "It is not the matter of [sharing] that is in question, but when and how to [share]." (page 98)

Many A.A. members are also familiar with the phrase in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, "restraint of tongue and pen." This principle of prudent reflection before communicating has served many an A.A. member well. As one member recently shared in an A.A. meeting, "I also need to practice restraint of 'click and send!'"

While tens of thousands of sober alcoholics are expected to attend the Convention, approximately two million

more members around the world will not be there. Those fortunate to be enjoying the Convention experience first-hand, caught up in feelings of deep gratitude, often want to "pass it on" to those faithful members back home who are making sure local A.A. phones are being answered, coffee is made and chairs are set up, and other local services continue uninterrupted for any newcomers

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Anonymity is so fragile  
you can break it with  
one finger.

---

entering A.A. while some of us are away from our home groups.

Although posting photos and videos from one's Convention experience on social media might seem to be the "easier, softer way" to tell others about it, posting anything that discloses one's membership in A.A. in a publicly accessible area of the Internet is not in keeping with A.A.'s tradition of anonymity (see "Anonymity Online," available on the aa.org website).

Fortunately, there are other ways members can share the experience. Members might share a photo via email with friends back home (see "A.A. Guidelines — Internet" for suggestions about using email and the 'bcc' function), or upload content to a password-protected file-sharing platform they maintain. And while it may seem down-right old-fashioned in the digital world, some members prefer to wait until they return home so they can share photos and stories in person with other A.A.s over a cup of coffee and fellowship.

A.A. members may wish to let others know about the anonymity-protected video of the Convention flag ceremony that is streamed through the A.A. website the weekend of the Convention.

Of course, no one in A.A. can enforce any "rules" about how another A.A. member practices personal anonymity at the level of public media. Authority in

our Fellowship resides in our informed group conscience, often captured in Conference-approved literature like the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity." This pamphlet, and other resources mentioned here, can help A.A. members make the most-informed decisions. The great liberty enjoyed by A.A. members does indeed come with great responsibility.

Like so many of Bill W.'s writings, an article from the November 1960 issue of A.A. Grapevine offers principles that still ring true today. While Bill was writing at the time about television, the ideas he expressed are still wonderful guides for A.A. members sharing their experience in an increasingly digital world:

"A vast communications net now covers the earth, even to its remotest reaches. Granting all its huge public benefits, this limitless world forum is nevertheless a hunting ground for all those who would seek money, acclaim and power at the expense of society in general....

"Therefore nothing can matter more to the future welfare of AA than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination. Should we handle this great instrument badly, we shall be shattered by the ego demands of our own people, often with the best of intention on their part. Against all this, the sacrificial spirit of AA's anonymity at the top public level is literally our shield and our buckler. Here again we must be confident that love of AA, and of God, will always carry the day."

We hope to see you in Atlanta — and if we do, we won't tell anyone! ▲

**Box 4-5-9.** P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163

**Subscriptions:** Individual, \$3.50 per year; group, \$6.00 for each unit of 10 per year. Make check payable to A.A.W.S., Inc. To have issues delivered directly to your inbox, register your email on the A.A. Digital Subscription Service on G.S.O.'s Website [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).



# ARCHIVES CORNER

## Early History of Alcoholics Anonymous in Western Pennsylvania

Vaughn H., Past Delegate, Panel 51

**O**n March 18, 1951, a meeting was held in the Fort Pitt Hotel Gold Room to pick Western Pennsylvania's first delegate. Fifty-three (53) groups were represented.

The Host Committee, for purpose of clarification, presented a suggestion that the Regional Committee (Area Committee) be comprised of ten members, representation of the various groups to be distributed as follows: 3 from Allegheny County; 3 from North; 2 from East; 1 from the West and 1 from the South. Motion carried unanimously.

From written ballots came the election of the ten committee men (DCMs); W.G. (Skeets) G., Pittsburgh, as Chairman; Fred E., Pittsburgh, as Treasurer and C.H. Daubs, Erie, as Secretary. Voting was motioned that only the delegates (GSRs) from their respected areas (Districts) vote for their committee men (DCMs). Voting results as follows:

- Allegheny County—J. Q., M.D.
- North—J.C. W. from Oil City and Arthur B. from Warren, Pa
- East—Chas. V. from Bethlehem/Johnstown and George McG. from Pittsburgh
- West—Ben M. from Ellwood City
- South—Stanton F. from Washington, PA.

These men, along with the elected Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary,



formed the Committee of the ten area representatives. It was motioned that the ten elected committeemen retire and elect a delegate and two alternates from that group as delegate to the first National Conference. Election of Western PA's First Delegate to the first National Conference.

Following a short recess, the committeemen announced that they had elected W.G. (Skeets) G. as our first Delegate to the National Conference. Charles H. V. was elected first alternate and Stanton F. was elected second alternate.

**Note:** you'll notice that Charles H. V. and Stanton F. became delegates later

1951-52 Wm. G. F. •	1969-70 Henry C. •	1983-84 Carol K.	1999-00 Arlene H.
1953- Jack G. •	1971-72 Bob B. •	1985-86 Ray D. •	2001-02 Vaughn H.
1954- (Alt) Charles V. •	1973-74 Fran F.	1987-88 Rege F.	2003-04 John W.
1955-56 Charles V. •	1975- Ellis B. •	1989- Bill S. •	2005-06 Chuck H.
1957-58 Jack S. •	1976-(such as Alt)	1990-(Alt) Maxine M. •	2007-08 Janet H.
1959-60 Stanton F. •	Jane A. •	1991-92 Maxine M. •	2009-10 Bonnie S.
1961-62 George P. •	1977-78 Ken K. •	1993-94 Lois C. •	2011-12 Jean M.
1963-64 Glen W. •	1979-80 Ian M. •	1995-96 Matt H. •	2013-14 Yvette N.
1965-66 Ray M.	1981-82 Bud T. •	1997-98 David B. •	2015-16 George K.
1967-68 Rose B. •			

• With deep sympathy we ask that you remember our past delegates.

on, Charles in 1954 and 1955-56 and Stanton F. in 1959-60.

The date of our first General Service Conference (National Conference as it was first called) was April 20-22, 1951 at the Hotel Commodore, New York City, N.Y. It was motioned and carried that the Pittsburgh Central group be responsible for the expenses of this initial Regional meeting. **This was actually Western Pennsylvania's, Area 60's first Area Assembly on March 18, 1951.**

When Wm. G. came back from the first Conference in New York, he asked that he be allowed to give his report at an assembly in Cook's Forest – this continued for his two year term. So, apparently, Cooks Forest started out as a Service Assembly for the delegate to give his report from the General Service Conference.

**Note:** In Gratitude, following is a list of our past 34 Delegates including our present delegate, who have helped carry the A.A. Message in Western Pennsylvania, Area 60: ▲

### Anonymity at the Public Level (Excerpts of presentations by Area 60 Members) (Continued from page 7)

beginning of realization that we needed to remain anonymous at the public level.

What I relayed here is just a brief synopsis of what happened in those early years and there are many more experiences relayed in Bill's writing about why we should remain anonymous at the public level.

In finishing my research, I again looked at Tradition Eleven where it reads, "This

Tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our fellowship." And also the Tradition Twelve, which begins and I paraphrase, "the spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice....AA's Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desire...we realize that the sacrificial spirit is well symbolized by anonymity

and is the foundation of them all."

These two paragraphs in the Twelve and Twelve never mention anonymity at the public level, but what they do is give us a guideline to follow in regard to our anonymity that is as powerful today as it was when it was written. I don't think it is possible to be anonymous if you are not humble nor humble if you are not anonymous. Thank you.

Marjorie S., DCM District 23

(Continued on page 10)

## Is Anonymity Important...?

Jan H. Past Delegate, Panel 57

(Continued from page 1)

Likewise, I saw many photographs tagged on Facebook during the recent Atlanta International with phrases like “in Atlanta.” We have to remember when a picture is posted, it is liable to end up being sent to all of someone’s “friends list” including those that may not know that the person is a member of the fellowship.

The question, “What were you doing in Atlanta?” may provide an awkward moment. Maybe something like “time out with the girls” may have been better! Some members feel it best to not post any AA jargon; for example, “Friends of Bill W.” or any favored slogans.

Going back to my original question: Is anonymity important in these electronic times? Let me quote the long form of Tradition Twelve: “And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.” ▲

## Remembering the Spirit That Binds Us

Larry R. L., Jr. SCI Fayette

I am a recovering alcoholic with nearly seven years of sobriety, and am in prison as a result of my active disease. I understand the need to safeguard our anonymity in technology through self-restraint—in our desire to share — while using all the new technologies now available. I think this applies even though some of the technologies may be approved by the General Service Office (G.S.O.). It’s important to keep the 6th, 10th and 11th Traditions in mind.

In the fledgling years of our society, they learned the hard way what self seeking could and did bring about. Attraction, not promotion, was and still is the best policy. They found that doctors, clergy, reporters from the press and radio, and even law enforcement groups were carrying our message of hope for us without using last names or photographs of our members in any circumstances. This kept us humble — it kept us focused on our spiritual aim and away from ego that could destroy us as a fellowship.

When we visit any websites as a member of A.A., we need to remember to safeguard our own recovery as well as the recovery of others. This keeps our

foundation on a firm footing.

So much can go wrong on-line, which can put how people see us as members of A.A. and our message of hope in a negative light. I, for one, support the addition of the word “internet” to the 11th Tradition (after press, ration and films). However, I can still see the blessing of being able to share the message of hope with anyone seeking

recovery, as long as our spiritual traditions are safeguarded to the best of our ability.

We’ve got to remember that the spirit binds us all together as members of Alcoholics

Anonymous — using attraction, not promotion — while we use any technology available to us. I seek to be of service and not let my ego get the best of me, and possibly do damage to my own or other’s recovery. I cannot sacrifice our traditions just for the sake of a “good story” on line. I must use prudence and good judgment.

Let us all make informed decisions to stay safe when we use any technology. For now, good ol’ pen and paper, “word of mouth” and actions are the best technology available to me. I’m “old school” all the way. It keeps me humbly blessed, one day at a time. ▲

This statement is in all the material that I found. Bill W. also said that “*At this altitude (public level), anonymity - 100 percent anonymity – was the only possible answer.*” I guess Bill could foresee the problems coming our way.

I will close with this. The internet is here to stay and what we, as members of AA and as sponsors do with it, is entirely up to us. We have to protect AA for ourselves *and* those to come who need the life saving program that Bill and Bob gave to us some 80 years ago. We must teach our sponsees this program, especially the traditions and their importance as we all walk this road to freedom. Thank you for your time. ▲

Teresa K. Area 60 Alt. Chair

## Anonymity at the Public Level (Excerpts of presentations by Area 60 Members) (Continued from page 9)

### NERAASA 2015 Somerset, NJ. Panel Discussion: AA and Social Media.

Looking on Facebook, I was amazed at the number of “groups.” Many of them were listed as “closed groups,” but all of them showed full names and faces. This means that the 11<sup>th</sup> Tradition and the AA guidelines were not being observed. I discovered that people can add their friends without their knowledge. The only way to be anonymous on Facebook is to have what’s called a “Secret Group.” I also found many online web pages that used the AA logo, some inferring that they *are* Alcoholics Anonymous.

Lastly, out of curiosity I emailed Karen H. at GSO records and asked her if GSO registers and recognizes

online meetings, because a few of the meetings I attended gave their group service numbers. AA guidelines say they are **not recognized** in the general service structure. However, GSO does list them and supplies them with a service number. There are currently 26 listed. They also publish these groups in the front of Regional Directories. It’s interesting to note that GSO in the CER (Central European Region) does recognize online meetings as part of their service structure, but the UK does not.

AA is very clear about embracing our 11th Tradition and the AA guidelines. They read as follows: “*When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and that of others.*”

## Hope for the Future

Mike L., SCI Greene

In this age of the internet and smart phones, there is no better tool that can be used to spread the message of recovery and the gift of hope it brings. Today, when someone has a question or needs to find something out the first thing they do is use some type of application or search engine like Google to find their answers.

In generations past, you would have to go to a library or hope to find the right person to ask which would take you considerable time and effort.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message of hope to the alcoholic who

still suffers, so what better way to do this than with the click of your finger?

A.A. literature, Big Book and meeting lists are all easily accessible on-line. Through the evolution of technology, we can continue to carry this message to those in need quicker and faster for generations to come.

Hope and the therapeutic value of one alcoholic helping another is still the attraction of this great fellowship.

Regardless of how we get here, the point is that when the suffering have no where else to turn, that they find their way to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous and through technology this is much easier today. ▲

**HOPE**  
**CHANGES**  
**EVERYTHING**

## Face-to-Face in a Roomful of Drunks

Scott, SCI Fayette

The basic premise of the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous have probably not changed much since the beginning, in the late 1930's. We have the same steps, principles, traditions *and* people with drinking problems. Some of our problems have changed or become more popular— such as high divorce rates, racial equality issues, single parenting, kids having kids, and easy access to drugs and alcohol.

Our technology has changed a great deal. We have much better transportation, cars, buses, planes, trains, computers and the internet. It seems like everyone has a phone, computer, camera, or video device. They carry them with them everywhere; and they can ring, beep or vibrate in the most inappropriate places. Such as the rooms of recovery.

It is one thing to have an emergency and have to make a call—just excuse yourself. But to be texting nonsense to a friend during a meeting would be annoying, in my opinion, and not tolerated.



Technology is fantastic. Things get better, faster, smaller and different. But when used wrongly, it can be an issue. The internet has a lot of good qualities to offer; but it has a bad side as well. I can see how much easier it is to

look up meeting schedules, A.A. related issues, step work, pamphlets or the history of A.A. I feel the use of email is good and fast, but so impersonal.

Using phones to call or text someone who may need help or to check up on a sponsee you're worried about is great. However, nothing is better than sitting in a room full of drunks, because I cannot hide behind my phone, especially if I'm using. I could text "*all is well,*" when the bottle is half full and draining fast, easily giving a false impression of how I really am. This is harder to do when face to face with someone.

Although a phone call or text could save someone's life or help them not to take the first drink — I like my tech advances — but I'm old-fashioned about being face-to-face in a roomful of drunks. ▲

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## GRAPEVINE NEWS



### Record Your Story!

*Learn About Grapevine's  
Audio Project*

Beginning in mid-January 2013, Grapevine started collecting up to 7-minute stories from the Fellowship in the form of audio recordings.

The recorded stories will go through Grapevine's editorial process just like the stories published in the magazine and online. If your story is accepted, Grapevine will publish it online and/or transcribe it for the magazine or website.

For those interested in participating, we offer some information below to help guide you in this process.

Don't worry though, GV's existing products are still available. Below, you will also find links to the monthly recorded Audio Grapevine and a featured audio book.

*Note: Grapevine will not be collecting recordings from speakers at AA meetings.*

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**Newsletter Themes & Submission Dates:** The SOS follows the General Service Conference annual theme. For 2015, this is "Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity and Service – The Foundation for Our Future."

**Due Theme:**

**July 31 Q3.** Safeguarding our Traditions through the Evolution of Technology  
**Nov 20 Q4.** Inventory – Looking Back to Move Ahead

**Website:** 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](mailto:website@wpaarea60.org)

**DONATIONS TO AREA 60**

Support from groups and individuals is always welcome and appreciated!  
 Make check payable to:

**AREA 60 TREASURER**

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**2015 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

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

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sunday August 16	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>AREA 60 3RD QUARTERLY MEETING</b>
Sunday Sept. 13	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator Meeting
Saturday Sept. 19	8:30-3:00PM	Dist. 65 Day of Sharing 218 E. Main St., Worthington, PA \$7.00 Includes Lunch
Friday Sept. 24 to Sunday Sept 27	Bob@www.naaaw.org	19th Annual National Archives Workshop. Independence, OH
Saturday Oct. 10	9:00-3:30PM	Dist. 15 Day of Sharing 875 Sunflower Dr., DuBois, PA \$7.00 Includes Lunch
Sunday Oct. 18	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>FALL ASSEMBLY</b> Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Sunday Nov. 8	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator & GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday Dec. 6	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>AREA 60 4TH QUARTERLY MEETING</b>
Sunday Dec. 20	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator & GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday Jan. 10	9:00 AM	GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday Jan. 17	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>AREA 60 1ST QUARTERLY MEETING</b>
Sunday Feb. 7	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator & GAW Planning Meeting

**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](http://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](mailto:newsletter@wpaarea60.org).