

Around AA

Items of AA information and experience

GSO Conference Theme: Unity

During the week of April 22-27, eighty-nine elected Delegates representing AA groups in the U.S. and Canada will gather at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City for the eighteenth Annual General Service Conference. The Conference is the voice of AA in North America. Its actions and deliberations with respect to AA policy and the General Service operation are the AA group conscience at work. The theme of this year's Conference is based on AA's First Tradition: "... personal recovery depends upon AA unity." Panels, workshops, talks, and committee meetings will explore present AA structure and functioning and make recommendations for strengthening AA unity worldwide.

— The Editors

The Serenity Prayer

Mrs. Reinhold Niebuhr writes the Grapevine about the Serenity Prayer:

A friend and former student of my husband's sent us the AA Grapevine for December 1966, marking page 42 in "Around AA." We were interested to read this, as so often the questions about the origin of this prayer come to us. This is the story.

My husband originally wrote the prayer for a Sunday service in which he was

preaching at the little country church in Heath, Mass. This was the village where we used to spend our summers. Our friend and neighbor Howard Chandler Robbins, who had been Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, asked him for the prayer as we walked home together after the service. Dean Robbins was then chairman of the Worship Commission of the then Federal Council of Churches. Later, during the Second World War the prayer, printed on small cards, was distributed by various organizations to the armed services. It was quite widely used during the war by commanding officers and often attributed indeed to admirals or generals because they used it. We do not know the date when AA adopted it as its official prayer.

You may find this story of its origin interesting. Incidentally, the wording of the prayer was slightly changed in the course of its use and transmission. My husband originally ended the prayer with the words "and the wisdom to know the one from the other."

— Mrs. Reinhold Niebuhr

The Story of The Story

The Story, now in its third year, is the quarterly magazine of the members of the Triangle AA Group, inmates of the State Dept. of Correction, Raleigh, N. C. The magazine, a little larger in format

than the Grapevine, averages thirty-two pages plus covers each issue, and is handsomely produced. Articles and verse (light and serious) by both inmates and outside experts are of high quality and are directed to carrying the AA message of hope and sobriety to all who read the magazine.

Incidentally, the Triangle Group is trying to put together a complete past file of Grapevines. They need November 1963, June 1965, and February 1952, plus anything earlier than September 1948. If you can help, write Captain Sam Garrison, Triangle AA Group, 835 West Morgan Street, Raleigh, N. C. 27603.

Books That Can Help

'Reality Therapy'

There are many similarities between the AA program and a successful system of psychiatric treatment called "reality therapy," developed by William Glasser, MD. AA members may find investigation of it rewarding. The best book on the subject is by Dr. Glasser, a Californian; it is titled *Reality Therapy*, and is published by Harper and Row.

The key difference between reality therapy and "conventional" therapy is that the reality therapist works in the present and concentrates on convincing the patient that his present actions are irrational and that they are causing him pain and discomfort, but that he can, by acting responsibly, become normally happy.

Everyone has a need to love and be loved, a need to feel worthwhile to himself and to other people, responsible people. Once, however, anyone starts on a course of irrational behavior, whatever the cause, he begins to destroy his own feeling of self-worth and to alienate the very people who can help him regain it. If he refuses to see that he has a problem, ignores it, tries to rationalize it away or drown it in alcohol, it is possible for him to start on a cycle of deterioration. Eventually, such unfortunate people will deny the reality of the world around them, deny the rules of society, break the law.

The cure is for the patient to be forced to recognize that his behavior is unre-

alistic and irresponsible. To start a cycle of improvement, he must recognize the disparity between the values he recognizes as acceptable and the life he himself is leading. He must act rationally and experience the good feeling that accompanies responsible behavior.

The trick is to make him see that what he is doing is making him unhappy and that even though he expresses unconcern for the feelings of his wife, his family, his business associates, or society, in reality these things do concern him, and thus his behavior is destroying his feeling of self-worth, thereby causing his own unhappiness.

In the case of the alcoholic, it becomes a matter of whether the questionable pleasures of alcohol are worth the unhappiness drinking engenders. If he is truthful with himself he will know the answer is No. —J.L.

Why a Group GSR?

The most frequently asked question at any General Service meeting is undoubtedly "Why the obvious lack of interest in General Service work?" It is my opinion that this question can be answered and answered realistically by asking and then trying to answer honestly a more basic question: "Why should there be a group General Service Representative (GSR)?"

These few words will be my attempt to answer this question, speaking from personal experience (most of which has been bad).

After a few years of sitting and listening and, of course, doing my share of the talking, I think it has finally come home to me just why each group should have a GSR—in *action*, not in name only. Until this becomes a reality, we will be plagued by the wail of the interested few: "Why the lack of interest?" The GSR is the backbone of group Third Legacy participation. It is his responsibility to create interest where none exists now.

Can he create interest if he has none himself? If he has no interest, he shouldn't be Group Representative. Those of you who have watched closely how our local elections are performed—I am not speaking now of elections run according to Third Legacy procedure,

but of group-level elections — know that they are buck-passing ceremonies. Let's be honest! — I know that uninterested people get these jobs, and so do you! Is it any wonder vital services don't get done? My appeal is to the few people or the only person genuinely interested: Come forward and declare yourself; make your intentions known; accept responsibility for doing the GSR job.

As an ex-Delegate, I know the importance of the GSR. An enormous amount of money (your money) is spent each year to provide for the General Service Conference. Delegates from all over the U.S. and Canada are sent to New York City at your expense to discuss their problems, to vote on issues that affect AA as a whole, and — most important of all — to be educated as to how they can better serve. A Delegate can be no better than the sum total of his GSRs. His purpose is to communicate, and any communication worthy of the name must be two-way. In this case, it goes from the grass roots to the General Service Board of Trustees and then back to the grass roots. Without a vital network of GSRs, the Delegate is whipped before he starts this job.

Much is written about the Conference, about the Trustees, Delegates, and committeemen, but the heart of the whole thing we take for granted and shouldn't.

If you are a GSR, re-examine your

motives and intentions, and your obligations will come clear in the light of truth. If you're not yet a GSR and want to be one, declare your intentions, and the opportunity to serve will soon be given to you.

This is my way of taking my own inventory. Thank you for the opportunity.
— *Ray M.*

No Recovery Back Then

Sir Walter Raleigh was a man of the world; he'd been around. His travels as an explorer and his life as a courtier gave him perhaps as complete a view of the human condition in the Elizabethan period as any man can then have had, always excepting that most astonishing of his contemporaries, Shakespeare.

If Shakespeare had a kind of democratic realism about people and their foibles, Raleigh had a patrician pessimism. When it came to drunks he was pre-AA, and then some; he saw no hope for wine-bibbers. He wrote: "It were better for a man to be subject to any vice than to drunkenness; for all other vanities and sins are recoverable, but a drunkard will never shake off the delight of beastliness."

"Beastliness"! "Never shake off"! It's good to live in a later time when there is hope — through AA.

— *Anonymous Al*