

# CONCEPTS

NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA LTD AREA 20 SERVICE LETTER

SPRING 2025 VOL. XLIX NO.1

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# Delegate's Corner



Service in Alcoholics Anonymous has always been one of the most fulfilling and meaningful rewards of my sobriety. One element of service I've always appreciated most was how different – yet at the same time similar – serving in A.A. could be.

Bill W. wrote *“Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.”*

My first introduction to service was at the group level – specifically, my home group. We met each Monday night at 8:30 pm and I never missed that meeting. At six months sober I was asked to make coffee. I was to be at the meeting location an hour early each week because the ancient coffee pot a member donated probably in the mid-80s took that long to brew. Others also showed up early for their service commitments and during that pre-meeting hour, I would listen to “old timers” share their experience over chairs and tables being set up, racks of A.A. literature filled, and ashtrays put out. During my three-month coffee making assignment, I rarely made coffee to everyone’s satisfaction. The coffee pot was responsible for multiple blown fuses resulting in impromptu candlelight Big Book studies, and at least one eruption involved coffee grinds being spewed everywhere. The coffee making commitment also included cleaning the antique coffee pot at the end of the meeting – not an easy job with this old machine. Yet, I loved being a coffee maker and still do today. I felt like a small part of a great whole. I had somewhere I needed to be, had something I needed to do, and it kept me accountable.

When I first got to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, I didn't have a license or a car. I depended on the generosity of other members to take me to and from meetings, and these women took me to **a lot** of meetings. I worked hard to

reinstate my license and purchase a vehicle in sobriety. When I got both, that gave me another service responsibility – taking women to meetings. Lots of meetings. All different kinds of meetings. Early morning, evening, and midnight meetings. Big Book meetings, Traditions studies, discussion, and speaker meetings. I had somewhere I needed to be, had something I needed to do, and it widened my recovery horizons.

I began sponsoring other women, working alongside them just as my sponsor did with me – bringing the steps of the A.A. program to life, walking them through A.A. Traditions, attending different A.A. events. Sponsorship was challenging because I saw a part of me in the women I sponsored and I had been a challenge, too. We studied and discussed A.A. literature, ate meals together, went on twelve step calls, practiced principles, shared inventory and gratitude lists. I had somewhere I needed to be, had something I needed to do, and these relationships deepened my love for one alcoholic helping another.

I was elected to be General Service Representative (GSR) of my home group. I took this responsibility seriously, following the example provided by my predecessor who had taken a new position within our District. I went to the monthly District meetings and met with other GSRs, learning more about my new role. I attended my first Area Assembly, watched in awe as other members approached the microphone, sharing their group’s thoughts and opinions on items concerning A.A. as a whole. I wanted to be a GSR because I loved Alcoholics Anonymous, and I loved to communicate. I had somewhere I needed to be, had something I needed to do, and this expanded my sense of commitment.

Over the years I stood for and was elected to other service positions within our District and Area. With each position, I learned something

# Delegate's Corner (cont)

new and amazing within the structure of General Service in A.A. I was able to take what I learned and apply it to my daily life, both personally and professionally. I learned to listen to the needs of others and offer recommendations when asked. At work I held meetings where, unbeknownst to my colleagues and coworkers, we practiced the right of decision, right of participation, and introduced the right of appeal. I worked with District Service Committee Chairs, and we hosted workshops to educate and inform about how to be of service in Alcoholics Anonymous. I was present for and served A.A. in various treatment facilities. I had somewhere I needed to be, had something I needed to do, and this kept me connected to the fellowship.

Service in Alcoholics Anonymous has transformed who I am and how I show up in my sobriety. Today, I am blessed to continue to learn and serve in A.A. Bill W. also believed that service was essential to the organization's growth and existence, but that it started with people taking action. He stated "A.A. is a society of people in action, and that service is the main reason for its existence." I am beyond grateful to be part of the A.A. community, being where I need to be, doing what I need to do, and carrying the message of recovery along the way.

Lisa S.

Alt. Delegate Panel 74



## Common Recovery Sayings

### **"One Day At A Time"**

*Stress is the biggest relapse trigger for many people in recovery. One of the most well-known mantras of AA, "One day at a time," refers to the focus, patience, and persistence necessary to tackle addiction. Considering sobriety a day-to-day endeavor puts focus on the task at hand, easing anxiety about the future, and regret over the past. Put a bit more bluntly by AA members, "When you've got one foot in yesterday and the other in tomorrow, you can only piss on today." Having a resentment is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. Some of the most common quotes from AA are regarding the relationships of those in recovery. Self-awareness and problem solving is the key to finding peace. AA members are encouraged to embrace the things that can't be changed and work toward changing the things that can. Many AA quotes support this mindset, including:*

- *"What other people think of you is none of your business."*
- *"I've found that you can not save your ass and your face at the same time."*
- *"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."*
- *"The healthy person finds happiness in helping others. Thus, for him, unselfishness is selfish."*

*Changing things that can be controlled is an empowering experience. Many people in recovery are to face conflicts without the assistance of alcohol. Mantras such as these allow a "go-to" mentality, and help keep thoughts and actions in check.*

# From the Chair...

Hello NIA! We have survived the worst of Winter, and I look forward to all we have coming our way in the Spring and Summer.

Our Editor has asked me to highlight what is different about the Chair position to the other Area positions I have held. The Chair position is an experience you must not miss. In other positions, I came to appreciate the previous holders very much, and extra so in this one.

The one thing that is different about the Chair position is the ability to bring about some amount of change. In December 2023, as I was about to rotate in, I decided that an Area Inventory was needed. While it is certainly not unique to NIA that we do not have optimum attendance at Assemblies, Committee Meetings and Area functions, there had to be something we could do to find out WHY. The first idea that came to mind is that we, as an Area, don't educate new people in service enough to the responsibilities of their position. We, me included, often forget how it was to be new to service, and the things that a new GSR, DCM or District Committee chair do not know. We cannot force attendance, but we can educate as to why it is necessary. From there, it is, of course, the individual's choice.

That idea was proven true by the results of the Inventory. There are things we need to explain better. Pre- General Service Conference. What is it? How does it happen? Why should I be there? The NIA site, the Primary Purpose Register, and the concept of service sponsorship are all points that were on the Inventory as things people in service wanted to know more about.

At the first Area Committee meeting of the year, we broke out to explain how to use the NIA website, and the importance of the Pre- General Service Conference Workshop. Thank you to Scott, our Web Administrator and to

Marilyn, our Past Delegate, for leading the breakout. Earlier in the main room, our Alternate Delegate Lisa led the annual Service Orientation. We have been going from District to District for the past year, along with Aaron, the Alternate Chair, to carry this service message as well.

I am hoping that 2025 will be a full year of further consideration and education of the new person to service, and that we will continue to get more involvement.

Dawn B.

NIA 20 Panel 74 Chair



# Father Ed Dowling



Father Ed Dowling was a Jesuit priest who played a pivotal role in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), particularly through his work with Bill W., the co-founder of the organization. His story is one of faith, service, and compassion, and his contributions to the recovery movement continue to be remembered by AA members and those who benefit from the program's principles.

Ed Dowling was born in 1906 in St. Louis, Missouri. Before becoming a Jesuit priest, Dowling pursued studies in philosophy and theology. His intellectual and spiritual grounding in the Catholic Church helped him develop a deep sense of empathy for those struggling with addiction. In the early 1940s, while working as a Jesuit priest in St. Louis, Father Dowling began to come into contact with individuals facing severe alcohol dependence. His personal encounter with alcoholism and his growing understanding of the disease led him to cross paths with Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bill Wilson, often referred to as Bill W., had struggled with alcoholism for much of his life. His journey to sobriety culminated in the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, alongside Dr. Bob Smith, with the aim of offering a new approach to helping people fight alcohol addiction. By the time Father Dowling met Bill W. in 1940, AA had already begun to grow, and its central principles had begun to take shape. Bill W. had found in the program an approach that encouraged individuals to take personal responsibility for their recovery through a combination of self-awareness, mutual support, and a higher power.

Father Dowling's introduction to Bill W. and AA came through a mutual acquaintance, Dr. Bob. The relationship between the two men grew out of shared values of service and support for individuals battling addiction. Father Dowling, known for his kindness and compassionate spirit, felt a strong pull toward Bill W.'s work. He recognized that AA's 12-Step approach aligned with the Jesuit focus on spirituality, humility, and community. However, Dowling also saw the spiritual component of AA as one that could transcend specific religious denominations, offering a universal path to healing for individuals from all walks of life.

One of Father Dowling's most important contributions to AA was his role as a spiritual advisor and confidant to Bill W. and other AA members. Although Father Dowling did not formally become a member of AA, his influence within the organization was significant. He encouraged Bill W. and other members to integrate the spiritual principles of AA into their lives, without limiting the program to any one religious framework. Dowling's insights helped shape the broader spiritual philosophy that AA continues to embrace today—an approach that allows for personal interpretations of a higher power while fostering a sense of humility, surrender, and personal growth.

Father Dowling's spiritual guidance went beyond just AA members. He also played an instrumental role in helping to create bridges between the Catholic Church and Alcoholics Anonymous. In an era when addiction was often viewed as a moral failing, Father Dowling advocated for a more compassionate, non-judgmental view of alcoholism. He sought to bridge the gap between organized religion and AA's unorthodox approach to recovery, which often didn't align with traditional religious teachings. By doing so, Dowling helped expand AA's reach, particularly among Catholic members, and helped lay the foundation for the program's growth beyond the confines of traditional religious institutions.

In his later years, Father Dowling continued his work with Alcoholics Anonymous until his death in 1960. His influence on Bill W. and the development of AA's spiritual principles is still felt today. Father Ed Dowling's legacy is a testament to the power of compassion, humility, and spiritual guidance in overcoming addiction. His collaboration with Bill W. was not just a partnership between two individuals, but rather a union of two paths toward healing and personal transformation, leaving a lasting imprint on the worldwide recovery community.



# From the NIA 20 Mailbag...

**Q.** Dear NIA,  
My husband is finally sober,  
but he goes to so many  
meetings! When will he stop  
needing meetings?  
Signed,  
*Worried Wife*

**A.** Dear *Worried Wife*,  
You'd be more worried if he  
stopped going to meetings.  
Read the BB until you find the  
answer.

**Q.** Dear NIA,  
Why doesn't my sponsee call me  
every day like I told her?  
Signed,  
*New Sponsor*

**A.** Dear *New Sponsor*,  
Suggestions, not orders.

**Q.** Dear NIA,  
I wish AAs would overwhelm the  
Concepts with articles about their  
experience, strength and hope in the  
program to share with NIA.  
Signed,  
*The Editors*

**A.** Dear *Editors*,  
Wishing is not action. Just ask!

**Q.** Dear NIA,  
Who monitors meeting  
attendance at AA meetings?  
Signed,  
*Curious*

**A.** Dear *Curious*,  
Your Higher Power.

# A.A. International Convention

## *90 Years - Language of the Heart*

July 3 - 6, 2025  
Vancouver, BC, Canada



There is still time to register and attend A.A.'s 90th Anniversary Celebration!

Did you know our room blocks are constantly being updated? Keep checking back to see what becomes available! Register here! <https://www.aa.org/international-convention>

### ***What each attendee can expect?***

Take part in the Thursday night party, flag ceremony, the stadium meetings and the Saturday night old timers' meeting.

Over 20+ Hospitality suites, collecting pins and how some people bring some to trade or share.

Over 250 different meetings to pick from. The types of meetings that take place are clergy panels, international, and of course, A.A. topic related.

There are marathon meetings overnight for those who can sleep after the convention is over!

Grapevine is onsite, we have a carry the message pavilion and the infamous GSO archives display.

The Saturday night old timer's meeting is so special, A.A. member attendees with a certain number of years of sobriety, usually around 50+, sign up starting on Thursday. Then, Saturday night, all those attendees who signed up sit together and random names are drawn for them to come up to the Stadium Podium and share for about 8 minutes how they have stayed sober. Amazing shares ensue, as you can imagine.

We understand many have never experienced an International Convention. With 10 years since the last convention, we have lost a lot of knowledge about what to expect, people think it is like their local round-up or state convention. NO.

This is the chance to hear from non-alcoholic professionals directly, international attendees, archives display – the things you don't get at other events. The clock is ticking towards the 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia start date on July 3, 2025, through July 6, 2025, and there is so much excitement to share.

Patrick C.  
International Convention Coordinator

## Why am I attending the 2025 A.A. International in Vancouver?



“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance – that principle is contempt prior to investigation.” Herbert Spencer

I heard this quote in meetings long before I read it on the bottom of page 568 in our Big Book. Found in Appendices II - Spiritual Experience; it encourages us to stop limiting the growth of our recovery with our fear of the unknown and unwillingness to change.

There was a time in my sobriety that I would not consider attending any AA conference. Time, my kids and the cost were all factors not to go. As time passed, I felt a little more freedom to take part. I found that every local, state, and national event I attended would be worth it! I would return with the CD package or a t-shirt and stories to share. But the International? Too big, too scary.

Then the door of possibility opened. One of my favorite friends in AA, who navigates the unknown well, was attending. I had only one more hurdle to clear. My family reunion is usually scheduled at the same time as the International. To my surprise, this year the family reunion is mid-July. My Higher Power presented the opportunity to attend the International in 2025!

I am not comfortable in crowds; I still do not have my passport as I write these words, and I do not like to do things I have not done before. I challenged this unnecessary mental exercise and listened to my Higher Power. I have registered for the event and so the growth opportunity Begins!

*Taking place once every five years, the A.A. International Convention marks the anniversary of Bill W.'s first meeting with Dr. Bob and the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935. A.A. members and their families and friends from around the globe attend the event. At the International Convention people attend meetings, workshops, dances, and events. A highlight is the traditional flag ceremony to celebrate sobriety worldwide. -AA.org*

I am going to experience something I should not miss. I will be at the International to celebrate the 90 years since Bill sat down and talked to Bob! The opportunity for all our recovery started then - as Bob listened to Bill. They walked out of that meeting and began to create our history. Both men tirelessly nurtured and protected this chance we have at a life beyond the darkness of alcoholism. I hope to see you in Vancouver BC!

-Anonymous



## Upcoming Events and Service Opportunities

**March 1, 2025**

### **2025 Spring Assembly**

*Hosted by District 70*

First Covenant Church  
316 Wood Rd  
Rockford, IL 61107  
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

8:00 Fellowship  
9:00 Meeting Begins

The Area Assembly Conducts the primary business of the Northern IL Delegate Area (Area 20). The Area Assembly is made up of the Area GSRs, and the Area Committee Members and we meet on a quarterly basis. The Assembly, through its officers and service committees, is involved in many opportunities to carry the message. There are reports from the Delegate and other officers as well as service committee chairs. The agenda will include a business meeting which will include items of interest within the Area or within AA. GSRs, Officers and service committee chairs will hold breakout sessions which will include people involved in specific areas of service. Many opportunities to better understand the service structure as well as to be active in it are available to GSRs.



**April 5, 2025**

### **2025 Pre-General Service Conference Workshop**

*Hosted by District 73*

Dixon Elks Lodge  
1279 Franklin Grove Rd.  
Dixon, IL 61021  
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

8:00 Fellowship  
9:00 Meeting Begins

Committee Breakouts the Week Prior

The aim of the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop is to present a well-informed group conscience to our Delegate in preparation for his/her trip to the General Service Conference (GSC) in New York, specifically on those items that are listed as Agenda items for the Conference.

The Workshop is a standalone event that is hosted by a district within the area in a manner similar to that of the assembly. Please refer to the Procedures for District Hosting Area Meetings for planning purposes. Issues that Groups or Districts feel should be discussed at the GSC should be brought to the Area, or directly to GSO, well in advance to provide ample time for the Group, District, or Area concerns to be considered on the Conference Agenda.

Traditionally Northern Illinois Area 20 has followed the guidelines as suggested by the General Service Office for assignment to committees. However, the Delegate, in consultation with the Area committee chairs, determines the conference committee chair assignments.

**March 16, 2025**

### **2026 Spring Conference Committee Meeting**

EDI Club  
18 W. Streamwood Blvd  
Streamwood, IL 60107  
2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

In person and ZOOM  
Meeting ID: 956-798-0705  
Passcode: 160390

## PROCEDURES FOR THE PRE-GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

These procedures are being written to describe the function of the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop (“Workshop”) and to clarify the responsibilities of our trusted servants in preparation for and during the workshop. The NIA Committee or the appropriate officers may alter these procedures at any time. The aim of the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop is to present a well- informed group conscience to our Delegate in preparation for his/her trip to the General Service Conference (GSC) in New York, specifically on those items which are listed as Agenda items for the Conference. The Workshop is a standalone event that is hosted by a District within the Area in a similar manner to the Assemblies. For planning purposes, please refer to the Procedures for District Hosting Area Meetings.

Issues which Groups or Districts feel should be discussed at the GSC should be brought to the Area, or directly to GSO, well in advance to provide ample time for the Group, District or Area concerns to be considered on the Conference Agenda.

Traditionally Northern Illinois Area 20 has followed the guidelines as suggested by the General Service Office for assignment to committees. However the Delegate, in consultation with the Area committee chairs, determines the conference committee chair assignments.

### Suggested Assignments

<b>Conference Committee</b>	<b>Area Service Committee</b>	<b>Chairperson</b>
Agenda	GSRs	Alt. Chairperson
C.P.C.	C.P.C.	C.P.C. Chair
Corrections	Corrections	Corrections Chair
Finance	Treasurer	Treasurer
Grapevine	Grapevine	Grapevine Chair
Literature	Literature, Concepts	Literature Chair
Policy/Admission	Secretary, Registrar	Secretary
Public Information	Public Information	P.I. Chair
Treatment, Facilities, Special Needs	Treatment, Facilities, Special Needs	T.F. Chair, S.N. Chair
Report & Charter	DCMs	Alt. Delegate
Trustee	Past Delegates	A Past Delegate
International Conventions & Regional Forums	Answering Service	A.S. Chair
Archives	Archives	Archives Chair

As soon as the Delegate receives the Final Conference Agenda and background material, he/she will make full copies of the electronic versions using current media such as cds and deliver to the Alternate Delegate. The Alternate Delegate then mails electronic versions of the background material to each DCM and Area Committee Service Chairperson, along with a printed copy of the Agenda.

The Delegate, Alternate and Past Delegates are available to assist committee chairs, DCMs or other trusted servants with additional background on issues, relative importance of various agenda items etc.

#### Committee Chairs

- Chairs of the committee meetings at the Workshop should be well informed about the agenda items that their committee will be discussing.
- Chairs should read all background material provided by the Delegate, Alternate Delegate and/or GSO.
- If there are any questions about agenda items these should be addressed well in advance and clarification or additional background information sought from our Delegate, his/her Alternate, Past Delegates and/or directly from GSO.
- This information should be disseminated to all committee members, in particular the District committee chairs, at the earliest possible time so that they can review it with their local committees prior to the Workshop.
- During the Workshop it is the Chairs' responsibility to review GSC agenda items with his/her committee and to prepare a summary of the discussion including the "Sense of the Committee" to be presented at the general session at the end of the Workshop.
- The committees will have up to two (2) hours to discuss the Agenda items. Many Agenda items are simple housekeeping or status reports on on-going activities that may require little or no discussion. The Chair should exercise some judgment as to what the more important issues facing his/her committee are and be sure that these are given ample discussion.
- A secretary should be appointed for the committee to condense the deliberations into a written report, given by the committee chair to the Assembly, who will have up to ten minutes to report, continue discussion, and recommend any "sense of the meeting" votes.
- Again, the essential role of the Chair is to ensure that both the Committee and the Assembly are well informed.

#### Committee Secretaries – Reporting to the Assembly

- The committee secretaries will be appointed by the committee chairs at the start of the workshop to take notes that need to be condensed into a report to the Assembly.
- Please keep your report to 10 minutes.
- The report should include some detail of the discussion, pro and con, that led to the "Sense of the Committee" so that other members of the Assembly are well informed during the process of arriving at a "Sense of the Assembly".
- The report will be followed by questions from the floor, after which comments from the floor will be heard. At any time, any member of the Assembly may ask the chairman to take a "Sense of the Assembly" on an issue. The vote tally will be recorded for the Delegate's information, but is not in any way binding on the
- Delegate at the GSC.
- The Secretary must provide a written summary of the "Sense of the Committee" to be handed into the Area secretary so that the Delegate can bring it to the GSC.

#### DCMs

DCMs should do their utmost to provide the Conference Agenda to their groups as early as possible so that the groups have ample time to arrive at a well-informed group conscience. If the groups need additional information on any issues the DCM is their primary contact to get this information. If the DCM needs further information he/she can contact the Chair responsible for that portion of the Agenda,

the Delegate or Alternate, Past Delegates or GSO directly. Although the Groups can, and should, be represented at the workshop directly by their GSRs, this is often not the case. Thus the DCM will need to carry the “Sense of the District” to the Workshop so that the Delegate hears the voice of the Groups in his/her area. If your District has a particularly strong opinion on an issue it is helpful if the DCM provides a written summary to the Delegate, who is typically overwhelmed with information during the Workshop. Finally, the DCM should encourage all GSRs to attend, and actively participate in, the Workshop, emphasizing that their Group’s voice is important, that they will be heard by their Delegate and that this input will go with the Delegate to the GSC.

## GSRs

The GSR is the most critical link in the chain between the Conference and the Groups. It is during the Workshop that the conscience of each Group can, and should, be presented to the Delegate and shared with the Area. In order for the Group to arrive at a well-informed Group Conscience, the GSR will need to bring the Agenda items and background to the Group for discussion. In most cases Group members will need some time to consider Agenda items, and/or additional background or clarification, so it is best to get the Agenda to the Group members as early as possible to allow time for discussion, fact- finding and arrival at a well-informed Group Conscience.

Some Groups hold business meetings dedicated to discussion of the Conference Agenda, while others simply discuss the Agenda as part of their normal monthly business meetings. Most Groups do not feel that this discussion should be conducted during the normal AA meeting time. If additional information is requested, the DCM, Delegate, Committee Chairs and GSO can provide this. The Workshop is in many ways the most critical experience for any GSR to participate in on behalf of his/her Group. If the GSR does not participate directly in the Workshop, then the Conscience of their Group will be diluted or lost within the voice of the District presented by the DCM. If a Group has a particularly strong opinion on an issue it is helpful if the GSR provides a written summary to the Delegate, who is typically overwhelmed with information during the Workshop.

## Sample Agenda for NIA Pre-General Service Workshop

- 8:00am: Registration
- 9:00am: Quiet Time, Welcome, Anniversaries, Newcomers, Concepts, Announcements
- 9:15am: Explanation of what will happen in break-out rooms
- 9:30am – 11:30 am Pre-Conference Committee Breakout Meetings
- 11:30am: Open Mike (3 minute limit)
- 12:00pm: Lunch
- 12:45pm: Explanation of what will happen in second half of meeting
- 1:00pm: Pre-Conference Workshop Reports & Discussion
- Adjourn - closing prayer





Visit the  
NIA20  
Webpage



Join the  
Zoom  
Meeting



# PLAIN LANGUAGE BIG BOOK STUDY GROUP

sponsored by the

## NIA20 ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEE

Sunday nights at 7:00pm (CT)  
starting February 16, 2025

Join us on Sunday nights for a weekly meeting where we will read and study the new Plain Language Big Book. This will be an ongoing meeting to get through the whole book.

**Zoom Meeting ID: 834 1687 9125**    **Passcode: access**  
Questions? Contact Chris E. – NIA20 Access. Comm. Chair  
**847-847-8319** or [accessibilities@aa-nia.org](mailto:accessibilities@aa-nia.org)

Accessibilities Committees explore, develop, and offer resources to alcoholics with significant barriers to receiving the A.A. message and to participating in our program of recovery. We want A.A. to be available to all alcoholics who reach out for it.