

# The Lifeline



June 2018

24-Hour Phone: 651-227-5502

Volume 54 Issue 6

## **Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

At the top of page 76 of the Big Book Step Six is broken down for our benefit. We have emphasized "Willingness" as being indispensable. In order to be willing and ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable we must first identify these things. If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us to be willing. Members of AA have, over time, helped me to identify some of my character defects that I was not aware of.

Before I sobered up in California I often got drunk on the riverbank while "fishing". Many times I took my own two small children on fishing trips where they did not belong. During my first year of sobriety I would often share in open meetings that if I went fishing I would drink. I must have said this in meetings too many times. After I celebrated my one year AA anniversary an old-timer came up to me after a meeting and asked me if I wanted to go fishing with him next Saturday morning? I agreed and began planning what we would talk about now that I had one year sober. He picked me up Saturday morning for a quiet ride as he drove us out to the canal. He stopped the car and told me to set up my gear at my spot on the canal bank, so I did. Once I got set up he drove the car down the levee about 50ft and set up his gear. We spent the morning catching a few nice channel catfish in silence. Once my seventy-two year old fishing partner decided we were done we had a quiet ride back to town. This man helped me to see that I was holding on to a lie. He showed me I could go fishing without drinking. He could not tell me this convincingly enough so he took it upon himself to show me. I could not be willing to let go of this character defect without the help of others.

My job moved my family and I to Minnesota. At seven years sober I met my Minnesota AA sponsor. He put me to work serving other alcoholics. I wanted him to help me make my marriage better. Whenever I tried to talk to him about that topic he always asked how much I was doing to serve others. He reminded me that "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us". I was holding on to a lie that I said so many times I believed it. I often said getting a divorce would kill me.

When I was growing up I lived with five different families in ten different homes. I promised myself that I would never get a divorce no matter what happened. I could not let go of this character defect alone. I did step work with my sponsor and with men I sponsored. I went to meetings and read the big book. I began thinking more about others and less about myself. When the time came that my divorce was necessary I worked through it and survived. Time heals all wounds. Service work is spiritual medicine. Some people have told me that I helped them during that difficult time of healing. Everyone I encountered during that period helped me to find the willingness necessary to work Step Six.

-Steve B., Minneapolis

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**608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102**

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**Tradition Six (Long Form) Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to the Program should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. Our groups, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to the Program, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart so that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the Program's name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those who financially support them. For clubs, recovering managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside the Program – and medically supervised. While our groups may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. A Group can bind itself to no one.**

#### **Tradition Six is a reminder that outside facilities are separate**

IN thinking about this Tradition I'm reminded of my friend George. In the fall of '94 I was on our local intergroup call list. Late one evening, I was asked to give George a call, as he might want help. George said that he had tried "AA" before but it had never worked--during several previous stays in treatment, he'd gone to meetings there. It was a great surprise to George when I said that most of those meetings were run by the facilities; they were not AA groups but a function of the treatment center or hospital. I said I would be glad to meet him and show him the program of recovery that worked for me--as outlined in our book *Alcoholics Anonymous*--and introduce him to an AA group.

Because of the amount of alcohol George had consumed, I suggested a medically supervised detox. After that, I agreed to meet him at my home group. Unexpectedly, I had to leave early so I arranged for George to be met by a fellow member, Jimmy D.--who became George's sponsor.

Eight years later, when Jimmy D. died, George talked about the wonderful way of life Jimmy had shared with him. George and I often reminisced about how he had given up hope of finding sobriety, and how he thought he had tried AA but had never been introduced to the program of recovery.

"While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied," AA's Sixth Tradition, long form, says. (AA's Third Tradition, long form, adds: "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation").

-- MIKE M.

Fort Wayne, Ind.

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#### ***The Lifeline: Purpose Statement***

*The Lifeline* is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Incorporated. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition, or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of our A.A. experience.

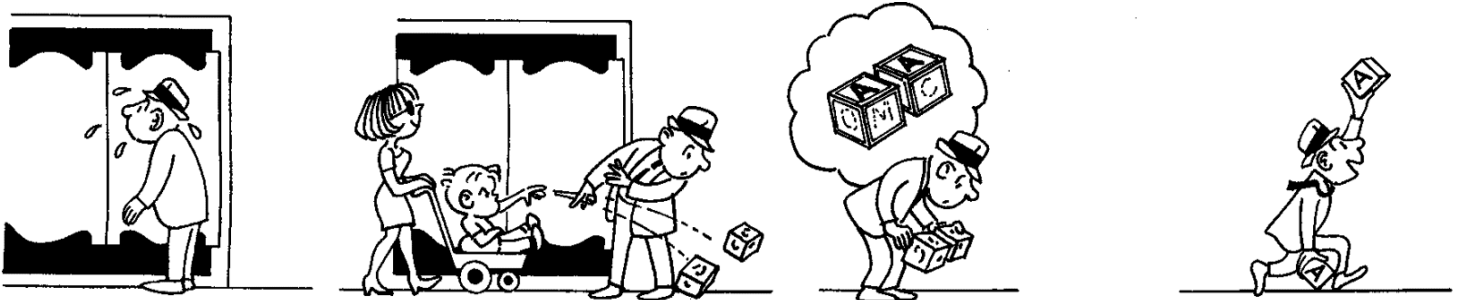
Please email your article to [lifeline@aastpaul.org](mailto:lifeline@aastpaul.org), or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 608 Seventh Street West, St. Paul MN 55102. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

## Thoughts From Your Board

As I look back on the last almost 7 years, never would it dawn on me that I would be serving on the St Paul Intergroup board. With much appreciation I was brought up in AA with solid sponsorship as well as leadership.

It took my sponsor and I only a few weeks to go through all 12 steps. However; it took some time for me to learn how to utilize all the tools set at my feet. I remember him telling me right from the start, "Now you realize this is all so you can help others." Boy did he really mean it!!! By the time I started to do my 9th step work, he was urging me to, "Get on out there and help someone else." Truth is... it saved my life. Never have I thought of myself and any worries I may be having when working with others. Due to an unfortunate accident, I've found myself with a lot of free time on my hands. Thanks to such a profound impact my sponsor has made on me, I have been able to give a lot of my time to service work. One of the greatest gifts ever bestowed upon me is that of sponsoring other men. What a true blessing for me. It seems as though I've been rocketed into a 4th dimension I never knew existed...

-Brian L., 2019 Member-At-Large



(Victor E. Cartoon reprinted with permission, Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc.)

**Concept Six: On behalf of A.A. as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principle responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.**

Reviewing this Concept is very timely for us. As you will read elsewhere in this issue of the Lifeline, our Delegate to the General Service Conference is asking for us to consider several things regarding controversy. He then asks that we communicate to him our experience and thoughts. He hopes to then share this with the General Service Board. This is truly Concept VI in action—ensuring that experience and authority come together properly.

It's an interesting division of responsibility that this Concept rests on. As Bill W. says elsewhere in our literature, the *experience* rest entirely with the A.A. Fellowship, and the *authority to act* rests primarily with the General Service Board—as the Concept points out. Therefore, in order for our society to work effectively and according to Gods will for us—these two things must come together. This most often is intended to happen through the deliberations of the General Service Conference.

We have a wonderful opportunity to participate in Concept VI by responding to our Delegates request. The best approach will be to take the time to hear his Conference report. The Intergroup Reps will have the opportunity to do so at the May Intergroup Reps Meeting. Other interested A.A.'s should keep an eye out on the Area 36 website ([www.area36.org](http://www.area36.org) - Delegate section) for the schedule of his presentations around the Area and make an effort to go hear what transpired at this year's Conference and how they can participate going forward. In the area covered by Intergroup there are three Districts (District 8, District 15 & District 19) that may be having the Delegate report at their meetings – check with your G.S.R. to find out the date and location.

-Anonymous

St. Paul Intergroup  
~ 52nd Anniversary ~

# Open House

Date: Saturday, June 23rd  
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM



Join us for fellowship,  
refreshments and fun!!

**608 7th Street West  
St. Paul, MN 55102**

(SE Corner of Michigan & West 7th)

**For More Info Call Us:**

**651-227-5502**

~Special Medallion Gift for all attendees  
One per visitor between 11am—3pm~



# Announcements & Updates

## HOOTS!

**THANK YOU, OWLS!** A big thanks to all of our Night Owls for their service to the Intergroup and the Fellowship during April.

### ONLY Two Open shifts at this time:

**1st Saturday 9am - 2pm**

**4th Saturday 9am - 2pm**

### **WANTED: One New Night Owl Committee volunteer**

The Night Owl Committee members take turns carrying the back-up Phone) for one week at a time. We help out if a volunteer has a problem and we also make the reminder calls.

#### Requirements:

- 1 year sobriety
- Answer the back-up phone during your rotation
- Experience with Night Owl
- 2 yr commitment

Thank you!

Frank N.  
Night Owl Committee Coordinator

Reminders to all groups! Please let us know if you get a new Night Owl Coordinator for you group so that we are reminding the right person. Send e-mails to the committee at [nightowl@aastpaul.org](mailto:nightowl@aastpaul.org)

### Group and Area News

**Meeting Change:** The *Fourth Dimension* group is now meeting People's Congregational Church 309 N. 3rd Street, Bayport 55082., The Group hosts a Thursday 7:30 Open, Mixed, All-ages Speaker/Call-up Meeting. The group also provides childcare, and the facility is accessible to all.

**New Meeting:** The *TBI Solutions* group is now meeting 6:00PM Thursdays at the Bethel Christian Fellowship Church, 1466 Portland Avenue, St. Paul. The format is 12 & 12. The Group is Closed, Mixed, All-ages, and for those with Traumatic Brain Injuries only, please. For more information, please call Andy D. 651-699-5092.

**Please Let us know about any meeting changes, new meetings, or any meetings that are no longer. Please email: [lifeline@aastpaul.org](mailto:lifeline@aastpaul.org)**

### Your News?

We invite you to share your AA news here!

Please send your items to:

*[lifeline@aastpaul.org](mailto:lifeline@aastpaul.org)*

We look forward to hearing from you.



**Looking for a Service Opportunity?  
Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl!**

Upcoming Night Owl Orientations:  
**Saturday, Jun 16th, July 21st, Aug 18th**

**Every Third Saturday from 10:00 -11:00 AM**

St. Paul Intergroup Office

608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102

**To RSVP please call: 651-227-5502**



**St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes, April 17th 7:30pm**

1. Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.
2. Last month minutes reviewed, motioned Carl O, and seconded by Nick L, motion approved.
3. Treasurer's Report, C.J. M gave the report. Alt. Treasure position is open. C.J. updated the format of the Financial Report and adjusted the discrepancies from last month's report. 13% of AA groups are contributing to AA St Paul Intergroup – please encourage all AA groups in St Paul/St Paul Area to increase or start contributing to AA St Paul Intergroup. Total Contributions: \$4,790.00 increase of \$1,222.00 Net Income: \$3,572 typically we want Net Income difference to be larger (-\$41 difference from last month) See Treasurer's Report for full financial details.
4. Office Report, Bill S – Intergroup is in need of Lifeline writers, Faithful Fiver Donators, and volunteers for the 3-5:30pm shift. GSO put out contact info of Telephone and Online Meetings. We will not be posting these to the website since the point of contact changes frequently. Please email lifeline@aastpaul.org for further information.
5. Night Owl Report, Frank N – 3 Opening Night Owl Shifts. Night Owl Committee called everyone on the volunteer list for updates on their contact info and if they wanted to continue to be Night Owl volunteers. Orientation is every 3rd Saturday of the month at the Office @ 10am. Email NightOwl@aastpaul.org or contact the office for more info.
6. Website Report, Jonathan L – 727 regular weekly meetings supported by 285 groups in the area served by this local service office. Down 3 groups and 3 meetings. 9 service opportunities available on the Website (all updated). Traffic remained consistent with prior months. Outreach Script Updated. Contact Jonathan & Sergey at webservant@aastpaul.org.
7. Outreach Program, Carolyn M – There are NO "MIA" meetings on the list. Please encourage all AA groups that are listed on the website to join our Intergroup Rep meeting and to start contributing to AA St Paul Intergroup. Please contact Carolyn M at outreach@aastpaul.org.
8. Update from the Board, Jenni S - Alt. Treasurer Position open – 2 years sobriety required, position would begin ASAP, and position would transition into being the Treasurer in 2018. Intergroup is transferring phone services from CenturyLink to Comcast. There will be more updates in the following month.
9. Liaison Reports: District 8: Mike C – Approved a motion to donate 20 Big Books to Ramsey County Detox. District 15: 364 participants at the General Service Conference in April. Another heated discussion on social media (Google account/LinkedIn account). AA member helped inform the district about the ASL accessibility. District 19: Dan R – N/A
10. Upcoming Intergroup Events: Saint Paul Intergroup's Spring Fling on Saturday, April 28th @ 6 PM, Hospitality Suite at Gopher State May 25th – May 27th , and Saint Paul Intergroup's Open House on Saturday, June 23rd @ 11 AM
11. Old Business: N/A
12. New Business: N/A
13. Group AA Announcements:
  - a. OMD Potluck, Sobriety Recognition, & Speaker meeting - 1st Friday: 05/04 @7:00 pm in the NEW LOCATION: 550 W 7th St., Saint Paul. Speaker: TBD
  - b. Maplewood Alano Potluck, Sobriety Recognition, & Speaker meeting - 3rd Saturday: 05/19 @7:30 pm at 1955 Prosperity Road.
  - c. Main Idea Sobriety Recognition: 2nd Friday: 04/13 7:30:9:00 pm located @ 499 Wacouta Street, St Paul.
  - d. Study In Action Seminar by Dick and Mary at the Maplewood Alano Club April 20th @ 6pm-9pm and April 21st 10am-4pm.
  - e. Sunday Night Speaker Meeting @ 7pm located at Central Presbyterian Church 500 Cedar Street.
14. Suggestions for next month's agenda: N/A
15. Grapevine Report, Lindsey D; Volunteer for May, John K
16. Concept II review, Guillermo O; Volunteer for Concept III for May, Erik M
17. Mock Rep Report, Carl O; Volunteer for May, Rob
18. Close with The Responsibility Statement

**Meetings Represented:** District 8; District 15, Basic Text, St. Paul; Como Park Big Book, Roseville; Fireside Women's Big Book, St. Paul; The Firing Line, Roseville; Hole In The Doughnut, Roseville; Lakeview AA, Maplewood; Look To This Day, St. Paul; Main Idea, St. Paul; Maplewood Alano, Maplewood; Maria Drunk Squad, St. Paul; Outright Mental Defectives, St. Paul; Pocketing Our Pride, St. Paul; Rule 62, St. Paul; Summit Hill, St. Paul; Third Edition, St. Paul, Thursday Night 8PM Orientation, St. Paul; Women's Basic Text, St. Paul.

<b><u>2018 Steering Board:</u></b>		<b><u>Office Calls/Visitors—April 2018</u></b>	
Chair:	Lesli D.	Meeting information	94
Alternate Chair:	Rob C.	Inventory/hours/location	30
Secretary:	Carolyn M.	12th Step calls	5
Treasurer:	C.J. M.	Temporary sponsor	21
Alternate Treasurer:	TBD	Speaker request	28
Members-at-Large 2018:	Tom S. & Erik M.	Staff & Other Calls	125
Members-at-Large 2019	Brian L. & Guillermo O.	Total Calls	303
Advisor to the Board:	Jenni S.	<b>Average Calls/Day</b>	<b>14.4</b>
Manager:	Dennis B.	Total Visitors	216

**June 2018 REPS' MEETING: Tuesday, June 17th @ 7:30 PM**  
 SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH (Church Basement)  
 398 West Superior Street; St. Paul, MN 55102

**7th Tradition  
Suggestions for Groups**

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Conference-approved pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

**50% St. Paul Intergroup**  
608 Seventh Street West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

**30% General Service Office**  
P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163

**10% Southern MN Area 36**  
Area Assembly  
P.O. Box 2812  
Mpls., MN 55402

**10% District Committee**  
  
Ramsey County:  
District 8, P.O. Box 131523  
St. Paul, MN 55113  
  
Dakota County:  
District 19, P.O. Box 1466  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
  
Washington County:  
District 15, P.O. Box 181  
Lake Elmo, MN 55042  
  
SE Ramsey County:  
District 26, P.O. Box 75980  
St. Paul, MN 55175

**APRIL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Number of Group Contributors	43
Total Group Contributions:	\$5453
Number of Faithful Fivers:	13
Total from Faithful Fivers:	\$306



**District Meetings**

**District 8 (Ramsey Co.)**  
Fairview Community Center  
1910 Co. Rd B, Rm 108  
Roseville  
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM

**District 15 (Wash. Co.)**  
Christ Lutheran Church  
11194 N. 36th St.  
Lake Elmo  
4th Mon., 7:00 PM

**District 19 (Dakota Co.)**  
Rosemount Community Center  
13885 South Robert Trail  
Rosemount  
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM

**District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)**  
Grace Lutheran Church  
1730 Old Hudson Rd.  
St. Paul  
2nd Sun., 7:00PM  
[www.district26-area36.org](http://www.district26-area36.org)



**Thanks to all the Groups  
that contributed in April**

- A Baffled Lot
- Anoka Day By Day
- Children of Chaos Plus
- Como Park BB
- Cottage Grove Groups
- Element Group
- Fairview Riverside Group
- Fireside Women's BB Group
- Forest Lake Alano
- Fourth Dimension
- Friday Nite 12x12 By The Book
- Gloria Dei AA
- Halfway There
- Hampden Park Group
- Highland Park Groups
- Hole in the Doughnut Group
- Island Lake Group
- Joy of Living Group
- Lake Elmo Thurs Night Group
- Live and Let Live
- Main Idea
- Midway Club
- North Branch Community Groups
- North Dale Group
- Oakdale Woodbury Sun Group@Canvas Health
- OMD
- Pages of Wisdom
- Pocketing Our Pride - Mpls
- Positively 4th Street
- Ridge Runners II Sat 830 AM
- Rivertown BB Group-Hastings
- Rosemount Groups
- Saturday Morning Treats
- Shivering Denizens
- Shoreview 12 x 12
- Stepsisters of Northfield Group
- Third Tradition Northfield
- Thursday 630 AM 11th Step
- Una Luz en el Camino
- Unity Service & Recovery
- Uptown Club
- Valley Creek Monday
- Valley Creek Thurs Night

**Thanks to all of the FANTASTIC Office Volunteers who helped in April**

Barb M., Bob P., Chris H., Chuck L.,  
David D., Emily, Frank D., Gary B.,  
Heather R., Henry O., Jimmy D.,  
Kristen H., Kristi W., Marc S., Melanie J.,  
Pam M., Patrick C., Suzanne B.,



**Thanks to our AWESOME Night Owls too!**

## Is Legal Action Always A “Public” Controversy?

As many of you know, A.A. took legal action during the past year to attempt to regain possession of the original printer's manuscript of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. The legal action was eventually withdrawn and A.A. settled with the then owner of the manuscript, which included paying some of the then owner's legal fees. It was an expensive undertaking, with a total in fees and settlement costs of over \$400,000. The A.A. Fellowship was divided about whether taking legal action was wise, effective, or even against our principles. Many arguments were made on all sides of the debate, with our Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service being brandished both in support and in opposition.

At the General Service Conference at the end of April, I acted as the Delegate Chair of the Conference Committee on Trustees. Our committee considered two agenda items related to the manuscript issue. In opposition to the legal action, an item to censure the General Service Board was forwarded to the Conference, as was an item to reorganize the Board. Censure is a formal proclamation of extreme disapproval. Reorganization would involve removing some or all the board members.

After nearly 8 hours of deliberation, debate, and interviews with General Service staff and board members, our committee decided against taking action on either the motion to censure or the motion to reorganize. Instead, we wrote Committee Considerations (suggestions for the trustee committees of the General Service Board) which attempted to capture the points that our committee could agree on. One of the main points being to reaffirm where our Twelve Concepts state that the General Service Board should, whenever possible, consult in advance with the General Service Conference before taking any significant action, especially legal action.

Though neither my committee nor the full Conference body acted to censure or reorganize the Board, the trustees were fully aware of how the manuscript legal matter had divided the Fellowship and that, in the future, there would be a higher bar for including the Conference (thus the Fellowship) earlier in any such decisions. In a sign that the trustees of the General Service Board are taking this critique seriously, they had planned in advance of the Conference to have a general discussion about when and if legal proceedings are ever an appropriate action for A.A.'s corporate boards to take.

To begin a policy-level discussion about if and when legal action is ever warranted, one of the General Service trustees gave a presentation on fiduciary responsibility and intellectual property rights. A.A.'s corporate boards have taken legal action in the past, sometimes successfully and other times without success. The current boards are anticipating future circumstances where legal action might become one of the options needed to protect A.A.'s intellectual property – its copyrights, trademarks, service marks, and Internet domain names. A.A. is organized as a nonprofit corporation in the State of New York and is bound by certain legal provisions that require the Board to act to protect its corporate interests. Given the Fellowship's mixed reaction to the most recent legal proceedings, the General Service Board is asking our groups, Districts, and Areas to help develop policy to guide the Board in such decisions. recent legal proceedings.

I am summarizing here the Conference presentation that included a discussion of the Traditions and Concepts concerning public controversy, outside issues, and legal action. The short form of Tradition Ten reads, "Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." The question asked is at what point is an issue an "outside" issue and what constitutes "public" controversy. A matter related to A.A.'s ability to function as an entity and matters related to our functioning as a nonprofit entity may not be outside issues at all. And while an issue may cause controversy within the Fellowship (meaning we disagree about it adamantly), does that disagreement in and of itself rise to the level of public controversy?

Of course, the behavior of our own members may bring public attention to an internal issue, but the issue itself may not truly be a public matter. Bill W.'s essay on Tradition Ten in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, talks about AA, particularly as a whole, not taking a position on issues such as politics, religion or reform movements. The long form of the Tradition specifically notes those areas as ones we

(Continued page 2)



## Is Legal Action Always A “Public” Controversy? (Con’t)

must carefully avoid. The example of the Washingtonians, the failed sobriety movement of the mid-1800s, is often quoted – but it is an example of taking on truly public controversies where A.A. ventured into topics and issues that were outside its primary purpose. Are those sorts of topics different than whether A.A. is forced to protect its own name or to preserve a copyright ensuring the integrity of the A.A. message?

The issue of the usage of legal proceedings is addressed more directly in Warranty Five of Concept Twelve. It states, “that no conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.” Bill’s essay about Concept Twelve further states that we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. He goes on to say that experience has shown that A.A. has been made exempt from the need to quarrel with anyone, no matter what the provocation. He continues by saying that nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the world-wide good will which A.A. enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

Later in the essay, Bill says that “...a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage.” Though these statements all seem quite definitive, our General Service Board is asking for a discussion regarding what constitutes a public controversy. The issue remains grey because in the same essay, Bill states that “whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Is there a distinction between controversy that truly involves the general public and controversy that is specifically aimed at protecting A.A. from a specific party that is not the general public? Is there a difference between A.A. taking on a public controversy and an action by A.A. that is attempting to address the misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous that may simply be newsworthy and so is reported widely? These are the kinds of difficult questions on which our trustees are seeking discussion.

The Conference presentation also asked for discussion regarding our Concepts guidance about the Board’s responsibilities. Concept Six states that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters [general policy and finance] should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. In his essay on Concept VI, Bill goes on to say that “...the Conference in turn [must] delegate a liberal administrative authority to the General Service Board, in order that its Trustees may act freely and effectively in the absence of the Conference itself.” Later, he says, “Of course our objective is always a spiritual one, but this service aim can only be achieved by means of an effective business operation. Our Trustees must function almost exactly like the directors of any large business corporation. They must have ample authority to really manage and conduct A.A.’s business. “

The Conference presentation pointed to a seeming contradiction where the Conference Charter states, “Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever take any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole, without first consulting the Conference.” The trustee making the presentation made a plea to the Fellowship to help the Board to understand today and into the future what constitutes a great emergency in the eyes of the Conference, or perhaps help define when an action is greatly liable to affect A.A. as a whole.

To summarize the trustee’s presentation, his hope was to spur discussion, at this and future Conferences. Our First Tradition states that, “Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” As noted earlier, when we have chosen to use the tool of law, it has almost always created internal controversy and disunity within the Fellowship. We have also always recovered, but will that always be the case? Should these tools “never” be used? If so, what are the consequences of potentially failing to meet our corporate fiduciary responsibilities? Do we need to only use these tools with the approval of the full Conference? What if we might lose an opportunity by waiting for Conference review and authorization? It is possible that Conference members could become parties to a suit if they are consulted? Would they likely be subject to questioning in a deposition? Is that an acceptable risk? What constitutes an emergency? What do we define as an action that is liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole? What is a public controversy?

## Is Legal Action Always A “Public” Controversy? (Con’t)

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The issue of the usage of legal proceedings is addressed more directly in Warranty Five of Concept Twelve. It states, “that no conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.” Bill’s essay about Concept Twelve further states that we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. He goes on to say that experience has shown that A.A. has been made exempt from the need to quarrel with anyone, no matter what the provocation. He continues by saying that nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the world-wide good will which A.A. enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

Later in the essay, Bill says that “...a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage.” Though these statements all seem quite definitive, our General Service Board is asking for a discussion regarding what constitutes a public controversy. The issue remains grey because in the same essay, Bill states that “whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Is there a distinction between controversy that truly involves the general public and controversy that is specifically aimed at protecting A.A. from a specific party that is not the general public? Is there a difference between A.A. taking on a public controversy and an action by A.A. that is attempting to address the misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous that may simply be newsworthy and so is reported widely? These are the kinds of difficult questions on which our trustees are seeking discussion.

The Conference presentation also asked for discussion regarding our Concepts guidance about the Board’s responsibilities. Concept Six states that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters [general policy and finance] should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. In his essay on Concept VI, Bill goes on to say that “...the Conference in turn [must] delegate a liberal administrative authority to the General Service Board, in order that its Trustees may act freely and effectively in the absence of the Conference itself.” Later, he says, “Of course our objective is always a spiritual one, but this service aim can only be achieved by means of an effective business operation. Our Trustees must function almost exactly like the directors of any large business corporation. They must have ample authority to really manage and conduct A.A.’s business. “

The Conference presentation pointed to a seeming contradiction where the Conference Charter states, “Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever take any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole, without first consulting the Conference.” The trustee making the presentation made a plea to the Fellowship to help the Board to understand today and into the future what constitutes a great emergency in the eyes of the Conference, or perhaps help define when an action is greatly liable to affect A.A. as a whole.

To summarize the trustee’s presentation, his hope was to spur discussion, at this and future Conferences. Our First Tradition states that, “Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” As noted earlier, when we have chosen to use the tool of law, it has almost always created internal controversy and disunity within the Fellowship. We have also always recovered, but will that always be the case? Should these tools “never” be used? If so, what are the consequences of potentially failing to meet our corporate fiduciary responsibilities? Do we need to only use these tools with the approval of the full Conference? What if we might lose an opportunity by waiting for Conference review and authorization? It is possible that Conference members could become parties to a suit if they are consulted? Would they likely be subject to questioning in a deposition? Is that an acceptable risk? What constitutes an emergency? What do we define as an action that is liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole? What is a public controversy?

## Conference Collage (Con't)

From being a Panel 50 delegate (2000) that was part of the Policy/Admissions Committee that initiated the discussion on electronic voting, I would suggest that the results were what we originally calculated: very measurable time savings, accurate information, and from my personal perspective and most important of all, the "purification" of the process whereby people can anonymously vote their conscience with no outside influence.

With likely the greatest intensity that I have experienced in my four Conferences, this one surely had the most active minority voice on a range of topics. None were quite as intense, however, than the discussion regarding the censure and/or reorganization of the General Service Board. It began when the Conference Committee on Trustees recommended the slate for the new GSB. The Conference used this item, the first recommendation by the committee, to in-effect debate the censure/reorganization items Board. It began when the Conference Committee on Trustees recommended the slate for the new GSB. The Conference used this item, the first recommendation by the committee, to in-effect debate the censure/reorganization items. The Committee did not have any recommendations to censure or reorganize, but they did provide in the form of additional considerations information as to how to address items similar in nature to the Printers Copy Manuscript, which was the fundamental driver to these discussions, and how to address the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the General Service Board as bound by AA Tradition, the Twelve Concepts of World Service and the Bylaws of the General Service Board.

This is the discussion our Conference process is designed to facilitate and have, to insure the future of AA. The GSC also had a presentation on Fiduciary Responsibility, and that, coupled with floor actions related to the topics related to these items, will hopefully provide information for the fellowship to form a sound policy on copyrights, trademarks and other intellectual property including internet domain names and other technology issues.

I won't go through the week's work and recommendations, as all that is available to you through your delegate. However, I brought up in this article two prominent issues at the GSC that reminds us why we need to adhere to the Resolution adopted in 1955 and have active participation starting at the group level and utilize the channels of communication we have in place, so that the General Service Conference can serve the fellowship through an informed group conscience.

I'd like to close with a bit of sharing of personal experience. Over the past few months I've watched a video of Bill W., "Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions" a few times, which was made not long before he died. (DVD-05, if you'd like to get it from the GSO.) Hence, this would be at a time when he had the most experience with AA and had experienced a great deal of growth and maturation of AA over a few decades. However, even at this point in time of his life, he shared about the continuing need to apply the same principles that formed AA and are encapsulated in our Traditions. My point is that even with (1) great change and (2) almost a quarter of a century passing from when he wrote the Traditions to when he was speaking, the same fundamentals of (a) anonymity, (b) non-resistance and humility, and (c) an active need to carry the message and not be a passive member – all these still applied perfectly. I'd suggest that even 50 more years after that talk, those are enduring principles that we would do well to heed for our own humility, our own sobriety and to insure AA is here for future generations.

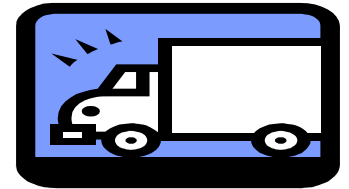
Yours in Service,  
Thomas A.  
WCR Trustee & AAWS Director

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