



Seeds of Service

Inventory: Taking Stock ...

Jan H. Past Delegate Panel 57

Inventory: taking stock, investigating growth, checking goals—looking at the possibilities and renewing the realistic ones. I read a phrase a while ago that said: *“An inventory can be a bunch of signs and guardrails, directional or otherwise.”*



growing which means change, hopefully for the better.

It is all well and good that we do our own inventory, **but what about our home groups?** My home group, Creighton In-Depth Big Book Study, energizes me. It is a Big Book study in depth sometimes discussing only one paragraph at a time. The words in the Big Book have always intrigued my brain and exhilarated my soul. It is important that our group checks out our energy, cohesiveness, and welcoming to newcomers. Our growth and spreading the AA message as written in the Book depends on it.

Has your group done an inventory lately? It doesn't have to be wordy or lengthy. Even five simple questions can bring up wonderful discussion in a group

conscience. *“There is something about being a part of a bunch of people all turned in the same direction—toward the sun....”* (Grapevine Dec. 1997 “Oh God, You Again” Don N.)

And finally, AA World Services has been conducting an inventory through the Conference process for the last few years. The General Service Office, the Boards, and other entities of our corporate entities wanted to receive input on how they are doing and receive suggestions for improvement. These are still timely remarks from Bill W.'s Grapevine February, 1961 article called “The Shape of Things to Come.” Bill's words are timeless.

“AA's first quarter-century is now history. Our next twenty-five years lie in

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Our steps provide us two opportunities to do PERSONAL INVENTORIES: the first in the Fourth step—the thorough and searching fearless moral one; and the other in the Tenth step—the continuing (daily suggested) with prompt admittance of wrongs done. We try to do this life one day at a time, so how we are is “only for today, never for tomorrow.” We have to keep

Has Your Group Looked in the Mirror Lately?

Box 4-5-9, Vol. 54, No. 2 / April - May 2008

The idea of taking personal inventory is as old as A.A. itself. In the Big Book (p. 64), published in 1939, A.A. cofounder Bill W. and a handful of early-timers likened the process to the vital task of maintaining a small business, noting that the one that “takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. ... This fact-finding process is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade...to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. ... We [in A.A.] did exactly the same thing with our lives.” This process of individual inventory-taking, familiarly known as Step Four, had its group counterpoint in Tradition Two, which states, “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”



It is through the lens of inventory meetings, as well as sharing sessions and business meetings, that group members become familiar with the concept of the “group conscience” as the deciding factor in any situation that arises, and with the need at all times to place “principles above personalities,” as detailed in the Twelfth Step.

Additionally, many A.A.s say that the process of arriving at a group conscience

offers a view of the world in microcosm. Learning to function as part of a group—to cope with its ongoing challenges, joys and interrelationships—often gives them the first crucial tools for learning to function sober at home, at work, everywhere.

In the April 1956 issue of the A.A. Grapevine, Pennsylvanian M.J.G. suggested that “even in the most circumspect groups all is not always well. Just as it occasionally happens in the country club, the church choir and the college faculty, a lone wolf will howl and a Red Ridinghood will simper (smile) invitingly.”

Among other instances of disharmony that she felt could be resolved by taking a group conscience, M.J.G. said, “These days we see some of the founders of groups ‘retiring’ sulkily from A.A. after many useful productive years. Often this

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ON MY BOOKSHELF

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

From the beginning of the Grapevine magazine, Bill W. found it an ideal way to communicate with the members and groups of the early days of the new Fellowship known as “Alcoholics Anonymous”. “The Language Of The Heart” is a compilation of more than 150 articles, written over a span of 26 years, documenting the painstaking process of trial and error that resulted in AA’s spiritual principles of Recovery, Unity and Service. First published in 1988, it is arranged chronologically in three parts according to the primary AA concerns Bill was thinking and writing about during each period of time. They are further subdivided by major and minor subject matter within each part. Brief introductions to each part list the major events and trends in AA that compelled Bill to emphasize a particular aspect of AA life. The book contains a group of memorial articles and an appendix of seven articles in which Bill reflected on the Grapevine itself.

Like many AA publications, “The Language Of The Heart” is history, time line and reference book, as well as good reading. There is a handy index in the back. If you want to read Bill’s original essays introducing the Traditions to the Fellowship, you can



find the section (Part One, Segment One) in the Table of Contents in the front of the book, or you can find individual Traditions in the Index in the back of the book. His writings that became the essays on the Twelve Traditions won’t be found here, because they are published in their entirety in the 12 & 12. Lois Wilson, Bill’s wife, survived him by 18 years, and was able to write a foreword for the book before she died in October 1988.

The Grapevine book, “AA Today” was published on the occasion of AA’s 25th Anniversary International Convention, Long Beach, CA, in July of 1960, and several articles from that book are found in “The Language Of The Heart”, as are the essays from “The Best Of Bill”.

You may recognize some of the articles or passages from the book as all of them originally appeared in the

magazine and many of them have been quoted for other publications or pamphlets published by AAWS; Bill often repeated ideas or illustrations to be certain that people had knowledge of them; some of the material has become outdated but has been retained to insure the integrity of Bill’s work; and some of his terminology might be considered inappropriate today, but has been retained so as not to change the meaning. The General Service Conference voted in 2002 that “Bill W.’s writings are to be retained as originally published”, in other words, we don’t change Bill’s language.

The last article that Bill W. wrote for the Grapevine magazine was his Christmas Message in December of 1970. It can be found on page 351. He died on January 24, 1971.

My sponsor gave me a copy of “The Language Of The Heart” my first Christmas in the Fellowship. I fell in love with it immediately. I was already a subscriber to the Grapevine magazine, and this was just the next logical step, to me.

“The Language Of The Heart” is available in hard cover, soft cover and large print editions. ▲

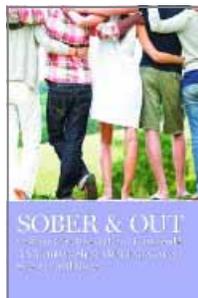


"I have the coffee pot, now all I need is a resentment and I can start my own meeting."

Grapevine Cartoon Contest Winner
Sept 2014—Anonymous

A New Book From AA Grapevine Sober & Out – GV33

Sober & Out is a collection of stories by AA members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (and a few friends) from the pages of AA Grapevine. They share their experience, strength and hope with alcoholism as well as their personal struggles and hard-fought triumphs. The stories in this book show that—like most alcoholics—LGBT AAs struggle to fit in, stay sober and find peace in their lives. By working the Steps, following the Traditions, doing service, and finding a Higher Power, they are now living sober in the Fellowship of AA.
Only \$10.99 ▲



Inventory – A Guiding Tool to Our Future

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

We all know about our 4th and 10th Step Inventories and many of us are familiar with the Group Inventory that is found in the Conference Approved Pamphlet “The AA Group,” but do you know that there are other inventories, as well? Some of you may recall the Area 60 Inventory that was conducted at the 3rd Q 2012 Area Meeting. Our General Service Conference is conducting an inventory of itself now. It began in 2009 with the first steps taken at that year’s General Service Conference. I have heard it said that nothing happens fast in AA; the following list of advisory Actions illustrates this point perfectly!

2009 Conference Advisory Actions Policy/Admissions Committee—“That the General Service Board develop a plan for the General Service Conference to conduct an inventory of itself that includes a planning committee consisting of representatives of delegates, trustees, directors, non-trustee directors, and staff, and that a progress report be presented to the 2010 Policy/Admissions Committee.” Box 4-5-9, Summer 2009

2010 Conference Advisory Actions Policy/Admissions Committee—“that the General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself and that a Conference Inventory Planning Committee be established to develop a comprehensive inventory plan to bring forward to the 2011 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions for consideration along with an estimated cost for conducting the inventory”. Box 4-5-9, Summer 2010

2011 Conference Advisory Actions Policy/Admissions—“that the General Service Conference Conduct a thorough inventory of itself in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan formulated by the Conference Inventory Planning Committee”. Box 4-5-9, Summer 2011

2012 Conference Advisory Actions Agenda—“that the theme for the 2013 General Service Conference be “The General Service Conference Takes It’s Inventory — Our Solution in Action”; that specific questions listed in the “Inventory Plan,” which were approved by the 2011 G.S.C., be discussed at the 2013, 2014 and 2015 Conferences”. Box 4-5-9, Summer 2012

The 2013 Conference was the first year of a planned three-year Conference Inventory. In her presentation on “why is an inventory necessary?” Lela M. observed, “*Our primary purpose hasn’t changed, but there are things that are changing. Our self-support model has been shifting. The logistics of publishing, commerce, distribution and*



communication — these are changing. Significantly.”

Lela continues, “We have choices that we need to make, to ensure that we use our precious resources prudently. Our inventory is an invitation to participate in a transparent, honest and loving dialogue about how we go about making these choices. It’s an opportunity to review the logistics of leadership, while preserving our beautiful Concept.”

Wednesday morning Conference members split into 15 groups to address the 2013 outlined inventory questions. Report backs were read by the reporter of each group on Friday morning. Box 4-5-9, Summer 2013

2014 Conference Advisory Actions—The 2014 Conference was the second year of a planned three-year Conference Inventory. Wednesday morning Conference members split into 15 groups to address the 2014 Inventory questions and report backs were read to the entire Conference Friday afternoon. Box 4-5-9, Summer 2014

The 2015 Conference will be the last year for that Inventory, which addressed questions such as how effective is the Conference with dealing with issues that affect the fellowship and how well do they communicate with the fellowship. Inventory results were reported in the Conference Report for each year.

The General Service Board, inspired by the action of the General Service

Conference, decided that it would be appropriate for that body to also take an inventory, which was conducted in October of 2011 and January of 2012.

To sum up this process, Ward Ewing, Class A Trustee and Chairman of the Board, said: “*I think we all agree that it has been a productive process*”. They developed a list of issues that need strategic discussion and selected nine as priorities in the areas of finance, structural challenges and communication. Mr. Ewing appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Inventory Follow-Up.

When asked to measure the results of the meeting against their expectations, the group was pleased with the progress made on key issues, their ability to work together and a renewed focus and unity around issues they need to address to help them carry the message and insure the future of the fellowship. GSB Minutes January 2012 ▲

Opening & Closing Service Meetings

The opening and closing of service meetings follow the General Service Conference example. The Responsibility and Unity Statements speak more to the purpose and atmosphere, respectively, of service meetings.

The Serenity Prayer is used sometimes as well, as an opening or closing. The general idea is that the Lord’s Prayer is a specific “Christian” prayer. Since AA is a spiritual organization, the Serenity Prayer is more apt to be acceptable to anyone regardless of their religious affiliation and also to anyone that doesn’t believe in any “organized” religion; however Group Conscience vote prevails.

How About A Group Inventory?

Excerpted from the August 1956 Grapevine

When the article, "How About a Group Inventory?," was first published in August 1956, taking an inventory of a group was a relatively new idea. Since then, it has become one of the most frequently requested Grapevine articles at the office. Perhaps that's because, as the author remarks, many AAs have found that taking a periodic inventory works as well for the group as it does for the individual.

Groups have found various ways to take inventories. As Roy R. suggests in the article, "Notes from a Group Inventory Chair," some ask themselves the questions in the **AA Group pamphlet**. Others set aside time to go over the **Traditions Checklist**. Still others develop questions of their own. If your group has had a similar experience, sharing your story may help other groups. So we hope you will consider sending it to the Grapevine.

Step Four and Step Ten have to do with personal inventory. All twelve of AA's suggested Steps are personal in that they deal with the individual. They constitute his charter of freedom. The Twelve Traditions, on the other hand, relate to AA as a whole and to AA in its various parts, particularly the groups. They constitute AA's guide to unity. Now if the individual should take periodic inventory, why not the group?

A group is not an inanimate thing. You hear references made to "the spirit of this group..." A group has personality and so groups differ one from another as do individuals. Some groups do well, others do poorly. Some groups flourish for a while and then go into a decline. Some groups fail, close down and cease to hold meetings. Why?

If an individual should take inventory even if he is doing well, why not the group? If things are not progressing satisfactorily, then an inventory is particularly in order.

How does a group take inventory? Much in the same manner as an individual. It should probably be done at a closed meeting. The leader might have pencil and paper and some prepared questions. The group then, through its members present, should review its assets and liabilities--not just the financial items, though these, too, might be included. Emphasis should be

given to the overall job being done, to an examination of how the group is executing its responsibility. This might best be accomplished by asking some questions. The following queries are not intended to be complete in coverage but merely illustrative. They may suggest others more directly applicable to your group. (Editor's Note: here are a few of the questions the article poses)

1. What is the basic purpose of the group? To keep its members sober? To welcome new members? To provide a social outlet? The Fifth Tradition says, "Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Is that somewhat surprising?
2. What is your group doing to "carry" the message? Does it take refuge completely in the Eleventh Tradition which says, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion?" Sure, it welcomes newcomers, but is that carrying the message, or is it reaping the harvest resulting from the prior sowing of others?
3. Are you getting a proper cross-section of your community? Or just the low bottoms? Or just the high bottoms who form a cozy, executive clique to which other types of alcoholics receive a frigid welcome? Do you get the proper percentage of men and women? Or mostly men? Or mostly women?
4. Do your members stick or is turnover excessive? Do a lot of new prospects come in but fall by the wayside quickly? Are you complacently sure that part of this is not due to group methods?
5. How effective is your sponsorship system and how much of a sense of sponsorship responsibility does your

group have? What does it do about a prospect who comes in without a sponsor? Or the one who comes for a while and then does not show up? How many times will you "go after" him?

6. Has everything practical been done to provide an attractive meeting place where new people will be comfortable and to which older members will be glad to return? Or are you satisfied with inadequate quarters on the run-down side?
7. Has proper effort been made to explain to all members the need and value of working in the kitchen and performing other housekeeping duties? Have they been told precisely how to do those jobs, or is the whole matter left to their initiative. What methods do you use to bring members into the group, to make them feel that they belong?
8. Do you pick officers with care and consideration on the basis that officership is a great responsibility and an opportunity for unusual Twelfth Step work? Or do you consider the whole thing a chore and a sort of joke, electing someone in open meeting who may not even be present? Do you elect someone because you think it might be good for him, forgetting that our common welfare should come first?
9. Does your group lend its fair share of support to intergroup and the General Service Office? These service organizations are doing a Twelfth Step job on an area, a national, and an international basis. No one group could carry out that responsibility.

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Personal Inventory

Bil T., SCI Fayette

When I came to the fellowship of A.A., I was told that I had to first admit, then believe and thirdly, make a decision. These were called action steps. Next came the Fourth Step, and plenty of action was needed. I had to look deep within myself and look at the character defects which had led me to an alcoholic life.

Fear, insecurity, self-pity, and anger had become my drinking buddies. I felt justified when I “used” to who were dear to me, when I lied, or when I depended too much on those closest to me. My life was a mess. Slowly and over a period of time, I was able to reach down and bring forth these defects of character. Some were harder to face than others, but I was determined to drag them to the surface.

My ego and pride worked hard to convince me that this step wasn't necessary for me to do, but my desire for healing and sobriety was stronger. I saw all the people I had hurt, both directly and indirectly. How I had lost

my true self and myself first at the expense of others. Now, I had a weapon. No longer would I manipulate others to my own willful desires.

Working Step Four was now a beacon of hope, where my life could move forward, finally free from the alcoholic obsession that had desperately clung to me. I believe that taking a personal inventory was the most vital step in my recovery. It helped me to come to an understanding about who I was, where I need to be going, and a map on how I will get there.

I know the importance of an inventory as I daily continue my lifelong journey of sobriety. Fear is no longer my companion; I now walk with hope. Hope for my sobriety, my future, and to those still suffering from their addiction. It is my turn to step up and to be of service to the newcomer as those ahead of me did. Only by taking a daily inventory, and admitting when I am wrong, will my journey stay a success. ▲

Begin by Taking My Own Inventory

Jacobi C., SCI Fayette

My name is Jacobi C., I'm a 37 year old man from the Philadelphia area, soon to be released. What the concept of inventory means to me is for one to take a thorough evaluation of themselves to better deal with life and what they are trying to accomplish.

There is no way we can continue to have spiritual growth if we practice gossip, even as passive listeners. Spiritual growth takes place within us, and it needs an environment completely free of any ill-will. The power to change ourselves, when we desire it, comes from a higher power – God as we understand God.

I've learned to understand life on life's terms and to make a way that would help myself in becoming a more positive and productive citizen in society; as well as being there for my family and children.

Some people say the “Golden Rule” is impractical or believe it can work only if everybody begins following it at the same time. I've now changed the people, places and things that once hindered me in my past from growing to be the person I know I can and will be someday. I started by taking my own inventory, whether or not others do. I've made amends for my own wrongs, even when these amends were not made to me.

What this means is complete honesty about who and what we really are. We should not tap-dance around our problems in order to evade responsibilities. We, as people, as human beings, need deep changes, not mere surface ones.

I thank you in advance for allowing me to submit the area newsletter. I hope that it can be of some help to others as it has been to myself. Have a safe and blessed day. ▲

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober & Joyous

Box 459 Winter 2013

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1. Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.
2. Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.
3. Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.
4. Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.
5. Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.
6. If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.
7. Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an “important date” you have to keep.
8. Worship in your own way.
9. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.
10. Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—“one day at a time.”
11. Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.
12. “Having had a . . .” No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it. ▲

Our best wishes for a safe and sober holiday!

We gladly share the sentiments expressed by GSO staff in the Winter 1994 issue of Box 459...

" During this holiday season, we at Area 60 are filled with love and gratitude for those who have gone before us and shown us the way; and for those we pray will join us as we " trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. "

A collection of handwritten signatures in black ink, including names like George K, John R, Mario D, and others.

Panel 65 — Grateful to be of service...

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SAVE - THE - DATE

March 27-29, 2015

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18th National A.A. Archives Workshop

Al C., Area 60 Archivist

Archivists from Areas, Districts, and Intergroups across the United States and Canada came together this past October at the 18th National A.A. Archives Workshop held near Philadelphia. I was honored to among the 259 in attendance; however, the workshop is open to anyone.

We met to exchange information, and learn conservation and preservation techniques for A.A. documents and items. I arrived early for the workshop and was able to take a tour of Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills, NY, the home of Bill W. and Lois. It was an inspirational tour of their home. It was amazing to view many of their personal items and articles, and to tour the home where much early A.A. history had taken place.

Another interesting building on the Stepping Stones site is *Wits End*, a writing studio where Bill W. wrote *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *A.A. Comes of Age*, hundreds of Grapevine articles and many personal and professional letters. This building also contains Bill's original desk at which he wrote the "*Big Book*." The property also includes a Welcome Center and its own Archives Center.

I also took a trip to the General Service Office (GSO) in New York City. Early Thursday morning we boarded a bus at the hotel and made the trip to 475 Riverside Drive, Manhattan, where the GSO is located. They occupy the 11th floor, and the Grapevine occupies a portion of the 12th floor. Both offices overlook the Hudson

River and Grant's Tomb providing a magnificent view.

We assembled in the board meeting room for an introduction, coffee and bagels. This room is also where the G.S.O. staff have their Friday morning A.A. meeting. After introductions we broke off into groups, toured the offices and met many of the staff members. They told us that "*This is your office.*" Several staff were out of the country participating in the World Service Conference in Poland. Of course, we also toured the G.S.O. Archives which was very impressive. A portion of the display was devoted to the Philadelphia/SEPIA Intergroup which had arranged the tour.

The actual workshop kicked off on Thursday evening with a welcoming meeting and a speaker meeting. The speaker, Ron C. from Australia has 61 years of sobriety. He knew Bill W. and Lois, and had visited with them at Stepping Stones often. These stories were quite interesting.

On Friday I attended Part I & II of preservation and conservation techniques and made a small presentation of Area 60's archival efforts at the Mid-Atlantic States History and Archives presentation. Friday evening commenced with a sobriety countdown and a long timers panel with members having 50 or more years of



sobriety. The GSO Archivist, Michelle Mirza, also made a presentation.

On Saturday, I attended the "Archives, The Basics" and "The Digital Libraries for A.A. History, Research and Exhibition" workshops in the morning. In the afternoon I attended the long timers' panel with members of 40- 50 years sobriety. I also attended a presentation by Gail L., an NAAAW archivist from the Akron Intergroup, entitled "*I have this stuff*" now *what do I do with it?*" after which I attended "The Host Area (59) Presents Its Archives."

At the Saturday evening banquet I sat with the Area 59 archivist, Don H. and archivists from Utah and Colorado. Much information was exchanged during the banquet. The speaker was quite interesting. He had gotten to know Bill W. and Lois at an early age and had been to gatherings at Stepping Stones with his sponsor. He also told of his many visits at some of the early A.A. historical sites in New York and New Jersey.

I attended the NAAAW business meeting on Sunday. They announced that the 2016 Archives Workshop will be in Walnut Grove, CA. Next year, 2015, the Archives Workshop will be held in Independence, Ohio near the Cleveland/Akron, Ohio area and will be Sept. 24-27, 2015. I hope to see some A.A. members from Area 60 there. I will have registration forms for this event when they become available. ▲

Giving Some Report—Are We Doing Our Best?

Barb G. Area 60 Newsletter Editor

When I first came into A.A., I was "dazed and confused," so to speak — dumbfounded to find myself back in these rooms. I could barely make eye contact with others at the meetings. I would listen to the Preamble, the Steps, Traditions, and oh those numerous reports, and wonder "*What did it have to do with me?*" I would wait for the "good" parts, the lead or the discussion — never realizing how important the readings were; or understanding what the GSR's, SCR's and GV reps were talking about.

At many meetings, the general service rep would say each week "No Report" — people joked about GSR really meaning "Give Some Report." I wondered what the difference was

between them and the Steering Committee. And then there were those sometimes funny, often not, jokes from the Grapevine reps.

Thankfully, I did the basics—got a sponsor, began my steps, got a home group and eventually got involved in service. But I looked just beyond my nose for quite a few years. Honestly, most of those words/reports at the beginning of meetings meant nothing—until it meant something to me personally.

While serving as a SCR at an early home group, I suggested that we remove the reports from our meeting and give them

only at group consciences. I said, that will give us more time to "*talk*" and the "*newcomers don't know what we're talking about anyway.*" Sadly, they all agreed.

I also remember people with time saying "*more will be revealed.*" Truer words were never spoken, because I needed the repetition and the willingness to stay involved to finally get it. Our service positions are what keeps this whole thing going. We keep the doors open by doing our best to learn our jobs, attending district and area meetings, asking questions, and asking for help from the Area

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We Are All Responsible

Teresa K., Area 60 Registrar

From the very beginning of AA folks have been taking inventories. Why is it necessary? Because we are all here to change and become better people, so that we can serve the next alcoholic who walks through our doors.



From the individual to GSO, inventories need to be taken for the purpose of growth and change. In one of the last conference reports GSO took its own inventory and found places where change was needed. Floor actions were presented, and those actions were brought to the delegates, then to the Areas, the Districts and finally to our Home Groups.

A home group may not survive if it doesn't take its inventory. The pamphlet "The A.A. Group" provides great examples of "how to" take a group inventory, as well as questions to ask ourselves at a group level. Groups can become stale, cliquish, and even harmful to newcomers.

For example, I attended a beginner's meeting in very early recovery; and over heard a long-timer say to another newcomer, "If you don't have Jesus Christ as your personal savior you don't stand a chance to stay sober." It made me feel that I didn't belong to AA; and needless to say I didn't go back to that meeting, nor have I recommended it to the women I've sponsored. Being responsible also means speaking up—for ourselves, our fellows and A.A. as a whole.

That experience helped me to be more aware of the kind message we give to newcomers. How many groups do this sort of thing? We all walk in here with fear of the unknown, and with a need for acceptance as we begin our journey of recovery. It's important to ask ourselves regularly, as individuals and groups, if we are following our traditions in how we carry the message.

Districts can also benefit from taking a regular inventory. We are a lot that would not normally mix. Our

character defects can side-track our service work just as easily as it can in a home group — leading us away from the experiences of our founders and the spirit of the traditions and concepts they left for us to follow. I've seen this happen personally. Several groups lost trust in the process. Some responded by withholding support, one left the district because they felt they had lost their voice.

I found it discouraging; but at least the experience motivated me to spend more time with our A. A. Service Manual to learn more about our traditions and concepts. Why do we open meetings with the Serenity Prayer and ask God in — if we as individuals edge him out? How can a home group or a district best serve AA as a whole when these kinds of things go on? Why do we have to take inventories? So examples like these happen less often.

Bill W. once wrote that "**AA will not be destroyed from the outside but from within.**" Strong words but very true. It all starts with us, members of AA. Do we just sit back and "let someone else handle it" or do we accept responsibility to ensure our sobriety, the life of our home groups, the health of our districts and the Area? I was told to suit up and show up and; as long as I do that. I get one more day of a very blessed life.

What are the benefits of inventories?

1. First of all we become better people inside and outside of the rooms.
2. We can better serve the newcomer.
3. WE can be the examples instead of the excuse.
4. Our area, districts, home groups and I can become stronger with the ability to give back what was so freely given to us. This list can go on and on.

I once heard: "Wisdom is the ability to learn from other peoples mistakes." Without inventory we just keep repeating our mistakes over and over again. I know for myself I have to lift that curtain and look through the window into my heart and soul. ▲

Giving Some Report

Barb G. Area 60 Newsletter Editor
(Continued from Page 7)

Coordinators, Officers or even by calling or emailing GSO (*shhh, here's a secret, any member can call GSO*).

One of the things we can inventory as individuals, groups and districts is to look at our reports. Certainly, they don't have to be perfect; but overall, are we keeping people informed about what's going on with the Area and GSO?

Do you tell your group about quarterly meetings, day's of sharing, elections? Does your Grapevine Rep know about all of the books and CDs available or the Digital GV Archives? Do you know that you can buy AAWS literature (Big Books, pamphlets, etc) at quarterly meetings? Does your GSR announce that the Seeds of Service can be found online at www.wpaarea60.org; or that it's a good tool for their GSR report?

The Area is here to serve all of the home groups and districts in Western PA. There is an enormous wealth of knowledge and experience available at our quarterly meetings. If you've never been, I encourage you to attend.

I heard a talk about Surrender by my favorite AA speaker, Bob D. of Vegas, NV. He said that "*uselessness and self-pity are not two separate things.*" The more useful I am, the less time I have for self-centeredness. I know in my heart that I *have* to give it away to keep it. ▲

GRAPEVINE Quote of the Day

April 4, 2014. "I am responsible as a trusted servant to be informed -- my group expects and deserves that. That responsibility requires me to take action, to do some reading, and to find out what the principles say -- not what I think ...

The beautiful thing about AA is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We have directions and guidelines that we can follow; they were hammered out on the anvil of experience by those who have gone before us."

San Carlos, California, October 1994

"The Anvil of Experience"
AA Grapevine

Group Inventory?

(Continued from Page 4)

10. AA is easier to know about today because of the work of our service organizations. AA is respected today and it is therefore easier for some of us to join than it was years ago. Our sobriety might depend on the overall national acceptance of AA. Any disgrace would have an effect in every local area, in every group. Do you ever give any thought to these broader concepts? If so, does it result in action, in generous help to your intergroup and the General Service Office?
11. What has your group done during the last six months to carry the message?

Most of these questions relate to the Fifth Tradition, carrying the message. Many others could be raised relative to a group's success in the light of other Traditions: common welfare, unity, group conscience, money, outside interests, anonymity--could all be subjected to extensive inquiry.

In taking group inventory, the chairperson, leader, or secretary might want to make some notes. The group might wish to take action as it went along. A complete set of minutes might be prepared for reading at the next inventory meeting, say six months hence. The minutes might help to look back and see what improvements resulted from the inventory taking.

We are fortunate that it was *the group* which developed into the primary instrument for channeling the AA message. AA did not necessarily have to develop in that manner. The founders might have chosen paid consultations, paid sanitarium incarceration, paid correspondence courses, or a dozen other methods of transmitting the message.

The fact that the informal no-dues-or-fees group was created is the principal reason why AA has grown so rapidly. It may be the reason why you and I are sober. The group is a precious thing. Let's look after it.

Anonymous Scarsdale, New York. ▲

Reflections from a District Secretary

Keith M. District 27 Secretary

Greetings all. I hope you are having a good end of the autumn season and are ready for winter. Remember, in W. PA there is no stopping winter! That's true for everywhere, but very true here.

WE had a successful election at the district level but are leaving one position unfilled. That position is secretary. Please if you guys can announce at your home groups about this position. I put an excerpt in the minutes about the position. It's a very important position. What would we do if we didn't have trusted servants? AA wouldn't exist. So please, find someone to fill this position. Here's a short story:

"When I was down and out at my worst, I had a guy helping me from my childhood. I played baseball with his kids and we grew up together (my family and his). Life happens and we grow apart, but I met him years later in AA. Always knowing i could go to him for any substance issues, I did just that. He stood by me, never giving up, even after I STOLE off of him. If he would have abandoned me, I may have died years ago. He was there to serve me

and stand by me at my weakest points. He never ignored a phone call from me even from the xx psych wards that I used to call him from. We need more people like that in AA. People who are willing to step up and not turn their backs, weather it is for a group or for an individual, or BOTH! At the end of the day, it's not about holding a position. It's not about going to district meetings. WE are here to help people recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Without trusted servants the whole domino effect happens and if that happens, what will happen to the people who are looking for a new way of life?" (Keith M.)

By the way, just four years ago, I was allowed in back in his home for the first time since I got sober (four years prior to that). The short story is we need a secretary. I cannot do it, because I've done my time and I'm attending a university in Fall 2015. I really enjoyed serving and I look forward to coming back at a later time. I hope my story can help someone make the decision to take my position. I will be there to train anyone who takes over. Thanks! ▲

HEARD AT MEETINGS



HUMOR	SLIPS
When I was new, I thought my first name was "Does Anyone Want to Share?"	Sobriety Loses It's Priority
INSIGHTS	THOUGHTS
You can't believe in God and play God at the same time.	You can leave A.A. one person at a time ...

Inventory: Taking Stock...

Jan H. Past Delegate Panel 57

(Continued from page 1)

prospect before us. How, then, can we make the most of this new grant of time? ...now that our functioning is fairly effective and widespread, it would be temptingly easy to settle down as merely one more useful agency on the world scene....AA is fine, just the way it is....We know that the price of such self-satisfaction is an inevitable backslide, punctuated at some point by a very rude awakening.

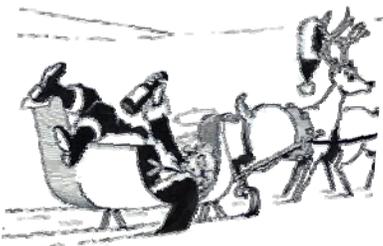
We have to grow or else deteriorate... Just how, then, can AA go on changing for the better? Does this mean that we are to tinker with our basic principles? [12 Steps & 12 Traditions] Here the answer would seem to be "no".... So then, if our basics are so firmly fixed as all this, what is there left to change or to improve?...While we need not alter our truths, we can surely improve their application to ourselves to AA as a whole, and to our relation with the world around us....We can constantly step up 'the practice of these principles in all our affairs....let us therefore re-dedicate ourselves to an ever greater responsibility for our general welfare.

Let us continue to take our inventory as a fellowship, searching out our flaws and confessing them freely. Let us devote ourselves to the repair of all faulty relations that may exist, whether within or without."

Inventory remains a major key to our survival. ▲

The Laugh's on Us

Submit a caption for this cartoon at:
www.aagrapevine.org



OR vote on last month's captions and view previous winners!

Has Your Group Looked in the Mirror Lately?

Box 4-5-9, Vol. 54, No. 2 / April - May 2008

(Continued from page 1)

'retirement' is precipitated by disagreements with new members over group affairs. Sometimes there have been shattering battles for power. If we all remember, as Tradition Two reminds us, that 'our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern,' we may not mount our high horses and go riding off into Never-Never Land when our own turn comes."

And in its Sept.-Oct. 1964 issue, Box 4-5-9's forerunner, the A.A. Exchange Bulletin, ran a lead story asking, "How Healthy Is Your Group?" It informed the reader that "the most popular form for taking a group inventory has been the set of questions shared by the Three Legacies Group of Spokane, Washington, in a 1960 issue of the Exchange Bulletin." Because of the volume of requests, the Bulletin noted, it was running a recent version with the hope that it "may revitalize group health."

That venerable Washington State inventory model greatly resembles the suggested guidelines for inventory taking that are set forth in "The A.A. Group" pamphlet. Also, many groups and districts across the U.S./Canada have developed similar formats that work well for them. Any thorough inventory of course bears the distinct mark of the group involved. For shared experience you may contact the General Service Office.

Says Georgia P., past chair of the Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community for the Tacoma, Lakewood and Puyallup districts: "In my experience, so many group problems, from refreshment hassles to anonymity breaks, can be resolved through the mechanisms of the group conscience. Several years ago, when I was the general service representative (G.S.R.) for Tacoma's Fern Hill Group, we decided to inventory ourselves to see if we were working within the Traditions of A.A., just as we do with the Steps in taking our personal inventories. We asked two

of our Area officers, Andy A. and Debbie C., to act as facilitators. They took their questions right from 'The A.A. Group' pamphlet and another G.S.O. service piece."

Georgia recalls that the facilitators "questioned us as a group, we responded as a group, and it worked. The other districts I've been connected with have handled inventory meetings pretty much the same way. In fact, the greater Tacoma district right now is putting together an inventory night. Our District Committee Member Scott G. has asked Western Washington past delegate Dick D. (Panel 55) to facilitate the meeting, with the date and time as yet to be set."

Also, Georgia says, "I know of groups in Tacoma that hold an inventory every year to make sure they are meeting the needs of the group and attracting the newcomer. These group conscience meetings don't just clear the air. They teach home group members and the district how to be of service not only as sponsors, one-on-one, but to A.A. as a whole—to be available to work on service committees in treatment, corrections, public information and more so that the A.A. message is carried to as many alcoholics as possible."

In 1990 Michael Alexander, then Class A (non-alcoholic) chairman of the General Service Board, saw inventory taking as a must for all of A.A. In the Holiday issue of Box 4-5-9, he said that "in order to fulfill our expanding service role abroad, we must lead from a position of unity and support at home. From each individual member on through our groups, inter-groups, districts, area assemblies and the General Service Conference, our Fellowship is only as strong as its weakest link."

Accordingly, he urged, "let us take inventory of our weaknesses and strengths in some vital areas"—including self-support, newcomers, minorities and other groups of people underrepresented in A.A., and international services. Mike saw inventory-taking as a bulwark of A.A. unity. "I am confident," he said, "that our collective conscience will lead us in the right direction." ▲

A.A.—A Guiding Tool For My Future

Larry R. L., SCI Fayette

Hello again fellows A.A.'s! Since this fall's topic is about inventories, I'd like to share some of my experience, strength and hope. I will be celebrating six years sober – God willing and the creeks don't rise – on November 5, 2014. That is important to me because out of nearly 30 years around the fellowship, I've only got six years of continuous sobriety. Why? I refused for all those previous years to ever do a 4th Step Inventory.

I'm on Step 8 getting ready for Step 9 and my 4th Step took over a year to complete. I did an awful lot of damage and harm since the 70's. I always knew there was a 5th Step, but I did not want to admit to anyone alive (or dead for that matter) the exact nature of my wrongs – let alone write them all down. I just could not surrender my will!

As the Big Book says "A business that doesn't take a full inventory usually goes broke!" I was so spiritually bankrupt,

sick, dishonest and twisted in my thoughts and actions; I had no other option left but to fully surrender to this new way of life and the fellowship as a guiding tool for my future. I had to get honest of die! I got a 10-30 year prison sentence for something I did while drinking in a drunken stupor. I found out I'm not alone or the lowest sickest person on earth as I once felt during my 5th Step. I drank since the late 70's at age 16 because I didn't like me for me – nor did anyone else, so I thought. I'm 51 now and because I have the courage to work the steps honestly, my third wife came back to me a few years ago. I also sponsor five guys, I laugh a lot, I deal with life on life's terms, I attend church regularly, and have had the privilege to work service positions because people finally trust and believe in me. Funny thing – so does the God of my own understanding, and so do I! The fellowships love made me comfortable in the skin I'm in today. God bless. ▲

Inventory

Norm S. SCI Fayette

As I get further into my recovery, things are getting clearer. I use to be the guy who sat in the back of the room and hoped nobody noticed me.

Well today, I am coming up on almost three years clean. It's only because of the positive action I take, such as getting a sponsor, four meetings a week, and work on the steps and the traditions. My sponsor has me writing

in a journal every night. This has been such a big help in my recovery. When I write in my journal, it has become an inventory of how I conducted myself that day; and if I did something wrong, I fix it right away. Also, I am currently working on the fourth step, and am taking that deep look at myself. When I do a daily inventory, things just keep getting better! ▲

Grapevine Challenge



This is a challenge to home groups in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. We are inviting groups to become more "active in service" by purchasing a Grapevine subscription, and having it sent to the **Chaplain's Office, Allegheny County Jail, 950 Second Avenue, Pittsburgh PA, 15219**. We are hoping to get at least

300 subscriptions out of the 654 home groups listed in our AA meeting list. At a cost of less than \$30.00 per year for 12 issues, this is a very easy way to do 12-step work and help A.A. in the process. *If one issue saves one person's life – the other 11 issues are free!* ▲

This challenge comes on behalf of District 20, Regis S. DCM

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- One On One: *AA Sponsorship in Action*
- Young & Sober: *Stories from AA Grapevine*
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Newsletter

Editor - Barb G. newsletter@wpaarea60.org
2015 Themes & Dates: The SOS will follow the 2015 General Service Conference theme "Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity and Service – The Foundation for Our Future"

Due Theme:

- 12/29** Diversity in A.A. - Our Heritage of Inclusion
- 05/01** Safety and Respect – Practicing the Principles Begins in our Home Group
- 3rd Q** Safeguarding our Traditions through the Evolution of Technology
- 4th Q** Inventory – Looking Back to Move Ahead

Website

Webmaster - Greg G. webservant@wpaarea60.org
 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

DONATIONS TO AREA 60

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

AREA 60 TREASURER
 P.O. Box 152, Conway, PA 15027

2014/2015 Calendar of Events

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

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sunday, Dec. 7	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	AREA 60 4TH QUARTERLY MEETING
Sunday, Dec. 21	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator and GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday, Jan 8	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	AREA 60 1ST QUARTERLY MEETING
Sunday, Jan 11	9:00 AM	Area 60 GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday, Feb 8	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator and GAW Planning Meeting
Feb. 20-22, 2015	Noon 2/20 Registration	24th Annual North East Regional Service Assemble (NERASA) Somerset, NJ
Sunday, Mar 15	9:00 AM	Area 60 GAW Planning Meeting
Mar 27 –28	All Day	Area 60 Get Away Weekend
Sunday Mar 29	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	AREA 60 PRE-CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY
Sunday April 12	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator Meeting
April 19-25	All Week	General Service Conference New York, NY
Sunday, May 17	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	AREA 60 2ND QUARTERLY MEETING
Sunday May 31	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator 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; 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.