

# CONCEPTS

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Northern Illinois Area, LTD. Area 20 Service Letter

Summer 2021

## SUBSTANTIAL UNANIMITY – BEING OF ONE MIND

### AND THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIFTH BALLOT

The topic of the Spiritual Significance of the Fifth Ballot is a topic I have wanted to write about and submit to our Concepts Newsletter for each Summer Edition prior to our Area Elections since 2015. The weekend of February 27 – March 1, I travelled with friends to the 2015 West Central Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Conference in Norfolk, Nebraska. This has always been an enlightening event for me whenever I was able to attend, but this year had something special that moved me. It was a short impromptu moment just after their Trustee's Report, A Past West Central Regional Trustee was encouraged to go to the microphone and share about an experience he had.

But first I'd like to share with you a brief version of the history that evolved into our Third Legacy Voting Procedure. Before the first General Service Conference there were early talks of Committees and/or Groups selecting candidates for Delegate then draw lots to see which nominee would be the Service Conference delegate.

Which evolved to: from "Your Third Legacy: Will You Accept It?" Pages 24-25. "Delegates and alternates will be chosen by election or by lot, or by a combination of these methods. But if elected, a delegate ought to be chosen by a majority of two-thirds because all delegates should feel themselves servants of world A.A. rather than marginal victors of troublesome political contests." From "Pass It On", pages 348 and 349 - "In April 1951, a few months after Bill completed his speaking tour, the First General Service Conference met in New York City. Its theme, chosen by Bill, was "Not to Govern, but to Serve." There were 35 delegates on the first panel, and their general meetings were held at the Commodore Hotel. Bill was gratified to note that about a third of the delegates were real old-timers, and the rest were active members sober four to eight years. Best of all, he was encouraged that the majority of them had been chosen by the two-thirds vote provision; only a few of the elections had had to "go to the hat." Which brings us to what we have today, our current Third Legacy Procedures pages S21-S23 of our "A.A. Service Manual".

So back to Norfolk Nebraska, this Past West Central Regional Trustee is urged to the microphone to talk of an experience he had that he shared earlier in the week to a small group of indi-

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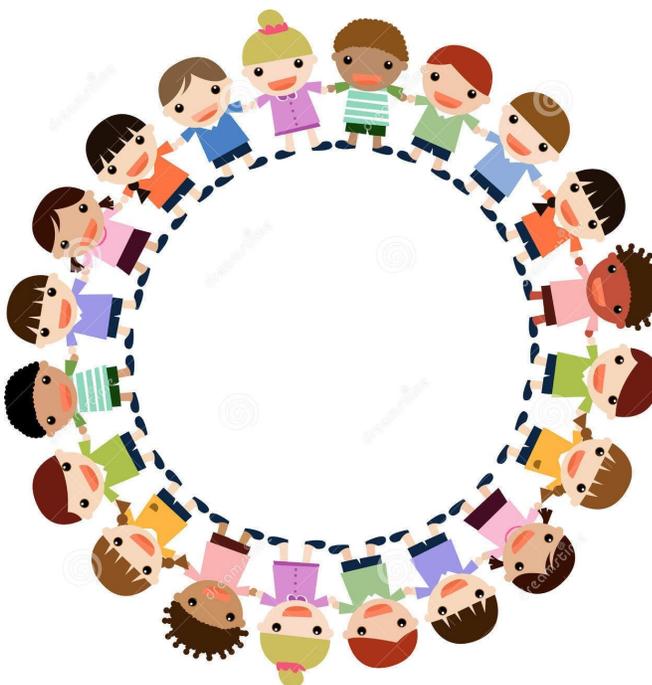
viduals. He talked of being a first year Delegate and having a conversation with Dr. Jack Norris, past Non-alcoholic Trustee and General Service Board Chairperson, also, who we owe gratitude for his idea of Regional Forums. Carl had thought often about going to the fifth ballot instead of going to the hat, because the count never seemed to change between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ballots, and he shared this thought with Dr. Jack, who shared this from his long history with Alcoholics Anonymous as a Board Member from 1951 – 1978. Bill Wilson put a lot of efforts to find a way to have complete substantial unanimity in all our decisions. We built in an opportunity in everything we did to do that



except we had a hard time to make it work in our elections. The desire was to keep politics out of the decisions. Our Third Legacy Procedure is our way of keeping politics out of our voting. And it is in that special time between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ballot that we should take some time for pause and prayer. If we see that the voting body has equal confidence in both candidates, then possibly “the hat” is the only solution. But if one candidate is possibly just shy of 2/3 substantial unanimity then possibly the 5<sup>th</sup> ballot is our opportunity to make a spiritual sacrifice, to make sure that we try to get things right. It’s a personal thing with you, and you may have to be willing to make that sacrifice. You can always hold out, hoping that you get your way, and go to the hat. And if you are in the minority, you might get your way. But then do you believe that what you want is the best for Alcoholics Anonymous? The 9<sup>th</sup> Concept talks about choosing the best possible candidate for Alcoholics Anonymous. Is it possible that the other candidate, that is just shy of 2/3 vote could maybe do an equally good or better job than your minority candidate? With these thoughts, is it possible to consider in the name of Unity, that this may be time for you to consider the qualities of the other candidate? PAUSE AND PRAYER. I know that I have thought the same as Carl did about why do we bother moving to the 5<sup>th</sup> ballot because the vote never seems to change. I have enjoyed looking at a small part of our history. I hope you thought it interesting too.

Rich H, Area 20 Panel 62 Past Delegate

Concepts is published four times a year in the Spring, Summer, Fall , and Winter just prior to the Area’s Assemblies. It is posted on the Area Website in both English and Spanish. If you would like to receive a copy via email please send your request to the Concepts Editor by clicking this [link](#) or using the Contact Us page of the Area Website. Happy reading.



## GSR Preamble

We are the General Service Representatives.

We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A.

We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God expressed in our group’s conscience.

As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience.

As trusted servants, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship.

Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance to listen while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our groups as a whole.

# Working With Others

I was a little less than a year sober when I was asked to work with another woman in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had already worked all twelve steps with my own sponsor and had begun to practice the principles of the program in my daily life. I had experienced several powerful spiritual awakenings, although they were far more in line with the educational variety that are referenced in the appendix "Spiritual Experience" than anything resembling a white light moment. I had been showing up early to meetings to help set up and being of service afterwards to help clean up. I thought I was ready to take that next step of working with others and carrying a message of experience, strength, and hope to another.



So why did I feel so inadequate?

It was suggested that I would be good sponsor for this particular newcomer, as we shared a similar story and she felt comfortable during times we had spent together in group settings. She expressed a willingness to work with me, something she had refused to do in the past with others. Yet, I was still hesitant. And scared. I remember clearly asking my sponsor "But what if I break her?" And after my sponsor finished laughing, she responded that most of us are already pretty broken when we get here. She also said God would guide us both and she was not wrong.

That was my introduction to working with others. I have worked with many amazing women since that first newcomer, and each has taught me countless life lessons. Lessons of love, patience, sacrifice, unselfishness, and tolerance among them. Our literature tells us that practically every A.A. member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done. "To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch these people awoken to the presence of a loving God in their lives—these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.'s message to the next alcoholic."



# In his Words

Bill W

General Service Conference Talk 1968

“In A.A. we have a principle: let’s live one day at a time. Yesterday is gone, today is here and the future is not yet with us. In that trite little statement there is a great deal of wisdom. But like so many of our familiar cliches, it doesn't cover all of the territory and can still leave us rather cockeyed on the subject of time. I make these few observations . . . For example, clearly if a person is all the time in the past—whether with guilt, whether with remorse, or wishing for the good old days when he could drink like a gentleman—no progress at all is possible. At best he becomes a conservative who is against all change. On the other hand, if I live in today in a really absolute sense—and forget about yesterday, and think nothing about tomorrow—I become a creature of pure expediency and get nowhere. On the contrary, if I’m always pondering the future, I’m out of the reality of today. So, if you make these too-thorough divisions of time and label the present as good, the past as rather bad and the future as not something to be concerned with, I think we’re out of balance. Time is a stream of consciousness, and we came on it out of the past through today, and we go out into the future.”

## Walk Through the Big Book

### The Doctor’s Opinion:

Bill thought it necessary to include a medical perspective to the book. He had spent time with Doctor Silkworth during his three hospitalizations and respected his opinion regarding alcoholism. As has been indicated many times, Dr. Silkworth provided Bill with the problem the same way that Ebby provided him with the solution. Without the one, the second wouldn’t been needed, appreciated, or attempted.

Dr. Silkworth was a long-time provider of treatment for alcoholism at Towns Hospital in New York City. In his words: “I have specialized in the treatment of alcoholism for many years”. You could say, “he knows what he is talking about.” He writes about his experience with Bill and Bill’s “[acquiring] certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery.” And that “these facts appear to be of extreme medical importance; because of the extraordinary possibilities of rapid growth inherent in this group they may mark a new epoch in the annals of alcoholism.”

Bill indicates that, as pointed out by Dr. Silkworth, “the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind” and that “any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.” This is part of the problem. It is not good enough to be told that an alcoholic can’t control their drinking “just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives.” The physical component needs to be stressed.

Dr. Silkworth added a second letter, written years after Bill had been there, where he first gives his credentials: “I say this after many years’ experience as Medical Director of one of the oldest



hospitals in the country treating alcohol and drug addiction.” I believe that makes him qualified for us to listen to him. He writes: “We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker.” Dr. Silkworth believed that once alcohol is put into the body of an alcoholic this phenomenon of craving takes effect and the person is no longer able to control his drinking. They crave more despite becoming intoxicated. Where a normal drinker would say to themselves, “this is enough” the alcoholics body craves more.

The doctor goes on to talk about the problem with not drinking. If having a drink causes the phenomenon of craving then just don’t drink, right? But the alcoholic has another problem, the obsession of the mind. “Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alco-

holic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks – drinks which they see others taking with impunity.” This is the obsession of the mind.

So, for the alcoholic, the problem is two-fold. On the one hand, if I drink, I set off the phenomenon of craving and can't stop drinking. On the other hand, if I am not drinking, I get restless, irritable and discontented and obsess until I start dinking again. This is the vicious cycle of the alcoholic. I can't drink – I can't not drink!

But that is not the real problem. “Faced with this problem, if a doctor is honest with himself, he must sometime feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, it often is not enough. One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change. Though the aggregate of recoveries resulting from psychiatric effort is considerable, we physicians must admit we have made little impression upon the problem as a whole. Many types do not respond to ordinary psychological approach.”

The doctor, once again, indicates the conundrum that an alcoholic is in. On the one hand if I drink, I can't stop drinking and on the other hand I can't not drink. “This immediately precipitates us into a seething cauldron of debate. Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians, the general opinion seems to be the most chronic alcoholics are doomed. What is the solution? Perhaps I can best answer this by relating one of my experiences.” The doctor goes on to describe his encounter with another alcoholic. “About one year prior to this experience the

man was brought in to be treated for chronic alcoholism. He had been partially recovered from a gastric hemorrhage and seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. He had lost everything worthwhile in life and was only living, one might say, to drink. He frankly admitted in believe that for him there was no hope. Following the elimination of alcohol, there was found to be no permanent brain injury. He accepted the plan outlined in this book. One year later he called to see me, and I experienced a very strange sensation. I knew the man by name, and partly recognized his features, but there all resemblance in the. From a trembling, despairing, nervous wreck, had emerged a man brimming over with self-reliance and content. I talked with him for some time, but was not able to bring myself to feel that I have known you before. To me he was a stranger, and so he left me. A long time has passed with no return to alcohol.”

The doctor's opinion is clear. Chronic alcoholics suffer from a bodily and mental illness. Once alcohol is ingested the phenomenon of craving takes over and when not drinking the restless, irritable, and discontentment takeover and they obsess until they start drinking again. Dr. Silkworth was convinced the only solution for chronic alcoholics was a complete psychic change; that no human power, including doctors, psychiatrists, or psychologists, would be able to help. It is the epitome of being between the rock and the hard place.

“The general opinion seems to be the most chronic alcoholics are doomed.” The good news is there is a solution.



## GRAPEVINE CORNER

# Are You a Part of Our AA Grapevine Community?

You are if you enjoy reading our monthly magazine! That enjoyment can be increased by participation in other Grapevine activities singly and with other AA's. At the end of 2020, the NIA 20 Grapevine Committee started a monthly virtual GV workshop on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00pm with a commitment until the December 2021. Terry M. and Sandy C. asked if the area would sponsor this workshop and we have been meeting ever since.

### What is presented?

The workshop monthly topic follows the Grapevine Special Section topics. Future topics for the next three months are:

JULY- Prison Issue - Stories by members and prisoners about how AA brings hope into prisons and jails.

AUGUST- Sober Seniors - What are some challenges you have getting older in AA?

SEPTEMBER -Young & Sober - Did you come into AA at an early age? What was that like?

The meeting **opens** usually with tidbits of AA and Grapevine History that Terry digs up from the Archives. We then **listen** to an audio story selection from that month's issue, and may **discuss** and generally **share** about the topic. Sandy presents navigating the AA website and points out updated items and ways to get involved.

### How does it Help?

Providing the workshop on a regular basis reinforces our primary purpose of carrying the message to AA's who may not be or are only vaguely familiar with the Grapevine magazine and its' contents. It is a powerful tool in our tool kit. I was not personally aware of the Grapevine until I was six months sober and saw one on a table at a meeting. I am a voracious reader and I picked it up and was on a mission to read back issues and looked for Grapevines at every meeting I went to.! The message is the same, only the year and current events are different.

I echo what our Grapevine Board Chair Josh B. said in the May 2021 GV issue – *"I was one of those guys who had the magazine just show up at my house, only to find out that my sponsor had gotten me the subscription. I was told "You need a Big Book and*



*a Grapevine Subscription; that's part of taking your seat." I challenge us to say and do the same.*

### What else?

As a direct result of these workshops, I incorporated using the monthly 'discussion' rotation of our Stepsisters meeting on Friday nights to reading a Grapevine story from the current issue, to discuss, thereby acquainting more AAs with the wonderful current shares of our members. There are always **Discussion Topic** suggestions with some stories, in case you have a quiet group!

### And?

Fellowship online, please join us! Check the NIA calendar for login info.

## Free Daily Quote



Sign up to receive Grapevine's Daily Quote to your inbox

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## Be A Grapevine Chair/Rep for your Group!

Grapevine Representatives are the link between AA Grapevine and the groups. It's a fun way to get involved! All you have to do is announce the latest issue at your meeting, let people know how they can participate by sending in stories, or jokes. It's easy to get started. Simply let your homegroup know that you are interested. Register with us online and you will receive complete information kit from the Grapevine office.

Whether you are a newcomer to AA or a long-time subscriber, learn more about all of the ways you can participate!

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/get-involved>

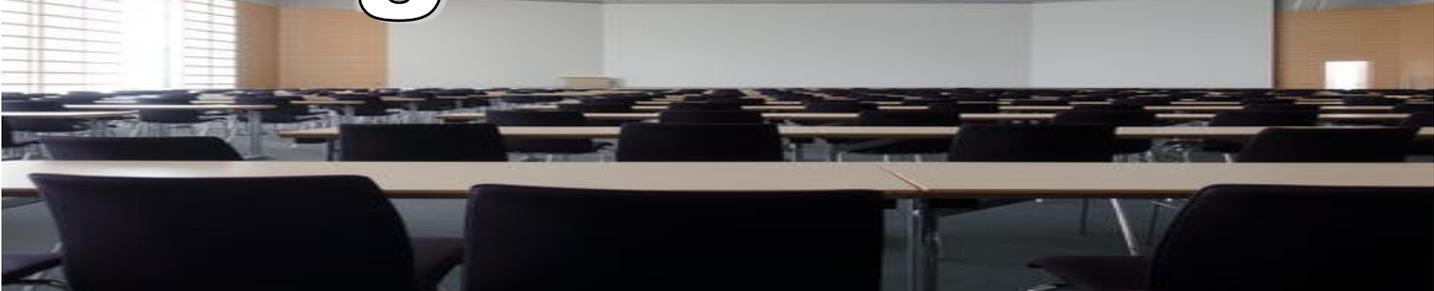
Have a wonderful sober summer!

Happy Reading,

Your Area Grapevine Chair.



# Delegate's Corner



## Why do we have Traditions?

Last week at my meeting we were discussing Tradition Five. We talked about singleness of purpose and the “Washingtonian Movement.” The phrase “singleness of purpose” can be found in the account of the Fifth Tradition in the “Twelve and Twelve.” Tradition Five itself reads “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” Our Preamble, printed in the grapevine, also discusses singleness of purpose: “Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.” The chapters on Traditions Five and Six in the “Twelve and Twelve” eloquently describe how absolutely essential this concept is to the survival of A.A., stating “The very life of our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.”

The “Twelve and Twelve” goes on (in the chapter on Tradition Ten) to describe the Washingtonian Movement, a nineteenth-century movement among alcoholics that was, initially, similar to A.A. in many ways. Over one hundred thousand alcoholics sobered up with the Washingtonians, before the movement self-destructed in the chaos caused by involvement in a myriad of issues unrelated, or only remotely related, to alcoholism. Lacking singleness of purpose, the movement collapsed. The experience of the Washingtonians provides compelling evidence for the importance of A.A. focusing directly and exclusively on the issue of alcoholism.

The Washingtonian movement was a 19th-century temperance fellowship founded on Thursday, April 2, 1840 by six alcoholics at Chase's Tavern on Liberty Street in Baltimore, Maryland. The idea was that by relying on each other, sharing their alcoholic experiences and creating an atmosphere of conviviality, they could keep each other sober. Total abstinence from alcohol was their goal. The group taught sobriety and preceded Alcoholics Anonymous by almost a century. Members sought out other “drunkards”, told them their experiences with alcohol abuse and how the Society had helped them achieve sobriety. With the passage of time the Society became a prohibitionist organization in that it promoted the legal and mandatory prohibition of alco-

holic beverages.

Washingtonians at their peak numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly as high as 600,000. However, in the space of just a few years, this society all but disappeared because they became fragmented in their primary purpose, becoming involved with all manner of controversial social reforms including prohibition, sectarian religion, politics and abolition of slavery. The new Washingtonians made this pledge. We whose names are **annexed, desirous of forming a society for our mutual benefit, and to guard against a pernicious practice which is injurious to our health, standing, and families, do** pledge ourselves **as gentlemen that** we will not drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider.

They decided to meet weekly. Each member was to bring a potential member to the following meeting. The president suggested that each member describe his own experience with alcohol. He began with his own story of heavy drinking for 15 years. He ended by describing the benefits he enjoyed with abstinence. Others did the same. This became a popular feature of the meetings. As a result, membership grew quickly.

A newspaper editor attended one of the meetings. He wrote that “The peculiar characteristics of this great reform are first, a total abstinence pledge.... Secondly, the telling of others what they know from experience of the evils of intemperance, and the good which they feel to result from entire abstinence.”

While I was at the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference last month, I witnessed our singleness of purpose in action. I saw Tradition Five working in all of the agenda items that were discussed and voted on. If A.A. did not have these valuable traditions that Bill W. gave us we could very possibly waste away like The Washingtonian Movement wasted away. None of us want that.

I am grateful to be sober in A.A. and that we have these traditions to keep our fellowship strong.

Marilyn F.



## Is A.A. For You

Only you can decide whether you want to give Alcoholics Anonymous a try—whether you think it can help you. We who are in A.A. came because we finally gave up trying to control our drinking. We still hated to admit that we could never drink safely. Then we heard from other A.A. members that we were sick. (We thought so for years!) We found out that many people suffered from the same feelings of guilt and loneliness and hopelessness that we did. We found out that we had these feelings because we had the disease of alcoholism. We decided to try to face up to what alcohol had done to us. There are some of questions we tried to answer *honestly* ([www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), search “Is A.A. for you”). If we answered YES to four or more questions, we were in deep trouble with our drinking. See how you do. Remember, there is no disgrace in facing up to the fact that you have a problem.

## What is NIA?

The principal function of Northern Illinois service Area 20 is to be a forum for effective communication between the Groups and the General Service Conference through its Delegate. In addition to counseling its Delegate about the collective Group Conscience of the Fellowship in Northern Illinois, NIA will assist its Districts, Groups and members to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers in a broad variety of ways, including but not restricted to conducting workshops, sharing sessions and seminars in all fields of general service.

## NIA Statement on Self-Support

Our Seventh Tradition states that “Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” Northern Illinois Area 20 wants our fellowship to endure, and be ready for the still-suffering alcoholic to come. NIA makes this possible by taking care of its essential services such as website. The groups and districts in Area 20 fund this website thru their continued contributions and support. For additional information see the A.A. pamphlet regarding self-support.

## NIA Statement on Singleness of Purpose

Our Third and Fifth Traditions state that “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.” “Each Group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. And as a Fellowship we do one thing only: “- share our program of recovery.”



## 2021 Events

### All Areas Open Meeting for Accessibility Committee Members @ Virtual via Zoom

- June 26th**      Summer Assembly and Board Meeting - Virtual via Zoom - [registration](#)
- Aug 14th**      Summer Committee Meeting - Details to be posted on the Area website
- Aug 20-22**     East Central Regional Conference [Save the Date Flyer](#)
- Aug 27/28th**   48th Annual Illinois State Conference - [Save the Date Flyer](#)
- Sept 18th**     Fall Election Assembly and Board Meeting—Details to be posted on the Area website

**Please Note:** At this time, all events are subject to be cancelled, postponed, or attended through a virtual format such as Zoom, Skype, etc.

Concepts is published quarterly by the Northern Illinois Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a form of communication between Northern IL Area, Districts, and GSRs. Subscription is free but generally limited to A.A. members within the NIA geographical area. All publication costs are paid by A.A. members through their contributions to NIA. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of Alcoholics Anonymous, NIA or the Editor. Comments, suggestions, subscription requests, and experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor: [Concepts@aa-nia.org](mailto:Concepts@aa-nia.org). All A.A. members are encouraged to see Concepts on-line at: <http://www.aa-nia.org>. "CONCEPTS" is a confidential document. It should only be used and distributed within the Fellowship.

***The next edition will be a special Pre-Election Concepts to be published in August. Therefore, all articles will be focused on General Service and the up-coming election. Please submit any articles by July 15th.***

