### Summer 2016

The 2016 General Service Conference, Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts, was held April 17-23, 2016 in New York, New York. It was at the Crown Plaza on Broadway a couple blocks from Times Square. It only took me 17 years and three months to get there, and it was well worth the wait. Actually, I got there when I was supposed to get there, when my higher power thought it was right and I was ready. I have heard past Delegates share their experience, strength and hope about the conference and I can say my story is very similar.

First of all everything before, during and after the actual conference is very time consuming. Because of the scheduling of the Conference this year, if I wanted to take advantage of the Stepping Stones visit on Saturday morning I would have to get there a day earlier. I am lucky that my husband is also involved in general service, because he was anxious to accompany me to New York, and was happy to plan on arriving early. There were many other activities or should say meetings, that were scheduled for Saturday. I am so grateful that I attended them all, because this was a way to meet many other Delegates and GSO staff prior to the Conference starting. The General Service Conference officially started Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. with Registration starting at 9 a.m. There were about 57 agenda items with 13 different committees. Each committee had a joint committee and conference

committee meeting Sunday evening. This is where the delegate committee members meet with the trustees of that committee. Then all the committees meet separately on Monday and Tuesday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. to discuss their agenda items.

In the committee meetings the members would discuss and decide whether to make a recommendation, take no action or make a committee consideration. There were three different discussion/presentations with three panelists at each. The discussion/ presentations were selected the previous year and came out of the Agenda Committee. The topics were "Connecting With the Newcomer," Connecting With Each Other," and "Connecting With A.A. as a Whole." The presenters were all Panel 65 delegates, or second- year delegates. Two other presentations were the Feasibility Study and A.A. Grapevine/La Vina presentation.

There were 46 panel 66 delegate area highlights; when the delegate gives a two minute talk about their area. It was pretty neat being up at the front podium looking out over all my new and familiar friends. Before each of the session scheduled for committee reports and discussion, the Summary of Conference Procedures was read. One of those procedures states that conference business requires a quorum of two-thirds of all registered members. On Sunday, at the beginning of the Conference, there was roll call to be sure there was a quorum. Substantial

Concepts is published quarterly by the Northern Illinois Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a service letter to keep Northern IL Area, districts, and GSRs informed of service opportunities, events, and experience relevant to carrying the AA message. Subscription is free but generally limited to A.A. members within the NIA geographical area.

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Comments, suggestions and subscription requests plus shares of experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:

Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see

Concepts on-line at:

http://www.aa-nia.org

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Yorkville, IL 60044.

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### From the editor

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

So I liked the themed issue about corrections so much I thought I would try another themed issue. I had a submission on LIM. While I have not been an international AA. I have been a homebound AA. So this issue is about that. You don't really realize how much you miss, not just need, meetings until you can't go. And usually the trials and challenges of being homebound are such that you really need more meetings than you would need when things were going smoothly. I was blessed in that I had already found online AA prior to my illnesses and injuries. That email group was a life line for me. I was in substantial pain and spent many sleepless nights. But someone was always there to read and respond to my email. Recently I had a big setback in my life and some of the first people I turned to were my women's email group. I am not homebound any more but those women are still as much a part of my sober support as any person I see f2f (face to face). I am not saying it's a replacement. Our greatest power always lies in one alcoholic talking to another f2f. But it sure has been a lifesaver for me. Enjoy and maybe pass this issue on to someone who is homebound.

# Submissions for the next issue will be due Aug 20, 2016.

Thank you for your submissions. Heather S. Concepts Editor

Unanimity is required for all matters of policy (Conference Advisory Actions). Any actions, including amendments, that affect any Advisory Action or a motion that might result in such an action, also requires two-thirds majority. The procedure also included information about hearing the minority opinion, tabling a motion, (which is a little different than what I read in Robert's Rules of Order when I was Area chair,) calling the question, reconsideration and floor actions. I did understand most of these and it didn't take long to figure the others out. Sessions for committee reports and discussion began Wednesday evening and always went to 9 p.m. After that there was the General Sharing Session - What's On Your Mind?

For the rest of the week the days went from 8 or 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. The agenda had us finishing at 3 p.m. and Friday with the committee reports, but we actually finished at 1:30 p.m. But, then there were eleven floor motions which put us ending at 7:00 p.m. Then there were farewells from the rotating delegates, panel 65s. So the evening actually finished about 8:30 pm.

Monday through Friday morning there was an A.A. meeting called the Serenity Group. I had heard about this meeting from past delegates and was encouraged to attend. My first thought was that no way was I going to get up earlier to attend a 7:30 a.m. meeting then run to a 9:00 a.m. conference start. I do not attend any early week days or weekend meetings here at home. But because I was sincerely trying to be open and willing to all the suggestions I have received before and during the conference, I attended the Monday meeting at 7:30 a.m. It was in one of the smaller rooms

there with about 25-30 members. The topic for the lead was from pages 14-15 in the Big Book, "For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead." It made me think about what I was doing there and how it was affecting me. There were a lot great comments from members that I have never heard share in an A.A. meeting. Tuesday and Wednesday also started at 7:30 a.m. The real test came when Thursday's meeting started at 6:30 a.m. But, I attended Thursday and Friday as well. We were given tickets with a stub to put into a basket when we arrives before every meeting and at the end they would draw tickets to see who would receive a few books that were signed by all who attended the meeting and to pick a Chair and alternate chair for next year's meetings. My husband's name was drawn to chair the meeting for next year, but because he was a guest, he did not quality. They re-drew and it turned out to be my ticket.

I had pre-conceived ideas of not going to the meeting, but my higher power knew what was best, and I am happy to be chairing the meeting next year. I have gained much more appreciation, passion and an emotion that is hard to put in words for Alcoholics Anonymous. I am looking forward to reporting on the actual conference at upcoming events through the area.

Grateful to Service Kelly L. Panel 66/Area 20 Grapevine Committee

# GOING TO ANY LENGTH .....AROUND THE WORLD!

Availability of meetings to members is usually not discussed in a meeting because we are already there. Though we 'know' there are members in remote, electricity challenged areas how do "they" receive the message on a regular basis?

Thanks to "Captain Jack" and the General Service Office there is the Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM), a confidential four page bimonthly meetings. Please refer to the following two sections from the AA website regarding the history and participation requirements.

I learned of this meeting when I had surgery and was homebound. I figured there must be a way to write to other homebound members, whatever their reason for not being able to attend face-face meetings. I filled out the form to participate and received the packet of information and my name was added to the over 400 people who call this meeting their home group. I am able to go to face-face meetings now, but I enjoy sharing my experience, strength and hope with those who cannot and I enjoy receiving letters in the US mail. I also believe all these members are reaching out and I wish to be the pen of AA! It's another wonderful way to be of service.

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# LONERS - I NTERNATIONALISTS M EETING (LIM) CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE

The Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM) is a confidential bimonthly bulletin sent to Loners, Homers, Internationalists, Port Contacts, and Loner Sponsors. The bulletin contains excerpts from LIM members' letters that are sent to the General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous. The bulletin includes full names and addresses. LIM is distributed only to the members described below who appreciate the need for confidentiality of personal sharing with one another through correspondence. To participate, an A.A. member needs to: 1) read and write English; 2) provide a stable mailing address; and, 3) be willing to share experience, strength and hope via correspondence. Many LIM members communicate via postal mail, while some utilize email. A G.S.O. staff member coordinates the Loners, Homers and Internationalists correspondence service, which is open to A.A. members who fit one of the categories listed below:

*Loner.* An A.A. member who is unable to attend meetings regularly because there is no A.A. meeting in the vicinity where he or she lives.

*Homer.* An A.A. member who is unable to attend A.A. meetings because of physical incapacity.

Internationalist. An A.A. member working on a seagoing vessel for long periods.

Port Contact: An A.A. member serving as a contact for Internationalists when in port.

Loner Sponsor. An A.A. member active in local A.A. meetings; who shares his or her experiences and group activity with Loners, Homers and Internationalists through correspondence. A Loner Sponsor is not a "Loner" or a "sponsor" in the traditional A.A. sense. (Because more Loner Sponsors participate in the LIM service than Loners, Homers and Internationalists combined; new Loner Sponsors are not currently being added.)

Loners, Homers, and Internationalists receive bimonthly copies of the confidential bulletin Loners Internationalists Meeting (LIM) and Box 4-5-9, a newsletter published by G.S.O. The Loners-Internationalists & Homers Directory is printed annually and lists all active LIM members.

To participate, an A.A. member needs to be able to read and write in English. A.A. members who fit a LIM category may contact: Loners Assignment, c/o General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; or e-mail: lim@aa.org. Please print or type information requested and return this form or information to G.S.O.:

See page 6 for the form and further information

LIM continued from p 5

Yes, I want to join (check ONE only): Loner Homer
InternationalistPort Contact
Full Name
Mailing addressa
City, State/Province, Postal Code, Country
E-mail address
Telephone number

### Overview of LIM History

The first LIM bulletin, printed in 1949 as The Internationalists Round Robin, was a few pages of excerpts from letters received at G.S.O. and mailed to a small band of Internationalists determined to stay sober no matter how isolated they were.

By 1963, the bulletin consisted of five or six one-sided pages, mimeographed on blue paper. In 1976, an A.A. Loners meeting merged with the original Internationalists meeting. Ever since the March-April 1980 issue, LIM has been printed on the familiar yellow pages.

LIM began through the efforts of Captain Jack S., a sailor who found sobriety in A.A. and understood that to maintain sobriety he needed to reach out to other members through correspondence.

Initially, Captain Jack was looking for A.A. contacts in port cities when he wrote a letter to G.S.O. dated March 28, 1946. Captain Jack requested information on A.A. contacts because he was ". . . still at sea on oil tankers, on which I have served for ten years. I have few contacts ashore with A.A., and have to rely on the Book and the guy upstairs." A G.S.O. staff member provided Captain Jack with the names of A.A. contacts in port cities, and encouraged him to write to other seagoing members, which he did.

After the publication of a three-part article, "A 'Loner' at Sea," by Captain Jack in the October, November, and December 1948 issues of the A.A. Grapevine, plans began to take shape to start an Internationalists meeting-by-mail. Letters responding to that Grapevine article prompted another G.S.O. staff member to suggest to Captain Jack that he consider starting a "Round Robin Meeting" via letters. Captain Jack responded positively and suggested the name be "The Far East Internationalist Group." He said that name ". . . would leave it open to lone members stationed ashore in the Far East and also to men who sail these waters under flags of different nations."

Captain Jack died in December 1988 at age 91, a few months after celebrating his 42nd A.A. anniversary. He had remained active in the Fellowship, seeking newcomers in Portland, Maine – where he had retired – while continuing to answer the many letters that he received.

A.A.'s phenomenal worldwide growth is attributed in part to Captain Jack and hundreds of Internationalists like him who, sailing the seven seas, carried the message wherever they dropped anchor.

## Rule 62

### From the Grapevine Archives

### February 1986

A newcomer to Alcoholics Anonymous informed his group that things were beginning to get better since he started asking Howard to help him. When asked who Howard was, he replied, "The person in the prayer you taught me: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, Howard be thy name'..."

### February 1986

THIS VERSION of the Twelfth
Tradition came in from an AA member
who heard a woman read: "Aunt Minny
is the spiritual foundation of all our
Traditions ..."

### March 1980

A PANHANDLER who solicited a dime for a cup of coffee noticed that his benefactor was following him. "Why are you trailing me?" he asked. "Trying to see if I spend it on booze?" "No," answered the businessman. "I just wanted to see where you could get coffee at that price."

### August 1986

TO ADD TO OUR AA dictionary, a couple of definitions: Hangover--the moaning after the night before.

Alcoholic--a person who puts thirst things first.

### January 1989

A STRANGER wandered into the bar

one afternoon and ordered a Manhattan for himself and a round for the house. Upon being presented with the tab, he realized he'd skipped the pool players and several card players in the game room, and insisted that they have one also. The barman said, "That'll be \$37.80." "Have-one yourself," the stranger said. So he did and made it "\$40 even." The stranger then assured the barman that he didn't have a red cent, whereupon he was dispatched from the bar by the seat of his pants. Sure enough, the next day he showed up again, ordered a double Scotch and drinks for the house. The same barman replied, "Sure pal, and I suppose you'd like to buy me one, too!" To which the stranger said, "Not on your life, my friend. You get violent when you drink!"



# Bedside stories AAs volunteering in the 'Sunshine Club' take meetings to hospitals and shut-ins

I was sharing my story at an AA meeting recently and I mentioned taking part in a Sunshine Club call. When the meeting was over, two visitors from Kansas asked me, "What is the Sunshine Club?"

Here in San Francisco, this Twelfth Step committee has really caught fire, but I was reminded that around the country, not everyone is familiar with the Sunshine Club. It has become such an important part of service in our city that I hope it will be of benefit to others to describe what we have found.

The San Francisco Sunshine Club brings meetings to members of the AA Fellowship who are hospitalized or homebound due to illness or injury. Those of us who have been incapacitated for a period of time know how loud the chatter in the mind can get. The Sunshine volunteers are there to offer an hour of serenity in the midst of all the noise and confusion.

On a typical hospital visit, we scoot our chairs in close to the bed and chat a bit with the fellow member before the meeting begins. When we formally start, we follow the suggested format. We say the Serenity Prayer and continue with "How It Works." At this point the person we are visiting will often visibly relax. Sometimes he or she may close his or her eyes and smile while listening. There is comfort in the familiarity of the words and safety in having your AA family around you. The catheter tubes and heart monitors fade into the background as the sharing becomes intimate and honest. Often there is laughter; sometimes there are tears. Sometimes the tears are an expression of gratitude.

When a Sunshine meeting request comes in, the volunteers can usually be organized within two or three days. The request might be from someone new in recovery who hasn't had an opportunity to establish a dependable support network in AA. Or it may come from an old-timer with dementia who wants the comfort of his AA family around him. The request may come from a member in hospice or from a new mom caring for an infant. We also show up for knee injuries, hip replacements, broken feet, hammertoes and countless other maladies.

When I was drinking, I never wanted to be around anyone who was in pain or needed my help. I was overwhelmed with more than enough pain of my own. However, when I became a member of AA and eventually worked the Steps, I found out that my job is to be "of maximum service to God and my fellows." With the help of a Higher Power who is in charge of the results, it became easier for me to be around hospitals and illness.

The Sunshine Club is a clear-cut example of the Twelfth Step in action. As I witness other members of the Fellowship volunteer to sit by the bedside of another suffering alcoholic, I know that this program works. It really does.

-- CAROLE P. San Francisco, Calif. Trom the grapevine archives



### AA In Cyberspace: An Update

I had the privilege of sharing my personal experience with AA in cyberspace at the International Convention in Minneapolis in 2000. I shared about some of the ways the AA message was being carried by AA groups in cyberspace and my personal views of how AA online might one day fit into the worldwide fellowship. I spoke with some hopeful excitement about AA service in cyberspace from the group level to the work being done beyond the groups to serve and unite the online fellowship.

The creation of an Online Inter-group (OIAA) after the 1995 International Convention in San Diego crystallized our hopes for a central service entity in cyberspace and enthusiasm still ran high in 2000. Today, there is still enthusiasm but also conflicting opinion about what should happen next.

Impatience with the slower-than-expected pace of development of a united service structure, confusion over whether an intergroup structure alone will meet the online fellowship's service needs worldwide, and whether an online service conference needs to be created, have all combined to pose a new set of challenges for the online AA community. But more about that later.

I first experienced AA online when I got a modem hook-up to our computer in late 1995. Like any alcoholic in a strange place, I did the natural thing--I reached out to find other alcoholics--in this case, by surfing the 'net for Alcoholics Anonymous. I found many, many paths to other alcoholics. I discovered chat rooms, e-mail groups, open meetings, newsgroups, and many websites that claimed to have something to do with AA. Initially, I was skeptical. I couldn't imagine that AA could work over the Internet. But does it ever!

I not only discovered a thriving AA fellowship online, I became an active member of the Lamplighters group, which quickly became a central part of my AA life. Through Lamplighters, I've made many friends from around the world. I was shown firsthand that groups need not be constrained by geographical boundaries, that the language of the heart can be spoken in cyberspace.

### Who goes to Online AA meetings?

The diversity of the AA online fellowship demonstrates how much this medium can help the suffering alcoholic. Deaf drunks who have drifted away from regular AA meetings find a welcome neutralizer of

their hearing difficulties online. Loners and homebound alcoholics exult over being "connected" with the Fellowship as never before. The fearful alkie finds online the perfect place to dip a toe into the water of recovery. The aging alcoholic rediscovers youthful excitement while once again fully participating in AA meetings and sponsorship in cyberspace. And for the rest of us, it's an opportunity to enhance our sobriety with extra meetings in the quiet of our own homes.

#### The man on the web

Today's counterpart to the "man on the bed" is the trembling, sick alcoholic in cyberspace. And we see a good number of them looking for help for the first time. We see them coming back from slips; we see them finding AA at a time and a place where we can feel their desperation and share our hope, just as we do in f2f (face-to-face) meetings. We see the occasional member struggling to stay away from a drink or going through a particularly rough time. One thing we consistently emphasize to newcomers is that the best place to get sober for most of us is in f2f groups where there is a better chance to be seen and heard and to get the maximum help that AA has to offer. But not everyone can or wants to attend f2f meetings. The AA maxim, "We carry the message but not the drunk," is just as true in cyberspace as in the f2f environment. Many who attend f2f meetings find that online AA is a wonderful addition to their sobriety. And for some, either by choice or necessity, cyberspace is their only real connection to AA.

As in f2f meetings, there are many opportunities for service. Some positions, like webmaster and listkeeper, are technical; others are traditional, like greeter, chair, secretary, treasurer, intergroup rep, GSR, birthday committee, and scores of others. I've served in a number of these capacities, but the real excitement for me has been Twelfth-Step Committee work. A vision for the future

I see cyberspace continuing to evolve as an increasingly robust and user-friendly multi-media environment. It's here to stay, and we will continue to learn to use this "colossus of communications" to help alcoholics. With time, it will become even clearer that there are not two forms of AA--f2f and online. There is only one Alcoholics Anonymous. Practicing the Steps and guided by our Traditions and Concepts, we will increasingly become more united in our efforts to help alcoholics. Online AA needs to protect our copyrights to help insure that the integrity of the AA message is

maintained. Geographically-based AA will continue to use cyberspace to provide ever greater service and improved communications.

When drunks reach out for help in cyberspaceand it's happening with increasing frequency--they may find a meeting around the corner from their homes on an intergroup or central office website. Or they might find an online meeting through the Online Intergroup where members will share their experience, strength, and hope. And since attendance at f2f meetings is always encouraged, members may help arrange a Twelfth-Step call by communicating via cyberspace with the local intergroup.

The medium is different; the message is the same Isn't it ironic that the Big Book brought the first technology issue to our fellowship? Wasn't it Bill D., the third alcoholic, who actually refused to have his story included in the first edition of the Big Book because he felt so strongly that the message should only be carried "face-to-face"--one alcoholic speaking with another--and not through a book?

Over the years, the message of Alcoholics Anonymous has been transmitted f2f, via the printed word, mail correspondence, telephone, the AA Grapevine, "our meeting in print," ham radio, ship-to-shore and ship-to-ship, radio, television, and most recently on the Internet. In a November 1960 Grapevine article, Freedom Under God: The Choice Is Ours, Bill W. could have been speaking about the Internet as well as all the other media when he said that "nothing can matter more to the future welfare of AA than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination."

For most people, being in the physical presence of other alcoholics is still the best way to achieve sobriety. But like the drunk who gets sober alone after reading the Big Book, many alcoholics are finding and maintaining sobriety through chat and email meetings in cyberspace. And many eventually do connect with f2f AA and some even decide to stick with f2f AA after first getting sober online. Interestingly, one of the most often shared special moments among online AAs is when they get to physically meet an online friend. And when we make new friends f2f, don't we often exchange e-mail addresses? Rather than

being mutually exclusive, these two forms of the Fellowship complement each other in wonderful ways.

There isn't just one way to get sober, as we all know. I believe we just need to keep an open mind and remember that we're not the ones in charge of how and when alcoholics get sober--we're just the messengers making use of an opportunity. As long as people gather in cyberspace, AA needs to be there for the sick and suffering alcoholic.

#### The group conscience of Online AA

How will Online AA participate in the collective conscience of AA? The Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts guide our groups and our general service structures. AA groups meeting online with members from all over the world don't fit into any of the general service structures which are organized within geographic boundaries. Out of the Online Intergroup of AA (OIAA), the present hub of AA service for the online fellowship, a new service structure will, I believe, begin to emerge. This past July, a gathering of representatives from online groups was held--in cyberspace, naturally. (See page 40.) If an online service structure continues to evolve from this exploratory meeting. I believe the day will come when it will carry the conscience of online AA groups into the World Service Meeting, the biennial get-together of general service offices from around the world, meeting to discuss matters of unity and mutual concern.

Is this really going to happen? I believe the answer, as usual, is right in our literature. In that same 1960 Grapevine, Bill W. quotes from AA's twenty-fifth anniversary dedication in Long Beach, California, "We now entrust you of AA's distant reaches--you who so well symbolize the unique and loving communication that is ours in this universal fellowship--to carry this message to fellow members everywhere; and most especially to all those others who still know not, and who, God willing, may soon issue out of their darkness into light."

-- Dennis M. Bronx, New York From the Grapevine archives

### **Announcement**

**Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org** 

NIA 20: www.aa-nia.org

Summer Assembly June 11, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

District 51 Workshop <u>June 18</u> "The A.A. Group" New Lenox, IL Contact: Michelle E. DCM 815-922-9717

Summer Committee Meeting, Aug 6, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

Illinois State Conference, August 12-14, St. Charles IL

Fall Assembly, Sept 17, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

Fall Committee Meeting, Oct 15, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

23rd Big Book Conference, Oct 29, Wheaton Bible Church, Wheaton IL

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### **AA SPEAKERS**

Madeleine P. of Happy Valley, Oregon Laurie H. of Oak Lawn, Illinois

## **GSO Staff Member**

Jeff W.

### **East Central Regional Trustee**

Bill F. of Marietta, Ohio

### **AL-ANON SPEAKER**

David E. of Chicago, Illinois

August 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

