

Gratitude Gazette

Summer, 2017

EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Inside This Issue

Upcoming Activities.....	1
Delegate's Note.....	2
Inspirations from Area 38 Servants.....	2
Archives Update.....	3
Tech Talk.....	4
Our Primary Purpose.....	5
God Is in the Weeds.....	8

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES...

Missouri State Convention

August 4-6

Capital Plaza Hotel, 415 W. McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101

Call: 1-800-338-8088

National AA Technology Workshop

September 8-10

Sacramento, CA

Area 38 Fall Assembly

September 30

National Corrections Conference

November 10-12

Saint Louis, MO

DELEGATE'S NOTE... by Ian S.

WHAT HAPPENED IN NY, AT THE 67TH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE?

Since May, Alt. Del. Gene M. and I have been visiting districts, giving brief talks and taking Q&A, to answer that question. Our district visits continue into September – if we haven't been to yours yet, ask your DCM or feel free to contact us for the schedule. Also, I'll be walking folks through my Conference PowerPoint presentation, and all the nitty-gritty details, at the 6/24/17 Area Assembly. In case you can't attend any of those events, or you want to spend more time with the handouts, we've got you covered – with the help of our Area Technology Committee, we've made them available to be viewed/downloaded with the links below: <http://bit.ly/delegatefull> (full) <http://bit.ly/delegatenews> (short)

The full report, *which is confidential because it contains some last names*, is password-protected. The password will be given out at the Area Assembly, and any AA member may also get it from any Area Officer, or another AA member who has it and wishes to share it with them.

It was an honor and a pleasure to serve the Eastern Area of MO and AA at the conference. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, at delegate@eamo.org. Thank you.

INSPIRATIONS IN SERVICE...

Marge D (Panel 65, Area 38): I've had a blast doing General Service. There have been many meaningful moments; it can be hard to pin one down. One situation made a lasting and spiritual impression on me. It happened in 2015 at my first General Service Conference. During the opening, someone said that our work for the week was all about "helping the drunk on the corner." Shortly after that session, a few of us went outside of the hotel during a break. We were hanging out on Broadway when a man approached us. He enthused, "Hi! What are you all doing?" We answered that we were delegates doing business for Alcoholics Anonymous. "Alcoholics Anonymous?! I need that!" So, right there – on the street in Times Square – we started doing 12th Step Work. We happened to have a copy of the New York City AA meeting directory which included Intergroup information. We gave it to him and said to call these folks – they could help. He clutched the booklet and thanked us for speaking with him. We wished him well and went back inside. We don't know what happened after that, but we all hoped for the best. Meeting and helping "the drunk on the corner" on that particular day is something I'll never forget. What amazing serendipity!

Laura V. (Panel 61, Area 38): I always tell people that my favorite service position was as GSR for my home group in District 52. It was my introduction to both district and area meetings and came at a time in my personal life when I really needed to serve AA and get out of myself. Being the organized perfectionist that I am, I typed and distributed my rather lengthy GSR reports at our business meetings, where the group listened patiently, though I'm sure not all of them shared my new-found enthusiasm!

The pamphlet "Circles of Love & Service" was also very significant to me early on, not just because it explained how our service structure works, but also by emphasizing that the reason it works is because of our spiritual principles of self- sacrifice for the still-suffering alcoholic and loving unity within the fellowship. When I had the privilege of serving as area delegate many years later, I was assigned to the Conference Literature Committee and this pamphlet came up for review and revision. I gave an impassioned plea to the committee that, regardless of whatever other changes were made, we recommend retaining the theme of "circles of love and service" because it had had such a great impact on me. Gratefully, they did!

FROM OUR AREA ARCHIVES CHAIR: *If Walls Could Talk*

For those who are not aware, this is the name of a section in each Grapevine Magazine. In “If Walls Could Talk” are pictures of various A.A. groups’ meeting rooms and outdoor meeting places. Our Archivist, Lou, thought that we might try this idea for our next EAMO Archives project. When completed, we will mount pictures of groups’ meeting locations and will bring this display to an Eastern Area Missouri Assembly. If you would like to participate, please submit a picture in either jpeg or pdf format of your group’s meeting place without any people in it so there are no problems with anonymity and email the picture to archives@eamo.org. With the picture send the name of your group and the location (city and building), the day and time the group meets and if available the date the group first met. This would be a great way to get the word out about your group, celebrate your group’s history and welcome others. As stated in the last Gratitude Gazette, group histories can act as a source of value and harmony which can strengthen each group.

What can be found at the EAMO Archives Office?

Hmm, where could we possibly start? To begin with we have all four editions of the Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous and several editions which are in foreign languages. There are letters to A.A. headquarters in New York from people in Missouri dating back to 1940 (shortly after the Big Book was published) inquiring how to get a copy of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Prominent on a huge bulletin board, we have many items from the 1955 International A.A. Conference which took place at the Kiel Auditorium (now the Peabody Opera House) right here in St. Louis, Missouri. If you are a fan of the Grapevine, we have most of the issues dating back to the magazine’s beginning in June of 1944. If you enjoy listening to speaker tapes we have more than you could possibly listen to in a life time. Among some of the tapes and CDs are speakers from most Missouri State Conventions and other conventions not only in Missouri, but all around the country. For the last several years, we have been developing a research database on the EAMO/Archives computer for Area and District activities which have already come in handy for research. Also available for research are General Service Conference Reports, Southwest Regional Service Assemblies, Southwest Regional Forums, Southwest Regional Delegates Assemblies, past A.A. Service Manuals along with past and present A.A. meeting directories throughout the country. Are you looking for ideas on how to develop or design an eye-catching flyer? We have a huge collection of flyers for events throughout Area 38 dating back many years. You may also find design ideas from many of the newsletters we have on file from our Area, Districts and local Intergroups. Please consider stopping by. We are located at 14 Sunnen Drive, Suite #144 in historic Maplewood, Missouri. Our hours are 1 to 6 PM on the first Wednesday of the month and 10 till noon on the third Saturday of the Month. You may also contact us to set up a special appointment by calling Carl at (314) 359-4776 or email archives@eamo.org.

“We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian...”

“It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion...”

“We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come...”
Bill W., 1957

TECH TALK by Lois L

The Technology Committee explores ways to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic through the use of technology while honoring the guiding principles and traditions of our fellowship.

Tech Tools You can Use:

Online Meetings

Visit <https://www.aa-intergroup.org/> to find a variety of formats for online meetings including chat, video, conference call and email. This is especially useful for members who might be ill or unable to make it to in person meetings.



Meeting Guide app

This app supports meetings in EAMO area 38 but also in many locations across the country. Visit <https://meetingguide.org/> to download. This is useful for members who are new or if you are traveling. We've found many professionals like it too.



TIAA Online Forum

TIAA stands for Technology in AA and this online forum provides a place for members of the fellowship to discuss technology as it relates to AA. Visit TIAA-forum.org for more information.

Tech News

The area technology committee is working on four key projects currently. If you are interested in getting involved in one of these please contact techchair@eamo.org and we'll plug you in.

- Hosting district websites on Area web host
- Website Redesign.
- Google for nonprofits – G-Suite implementation
- Area-wide Communications strategy

OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE

by Lisa Mc

Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose* — that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Do you remember your basic goals as a child? Mine were to make good grades, follow the rules and gain recognition. My chief aim upon becoming an active teenage alcoholic was still to make good grades, but recognition and rule-following turned into popularity and rebellion by day, and booze and boys by night. During moments of existential angst, I wondered why I was still alive. I was 19 years old. My primary aims became money, men, the Manhattan skyline and learning to like martinis. My alcoholism quickly progressed. Right before I turned 21, I'd drunk myself out of the privilege and ability to attend college. I was confused. What had happened to my drive and ability to follow through? I was bewildered, depressed and crazy.

My life was a wreck. I lived to drink, and drank to live. I focused on him and tried to manage his life, while my own crumbled upon me like a skyscraper implosion.

I'm a fortunate one, as are you if you're reading this. Something extraordinary happened one cold morning in 1984. I came to, still drunk, room reeling, head splitting, severely nauseous, sweating buckets and mind racing, trying to stitch together the night before. I had a moment of clarity and saw that alcohol was my problem and my master. I'd reached the jumping off place the Big Book describes. I was "unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it," (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 152).

I called my best friend's mom, the only person I knew in Alcoholics Anonymous and said, "I think I'm an alcoholic." She in turn called another woman in recovery. I was Twelfth Stepped into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous on a cold morning in Feb. 1984 by a woman alcoholic that I had nothing in common with externally. She

was in her 50s. I was 23. Her hair was silver and coiffed. Mine was light brown, straight down to my waist, and stuck to the side of my face and body because of heavy hairspray applied the night before mixed with buckets of sweat. She had long red fingernails adorned with sparkly diamond rings. I had chewed away nails and cuticles and wore silver and turquoise.

What we did have in common was the personal story she shared and to which I related: a living hell filled with the humiliation, guilt, remorse and horrors of alcoholism. I listened to this lady who looked good and smelled nice, tell about her battle with alcoholism, how she surrendered and how she'd found a way to recover. I identified like only one drunk can to another. She was the Fifth Tradition in action.

I fell in love with the people and program of Alcoholics Anonymous. My sponsor and leaders in AA spoon-fed me the traditions from the start. As I took each step toward liberation and recovery, old-timers taught me about the program to which I belonged. They shared AA's history and took me to see our archives.

I learned that no one could deny my membership — if I had a problem with drinking and wanted to do something about it. That AA didn't have any chiefs, bosses or corporate hierarchy. That we weren't compelled to pay anything but asked to donate to the basket. That we only existed to carry AA's message to the next suffering alcoholic. All they asked of me was once I reached Step Twelve that I'd give freely this unearned gift: the grace of sobriety I'd found through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our literature defines sobriety as "freedom from alcohol — through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, [it] is the sole purpose of an AA group.

"Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned there is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into AA members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our AA

groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone" (Language of the Heart/LOH, 93). AA's primary purpose to carry its message to other alcoholics became my own. I began to share my experience, strength and hope as a bewildered, terrified, demoralized, self-loathing alcoholic transformed into someone who was not only bright and shiny, but back in college, confident, and capable of unconditional love. I carried AAs message to drunks who wanted to learn how to get and live sober.

Our 12 Steps show us how AA works. Our Traditions tell us why AA works. The Traditions were created out of AA's early growing period where self-propelled, sober members tried to relate to one another in AA and the world as a whole. This erstwhile, erratic band of alcoholics and children of chaos in motion almost blew up our beloved program. I see many groups and individuals today who have drifted away from this tradition because they're uninformed or misinformed.

On the minds of Bill and Dr. Bob was how AAs could live and work together and how to secure the fellowship for future alcoholics. For you and for me, who'd need to find the same life-saving grace they'd found, in our literature and the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. But it didn't stop there. It was to preserve this simple program for our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

I love all of AA's Traditions, but especially Tradition Five, because it finally defined why I was here. My sponsor showed me how my home group business, district and area meetings were like a football field where I could learn to practice all Twelve Traditions inside AA so I could practice them in the world outside.

In April 1946 Bill W. wrote, "Nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous. It grew. Trial and error has produced a rich experience. Little by little we have been

adopting the lessons of that experience first as policy, and then as tradition.

Can we now declare general principles, which could grow into vital traditions — traditions sustained in the heart of each AA by his own deep conviction and common consent of his fellows? ... I'm sure we have come at last to a vantage point whence we can discern the main outlines of a body of tradition; which God willing, can stand as an effective guard against the ravages of time and circumstance," (*The AA Grapevine*, April 1946).

When Bill introduced our traditions through our meeting in print, *The AA Grapevine*, he called them "Twelve points to assure our future." (LOH, p 68)

The spiritual principles of Tradition Five include singleness of purpose, preservation and unity.

We have only one purpose and one message: the message of how we recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body called alcoholism through AA's 12 Steps.

For chronic, hopeless alcoholics like me, sobriety is a matter of life and death.

"Shoemaker, stick to thy last!...better do one thing supremely well than many badly" begins Tradition 5 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. (12/12, 155). In case you never really knew but were afraid to ask: A "last" was the form of a human foot upon which a shoemaker repaired shoes.

"Under these compulsions of self-preservation, duty, and love, it is not strange that our Society has concluded that it has but one high mission — to carry the AA message to those [alcoholics] who don't know there's a way out," (12/12, 151).

The language is clear in AA literature. The warning is strong: Don't presume just because we know how to recover from alcoholism that we should try to carry AAs message to those whose primary addiction is food or smoking, gambling or sex, debt or work, or heroin or prescription drugs.

I'll admit at one point I tried this with three separate women. Their primary problem was not alcoholism, but something else.

They didn't relate to me, or I to them. They could practice their malady, and I never knew it. I discovered how arrogant and inconsiderate I'd been. My God, I could have helped them die by not walking them into the arms of people in a fellowship that might save their lives.

"We think we should do one thing well rather than many things to which we are not called. This is the central idea of this Tradition. Our society gathers in unity around this concept. The very life of our fellowship requires its preservation....Together we have found a substantial remedy for a terrible malady...As a fellowship, we know that we must not be diverted.

"We can approach sufferers as no one can. Therefore, the strong kind of moral and ethical compulsion is upon us to do this and nothing more," (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, 106-107).

I learned I can't be all things to all people in AA, nor in my life outside.

Because of sobriety, I graduated cum laude from college, married a fellow AA, became a mother and entered my profession. I worked full time outside the home by the time she was three, but I was present and involved in my daughter's life. At first, I said yes to everyone who asked something of me: my child's homeroom teacher, the PTA, our church, the community, the soccer and volleyball teams, the cupcake sales, the dance recitals and head coach for academically gifted kids' competitions.

One day while studying our literature, the light of understanding streamed into my consciousness. I was to take Tradition Five as a rule of life or personal mission statement. My primary purpose was to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. PERIOD.

"Because it has now become plain enough that only a recovered alcoholic can do much for a sick alcoholic, a tremendous responsibility has descended upon us all, an obligation so great that it amounts to a

sacred trust. For to our kind, those who suffer alcoholism, recovery is a matter of life or death. So the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot, it dare not, ever be diverted from its primary purpose," (LOH, 82-83).

Other moms and dads could coach teams, bake homemade cookies, serve as homeroom parent, teach Sunday school and lead the PTA, just as well, or better than me. I realized the sacred duty God had entrusted to me — to all of us — with continual sobriety. I could reach another alcoholic where doctors, priests, therapists, spouses, mothers, ministers, fathers and rabbis could not.

"And may we reflect with ever deepening conviction, that we shall never be at our best except when we hew only the primary spiritual aim of AA. That of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers alcoholism," (LOH, 83).

When I live my life, my heart, mind and soul from Tradition Five, somehow everything works out in life. That doesn't mean I get what I want when I want it. But I can relax, take it easy, clean up my side of the street, make amends if called for and stay emotionally sober with true peace of mind. Tradition Five is my home group's sole reason for existence. May it be each AA group's primary purpose. May we forever remain enthusiastic about AA and keep trying to carry AAs message.

I work with a lot of newcomers. I can't report they've all gotten or stayed sober. But I have. I'm so grateful, as I know you must be, for sobriety; for a brand new adventure where I can meet life on life's terms.

Here's one beautiful promise of Tradition Five, "So long as we remain grateful for what has befallen us, and for so long as this Tradition of high and single purpose indelibly emblazoned on our hearts, our destiny will be assured. We shall be worthy of God's Providence," (*The AA Grapevine*, October 1949).

GOD IS IN THE WEEDS by Melissa M.

I'm a big fan of houseplants, bringing a little bit of nature's wild beauty inside. Lately, I'm seeing them as a symbol for my sobriety. (Once upon a time, I used to smoke pot and claim to see the future in a cactus, but that's another story.)

Orchids are pretty well represented in my collection. They are beautiful, but they have a reputation for being difficult. Somehow, they come easily to me and I usually have at least a few gorgeous spikes in bloom.

Ferns, though, usually appear on any lists you find for "hard to kill houseplants." And they bring out my black thumb. In all my experience of plant-keeping, I've never been able to keep a fern alive.

Over the years, friends have given me clippings of plants they love, and some have flourished while some have died. My husband gave me a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum to cheer me up one day when I was feeling sad. It made me smile, and then promptly shriveled up.

They all require various levels of care and upkeep, and none of them is exactly the same. At any given time, if I'm honest, I'm failing miserably with some portion of them. There are always a few that look approximately dead but I know they'll bloom again if I'm patient and diligent. And there are always a few that manage to look incredible no matter what.

In my recovery, I have some consistent pieces of success. I haven't found it necessary to put alcohol in my body for almost six years, and I talk to my higher power every day. Some parts are limping along—I don't currently have a solid service component to my recovery. My meditation practice is on life support at the moment, but I know from past experience it can and will bloom again, as soon as I focus on it.

I'm never doing a perfect job, and my failure rate is higher than I'd like. I know my plants need sunlight and water, and my attention. I can give them that. Taken as a whole, my little flock of plants gives me great joy and contentment. They make me proud and satisfied, and the failures here and there have never led me to say "ah, to hell with it." I'm going to keep watering them. And I'm going to keep watering myself, by showing up at meetings and sharing with my fellow alcoholics, always inching toward god's sunshine.

To submit an article, event, or other item for possible publication in the Gratitude Gazette, please email gazette@eamo.org. Letters can be mailed to: Editor, Gratitude Gazette, c/o EAMO Office, 14 Sunnen Drive, Suite 144, St. Louis, MO 63143.

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