



The Boomerang

Spring 2017

Why Do We Need a Conference?

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of the board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: “We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life.

We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions and all of its services.

“We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time with have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE – Your Voice is heard!

As we prepare our delegate for the General Service Conference with our voice, thoughts and experiences it is important to see and understand the process of A.A. that works. See how our voice impacts A.A. as a whole, and especially how it can carry the message of hope to the still sick and suffering alcoholic.

At our Spring Assembly in 2014 an agenda item under Corrections, to make a new video to replace the 20-year-old one, “It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell” was under discussion. At a cost of \$70,000 it seemed a poor use of funds, or so was the prevailing sentiment. I was delegate for my first conference and I wanted to know the feeling of the area. Though I was ready to take the prevailing thought to vote against this new video, one of our active members got up to the mic and made an impassioned argument for spending the money to have something relevant in the correctional facilities. She spoke sincerely from her heart, sharing her personal experience, strength, and hope. Her words and sentiment resonated with me and turned the prevailing attitude to one of making the video. I can still picture her at the mic and hear the emotion in her words. As the delegate, I made notes and brought them to the conference.

When this agenda item came to the floor of the conference for discussion it went very much as our assembly had first gone – we didn’t want to spend a lot of money and what would be the ‘bang for our buck’? I felt it was for the good of A.A. as a whole to bring Area 28’s voice to the discussion even though it seemed more of a minority opinion, so I went to the mic. I’m sure I wasn’t as eloquent as our area member but I got the point across and the tide changed and the motion to make a new video passed.

Not so fast forward ---The new video “A New Freedom” has been completed and can be viewed in a 30 minute, 20 minute, or 10-minute format on the A.A. website www.aa.org . It is also being shown in correctional facilities throughout California and in Texas where the presence of A.A. in correctional facilities has been lacking. I encourage all to visit the website and see what your voice made possible and to read the article “Group Effort Creates ‘A New Freedom’” in Box 4-5-9 vol. 63, No.1 / Spring 2017 to get a sense of what our program, steps, traditions, and concepts look like in action.

Every delegate has a story to share like this one. Our conference system really works if we all participate and do our part in carrying the message. P.S. It is thought by many at A.A. World Services and G.S.O. that it was the best \$70,000 ever spent in reaching so many!

Mary Lou Q. panel 64 (past delegate)

Twelfth Tradition

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 that presides over us all.

Hi folks, I am an alcoholic, my name is Dennis K. from the Belgrade Lakes Group in District 14 and am currently in my second year serving as Chairperson for our district. As a district chair, each of us is appointed to an Area Standing Committee by our Area Chair.

My appointment was to The Guidelines Committee. To be honest, I wasn't exactly thrilled in the beginning but have become more passionate about it. Part of our responsibilities are to update and maintain the Area 28 Service Workbook. I've always referred to The A.A. Service Manual from the General Service Office, along with a service sponsor, as my basic guide in service to our fellowship. I got sober in another Area and had to become familiar Area 28s particular procedures. For me, it was similar to Fishing here in Maine, we have the General Rules (The A.A. Service Manual) and then by county and by lake, there are specific rules (The Area 28 Workbook verses my old Area). Don't get hung up on the word "rules", it's just an example.

As a GSR I had to use the workbook during assemblies looking for certain issues and procedures used in Area 28 that were different from where I came from. Being part of this committee forced me to read the "whole" book, not just the sections I needed at the time. Eye opening would be an understatement. Going through the book line by line and reading the history of past assemblies, commonly called the "white pages", I've learned a lot about the history of Area 28 and changes through the years.

The Workbook contents itself, are vital for the newly elected GSR attending their first few assemblies as a guide to exactly what each of our committees and officers duties and responsibilities are. Processes and procedures explain how business is conducted at committee meetings and assemblies. Over the years much has changed since the first assembly recorded in Augusta during the fall of 1955. Updating our additions, changes and removing outdated material to keep our Workbook current is an ongoing process in keeping us, trusted servants of Area 28, well informed and on the same page.

Although not thrilled in the beginning of this assignment, it has been an education and experience I am grateful for.

Yours In Service
Dennis K.

My name is John and I serve the Maine Area as editor of this newsletter, *The Boomerang*. The Boomerang has had an active committee of four AA members from the North, South, East and West regions of the Maine Area. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the experience and commitment of everyone that has contributed to publication of this newsletter. Submissions are welcome, if you have already submitted material know that it is appreciated; feedback I have received has been positive. It is my hope and commitment that the Boomerang will continue to serve as a communication link for AA members in the Maine Area.

Yours in AA Service,
John D. Boomerang Editor

The Background on Maine Area 28 Guidelines and my experience

The history of the Guidelines committee can be gleaned, if thinly, from the area history in the back of the booklet, but as usual with AA, much of the history resides in our memory of the events.. The “our” are passing away and so the memory of the experience is also being lost. There are still a few of us alive who might remember the stormy beginning, such as Guy F. in Quebec, Elaine and Denny O. in Arizona, a few others, and myself.

The story begins in the early 1980's when a large influx of AA transplants arrived in the Maine Area after getting sober in other areas, such as Southern California, Northern California, California Coastal, Eastern Massachusetts, Arizona, Rhode Island, along with many from Maine who were just getting active in General Service, plus the past delegates of Maine. The Maine Area Committee met a half hour before the assemblies would convene at Eastern Maine Medical Center Auditorium on a Sunday afternoon to try to decide on an agenda. The assemblies would mostly be spent on deciding who was an officer and who could vote and would last about one-and-a half hours or maybe two hours in length. Some of us saw the need for some sort of a booklet on how the assembly should proceed, and so in the Fall of 1984 on Indian Island a guidelines committee was created by the area. As I recall, Paul H., from District II which then included Boothbay Harbor, remained chair for several years and was joined by Jake H., from District II which then included Winthrop, and others. Their guide was a pamphlet then in use by the California Northern Interior Area that I had brought to Maine with me. Five years later at the Fall Assembly in Bath, 1989, a motion was made to present the Area Guidelines at the Spring 1990 Assembly for approval. (The assembly actions from this meeting are missing but should be in the binders I gave to the area secretary years ago, I hope.) They were accepted and the assemblies tried to go through the booklet as a whole as they tried to make changes, so at the Spring 1991 assembly the process of making changes to the guidelines was returned to the committee where it has remained since. It was also decided to have the alternate delegate serve as chair of this committee so they would have a job to do, as well as learn a bit more about how a committee should operate as preparation for perhaps serving as a delegate at a General Service Conference. One dramatic moment occurred when Al R. took to the assembly floor in Ogunquit and tore a copy of the guidelines up, saying with great passion that the area didn't need them, and Cena R. who was alternate delegate then, quietly turned the chairmanship of the committee over to me with a smile. There were many other such explosions which have subsided over the years as we have grown in accepting that we need some guidelines on how to proceed with area business for otherwise we would become bogged down in a process every time we met.

I have grown in acceptance over the years, as I felt some sort of responsibility for the health of the committee, which is why I have attended these committee meetings when not assigned by the area chair to another committee or ad-hoc committee as needed. The acceptance comes from experiencing and listening to other interested AA members share their experience, strength, and hope as we strive for progress. In many senses, this is the first successful committee composed of more than one person on the area level. We now have many more active area committees composed of more than one person, which will, in time, generate more agenda items for the Maine Area Assemblies. It is on this committee where I have learned the most that I am but a part of a great whole.

Bob D., Panel 36