

**REPORT ON THE THEME AND
PRESENTATION AND
DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR THE
59th GENERAL SERVICE
CONFERENCE**



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**“OUR
COMMITMENT TO
CARRY A.A.’
MESSAGE –
ENTHUSIASM AND
GRATITUDE IN
ACTION”**

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INVITATION TO ALL MEMBERS

THEME AND WORKSHOP FOR THE CONFERENCE DAY

Good day everyone,

On March 14, 2009, the day on the theme and workshop for the 59th General Service Conference will be held. An invitation is extended to all AA members.

As you all know, your delegate will represent our Area's group conscience to this Conference that will be held in New-York.

In order to know the real conscience of our Area, meetings will simultaneously be held in various locations of the Area on March 14, 2009, and the questions that will be examined at the Conference will be discussed then. Your DCM should tell you where your district will meet.

If you want to be heard and that the Area's conscience be well represented, it is important many people participate to these workshops in order to get the real pulse of this conscience. Your opinion represents the rank and file of the reversed pyramid and it is important that it should be known.

I know, because I have seen it at the Conference, that many delegates have asked questions not on a personal basis, but in the name of the members of their respective Areas specifically so that the voice of the rank and file be heard.

Our Area's collective conscience, through our delegate's voice, must be heard at the Conference and this day on the theme and workshops of the Conference is most certainly the best occasion to allow our delegate to properly represent us.

Gratitude in action

Love and Service

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Sylvain L, Delegate, panel 58

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**Subjects to be discussed at the day on the theme and
workshops for the 2009 Conference**

**“Our commitment to carry A.A.’ message – Enthusiasm and
Gratitude in Action**

Saturday, March 14, 2009, at predetermined locations

Theme for the Conference

a. Humility and Sacrifice:

- 1. Setting an Example**
- 2. Changing our Perceptions**
- 3. Anonymity – Sacrificing our Egos**

b. Enthusiasm and Gratitude:

- 1. Hope and Purpose from Defeat and Despair**
- 2. Happy, joyous and Free**
- 3. Enthusiasm – A Gift of Inventory**

c. Spiritual Program in Action

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1. Maximum Service – Our Spiritual Benefit
2. Persistence – The Key to Progress
3. Living the Traditions

Workshop topic for the 2009 General Service Conference

“ Language of the Heart – Keeping It Simple”

The participants are invited to share on the workshop topic chosen by the 2008 Conference, “Language of the Heart – Keeping It Simple”. The following questions should allow for a complete and fruitful sharing session.

- a. How to “Keep It Simple” when I share with a newcomer or when I answer of Twelfth Step call ?

- b. How do I reach and talk with newcomers who are different from me, be it because of age, sex, race, sexual orientation or other?

- c. When the group conscience has given its opinion on something, whether in the group, the district, the area, in a board meeting or at the Conference, do I speak the language of the heart? Do I keep it simple? Do I listen? Am I open to the possibility of changing my mind?

Theme for the Conference

A. Humility and Sacrifice

➡ Setting an Example

- ➡ She mentions that we should talk less and act more. In the groups, we hear that there is a lack of implication. She says that we should act rather than speak about it.
- ➡ He says that he devotes himself to AA through his implication and fills out his responsibilities the best he can.
- ➡ He mentions that setting an example is primarily transmitting one's enthusiasm.
- ➡ He mentions that setting an example is conveyed in one word: attraction.
- ➡ He mentions that he likes to help and serve (coffee, welcoming). He is present and likes to be the first to the

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meeting in order to welcome the other members and chat with them.

- He mentions that previously, he had suggestions for the newcomer and knew all the answers. It was good for the newcomer, but not for him. He didn't himself put his pieces of advice into practice. It is a matter of sacrifice and humility. He mentions that the function of secretary is very demanding at this level.
- Each member who undertakes a function must do it 100% and must commit himself totally. He attends the meetings to improve his knowledge of the task and get all the necessary information. Services are totally free and the fact that it is done on a voluntary basis is correct. It shows humility and sacrifice.
- Setting an example is attending meetings to improve one's knowledge of one's task. She devotes some time every day to reading a few pages of the Service Manual. She says that we should not unnecessarily place ourselves in a position leading to controversy, but encourage the members to read the answers found in our literature.
- He talks about the GSR function and of the person who, in front of the group, says that "he lacks interest"; this is an image that is not good for the group and the commitment. If you represent AA, you should accomplish your task properly and refrain from saying anything not worth while in front of the group.
- As a GSR, it has to be pleasant and positive. He never says that he lacks interest when he addresses the members.
- One must not make use of a title in AA and must remain humble in one's tasks. Previously, she found it difficult to

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address the group. Now, she accomplishes her task having in mind that she represents the group and she now feels at ease. She encourages people to serve. She does not use her title to show that she is superior to others. It has to be kept simple.

- He prepares the coffee and says that it is important to come in early to prepare it and share with the members before the meeting.
- Says that whatever functions he has in AA, he must be able to say nothing and listen to others' opinions. He could have done something else this morning, but he chose to participate to this meeting and learn a bit more again. We should not force anybody to get involved but stimulate their interest to do it. We must enthusiastically prepare people to take over and pass this state of state of mind to the others.
- She says that, 5 five years ago, service have saved his life when he was asked to take charge of the Public Information sub-committee. She accomplished her job with enthusiasm and tries to convey the same enthusiasm to members of AA shying away from service. Her job as secretary, which she has been doing for the past year and some months now, gives her a great sense of belonging to AA, and even more to her home group. She feels useful and understands the importance of efficiently serving AA, in all humility.
- She says that she is working in her home group 5 days a week, but she is happy to do it, even though it is very demanding. She attends many meetings, but she finds it easy to do. She likes conveying the information to her group.
- Says that he is not a passionate person but rather a tempered one. He says that he practices humility by respecting others in discussions. He accepts the decisions of a majority of

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members and puts his trust in the groups' conscience. He doesn't take two functions at the same time but prefers successfully complete one task at a time.

- He used to judge a lot but since he has started to get involved, he has changed quite a bit. He has experienced controversy in his home group and has found out that he didn't have to tell others what to do but rather listen more and have some tolerance. He notices that he has changed because before, his pride and his ego were always stronger. Service starts at the beginning (in the groups) and he has learned to listen to others rather than try and rule everything.
- Work humbly means reading the *Daily Reflections* every day to receive the best guidance.
- One must remain oneself, give one's opinion and try and shade light on the topics discussed. He has always had pleasure in accomplishing his GSR task during 13 years in the same group. He doesn't see his task as a sacrifice but rather a way to evolve in AA.
- Attraction rather than example get into action. Do what I have to do. Participating to AA's activities is attraction, revival, self-sacrifice. Was impressed by the Welcome meeting, give back to AA. Attraction through involvement in service, be present in the service meetings. Serving AA is loving AA; attend meetings and give back to the members what he has received. Speak of the Traditions to his group. Remain humble.
- Attraction, service, communication, be responsible, principles over personalities, be positive, make use of the literature, spend some time with the newcomer, perseverance.

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- Remain silent, open minded, express himself and accept others' ideas. Find a quality in others, eliminate judgement, live the present, don't rely on appearances. Serve AA anonymously, let our soul live. Continue to speak of humility and spirituality, encourage and promote AA's literature, Respect oneself and others, discussion on the identification of members, on open and closed groups.
- Prepare the coffee in one's group. It is good to see older members still serving in the groups and be present to greet the members.
- At the beginning, we appreciate that the older members support us when we serve, so now, he tries to do the same, that is encourage and support the younger members taking tasks.
- Get involved in our home group. We must serve and set the example, that is how we grow. It stimulates their interest to also get involved and grow. It is motivating. In their monthly task, the hosts should thank the groups for giving them the opportunity to serve, rather than waiting for thanks for having been involved.
- Welcoming the new comer leads to attraction, so do it after the newcomer has arrived. Help him open up and hold out your hand.
- We must always return to the basics in order to remain sober and humble. We must remember where we are coming from. There is an obvious lack of involvement and he doesn't understand why. He wonders why the members are not more involved. In his mind, it is a question of life or death.
- For him, coffee and welcoming at the door have been the key to his staying in AA. We must extend AA's hand.
- We must choose the meetings where we feel at ease, especially at the beginning. He looks for respect from others and respectful people in order to learn how to have respect toward himself and others.
- It is not important to list everything we have done for AA, we should rather demonstrate, through our behaviour, how to do

it. She finds that it is improper to let newcomers read in front of the group or to applaud people coming back to AA. She thinks that they should rather sit down and listen, as the older members used to say in the past. We must be patient and tolerant toward others in order to experience humility. We must not forget where we are coming from. In her opinion, we must learn to get to recognize what we are in order to live humbly.

- We must set an example also in service. We serve to help, not to show off. Our sobriety grows with service. While we serve, we guarantee our sobriety.
- Give young members an opportunity to serve, in order for them to develop a taste for serving.
- Her first sponsor had told her: "humility is making a good deed but not telling anybody, not bragging about it. We must not kid ourselves: getting involved in AA, serving, also demands sacrifice, even if our recovery benefits from it.
- Welcoming newcomers is very important for them. We must be there to greet them. Enthusiasm to serve makes the difference. We must continue to serve in our home group, whatever the length of our sobriety (attraction).
- Service may also be a good opportunity for newcomers to serve and identify themselves as alcoholics. We must not forget that this simple gesture allows them to touch humility.
- The Fraternity is important to us and we must get involved in order for it to continue. It is not normal that the best way to empty a meeting place is to announce the business meeting. Going to meetings should not be a chore, our enthusiasm is really important.
- "After-meetings" are very important for our sobriety. Enthusiasm is raised again. Important+++.
- We must not give a job to someone in AA only because there is nobody else to do the work. It is not because a job is vacant that we should give it to a newcomer. He must be ready and willing to do the work. We must also sponsor him to set the example.
- She is not a model in her task, but she does her best. He allows herself to remain herself and makes the necessary

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efforts to do a good job. She likes to attend the various meetings. She always learns in those meetings.

- Not at any cost.
- Accompany a newcomer, get involved in tasks with a newcomer, introduce the newcomer to other members, make him feel at ease and listen to him, follow up with him. Welcome him, introduce him and guide him in the movement.
- Being a good sponsor is listening.
- Accept changes, listen actively, respect responsibilities, mutual respect, overcome fear.
- At the meeting, shake hands, welcome people, arrive early and depart late; in a discussion, not make comments on someone's subject, spend some time with the newcomer, make him feel at ease; remain on the same level as others, not always want to be right; for a DCM, be on the front line, serve, be able to let go of resentful and aggressive members who want to change everything and confront him.
- Not fancy oneself as someone else, give some of his time
- Contrary to what we used to be, help others, get totally involved, use our judgment, always be careful of what we say, take some time to help a newcomer who confides in us, listen, respect others, be oneself.
- Be on time, recognize the difference between boss and servant.
- Nothing to prove.
- Thinks of his sponsor, notion of sacrifice through simple things, gives him the chance to stay in the movement, the importance of leaving the door open.

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- ▶ Time and talent available.
- ▶ The example of our predecessors, the attraction of members who have sacrificed their lives to get involved is the solution to my suffering.
- ▶ Our common welfare before mine.
- ▶ Serving is not a sacrifice, it is fulfilling.
- ▶ Sacrifice my ego, my big shot mentality.
- ▶ The members see how you act and are free to take whatever they feel is good for them.
- ▶ You must believe in it and have the humility to say that service is part of my life, set an example.
- ▶ Nothing beats service in AA.
- ▶ Sacrifice = privation, enthusiasm = love of service
- ▶ Give the example of someone who has given it to me; being here today is sacrificing my ego.
- ▶ When I asked my friend, who had neglected attending meetings since a year or so, to present my anniversary cake to me, she said that my example had made her come back and get involved again.
- ▶ To continue to set an example sometimes leaves the impression that we are alone, as it is always the same people who get involved, but the benefits greatly surpass the sacrifice or the annoyance of doing certain tasks.
- ▶ Knowing without a doubt that others will take over and be humble enough to recognize that we are not essential.
- ▶ As Greg has said last October: "being an alcoholic doesn't mean being a member of Alcoholics Anonymous."
- ▶ When I started, they put their confidence in me when they gave me the key to the meeting place, in spite of the fact that

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they knew that when I was an active alcoholic, I had the reputation of being irresponsible. That makes me want to continue the set the example and attend meetings.

- Sacrifice some time spent in family life, etc.; get involved and create enthusiasm from what we receive; let the newcomers have a chance to try and get involved in turn. Attraction rather than promotion, and my curiosity leads me to continue.
- I have thought for a long time that effectively getting involved meant speaking to the newcomer. I now see better the way that I show the greatness of the movement and I find gratifying to see the help that we can bring when serving, and I feel useful.
- I don't like to talk about sacrifice because, for me, serving is a pleasure. If I didn't derive pleasure from doing it, I wouldn't do it. It is part of our therapy to get involved and serve others. Since I have started doing my tasks wholeheartedly, everything is better and making efforts is easier. We are not saints...
- Speaking of the lack of involvement in a plaintive manner is not the best way to incite people to serve. Showing our enthusiasm in accomplishing our tasks is more attractive. Rotation is important.
- Welcoming the newcomer leads us to put everything we've got into it. It is important to tell things as they are to the newcomer. There is sometimes a lack of support for the newcomer.
- When I was GSR, my intervention was often limited to thanking people for having been involved and to the others taking over. This way, people don't feel forced to take on tasks nor guilty for not doing it. They want to do it simply because I set them an example by showing my enthusiasm to serve and by always being involved.
- Anonymity doesn't mean telling what someone else has shared, but setting an example. Filling a position without telling others and then trying to make them feel guilty because they are not involved.
- Some people think they can't twelfth step because it is too great a commitment. I was once told: "I'm not asking you to

marry me, it is just a task for a certain time: one meeting a week in the group, one meeting a month at the district, and it's done." Twelfth stepping and GSR are serving the group and the group decides. We sometimes feel uncomfortable when starting a new task, we feel helpless; after a while, humility takes over and we see that we are there to give, to serve. Recognition comes from the fact that we know where we are coming from and how beaten we were when we arrived.

- I was initially in a group who had problems and it was suggested that the group be merged with another one. Members entrusted the group to God and some young people came in and thanked us to be there because they had no transportation means and they could walk to the meeting. Our belief in the group has saved it and allowed for it to remain open.
- Anonymity doesn't mean talk about the others, but to look at me and acknowledge my problems.
- I became responsible for a committee a short while ago and I started reading the Traditions. It led me to respect my superiors at work, outside the movement, to respect the authority of those who have been there before us.

2. CHANGE OUR PERCEPTIONS

- Experience service to be able to talk about it.
- Mentions that, with time, perception changes. He used to be centered on himself and his universe, but became open to service. He talks about the 3 legacies of our founders: recovery, unity and service. Service allows for giving back to AA what he has received. He is in the midst of discovering the third legacy. He must not keep all the information to himself but let others benefit from it. For him, the three legs are a gift.
- She used to criticize a lot. Then, she started attending Committee meetings. Her District is remote and the perceptions of the Area are not very good. When meeting

other Districts, she receives a lot of information and she feels supported in her task. Being a treasurer, she finds that her task involves many elements that she didn't know about. The Service Manual is very helpful, but the members of the other Districts and the Area are also helpful.

- She used to place personalities and titles over AA's principles. Since she has started attending meetings at the Area, she feels now at ease discussing with the delegate, the alternate delegate, or any other servant, whatever the title. We are ALL alcoholics serving AA, whatever the function. That is what has changed her perception.
- When she started as GSR, she thought she was some kind of police. She now understand that she is the link between the group and the District and that she is there to look for and to transmit the information to the group.
- At the beginning of his position of GSR, he attended the District meetings but he didn't really know what his role was. He attended the Regional Forum in Nova Scotia and he came back with a lot of information and enthusiasm. You must have gone through this experience to really understand what it is.
- He mentions that AA is like the life university. He thought that he had to say the things that he didn't like rather than try and find solutions to the problems. He doesn't tell other what to do anymore and he has changed his perception in relation to controversy in AA. Today, he prefers to listen to and help others find simple solutions to problems that sometimes seem complicated.
- Perceptions are erroneous because of judgment and lack of information. When judging others, we lose information that could prove to be useful instead of listening and going

forward. He regularly attends the District meetings. What he finds fascinating, is that people who have voted against a decision are given a chance to speak and then another vote is taken if necessary. This way of doing things may bring a change in the perceptions of others in relation with this decision and get the others to open up and reconsider their initial vote.

- He has understood that the “true” AA truth is in the literature. Answers are found in the Service Manuel, the pamphlets and the general AA literature. He makes sure that he gives the answers that he finds in the literature rather than to give his own answers who may change the perceptions on certain issues.
- He thought that the leaders of AA were driving Mercedes bought with the monies collected in groups. He got to understand that this was not the case and his perception has changed when he attended the meetings at the District and the Area. He says that information must be verified before spreading anything in order to avoid a bad perception of servants in AA or AA as a whole.
- She used to have a service sponsor who advocated three things: humility, action, respect. She used to criticize a lot when she started serving, but then she decided to act. She decided to inquire about the things that she didn't know about. Today, she has confidence. Servants are all equal; there are not titles in AA making someone more important than another.
- Recognizes herself in what has been said. Her perception was incorrect, even about today's meeting. She thought it would be long and tedious. She believes that it will never be settled

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for her. She still often has wrong perceptions about events and members. She often has unfounded apprehensions.

- He mentions that he used to be narrow-minded and that he was the only one who was right. He was uncompromising. He has been a GSR in a treatment center. He is now DCM of his District and he can now moderate discussions while before he always stirred up controversy.
- In his home group, there used to be verbal abuse and controversy. Today, the attitude is different, there is no verbal abuse and harmony reigns.
- When he has perception problems, his mind narrows and he falls back in his former behaviours. He shares with experienced members in order to be guided and lead to change his perceptions.
- He has appreciated to be able to express himself in AA. His perception of AA was drastic. He thought that AA was rigid and authoritarian. Today, he doesn't think that the servants (GSR, DCM) are upstarts. He is gentler and less irascible. He has softened and is more tolerant. He explains that his title of Alternate DCM doesn't make him more important than any other member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He has learned to love AA.
- He didn't make the necessary effort to go and get the true information.. He used to take what others were telling him for granted and had misperceptions because of this. Literature has helped him get the right information and change his perceptions. He now accepts the majority in a group conscience and recognizes that he doesn't have to support but he only has to put his trust in the members who vote, enlightened by God. He doesn't want anymore to take for

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granted the various perceptions of many members who are all mixed up while the proper information is in AA's literature. He has changed his perceptions when studying the Traditions more in depth.

- She used to perceive the members of the Area as unattainable. She finally worked for 6 years at the Area as secretary; she has changed her perception of things and has learned what humility is. She loves to server and will always serve AA. She is now Alternate DCM and really likes her task.
- She has changed her perception when she participated to the revision of her District's code of ethics and a member of the Area came to help. She has learned a lot from this moderator's suggestions. She has learned how to rally to the majority. This avoids many controversies and fruitless discussions when the result of a vote is not unanimous.
- He mentions that he always had the impression that he was right and advanced his arguments in meetings. With time and experience, he found out that it wasn't necessary for him to always be right and he changed his perception of people. He noticed the greatness and the self-sacrifice of AA members. In his mind, the delegate was an upstart who had to smile and not say too much to avoid making mistakes! He now knows that he a servant, serving AA like any other servant.
- He mentions that he is slowly changing his perception of service by serving himself.
- Be in contact with people, see the difference in others. The basis for a still suffering alcoholic is to get a sense of responsibility. I try to listen to people, to live the liberty of other members in the group. Change his way of thinking in front of other members. Take a step back when confronted with the

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opinion of others, act in complicity with others. Accept people as they are. Move away from fears. Curb my passion for the movement, keep it simple. Remain humble, working behind the scene, it pays a lot.

- Live and let live; rather than concentrate on the lack of involvement, see to it that I get involved. Since I've stopped drinking, see life differently, see the principles over the personalities, assert myself rather than keep silent. Instead of concentrating only on my task, care about the other tasks in the group. Help the other in his new task. Care about the older members instead of taking for granted that they are doing well.
- If you take of task, be responsible. We have to be open minded, or else we always have a good excuse.
- Change the image of the districts. It is often said that all there is in a district is controversy and quarrels. We absolutely must change this image for it is simply not true. We must avoid controversy that prevents us from effectively delivering the message. Imagine then the image of the Area! They don't understand what goes on at the Area, claiming that it is even more complicated. This perception of AA must be changed in order for people to feel at ease to join the movement. Perceptions must change at many levels in AA. The perception that involvement gives you a title, because it's not the title that is important, we must get involved for the movement to continue. There are sacrifices to be made to get involved in service. Some people have to take vacations in order to be present as required by their function.
- Live and let live. Avoid comparisons. Live in your own boots.
- It was difficult for her to adhere to the movement and to identify to AA because of the perception of an alcoholic vs a drunkard sleeping on bench parks.
- Thanks to his readings, his perception has changed. It is a good way to change one's perceptions.

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- ▶ Don't let a doctor write on a medical report or on a driver's permit that you are an alcoholic for the perception that others have of an alcoholic may not be the right one.
- ▶ We have our own perceptions and we have to work on them to feel at ease. Change our mentalities and open our minds.
- ▶ We all are sick at different levels, but that does not allow us to judge others. We must remember that service is not a moment of glory, it is also very difficult for our ego.
- ▶ To have a perception, we must have an identity. He used to listen to the older members and repeat what he was hearing. Let God act inside us and we will know what to do or not to do for the newcomer. There is no one single guideline, it may vary.
- ▶ Some older members didn't do their job, as he became GSR after only one year in the movement. We are there to welcome, not to impose our ideas.
- ▶ Perceptions are a synonym for interpretation, so we must be open minded and avoid judging. This is often related to where we are at in our personal and spiritual evolution. There is no one truth, because it depends where we are and what we want to live, what we are aiming at.
- ▶ We must persist to change... continue to evolve. We must have confidence and share.
- ▶ He is wary of perceptions so they don't become judgment. Watch out for the first impression... judging without knowing. Our perceptions may be right or wrong.
- ▶ Open mindedness; try not to judge; move away if it seems that my sobriety is in danger; I grow up every time. There are two sides to a coin. Voting for the opponent may change the perception.
- ▶ Perfection is not for this world. Trying to be right may well lead to losing your mind. When we accept our alcoholism, perception changes.
- ▶ Before going to the Region, which I didn't know, I was aggressive, not able to listen to the comments of people that were disturbing me. I didn't really like the idea of going to the Area, but since I have started to serve, I have come to be more tolerant.

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- ▶ Life changes, even at work. It is a spiritual movement, not a religious one. Be open-minded, learn not to judge, learn not to condemn.
- ▶ Leave a position vacant so someone may take over.
- ▶ Assess our ideas, be open-minded, accept an alcoholic even when he relapses and his way of living AA, welcome the one who experiences other problems. Guide people towards the association where they should go. Take the time to get to know the person who arrives at AA. Identify oneself as an alcoholic, first.
- ▶ Problem with sponsor is part of my perceptions: mistrust; a question of attitude. My way of looking at things results in my being selective. I cannot take anybody.
- ▶ Try to see things differently; thinking differently and changing my way of seeing others forces me to be open-minded.
- ▶ Recognize myself with my qualities and faults.
- ▶ Anonymity and perception. Learn all the dimensions of anonymity. Bill has well written on anonymity; we must assert ourselves in AA. Feel comfortable means sacrificing our ego through anonymity. Members are anonymous, not the movement.
- ▶ Sacrificing myself when I had a title. If I twelfth step, will I have an identification tag? Working behind the scene is anonymity. Doing some work behind the scenes for groups brings a feeling of usefulness.
- ▶ At the beginning, it was difficult to find the right words to get the newcomers interested in getting involved; I thought I had to explain all there was to do, but it scared them away. I found out that attraction leads people to get involved. I used to criticize in a constructive manner the way to recruit members, but I ended up changing my perception of service and of the recruitment of members.
- ▶ One morning, before celebrating my sobriety anniversary, I didn't feel good. I had asked an older member to present the cake and this same member told me that I set an example to him. So my perception changed as I thought that I could not be a model for some member older than I was.

- I changed my perception of the Twelfth Step because, at the beginning, I found it difficult to help someone; later, I was afraid to become a GSR and I was told that it sometimes is easier to help 60 people than it is to help only one. We must simply get involved to the extent of our capacity and, above all, do well what we have to do, without forcing.
- I didn't attend many meetings anymore, but since I became GSR, my perception has changed and it motivates me to attend more meetings and widen my horizons. It was very demanding for me to go in front of the group and I had to recognize that we cannot change others. That is what makes me progress.
- I have changed my perception of anonymity since I got involved at the District. It is easy in a group, but more difficult at the District, because the members don't know what goes on elsewhere. The benefits of working behind the scenes show the size of the needs. It is sometimes difficult to hear what goes on in the groups from what the GSR share at the District meetings. It brings the ego down, as we would like everything to be perfect.
- In Public Information, we are the hand that brings the message outside and we must be careful not to give a wrong image of the movement to the outsiders. In schools, certain members might have harmful because they left a wrong perception of the members. Members should not share their problems with alcohol but rather inform on the movement.

3. ANONYMITY – SACRIFICING OUR EGO

- Sacrifice ourselves in service to make other benefit from it.
- He discovered in the literature the practical anonymity and the spiritual anonymity. He talks about discipline and egocentricity. The word discipline goes with humility. He mentions that it is not correct to give the full name a person, even dead. It is a lack of respect for the anonymity of that person. We must think about others and try and avoid errors of judgment while not respecting other peoples' anonymity.

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- She used to conduct the Literature sub-committee her way; now she has an assistant who doesn't work the same way. Sacrificing one's ego means let the other accomplish his task the way he sees fit and not interfere in another one's function.
- She mentions that immoderate pride is dangerous. We must be careful not to take not to load ourselves with all the tasks. She has learned that it was much too heavy and that we must accept to trust others and to delegate tasks in a group. She has sacrificed her ego by taking only her own place. Love and self-sacrifice behind the scenes is more beneficial for the peace of mind.
- We must not wait for recognition. It must not be the objective for involvement. We must be wary of the too large marks of gratitude in order not to swell our ego.
- She mentions that sometimes, as secretary to the District, she must sacrifice her anonymity for the benefit of AA. For instance, in order to reserve meeting rooms, she must give her full name and she does it for the common welfare of AA.
- She had to give up in relation to a treasurer who, she thought, didn't do his job properly. Now, she doesn't interfere in other people tasks and keeps to her own task for the common welfare.
- Bill was a member with an immoderate ego. The movement was then in a deadlock. A personal ego can endanger the overall AA movement. Personal prestige and power don't have their place in AA. At the beginning, people were calling him "Mr DCM". He asked that the "Mr" be left out, as it could be dangerous for him. He still is an alcoholic, even if he is now a DCM. He must watch his ego in order that a title doesn't go to his head.

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- Anonymity is very important. Because a member has not respected his anonymity, he has lost everything (at his workplace).
- His anonymity has been respected by the members and he introduces himself as a volunteer in AA (instead of mentioning publicly that he is an alcoholic). He says that he has nothing to gain financially in AA, it is totally free.
- By practicing anonymity, he can remain humble in service. Before serving, he used to be very proud and his home group was the best! He thought he could save the world and the alcoholics. He then had a lesson in humility and found out that it was better to place principles over personalities.
- There are two anonymities: his own and that of others. His anonymity is important in the service to remain humble. It is dangerous to break someone else's anonymity, it can lead to a relapse. Our common goal is important. Humility takes away some ego power.
- He had to respect his anonymity in his home group and outside the group. He was challenged by a member who insulted him and he preferred not to answer and refer to someone else. He tells about something that happened at work: he had to respect the anonymity of his boss (he had found out that he was a member of AA but he didn't tell him anything).
- Gratitude. Respecting anonymity is giving. Remain humble in service, whatever the function. Respect anonymity outside the meeting hall. We often forget what we go through, it starts with us. God's anonymity is the foundation of the program. Face this moment's emotion. Lower our ego through our history.

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- Read the literature; speak about ourselves; don't brag; don't mention the name of a member of AA who has passed away; not share one's imagination with a member who doesn't visit AA anymore. Acknowledge the greatness of anonymity, speak about it to the members, not forget the main objective of carrying the message to still suffering alcoholics.
- Very important. We don't have to publicly identify ourselves and we should not do it. Simply attraction. Should it be known, it could be dangerous for our job. Preserve our anonymity because should we relapse, the existence and the effectiveness of AA could be questioned.
- For him, it is exactly the fact that it is known in his workplace that allows him to extend his hand to other alcoholics in his workplace. He twelfth steps at work. Because of his attraction, his colleagues, knowing that he is an alcoholic, come and see him to seek help. He thinks that AA should be more known. We should have some publicity to make it known.
- The members and the content of the message are anonymous, but AA is not. It should be publicly publicized.
- The anonymity of a group is also important, especially for a closed meeting. Visitors should not be allowed in.
- We should protect our anonymity for the members of our family, even when someone has passed away.
- He totally assumes his own anonymity. The fact that he identified himself to his boss has changed their relation, which is much better. His boss was stuttering and was quite shy about it. After confiding to him about his shyness, the member opened up on his alcoholism, just to show him that he wasn't judging him.
- It is not always at the ego level, for it happens that identifying ourselves to a non member allows us to extend a helping hand. It is a choice and a responsibility.
- Anonymity is a jewel to be used adequately. Anonymity is a serious matter. We must be careful because it is directly related to AA's reputation.
- Keep it simple and not brag about what we are doing in AA. Acquire humility. Attraction rather than propotion.

- Brag! I was at such an AA event! Those who are involved bring atmosphere to the groups. When I was drinking, everyone knew and I didn't care about it. Today, sober, I do what I want and the others see how I recovered.
- Keep secret the attendance of others at the meeting: you only had to be there! I participated to an AA event and I remained silent about it. I didn't want a pat in the back and I wanted to avoid being Miss AA. Share with the newcomers. If you don't want it to go out, keep it for your sponsor. Attraction and principles rather than personality.
- Carrying the message, respect of anonymity, ego vs humility in recovery.
- It is important to get involved, but to respect one's limitations and put some balance between one's life and one's involvement. It also is important to guide newcomers towards getting involved to the extent of their capacity without catapulting them in a job and abandoning them without helping them.
- The best way to deflate our ego is to get involved. Sometimes, it is not easy to tell the difference in the opinions of others. Preparing the coffee with a newcomer rather than telling what to do, setting an example is the best way to show what to do.
- Sacrifice sometimes means letting go and recognize one's helplessness in the face of certain things and not to do anything to be loved. It is important to respect one's limitations.
- Doing Public information doesn't mean sharing my story, but telling what AA has done. When I am involved in Public information, it is not me who is there, but the whole AA movement.

B. Enthusiasm and gratitude

1. HOPE AND PURPOSE FROM DEFEAT AND DESPAIR

- Always enthusiastically search for something positive when things are not running smoothly.

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- He says that before, in his life, everything was either defeat or victory. Expectations are unrealistic when we think that way. He finds it difficult to admit his mistakes. Today, he sees it as experiences and he has the opportunity to start over again and to correct his mistakes. If he is benevolent with himself, he will be with others. His perceptions versus defeats have changed.
- He has experienced that because of his lack of self-confidence. His task of GSR has taken away his anxiety, his fears, and he has regained his self-confidence. He is grateful and enthusiastic because he had the opportunity to progress in his GSR position, which has also proven to be useful in his work environment. He has had more hope and determination in his work et he owes it to the service in AA.
- When he started in AA, he was full of himself. In his personal life, he was financially defeated and it turned to despair. Today, he transforms his defeat into a new energy to serve AA and he can now look at himself and accept what he is. An inner prison is more serious than the real one: it destroys and nibbles from the inside. It is much better to devote one's energy to service.
- She talks about his perfectionist side and her difficulty to accept his own mistakes. Through the service, she learns to accept criticism and to transform it in something positive to better accomplish her task. She is open to others and full of determination.
- He has received alcoholics at his home in order to rescue them and his tasks in service have helped him transform his rescue defeats into experiences that have made him progress. He has understood that he cannot save other

people but he can help them progress. He has put his determination to serve AA.

- She has known AA for 21 years and her sponsor has helped her a lot. When criticized, it is better not to get into controversy and avoid confrontation. She says that she is lucky to have a sponsor who is a therapist and she can confide in her, who can transform criticism into something positive and gratitude. She has had good guides in AA and her sponsor and service sponsor allow her to deprogram angry or inappropriate reactions.
- She says that she is not the one in the driver's seat. Today, she manages to entrust her despair to a higher power.
- He uses AA to transform despair into hope. When he is grateful, it is done more easily.
- Despair is a human feeling and gratitude is the springboard to hope, and then comes determination. It is the logical result of things.
- His life has changed radically in AA because of the encouragement received from the members. To remain in hope, he must not leave the members or the movement.
- Carry the program's message. Abide by the program; give a helping hand to others. Welcome the newcomer and give him the message. Twelfth Step. Follow the program in spite of difficulties; there is an alternative. Give hope. It is important not to compare one's miseries, give hope to the newcomers. Get to know the third Tradition in the 12-12. Transform defeat into victory, be grateful and don't ever drink alcohol.
- Share with the person. Entrust to God. Attraction. Be grateful, get into the action. Consider defeat as an experience. We

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have the power to chose. Feel priviledge. Serve. Learn to love.

- ▶ Believe in the movement and its principles. It is difficult to welcome all the alcoholics. Diversity. To each his own place. Not at all cost, admit one's limitations. It is hard with our close relatives. Nothing new : Twelfth Step, way of carrying the message, specific to each group. Be aware of the needs of others, of the various opinions on how to act. Do we have the desire to help the suffering alcoholic or not? Have we let go? Is having an official Twelfth Step representative in a group a way of removing all personal sense of responsibility? The importance of being hospitable. We learn, we practice, we become hospitable, enthusiastic and full of gratitude.
- ▶ The more we progress, the more rapidly we judge the newcomers. There is a lack of tolerance towards those who have more than one dependency. It is the same with those who are noisy, who talk or disturb during a meeting. Cellular phones are something else! Maybe it is something urgent? That is the reason why there is a vibration mode.
- ▶ After a relapse, because of her suffering, she wasn't ready to come back to AA. On the other hand, because of many members who showed her that she wasn't alone, she again found the hope to get out of it and to have also the right to be happy. The lifts that were offered to her, the support, etc. allowed her to progress.
- ▶ Attraction may also be leadership. She is quite busy, but she is happy in all that. She enjoyed very much going to Moose Factory. She had to take a week's vacation to go, in spite of the fact that she was responsible for two jobs and was overloaded with work. The last message was: "AA is bound to have a more and more open mind. It is clear enough in relation to those who have more than one dependency. We have a responsibility towards society. We will have less and less pure alcoholics who will join AA." She is very grateful for this very interesting trip. Thank God. She finds a bit difficult the

sentence “put the principles over personalities”. Yvon gets us focused on literature, the Twelve and Twelve. Our helping hand is extended to everyone. One must first be an alcoholic and if there are other dependencies, that’s not so important. The important thing is that he remains with us.

- Gratitude because of the experiences he has gone through; remain sober; accept that our lives had become unmanageable; accept that we don’t control the results.
- Encourage the one who comes to AA, telling him that he can live without alcohol and be happy with the Twelve Steps way of life.
- Understand one’s role in order to explain it and put it into practice.
- With time, the newcomer is transformed: at the beginning, he is still in a drunken haze; then he sees the light at the end of the tunnel; after 3 months, he has changed; if he is open-minded, his thinking is positive. Example of a member: 2 people phone each evening, each night; he spends half an hour with each of them: that his transforming defeat. Maybe one of the two people will come back. Don’t forget the grave emotional and mental disorders. When a good looking girl arrive, it’s easy... so I do it for the others. We must be careful. This could be dangerous for a couple.
- Welcome the newcomer, take the drama out of the situation and give hope for better days; get the newcomer out of isolation and suffering by going to welcome him; forget oneself in order to help.
- Give back by gestures.
- See the progress in time of the newcomer in all domains, give hope.

- Give back to the newcomer through involvement.
- My greatest challenge has been to change my more directive approach and to use the Traditions without talking about myself. That's what makes me comfortable in a group because it is not what I think that is important, but what is written in the Traditions.
- The AA movement is perfect as it is, but the members are not.
- Transforming defeat and despair into hope and determination. I think that sponsoring is important, because that is what I have received from my sponsor who gave me hope and determination to follow the others' suggestions. And it is because of my determination that my life has improved. I will never be able to give back to AA what I have received. We must never forget where we come from and determination gives confidence and self-esteem.
- The importance of placing principles before personalities. At one time, I had an assistant and I was telling myself that this person would accomplish some good work, but unfortunately, that person has forgotten to place principles before personalities and has really harmed the movement; we now have to rebuild the confidence towards AA. Organizations have been prejudiced because shortcuts have been taken at the structure level in order to accelerate the process. The result was that we had to start over and it put us back considerably. I am not the one to decide, it doesn't go fast, but we must keep the structure in mind. It is sometimes very tempting to skip.
- Reading many books like "Dr Bob and the Old Timers", "AA comes of Age" and "The language of the Heart" increases my enthusiasm because we see that Bill was already seeing, in 1948, the long term structure of the movement, but Dr Bob accepted it only some years later. The slowness of the process is impressive, but we can thus appreciate the greatness of the movement.

- ▶ We must forget ourselves, give in order to receive, forgive to be forgiven and give without hoping to receive in turn. Get out of the me, myself and I.
- ▶ I better understand what happens outside the groups, but it sometimes hard to change our way of thinking and make room for new principles takes time. Get out of judgment and respect everyone's rhythm. There is a difference between knowledge and experience.
- ▶ Alcoholics are often extremely emotional people and the movement is protected from these emotional people by the structure. We must curb our emotions and that is how the principles go before me.
- ▶ I sometimes find it hard to become impersonal in face of this almost perfect movement. We strive on humility, we should insist on authenticity. Why not accept praise when it comes. It is a good way of life that forces me to go out of myself to improve myself.
- ▶ I once felt an impostor because I had not succeeded in helping someone different. But we must know how to respect our limitations and help others in accordance with our capacities, or find other resources where to direct that person if we cannot help.

2. Happy, Joyous and Free

- ▶ Try to practice the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts.
- ▶ She talks about the founder of a group who had a relapse after 30 years of sobriety. She noticed that the members were intolerant towards him because he wasn't mentioning his relapse and that brought about some controversy. They had to place principles before the personality of this member. In fact, the only important thing was the desire of this member to stop drinking and everyone finally accepted that fact.

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- He had put his sponsor on a pedestal in his home group, and he relapsed. Nobody is safe from a relapse.
- Had never thought about it, but he suspects that his personality might sometimes go before the principles.
- Attraction, acceptance. Deflation of one's ego. Dr Bob : the wealth of humility, keeping it simple. Learning to know the principles, the gratitude of the program. Stay connected to the reality of life. The importance of literature. Listening. Ask God to remain self. Go towards a newcomer.
- See the human being on a equal basis and apply it in the business meetings. Inquire if the person is competent to do the task, apt to benefit the movement. The principles before my fickle personality. It take some humility and the help of God. Have someone share for his benefit is not geared towards our common welfare.
- When he came to AA, he was told to bring his body and AA would do the rest. It worked for him. Today, he can give his opinion and listen to others. Before, he knew everything and the others didn't know anything. Now, in the service, he has learned that he didn't know it all and to open to others. He can take his own place. He is thankful to AA for that as, without that, he is nothing.
- She had to accept who she was. Gratitude makes her always in a good mood and joyous. This is how she is and sometimes other members find it hard to accept. She feels so much better today, although life goes on and some moments are sometimes harder. It's not because it's harder this morning that the whole day will be like that. No, the afternoon may be very nice in spite of this morning's difficulties. She tries to practice diversity, to extend a helping hand, to reach to people who would not have come to her. You must pass on what you have received if you don't want to lose it, in spite of the controversy that it may bring.

- ▶ Titles are not important. Accept the differences. Humility. Put welfare first. (During the discussion, we realize that nos 2 and 3 overlap each other). Do you have something else to tell me instead of talking about other people? Don't talk about the others, but about you. Try to help. Be able to say that someone has disturbed you. Resêct.
- ▶ The principles are tools that we have in our groups.
- ▶ Free to recover. Make efforts when I give the envelope to the newcomer. Give a dream. Dream = enthusiasm. Find the lost dreams. Give hope to go on.
- ▶ Pass the message on, try to give hope.
- ▶ Defeat into hope. Make a decision between life and death. Attraction from others lead me to involvement.
- ▶ Put the program into practice; humility.
- ▶ We must welcome everyone, even a violent person. That's what the third Tradition says. It is important to introduce oneself as an alcoholic. If a go to another fraternity, I will introduce myself in accordance with where I am, and not as an alcoholic.
- ▶ Even when dealing with a suffering person, we should not necessarily tell him what he wants to hear, but sometimes tell him things that will shake him. Tell the truth.

3. Enthusiasm – A Gift of Inventory

- ▶ The primary purpose of each and everyone.
- ▶ Show good will and open mind.
- ▶ She talks about her group where many people were suffering and she has always extended a helping hand to any suffering alcoholic.

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- Had given himself the challenge of shaking hands with anybody, whatever his clothing, his condition or his language.
- He mentions that, in his group, there are many people who relapse regularly, some drug-addicts, and people with poor hygiene. It doesn't really matter to him as AA must welcome all members, without exception. We never know who may want to adhere to the movement; we should not judge the condition of people who come to the group.
- Give the group a chance to help all alcoholics. It is not the duty of one member, but that of all members of the group. He talks about the importance of the tolerance towards a newcomer who has a bad attitude. He believes that we should not provoke him but invite him to come back at the next meeting. According to him, that is the best solution.
- To be a member, you only have to "desire to stop drinking". That's all. We should not judge those who disturb in a meeting but rather hold out our hand and gently get them to participate to the meeting. Whatever the number of relapses, he must be received the same way. He explained to a young member that he should respect the movement and identify himself as an alcoholic. The young man understood and acted accordingly.
- She is herself a « diversified » alcoholic. Her sponsor had her share in a meeting even though she was drunk. Because of this reception in AA, where she was not judged, she finally became a member of the movement. She talks about her experience in AA, how she was received and to what extent she is grateful. Today, all the more reason for her to welcome any suffering alcoholic. Sometimes, even, some members who have been sober for 30 years also need to be welcomed because they too may be suffering.

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- We should not select the members to whom we should hold out our hand, we must be there for any suffering alcoholic. We never know when someone will join the movement or how long it is going to take. The important thing is that our hand should be held out to any suffering alcoholic arriving to AA.
- The hardest to do, when welcoming someone, is to forgive the member who has harmed us. When we talk about personal problems in front of certain members with certain personalities, that is where it is harder. We must look at ourselves. He now understands that the member who has harmed him was probably suffering and it would be better for us not to foster our resentment.
- It is easy to receive good members, but it is harder to welcome the one who is dirty and smelly. That is part of our responsibility to reach to others. It's the group's duty to reach towards the one who is suffering. AA is the way out.
- All nationalities; if you are a man, refer a woman to another woman, and vice versa. A member who often relapses is deficient.
- Regional forums allow us to experience a lot of gratitude, for example in Moose Factory, in spite of the small number of members who participated (69). Native people are really not privileged. They often have to travel 150 km or more to attend a meeting.
- He doesn't like it when someone gives his full name in front of the group. At the beginning, he would have left. In his opinion, this should not be done, because it breaks anonymity. He finds that it is not normal that, within his circle, it was easier to find someone to go to Moose Factory that it was to find someone to lead a meeting. There is a flagrant lack of involvement in the groups that he visits.

- ▶ In AA, we all are equal and nobody is safe from relapsing. When we join AA, we are all equal, whatever our day to day life.
- ▶ Put the 3rd Tradition into practice; remove prejudice, put into practice the declaration of responsibility, no judgment call.
- ▶ Whatever their orientation in their personal life, whatever the way they get to the movement, newcomers as they are, are the most important people in the meeting.
- ▶ Each person is responsible for his first Step. Getting involved does not mean do everything. The declaration of responsibility reminds us to hold out our hand and to act in a way so that AA's hand will always be there. That is the reason why the group conscience is there.
- ▶ We had performed in a play at the FFC (Federal Formation Center) and three quarters of the attendees were there to find a way out of their problem and the rest were there to waste some time. The play had been modified and had become more violent and almost disturbing. Afterwards, one of the convicts who had been convicted for many murders saw where alcohol had taken him and, seeing the violence in the play, identified himself as an alcoholic.
- ▶ In my job, I redirect people who had got to the wrong department. In AA, we can also redirect people who don't seem to be at the right place and recognize the limitations of the movement and what AA doesn't do.
- ▶ We must be open-minded with the newcomers and receive without distinction all those who come to us. Of course, we remind them that they should limit their presentations to problems related to alcohol (blue card).

C. SPIRITUAL PROGRAM IN ACTION

1. MAXIMUM SERVICE – OUR SPIRITUAL BENEFIT

- ▶ Establish one's own rhythm to correctly serve AA.

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- She talks of her maximum at 210% and says that it is personal to her. She tends to always want to do more and feels at ease in her task. The benefits that she gets from it are simply extraordinary. She feels appreciated and that she really is at her place in service.
- He accomplishes his task at a maximum but doesn't mingle in the others' tasks. He is not slave to others and doesn't overdo his task. He speaks about the expenses related to his task. He does what he wants with the money he gets from it and sometimes he puts it in the group's basket.
- He wonders what spiritual benefit means. He says he doesn't understand the term. All he knows is that he doesn't drink. To him, that what the spiritual benefit is. Before, he thought that everything was owed to him, but that was an illusion. Service is not a punishment but a relief.
- She likes to serve and cannot judge someone else in his task. She serve AA so that it goes on and on. She thinks she needs to serve at the maximum.
- Maximum = quality. Being responsible in one's task is being well documented first. There are no courses in AA, we learn "on the job". The spiritual benefit is related to the help that we bring to others. One day, this we come back to us under various forms of dividends.
- Has been an alternate DCM and did his job at 200%. Then he was DCM and tried to give 300%, that lead him to have a heart attack! He says that he has to get back to the main thing and not do too much. The benefit comes from being in close contact with other serving members.
- Faith without action is a dead Faith. He makes use of his own potential to serve in AA. For him, there are no benefits, but

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dividends or bonuses. Service is accessible to everyone provided that we get into the action.

- ➡ Has experienced service when he was an active alcoholic. In AA, it's different. In service, the benefits come from the members, the handshakes. He accomplishes his task to the best of his abilities and the best he can.
- ➡ He is in the action and he gives his 100% and even more. AA will teach him to have a better balance, as he tends to do too much. He is happy for being involved because the dividends come from the appreciation and encouragement from the members.
- ➡ He is fortunate to have been involved in AA. He has done many tasks in the same group and has decided to step back to get involved somewhere else doing one task at a time. He finds it difficult to attend evening meetings, but he likes to go to get some information. He can then give pertinent answers to members asking questions. He needs to meet members and shake some hands.
- ➡ I need to serve to give back what I have received, to be open-minded and to let others think what they want. I serve in my home group, service in unity; the group benefits from it. When I give, I receive. The spiritual benefits mean more capacity to be connected to the program. Spiritual equals more tolerance towards others. We need to serve to live our spirituality. Through service, my spirituality and humility grow. Serving my home group makes me grow spiritually. Through service, I improved my spiritual side.
- ➡ Not wait for congratulations; without expectations; do it for yourself; I am not responsible for results; surpassing myself.

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- It is suggested to say yes, in order for you and others to be well. Avoid controversy. Try to search for unity and harmony. Read the literature related to service like the Service Manual. Participants share their personal experiences and show a marked interest for the smooth operation of AA. Participating to meetings at all levels is spirituality in action. Every task becomes an act of faith.
- When he was an active alcoholic, he served very much... for the wrong reasons and the wrong way. In AA, learns again to serve adequately and for the right reasons. He wants to give back to AA. Furthermore, he can go on serving adequately in other organizations outside AA, because he learns in AA. He agrees with the anniversary cakes, as it shows the newcomer that it works, even if it nourishes the ego.
- The maximum service is the Serenity prayer: it is complete, it gives more self-confidence. Be open. After a while, we see in each person involved a better person than at the beginning, an inner well being. When you attend meetings, event if it rains, the weather is fine. If you feed a couple of cardinals for some years, they become angry if you don't feed them; meetings are our food to get into the action. There has to be a balance, serving too much can take you down.
- Stop egoism, egocentricity; give priority to self-sacrifice. When spirituality is well, everything is well.
- At the beginning of our recovery, the word God scares a lot of members. After a while, spirituality becomes more important and the service in AA starts to bring a spiritual well-being and the benefits for getting involved are numerous: learn how to pray, how to meditate, how to get closer to other people. Dr Bob said: "the AA way of life is only spirituality". Give and you will receive.

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- Get together to share; unity = spirituality; help others, have a spiritual view of the movement.
- I was an atheist and a non believer, but I came to believe that a higher power could help me. I chose to be happy rather than unhappy and I get there by letting God enter my life.
- I used to twelfth step by giving a Big Book to someone and entrusting them to God.
- Spirituality brings some calm to me as I am naturally speedy.
- When I last celebrated my sobriety anniversary, I said that I wanted to go to New York later and someone told me that I should not forget to bring God with me. I thought about it after and I realised that if God had not been with me until today, I would not even think of going to New York.
- The spiritual benefits come through action and service. Give to keep what we have received. Spirituality prompts me to persevere.
- Perseverance VS helplessness and self abandon. Self-sufficiency is the basis of pride.
- Faith without action is dead faith. Entrusting to God without doing something is fruitless.
- At the beginning, I was a non believer, but someone suggested that I should pray as if I believed and it worked. Today, I pray and I know that God protects me, not always as I would like or as fast as I want, but as it is good for me.
- A member had been in AA for 50 years, but he relapsed for 25 years. He persisted and has now been sober for 25 years. We never know when the grace of God will come.

2. PERSISTENCE – THE KEY TO PROGRESS

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- Follow the example of our co-founders.
- In 1955, the three legacies were given to AA (recovery, unity, service) and with the help of God, the movement has become autonomous and has been doing well since then. He talks about his own perseverance in AA.
- He talks about his GSR mandate in a group many kilometres away from his home. He was supposed to stay in his position for 24 months, but he wanted to quit after 22 months. His sponsor told him not to “cut corners” and to persevere. He decided to stay on. He progressed because of that decision. He even grew, because it was known to him to listen to someone else as he had never listened to anybody before.
- He speaks of a group where only 3 or 4 members were taking care of the group. The group conscience persevered and now, at least 15 people are involved and the attendance has increased tenfold. All that because of a handful of people who would not let the group down.
- In his active days, he was determined. Now, in the movement as in his personal life, it does happen that he is tempted to drop everything. He persevered in his personal life and his life has changed. Positive events have come about because of his perseverance.
- I would have liked to find my well-being immediately, but everything comes in its time. Progress is awakening to the way of life, in all domains. I finally understood with time. Perseverance in AA is simple.
- Start first with short term involvement; perseverance equals well being, happiness; find a sponsor; let go.

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- ▶ Perseverance is the key to progression, especially in his present commitment; it makes him live some great things and to be proud of himself.
- ▶ Service saves his life. The spiritual aspect is very useful to him. He learns humility and anonymity. It is a life insurance for him in AA. He learns in AA how to live and communicate. He has acquired self-confidence and confidence in others, slowly, at his own rhythm. So, service and perseverance are his best servants. When he was drinking, he was doing it at a maximum, so now he tries to be involved at a maximum. It must be pleasant and fun for him to stay in AA.
- ▶ AA has taught him to be proud. So celebrating his anniversary is a way to be proud of himself and it is right.
- ▶ Perseverance is when we have come to believe and we continue to try and progress in our way of life by doing the necessary efforts. Persevering is going on in the movement in spite of everything that can happen, because there is never any good reason for drinking. Perseverance is the key to progress. Perseverance is also talking about the danger of relapsing.
- ▶ If we do apply the spiritual program (with God) from beginning to end, we will obtain the results.
- ▶ Perseverance is not letting down who relapse but go on working and changing more than a member who does nothing. Making the first move, not forcing. Go to the next one, without expecting anything in return. I chose to stop drinking, my sacrifice is continuing to make an effort, to be responsible.
- ▶ Improve our conscious contact; difference between perseverance and obsession; respect of personal values; spiritual growth.

- ▶ Perseverance is the key to progress, that is why it is important to attend meetings for oneself, not for others.
- ▶ Perseverance is the first to do to advance. Faith does not always come easily, but it helps us get over ordeals. Alcohol was connected to me, but now I must connect to spirituality. I pray for my grandchild who had been violent in a hockey game and it calmed me.

3. LIVING THE TRADITIONS

- ▶ All the answers to the various problems in groups can be found in the literature.
- ▶ Because they experienced something in her home group. Some problem has arised pertaining to the identification of members. She found some answers to certain questions pertaining to the tratidions. The business meeting is the place where these items can be discussed. She was somewhat scared to express herself concerning the acceptance of a non member in a closed meeting, but she did it just the same and everyone agreed to resolve this problem gently. In the Service Manual, there are many answers related to the traditions which help prevent controversy in meetings. Our literature is there to be used. It is important to have the traditions respected by groups for the well being of AA.
- ▶ Be there for others. I find it difficult to deal with « group owners ». The importance of the traditions : over personalities; common welfare first; open mindedness; group conscience. Simplicity of the traditions. Know the traditions, the importance of tradition keepers. Try and live the best way possible for me, live and let live. Put the traditions in action in the group. Having the traditions respected is the business of everyone in the group. Take them home, in all the domains of my life.

- ▶ The traditions are not properly known, especially by newcomers who often come and create controversy in groups. She mentions that in the pamphlet "The AA group, where it all begins", there is a lot of information on the functioning of groups. She talks about the experience of her home group related to the Declaration of responsibility versus the Lord's Prayer. A related paragraph on page 15 of the pamphlet has helped to enlighten the group on this matter.
- ▶ He questions himself on what "Living the Traditions" means. Must they be constrained in very dull limits? It is like eating cakes at one's anniversary, it is not AA but it doesn't prevent us from doing it. AA must be fun if we want it to go on. Should we or should we not be limited by the traditions? All this is individual. To each his own.
- ▶ Traditions are there to respect the program. It is to protect US, the gang in AA. They are our markers in AA for it to work. You cannot do anything. They are not there to treat us like children, but simply to keep us inside certain rules. It is not for the individual but for the group.
- ▶ Service has saved her life. Her group almost closed. She was sexually assaulted, etc. Recently, she decided to take a token instead of having an anniversary cake. She felt free to do what she pleased. She persevered and grew in all this.
- ▶ The small stock phrases in AA are more often than not a simple lack of vocabulary. AA is not free. One cannot do what he pleases in AA. You can do whatever you like in your life, but not in AA.
- ▶ To her, it is important to have traditions, as AA is a huge hospital, so that they prevent anything wrong from happening. Anniversary cakes are important to her, even if they are not in the traditions. It allows her to examine where

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she is at while paying tribute to the people who have progressed with her through the year.

- Anniversary cakes are taken after the meeting exactly because they are not part of AA's program.
- Service is not necessarily serving at the District ou Area levels. It starts in your group. For certain people, it is already very demanding to go to their group. Keep it simple.
- It is part of AA for our survival. We should talk more about it in our meetings as it is very important the health of our movement. Today, Traditions are not very well respected. We often defend ourselves with phrases like "Keep it simple" or "Each group is autonomous". We should try and better respect our traditions.
- We have to live the Traditions in our lives in order to apply them in our groups.
- Our first Tradition: the Unity of AA depends on each of us. Live the Traditions outside the meeting. Respect those who do not, even if they are not right. Live and let live. Be able to go away if things are not working properly, back to basics; when a group goes well, your life goes well.
- To live them properly, there has to be some spirituality; live them with respect and balance, mutual aid and acceptance.
- Has problems with the word God, due to past experience. Feels bad in front of God, it brings his enthusiasm in service down. Creates reactions because of his lack of belief.
- Respect the opinion or belief of other members or groups; see the evolution of someone who has come to believe; the happiness it brings to him; to each his own conception.

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- ▶ Follow Bill and Bob in the heritage they have left us.
- ▶ Put them into practice by sharing my experience; bringing them home has transformed me.
- ▶ Change my life at work guided by a sponsor.
- ▶ Where everything begins; the 5th Tradition: passing the message on maintains spiritual unity. Traditions serve as questioning for the individual and the group.
- ▶ Living the Traditions well is one of the best things in the movement.
- ▶ Learning the Traditions is done when we put them into practice and in the structure of AA. Then we try to apply them at home and at work. Traditions are not only for groups, they can be applied in the family. Unity can be respected. It is also important to have the tasks done by qualified people. It also is important that what we do is not detrimental to the family. We could find many examples of how the Traditions can be useful outside the movement.
- ▶ I realised that I went for 25 beers a day to none. It took the power of someone more powerful than me to accomplish this and I came to believe.
- ▶ I saw that the experience I had acquired in the service of AA, especially at the district level, had been useful when in strike at my former job. It gave me the experience to go by the agenda and the resolutions and I saw to what extent people were hypersensitive and how experience can lead to manipulation.

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP 2009

A. How to “keep it simple” when I share with a newcomer or when I answer a Twelfth step call?

- ▶ Suggest one thing at a time and don't give orders.
- ▶ Listens and suggests another member, if necessary, or refers him to some AA reading.
- ▶ Tell him that he should remember the last time he tied one on.
- ▶ Bring him to a meeting and speak with him.
- ▶ Listen to him, don't tell him what to do and take him to a meeting.
- ▶ It is important to tell the person that his anonymity will be respected and invite him to a meeting.
- ▶ Listening; self-sacrifice; speak of oneself. Bob told Bill to keep it simple. God makes his presence known through the group conscience. Each of us carries some message; using the program to keep it simple; remembering where I come from.
- ▶ Never go alone to someone's home. Welcome the person as he is, even if drunk. Take the drama out of the situation; speak about one's own experience. Direct him towards the literature: 44 questions, A newcomer asks, Sponsorship. Man with man and woman with woman. It is important, in service, to have a service sponsor.

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- ▶ When she shares with a newcomer, she tries to keep it as simple as possible, because their understanding is limited. She uses simple and key words. She listens more than she talks.
- ▶ We often would like that the newcomer was at the same level as we are. Listen to him, bring him to talk about himself rather than trying to sell them anything. Keep that simple to the maximum. Stay with us and we will help you. Make sure that he will have a lift to the left meeting, accompany him for a coffee, etc. Don't ask personal questions, he will share what he wants to. If we don't welcome him properly, there won't be other newcomers and AA will fade away. We need AA, it's a matter of survival. We must be careful. The way we welcome him will determine if he stays or leave.
- ▶ Listening is the key, as the newcomer needs to express his suffering. He doesn't need to be told what to do or how to do it. When he will want to know, he will ask. And when he does, direct him towards a sponsor and the literature. He won't get killed if he makes a mistake choosing a sponsor, he will be able to change later if need be. We must go to the newcomer, offer him our phone number. AA is a fraternity. Greet them as they are, whether her they are white, black, or another color, gay or other, etc. We must be open-minded and he will open up.
- ▶ Newcomers sometimes do not smell too good and this is normal, but they are the ones who need to be welcome most.
- ▶ It is the same thing for those coming out of therapy. Twinning is very efficient.
- ▶ Pay attention to what the newcomer says, it often reflects his feelings. It sometimes happens that young newcomers think they have not suffered enough when we tell them they are lucky to join so young.

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- Don't impose anything to the newcomer. You should rather listen. They are full of fears, etc. Welcome him gently, offer him our phone number and suggests that he collects other phone numbers. There are no guidelines that fit everyone, but rather listen to our heart and we will know what he needs: he will often tell us if we really listen. Offer him a ride if he doesn't have a car.
- Keeping it simple with a newcomer means listening, answering his questions, explaining what AA is, helping him find his own answers. Not pestering him with the way of life, letting him discover his own reality and answering his questions to the best of our knowledge.
- When I share with a newcomer or over the phone, I listen. I don't tell him what to do, I invite him to a meeting, and he has to be informed. They don't know what AA is; give them an outline, through the brochures and the pamphlets, on how we can help them. Most of the time, we talk about ourselves, how we got to the movement. Don't interrupt. Do not reject if they talk about drugs, direct them towards people who can help them. With drugs, they arrive faster to the movement.
- Speak humbly of our own experience.
- Present an easy to understand concept to the newcomer.
- Share my vision to help him; guide the newcomers to the right people. AA suggests a way of life.
- Give him some time.
- Adapt one's language to the newcomer's.
- Insist on the importance of today; don't complicate your explanation; be an attraction for someone.

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- ▶ The Twelfth Step must be done by everyone, not by someone in front of the group; telephone; listening; get back to basics; extend your hand.
- ▶ Keep an open mind in front of differences; don't be afraid to tell things as they are in the program; change with society in AA.
- ▶ Answer questions with my experience.
- ▶ Explain that AA is open every day.
- ▶ Talk about myself to help a newcomer to identify.
- ▶ Shop for a group as we do for a pair of shoes and explain that it is important to choose a group where we feel at ease.
- ▶ Listen without directing, have the newcomer express himself.
- ▶ Don't start explaining the whole structure.
- ▶ Tell him/her that we need them.
- ▶ Listening is what made me stay. I was listened to and then a man introduced me to a woman with whom I continued to progress.
- ▶ Love in action. The principle of "Keeping it simple" is overused when we use it for anything or nothing. But Bill answered to Dr Bob in the explanation of the 9th Tradition : "We must differentiate between spiritual simplicity... "

B. HOW DO I REACH AND SPEAK TO NEWCOMERS WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM ME EITHER BY AGE, SEX, RACE, RELIGION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR OTHER ?

- ▶ Not to make any difference on that.
- ▶ The alcoholic who still suffers is the only person that counts, whatever the difference.

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- She mentions that the true welcome is to greet any person who needs help. The Twelfth Step work is to welcome who wants to stop drinking. She says that she welcomed a man who was drunk and felt very gratified for having helped another alcoholic directly on the field.
- There is a difference in language between a teenager and an adult.
- By focusing on his alcoholic suffering. It is difficult with a difference like paedophiles. Keep it simple, live AA to get his answers, get the drama out of it. With humor, talking about his own alcohol problem.
- Extend your helping hand to someone who is suffering. It is the same approach, whatever the difference: common problem. Welcome the newcomer with his difference. Make them want to come back. Have a resource person in a group to accompany the newcomer. Ask the Conference why there are distinct groups (men only or women only). It surely responds to a precise need (place where I can identify). The newcomer is like me when I came in. If I don't have the ability to answer him, I refer him to someone else. No difference: he is an alcoholic. Respect religious differences.
- It's in the desire to stop drinking. AA's common goal. The 3rd Tradition. It's more important than anything else.
- It is in the Steps. We must open up to other cultures. The opposite of self-centredness is humility.
- She finds it more difficult to welcome a man because she doesn't have much in common with him, so she refers him to another man. On the other hand, she welcomes women very well. She prefers that. She believes that the newcomer feels better that way, so does she.

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- ▶ Every morning, when he wakes up, he is a newcomer. So he uses a language that makes him go to the newcomer; he feels he has been chosen by God to help him. He leaves near a treatment center, so he often has the occasion of extending a helping hand. He passes on what he has received. People have travelled many kilometres to help him in his beginnings, so today, he travels for others. God gives him the chance of still being sober today, so he wants to give it back. This is close to his heart. He says he is a chronic spiritual alcoholic. He has a lot of gratitude for the program.
- ▶ We are not made to do all the jobs in AA. We must know ourselves first in order to properly welcome the newcomers.
- ▶ First, listen. It is a 24 hours at a time program. Secondly, make him understand that we are all there for the same reason, whatever we may look like. She has met her present spouse in AA. They are completely different, but they got together for the same purpose, to recover. Man and women who share in order to remain sober. Who are we to judge that someone is not apt to accomplish a task?
- ▶ Some Spanish speaking people called, last Wednesday, on the 12th Step mobile phone. He was finally able to refer them to Spanish meetings in Montreal. Then he gave them his phone number and went and had a coffee with them before they left for Montreal. They were in Brownsburg and they were going to Montreal to attend a meeting in Spanish.
- ▶ Accept people, whatever their orientation or way of life. Explain to them that I cannot sponsor them and direct them towards people who have lived through their experience. The suffering is the same for everyone; avoid prejudice against anybody.
- ▶ We are all equal human beings living from love and hope; thus we will welcome him with respect.

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- No difference must be done in a spiritual manner.
- I had to be right; slowly, I became more flexible; democracy, trust in God.
- The newcomer is most important, never leave him alone.
- Speak about the illness and what I have in common with others; make him at ease, without judging; trying to carry the message.
- Speaking of the despair and suffering I was going through at the beginning; one day I was told that someday I would be free.
- The common point is the illness. Try to remain on the same level as the newcomer. Learn to communicate while leaving everyone on the same level. Look at what links us rather than what separates us.
- Accept people and use them to progress. Go towards people who have harmed me in the past.
- Try and refer the person to someone more appropriate if I feel I cannot help. Understand the specific problem of the person in order to direct him/her to someone who has gone through the same thing or towards another fraternity if we feel he/she is not at the right place.
- Say simple phrases like: "Don't have your first drink", "rigorous honesty", "Just for today", "Do what you have to do". Sometimes, when we arrive, we are far away in the past or in the future, and we must be brought back to today. Simple phrases are more easily remembered, as the newcomer's mind is full. The language of the heart is international. I was in Switzerland and I was thirsty, I found a meeting and it helped me. Wherever we are, it's the same illness and it is important to place principles over personalities.

- ▶ In a meeting, I saw a man dressed in woman's clothes. I listen, trying to keep in mind to place principles over personalities. We have to have a minimum of civic responsibility with a person who is different.
- ▶ There was a Muslim in our home group and the group never set him apart, but he did so himself. It took eight months to get to say hello to him, than to warmly shake his hand and then to embrace him. He thanked me for having persisted.

C. WHEN THE GROUP CONSCIENCE HAS MADE A DECISION IN THE GROUP, THE DISTRICT, THE AREA, IN A BOARD MEETING OR AT THE CONFERENCE, DO I SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART? DO I KEEP IT SIMPLE? DO I LISTEN? AM I OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING MY MIND?

- ▶ Changing one's perception after listening to others, that is the language of the heart. I lived through an experience at the area's level: the minority expressed itself and enlightened the others. Don't change your mind easily, the group conscience is important. Our Higher Power in an instrument to enlighten us. God made himself known to enlighten my sayings; entrust to God; keep it simple. The power of the movement; I am responsible. One day, I didn't like what the group conscience had decided, but a few years later, I answered the same thing that I had been told at that moment. Open mindedness, be able to change my mind, rally the group conscience.
- ▶ With time, I learn, with experience. The key to keeping a group healthy: open mind and heart. Language of the heart, live and let live. Accept that people may speak of what they are going through. Deciding that a precise group will be responsible for welcoming people may frustrate people who want to join this group; what gravity is there to add another

person to this group? When we read out or make some other presentation to the group, we should not use this as an occasion to talk about our problems, we should rather talk it over with our sponsor. Should we be more tolerant towards these people? A vote can change after sharing various points of view. Accepting a refusal. Bringing back a point that is important to me. Revisiting a decision after reflection.

- ➡ He had the privilege of opening a men's group. For the first two years, he was resentful because of the rumour that was naming the group after his first name. Then he succeeded in saying: "No, this is not ...'s group, but the Evolution group. He is but a servant chosen by God to help others. It never is someone's group. It's so much better when it is done humbly.
- ➡ At the beginning, her sponsor had her opinion and she had another. Then, she was able to discuss it with her. Her sponsor made her understand that that was what a group conscience was made of. After a discussion, when the group conscience makes a decision on something, she must rally in order not to go against what the group wants and find herself alone in her position. Thus, it is important to change one's mind occasionally, or when necessary. It is not always our idea that will be accepted.
- ➡ The 5th Concept does say that we have the right to submit our opinion and it happens that this can have the group's decision changed.
- ➡ The principle of Unity must prevail over personalities. It is important to rally if it keeps harmony and serenity in the group.
- ➡ Put our personal ideas aside and accept the different opinion of others. Keep the welfare of the group and of the movement in mind. Put our little fancies aside in the interest of the movement. Put the principles over personalities. Be grateful

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for the members' generosity; be open to the possibility of changing one's mind in order to reconsider my vote or my opinion.

- If the decisions have been made in accordance with the principles and the Traditions, they will be respected. On the other hand, keeping our mind open to new ideas may indeed bring a change of mind.
- When a decision is made, accept it. Have an open mind. It is pleasant to make a decision in a group. The minority is important. We must listen. A long discussion on a subject may bring a change; have solid arguments; inquire before wanting to change; refer to the Service Manual, an essential tool. Think to ourselves, for the welfare of everyone, and then we can rally. We also talk about harassment: physical, psychological; make the difference when we are dealing with someone who needs psychiatric treatments, in person or over the phone.
- When all parties are spiritually well, it is easy to speak the language of the heart.
- At the beginning, I was intolerant with picky people. I thought I had the truth and I thought it was the only possible solution. But now when I listen and keep an open mind, I am open to changing my perception.
- I may sometimes rally the majority, even if I think otherwise. I accept that people may not always agree with me.
- Accept the group's decision not to change the Lord's Prayer for the Declaration of Responsibility.
- Return to the code of ethics and accept that the minority expresses itself. The importance of keeping the Traditions and the Concepts in mind.

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- ▶ When items were carried forward to the next meeting, the slowness of the process exasperated me, but I learned to accept that sometimes, it takes time. I learned to change myself rather than to try and change the group where I didn't feel at ease. Keep one's judgment and change group or mind, if necessary. Don't stop and try to change what we cannot change.
- ▶ I often say the Serenity Prayer in order to accept and get out of my stubbornness.
- ▶ Everything starts from the group conscience. Everyone's opinion is heard and we go back to them later. I had experienced some controversy in a district as DCM, and I persisted in my idea with the help of the literature and the Traditions. I held up to my convictions because I was sure that I was right and finally, it was agreed. We must sometimes go and see some people who have gone through similar situations to get help or counsel.
- ▶ I did not always agree with the way things were done and I wanted to change everything, but with time, I learned to accept. Sometimes, I rally even if I am not in agreement, except when I am really convinced that I am right. With time, I learned to leave if I don't feel at ease.
- ▶ I try to keep in mind: "How will my intervention help the newcomer?" We must evolve with time and always keep the newcomer in mind. I stopped being the dictator that I was and to try to control everything.
- ▶ It reminds me of the text in "Bill's Reflections" which talks about the bleeding hearts who do not easily accept change and of the strong hearts who leave without making waves.
- ▶ I had been secretary of the Roundup at the Palais des Congrès and I had found it difficult because there was a lot of

controversy. Ego wars were strong, but the roundup was a success, notwithstanding.

- The Fifth Concept is important. The minority may and must express itself and people may change their mind. We have witnessed, in certain meetings, a person who was alone against the rest of the group bring them to change their vote. The explanation that this person gave of his point of view was such that the majority who was against the point at issue became for it.
- It is important to respect the various opinions, but also to express oneself with conviction or else to rally and be patient.

This document represents the opinion of the members who participated to the March 14, 2009, Theme of the Conference Day.

Reporting on the Conference :

Reporting to groups, districts and the area back home is a big part of the delegate's job, and one that can prove challenging. One past delegate says: "On my return from the Conference, I traveled some 4,000 miles in the first six weeks visiting groups. If I was not asked to speak at group meetings, I asked them to let me speak. I made a point of never talking too long, but I gave literally hundreds of these talks. I talked of service and unity and G.S.O. and area assembly." That same delegate reports the results: more new groups than ever before, a stronger service structure, and the first state convention. "We have grown, and if I were asked to pick

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out the one part of our activities that contributed most, it would be improved communications.”

Réf : The A.A. Service Manual, 2007-2008 Edition, page S50

General Assembly

On the occasion of the general assembly that will be held on May 16, 2009, our delegate will report on what he has seen, heard and felt at the 59th General Service Conference. You will have the opportunity of hearing him talk about the greatness of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Love and Service

Richard B

Alternate Delegate

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