

DON P ARCHIVE

A Design for Living: Traditions and Concepts

2002 | Part 4 | Reading edition

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I had been around the country, there was a certain prestige attached to me that I was not comfortable with, a certain notoriety. I mean I've been places and I'm asked to do things and so I had become public and the more public I became the more I realized I must remain in here anonymous. I must understand that it's God through me demonstrating what he can do, not me standing up or demonstrating for God what I can do.

I've become real and I get serious about this stuff for a while, it all ends up funny. Don't get too serious, it's only life or death, goodness. Anyway, right in the middle of this second year of my term, Don Brunner from Gopher State up in Minneapolis called me, a huge convention of 6,000 people. Nell Wing was supposed to be their general service speaker and she'd broken her arm the week before and so he asked me, can you fill in for her as a general service speaker?

By a fluke I was free and in my talk I mentioned to the audience how really important it was that I remained anonymous within here. Well the speaker gift at Gopher State at that time was a blonde plaque of the program, my name wasn't on it, Nell Wing's was. And I thought, oh okay thank you God, I'll lighten up. Okay, you want to be anonymous he says, you're anonymous. Nell came to me later and said, I'm going to do it next year, we'll just have, we'll swap, but I said no, this one is really important to me.

Well you had something you wanted to say. Probably she'll light. You always do. Hey my name's Roy Ballinger, I'm an alcoholic. I actually wonder whether the fellowship really does have any power. Now if I remember back a few years that there was a movement, I believe it started in California about relocating the general service out to service or somewhere in the Midwest. And I am not as familiar as you are with us, but I will believe you would like to comment on this.

I just think that I'd like to have you comment on something that has made me quite nervous for a number of years. Yeah I was on the board of the time this came up, this is a set up. And it does come up from time to time philosophically and spiritually it just feels better to have our general service office in Kansas City or Minneapolis somewhere in the heart of the country rather than New York. There's a sense that it feels better.

By tradition you have given the board the authority to investigate some things. Again if we sent that back to the groups, what a mess. So we hired some people, spent a little of your money, hired some professionals to check out the costs involved. Not only the financial costs, but the emotional costs. It's been nearly a year where I investigated and there were five cities being considered, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Denver, and a couple others that would be big enough because we're a major communication that is a major problem.

We've got to be in a place for communication. At that time we didn't have all this internet and satellite stuff. Anyway the report came back, the best we could expect financially is it would take ten years to break even from the move. It was about a ten million dollar move to do that financially. So ten years just to break even. Many of the staff working at General Service would not move from New York. We would have to hire brand new staff, both of our alcoholic staff and the support staff, train them quite a deal going on there.

In checking with our friends around the world, there was a negative response because we are viewed, New York is viewed as the communication center of the United States and almost in the world. So for A around the world it would have been a bad move, it would have just jointed some things. So overall while it emotionally seemed like it would be a nice thing to have happen, it was not a feasible move. It was not a good move.

We would lose staff, we would lose money, there would be great disruption of services during the move. There were a lot of reasons we shouldn't do it. And it took a year to come to that conclusion and a lot of information to make the decision. You're welcome. I would love to see it in Kansas City. No, bring it up Roy. Okay. We also checked with the delegates and with all kinds of people, it was not feasible. Now please understand by our principles this can come up again and it may be feasible next time.

The communication piece is different now. The world perception is still the same. And trading off staff is no big deal these days. There's all kinds of people that are available. So it may come up again. Another one that comes up every ten years and should be encouraged is de-genderizing the big book. It's never going to fly but it should always be brought up. Well it isn't. We are de-genderizing all of our literature, if you notice.

That can be done. The integrity of the big book needs to stay the same. It does not read the same de-genderized. And there are gross errors in the big book. It was written by a drunk, New York stockbroker, not a writer. And even with God's help he screwed up from here to there. But it's the way it is. And these are the kinds of things we need not be afraid to continually bring up. We do a group inventory every quarter.

Sometimes it's six months we forget. And in the one group that I can no longer support but sent will send you to that meeting. It's a closed meeting and in my view the format is an open format. The purpose of the group is if you have a new person you can bring in there and you're guaranteed you're going to hear a. But you're like what happened, what you're like no that's our own topic. That's an open meeting format. So at every group inventory I would recommend that we open this meeting up.

And a kid I sponsor is adamant that it should stay closed. So after the first battle he and I had in the group decided to keep it closed he and I talked and said let's make sure we do this each quarter. As the group attracts new people they have not been involved in the decision process. And the only way that will happen is if you and I open the ball. So every quarterly group of conscience I'd say we need to open it and he'd fight with me and then the discussion is starting.

All the new people got a chance to participate in the decision. Time for a break I can see the smokers getting nervous. Our groups, our families, our businesses primarily unity. Based on a spiritual truth that I understand that helps me with that I am you and you are me. And with that in mind this end becomes easier to do because I will not be completely right as long as you're not. And so by helping you I automatically help myself.

It gets me out of self. I promote unity because that's an experience not because that's what I'm supposed to do. I don't feel right if I don't feel unified. One of the great masters said we learn to bless our enemies. It's much more difficult. Love your enemies. I've come to cherish my enemies. Sometimes the only measure of my effectiveness is the quality of my enemies. It doesn't mean I go out and make some. But my prolapse told me one time I will know you're okay when I meet somebody who's just met you and they tell me I just really didn't like him.

You can't please everybody. One of my old heroes put it this way. If God had made any two of us the same one of us would have been unnecessary. It means that I have a contribution to make to life and I'm the only one that can make it. You can't make it for me. And you have a contribution to make and I can't make yours either. And to make that come true we must be unified and trust one another. And while I may not necessarily understand or even agree with your contribution I honor it.

It's the only way I can guarantee that I'll get to make mine too. Because that really is my main contribution. That's about us philosophical I want to get this morning. It became apparent and Bill had an awful time selling the traditions. He had to sell them. The first thing apparent is it's going to take the power away from the local guru. So he used the grapevine. He stumped around the country and made lots of enemies.

And say Bill we'd love to have you come talk but don't talk about them damn traditions. He wrote a number of grapevine articles and sold them. Grapevine became as it is today the place where the personal view and the personal experience has a place. So we must safeguard it. The best way to safeguard the grapevine by the way, while it's nice to have a subscription, the best way is to write for it. That's how we keep it alive.

You and I write it. If we don't write it, there's nothing there. And if they've got a hundred stories to look at, there's a pretty good chance we've got at least three issues coming. And subscriptions are important but the grapevine will always lose money. I've watched the numbers on that by the way. Right now there's about 113,000 roughly. It peaks at 120 and it bounces between. No matter how big the fellowship gets or what happens from 113 to 120,000, that's it.

I mean just going to lose money. No matter how hard we try, no matter how fiscally responsible we are, it's going to lose money. You can't put out that small number with a magazine of that high of quality and not lose money. And we balk at paying a dollar for it anyway. It became apparent when Dr. Bob was diagnosed with cancer. Bill and Bob both woke up. We had begun to grow up a little bit. Early AA, if you read early AA history, is a group of adolescents going crazy.

If you look at AA today, it's a group of crazy adolescents going crazy. But we had begun to grow up. We were beginning to be responsible. The being self-supporting is so important to good mental health. Part of how we learned that, of course, is the story. They formed a club. We started in homes, married Henrietta Seiberling and other places. It was just in homes. Then we outgrew the homes. I needed to find some places. So we started going to sorted places like church basements.

They started a little club. Everybody was excited, cleaned it up, painted it up, had meetings. Everything was going fine, and pretty soon everybody wasn't cleaning up. And it was getting messy. And who gets the key? And Bill put it he and she and going on and he off times. Just to carry your rating. So the boys got together and decided we need a manager over here. We can't afford much. These drunks are cheap. We got this old fireman. He's still in a mental institution out there.

But he'd be okay. Let's go slicker him. We'll give him a place to live and some food if he'll manage just a little club for us. And they went and approached him and he said, they hell you see. He says, what you guys are wanting to do is hire a janitor that's slave wages. If you want a janitor, I'll come, but you'll buy God pay me janitors wages. My 12 step work will be free. You want a janitor, you pay for janitor. And he helped us open up

to that fact.

Our general service office salaries are based on there's a company that does research that gives you a bottom end and a top end for any given profession in the New York area. We start them off right in the middle. So we get quality people that get enough to make a living but not so much that they worry about it. So we're self-supporting and it became apparent that this had to move into larger areas. Bill had that office with Ruth Hawk and they answered phones and answered letters.

Dr. Bob's going to die and Bill became aware that someday he will too. It was time that you and I became responsible for all of our own services. We needed a conference. We needed a gathering of representatives of all of the different groups in the United States and Canada. That's essentially what the conference was for. The office would then expand and it would be guided by a board of trustees. This idea was not accepted well either. The current board of trustees didn't like that at all.

We mean the drunks are going to take responsibility. They're irresponsible people by nature. And the greatest resistance to the conference didn't come from an on alcoholic trustees. It came from the alcoholics. Kind of interesting. The alcoholics said well this might work. Bill's greatest writing I think is in the concepts. Stunning imagery. Clarity beyond anything I can think about. It's just precise. There are errors in it. But they're the kind of errors that even Bill says we can correct these.

If you indulge me at the request of one of the people here who I respect, I'm going to read the introduction. It's kind of like the fifth chapter. I'm going to read the introduction to the concepts and then we'll get to them separately. See I have fun with this. My dream since I was a little kid. I saw more on stage due to the cell. This is dramatic reading. And then I found Charles Law doing dramatic readings. I wanted to do dramatic readings forever. Look at me now.

The 12 concepts were World Service to be described in this manual are interpretation of A.A.'s World Service Structure. They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present form. And they detail the experience and reasoning on where our operations stand today. These concepts therefore aim to record the why of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past and the lessons we've drawn from that experience can never be forgotten or lost.

Historians call that provenance. I need to know what happened in 1963 because I'm going to make a decision based on that whole trail of stuff as it evolves and grows. Quite rightly, each new generation of A.A. World Service will be eager to make operational improvements. Unforeseen flaws in the present structure will not let show up later on. New service needs and problems will arise that they may make structural changes necessary.

Such alterations should certainly be effected in these contingencies squarely met. Yet we should always realize that change did not necessarily spill progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in World Service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore, it will be an important objective of these concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experiences of the past clearly before us.

And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these concepts may then provide a ready means of safe

return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover it. There will also be seen in these concepts a number of principles which have already become traditional to our services and which have never been clearly articulated or reduced to writing. For example, the right of decision gives our service leaders a proper discretion in latitude.

The right of participation gives each World Service a voting status commensurate with his or her responsibility and participation further guarantees that each service boarder committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will ensure effective functioning. The right of appeal protects and encourages minority opinion. And the right of petition makes certain that grievances can be heard and properly acted upon.

These general principles can of course be used to good effect throughout our entire structure. That works at home too, and I'll get into that. In other sections the concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships, and legal arrangements, the World General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service. A World Services Incorporated and the AA Grapevine Incorporated.

We're a corporation that owns two other corporations, all of them publishing operations. We don't have any publishers on the board. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of AA's world headquarters. Concern has been expressed lest a detailed portrayal of our internal structure might not later harden down such a firm tradition or a gospel that necessary changes would be impossible to make.

Nothing could stray further from the intent of these concepts. The future advocates of structural change need only make out a strong case for their recommendations, a case convincing to both the trustees and the conference. Area 92 is a clear example of that. That was a major change. We had 91 areas and you all finally made a case sufficient to convince the whole conference and all the trustees that it was a good change, and I've got to tell you, most of us didn't think so at the beginning.

But the case was brought forward and it carries sufficient weight that that change was made. That's a major change in our structure. It can be proud of yourselves. You're all goofy, but you can be proud. Yeah, someday we'll show you how to do it right. I'm just kidding. Laura will take care of that. This is no more than what would be required for the transaction and passage of any other important piece of AA business.

Just make your case. Save for an exception or two that is noteworthy that the conference charter itself can be easily amended. In fact, our original charter has been amended and changed. Perhaps one more precaution not to be observed when a proposal or a proposed structural change is to be specifically far-reaching. In such an event, the alteration should be an appropriate period to be labeled as experimental. The conference itself was experimental at the beginning.

On final approval, an alteration of this character could be entered into the specific section of this manual which might be entitled amendments. It isn't that brilliant. We'll put amendments under amendments. We have to be told how to do things like that. Group conscience would come up with 17 different names and we'd never get anything done. This would leave the original draft of the 12 concepts intact as an individual record of our former experience.

Then it could always be clearly seen by our future service workers just what did happen and why. That was a major change. When I went on the board in 85, the service manual and the 12 concepts for world service were in two separate manuals. I must tell you, I'd been in area chair for about six months before I ever heard the concepts. It had not been brought forward. I knew the service manual, but it was separated. So we put them back together.

At that time, the concepts also, every change that was made was put into the body of the text. So all of this provenance, all this history was lost. So we went back and changed that. What you have now is the concepts in their original 1962 form and all of the changes are footnoted. So the changes are there, but you have the original intent and why it was changed. So that you can make a decent decision based on that. I was shown we also now have them separately if you want to get them.

While they're in the service manual, they're also blue copy separately. I like that. Another one. Good. I want one. All right. I know. Go buy one of that. That's good. Gee. I bet I get one. All the past trustees get everything. I'm going to have to check the mail. In other chapters, great emphasis is laid on the need for a high order of personal leadership on the desirability of careful instruction induction methods for all incoming personnel and upon the necessity for the best possible public relations or personal relations between those who work in our services.

We got to get along with staff. Interesting thing there. A little sidebar. Staff is on the line five days a week, all year long, twelve months either. They're on the line and they get the information, they get the letters, they get the complaints, they get everything. We show up as delegates once a year. It is very natural for them to think correctly, we don't know much. They've been sending us volumes of information, but we don't know much.

Until you've been in that office for a whole day, you really don't know what's going on. And then you only get to see the chaos and how well it's handled. So the relations between delegates and staff has always been iffy. The delegates rightly perceive staff's trying to get something done here. Yes they are, they think it's right. And the delegate balances to get the information from them and work well with the staff because they have a vote too, you know, at the conference.

The conference is made up of enough people so a two-thirds of the conference members will always be delegates, always. So the delegates really do have the power to run the conference. Trustees only have twenty-one votes. Staff only has, what is it, fourteen? There's some directors. The delegates run the deal. Anyway, relations, it's important. If you piss off a staff member and you need information, you may not get it.

That's human nature. Yeah. If you schmooze a staff member, you'll get all kinds of information. It stacks up. That's be real. This is a spiritual entity, but we are in the human condition. It's like they're really hard-working folks. Yes, very dedicated. You can't imagine what they do for the little money we pay them. Anyway, in the any services we have always had to choose between the authoritarian setup or by one group or one person who's setting unqualified authority over another.

And the democratic concept, which calls for checks and balances who would prevent unqualified authority from running unrestrained. The first approach is out of the institutional or authoritarian type. The second is the method of constitutional governments and many large business corporations in their upper echelons.

Well-knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of checks and balances.

There is now and will always be at certain levels of general service a movement to consolidate all of our services under one CEO, reporting only to the general service board chairperson. Very dangerous for us. Good business practice, very dangerous for us. So if you're in service, watch for that. There are people who are well-meaning, who are always going to try to do that. It's just easier in business to do that. And make no mistake, that's a business.

It's a \$10 million a year business, which is chump change in New York. But to us, it's a big deal. Well, consequently, ideas like the following pervade the concepts. Quote, no group or individual should be set in unqualified authority over another end quote. Large, active and dissimilar operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital. We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity.

Remember, the trustees work for us. They do not have unqualified authority over anybody except the trustees. At each level of service, authority ought to be equal with responsibility. Double-headed executive directions should be avoided. These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly, yet efficient. We would especially restrain our tendency to concentrate money and power, thus being nearly always the underlying, though not always the conscious motivation of our recurrent passion for the consolidation of world service entities.

Bill was opposed to that. I'm opposed to that. Be opposed to that. Because of the large range of topics which had to be included, these concepts have been difficult to organize and write. Since each concept is really a group of related principles, the kind of abbreviated statements used in AAs, 12 steps and 12 traditions have not been possible. So, Bill wrote essays about the concepts, descriptions rather than the definitions.

However, these concepts do represent the best summation I am able to make after more than 20 years experienced in the creation of our service structure and in the conduct of AAs world affairs. Like the earlier written 12 steps and 12 traditions and the conference charter, these service principles are also the outcome of long reflection and extensive consultation. He worked with people like Tom Powers and Mike Alexander's dad, all kinds of people.

He went back to St. Francis and other spiritual leaders and how they had structured things, built in a lot of work to come up with how does a spiritual entity operate in the business world? Very important. Very tricky. It has much to be hoped that these 12 concepts will become a welcome addition to our third legacy manual of a world service and that they will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years to come.

That's good stuff. So, what are the concepts? We have the conference on a temporary basis, trial basis. How are they going to operate? I can look at the concepts in two ways. Their statements of spiritual principle are also, for me, my corporate operating guide. This is the corporate manual for how does a work? There's a lot of stuff in here, the average a member doesn't even need to know. How do we pick the committees?

What are the committees supposed to do? What are the job descriptions here? What are the interactions here?

The mill said, and I'm going to go to the 12th concept first as part of the charter, because he said, if you will try this, if you'll let us set up this conference, here's what we will not do. We guarantee certain things. In all its proceedings, the general service conference shall observe the spirit of the AA tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes a seat of perilous wealth or power.

That's sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve via its prudent financial principle. The ample reserve is currently based on whatever it's supposed to run last year. That's the reserve for this year. At one time, we had a cap on that. It couldn't go past 94 percent, and we started dropping book prices. For some reason, the cap is no longer there, but that's under discussion. Proving it reserved. In other words, if we stop for whatever the reason, sending money, G.S.O. could still operate for one full year at its present level.

Everything just stopped right now. And it's not going to. That none of the conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others. I can be a rebel. I can stand up and be stupid if I want. They can't throw me out. But I have been. That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whatever possible by substantial unanimity, which we have defined at the conference level as two-thirds.

Bill talked about the tyranny of the majority. 51 percent is not a mandate. Two-thirds, I can live with. Two-thirds of the people after a full discussion, or everybody got to bring out everything was possible, even if we missed dinner, I can live with it. Because I also know that two years from now, I can bring it up again. Okay. But I can live with it. Full discussion. All important decisions. So you have full discussion and substantially unanimity whenever possible.

And it's up to me to make that possible. And that no conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy. Many of you are aware of the difficulties we've had in certain legal arenas because of lawsuits, that we had we've been following these principles would not have occurred. Some of them we ducked and bobbed and we, you know, we stopped using the circle on triangle because of wisdom.

We had to defend that in court and there's already 55 other organizations that use it. We could never have defended it. So we stopped using it. And the wisdom is that eventually that will go into the public domain, then we can use it again. You and I can use it all we want. General Service can't. You and I can use it. We can put it on our flyers. We can draw it into our big books. We can use it. General Service can't because they copyrighted.

Bill said don't do that and we did it anyway. Big problems over a lawsuit in Germany. Big problems over a lawsuit in Mexico. They were none of our business. We got involved somehow. We just need to be aware of these things. They will all resolve themselves by the way. We need to be aware of them. What a waste of time and money. And that though the conference may act for the services of alcoholics anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government.

And like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous, which it serves, the conference itself will always remain democratic and thought and action. No acts of government. I really like that. In the, I think it was the 86th conference. The issue came up about non-conference approved literature in AA groups. And it only took a few minutes for the conference to remind itself it's none of our business. Personally, I don't approve of that.

The conference can have no opinion. We cannot lay a mandate down that you can't do that. Or that you

shouldn't do that. As far as the conference's concern is none of our business. You're autonomous. Personally, I think it's to looch the message. We have to have these principles because I get passionate about my personal feelings. I don't want to be the AA cop. God, it's hard work. We've tried it, haven't we? Geez. It's hard work.

They just tell you... That's not how I heard it. Well, it's on tape. So what are the basic principles of our conference? The first one is critical. It states the problem and again the direction for the solution. The final responsibility and ultimate authority for all AA services should always reside in the collective conscience of the fellowship. You and I are personally responsible for everything that happens at that conference.

As AA members, we created it. I've heard of you lightly that this conference is not AA. The hell it is. It's pure AA. We created it. We're responsible for all the services. For everything that happens there. Because we send the folks that make the decisions. We're responsible. Nothing happens there that we don't ask for. Let me take it one more step up. Because our tendency today, I'm afraid, is that we are abdicating our responsibility to general service as if it were a government agency.

Do you know that in Spokane, if you have a need for a particular pamphlet, you can produce it right here. You don't have to have anybody's permission. You can write it. Minnesota used to do public service spots. They didn't like the ones GSO had. They made their own. They were as bad as GSOs, but they made their own everybody. If you think it's necessary, you can do it. You should consult with the trustees first because it might have far reaching effect, but you're free to do it.

They can't tell you, stop. You can't do that. They can tell you don't reproduce what we put out. They won't. If you want to reproduce it, give it away. That's cool. We are responsible. The ultimate responsibility for all of our services rests with you and I. How are we going to make that work? That's the problem. How can we make that work? You and I can't go to that conference. Only seated delegates and conference members are allowed in that conference, partly because there's only so many chairs available.

The room won't hold two million people. How are we going to fix it so we can do that? In 1955, the AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference. They thereby delegated to the conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services. We delegated to the conference the delegates, trustees and staff full authority for the active maintenance of world services. And thereby made the conference accepting for any change in the 12 traditions or in Article 12 of the conference charter, the actual voice and effective conscience of our whole society.

Should we accept the Nobel Peace Prize? You gave us the authority to say yes or no. Should we have an interview on Dan Rather's Show? You gave the conference members, the trustees, the authority and the duty to say yes or no and to set out the terms as to how that's going to be done. How many of you saw my name is Bill W. Pretty good. Did you see the interview with James Wood and James Garner on the Today Show? One of the best 12-step calls you've ever seen.

Now neither of them are AA members, but they both took the roles because they have an awful lot of friends in AA, and they understand AA, and some guy called in, a drunk called in, and James Wood 12-step team on National Television. You and I can't do that. No full faces. We must remain autonomous or anonymous. Okay. We helped him put that together. That's why it went off so well. So we have delegated that authority.

Now, delegate doesn't mean give up. Delegate means that I'm giving you the authority and the responsibility to carry out certain activities, but I need you to report back to me. It's like any boss. Okay. I want to know what it is you're doing. We're the boss. The AA service structure is based on groups at the top. When I became a trustee, I had finally worked myself to the very bottom of the AA service structure. Yeah.

When it works right, that's how it is. That'll keep your ego out of hand. At home, that works pretty good. I told you roughly the concepts are based on the second tradition. How do we get genuine group conscience at that level? Well, I'll delegate the trash to Terry. We'll delegate the vacuuming to Gianna, because I've been paying attention, and I know that Terry likes to go outside and Gianna likes to run this deal, so let's give him the job they're suited for.

Appropriate means that picking our servants is important. Sean didn't like to do anything, so he was a little reluctant. We had to do some things with Sean. He got to clean up the dog boot. Hey, if you're reluctant, that's your job. In my house, the authority for dealing with intruders has been delegated to me, because I can see in the dark. My family believes that, and I can, because I don't use my eyes. I'm an old street survivor.

You see with everything. In my house, I know where everything is in the dark, so I don't bump into it. If you're an intruder, you're going to bump into things, so I'll know where you are. I can see you in my ears. The deal is, there's always a trade-off. Please don't leave anything on the steps that I don't know about, because I'll trip on it. Your inclination is to turn the lights on and see who's there. My inclination is to leave the lights off if somebody's there.

Delegation is a very real thing. As corrections chair, we had about four meetings a month at the penitentiary, plus about 40 around the state. There's no way I can cover all of them. I picked leaders, and by leaders I met people who would have people follow them. I let those leaders put together teams of five people each. One for each meeting at the penitentiary, and a fifth group, both to cover the fifth week on the odd month.

If one of these five couldn't make it, we could draw from this group, so there's always five going in. Remember, that's what they asked for. Then I let them go. They had a ball. They never missed a meeting. It was delegated to them. I had 25 people now doing what I couldn't do, because you delegated. They would report back to me what the needs were. I could go to the institution and tell them they didn't make the coffee last night.

We couldn't get into this one, and that was my job. Delegating is fun. We delegated to him our voice. To go to the conference, he used to carry our voice, not our vote. To be an effective delegate, we have given him the right of decision so that if he gets more information than we had, at that time, he can change his mind as long as he comes back to us and presents a good reason why he did so. Otherwise, there's no need for a conference.

We send informed delegates, not instructed delegates. If they're instructed delegates, we can do it by phone. 92 phone calls and it's done. Same thing in my work life and in my home life. If Terry's having trouble getting the trash out to the street, he has to be able to trust me enough to come back and say, I'm having some trouble. I can't reach the can. It's too high for me so that I can make arrangements so that he can.

We also have checked with the neighborhood. I didn't go to the neighbors and ask them, when do you put the trash out? I asked the trash company, when do you pick it up? And we put it out the same day. Because I noticed

in the neighborhood nobody had their trash out until trash day. Have you ever been a neighborhood really just leave the trash out all the time? I don't want to live there. And it's up to me not to do that.

Again, I don't want to get philosophical. This is real stuff. We have, as a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the groups, the conference and the A General Service Board and its several service corporations, staff committees and executives. We're talking about relating with other people. And of thus ensuring their effective leadership is hereby suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional right of decision.

Unfortunately, that can get screwed around too. My ego takes that to me and I can do what I want. No, it means I have the right of decision. I think of an example, a high-drowned example of how that played out. Yeah, the ADE 2 Conference won the delegates came in with a mandate from his area. And he came to the microphone and he said, I am bound. I must present this. I must tell you, I'm not going to vote for it. I don't believe in it, but I must present it because that's my job.

And he presented the issue. It got discussed and it failed. It was a goofy thing. I don't know about your area, but my area sometimes puts forth goofy things. At that same conference, the Wyoming delegate came in and passionately believed in his motion. We have too much literature. My area wants a moratorium on all literature. I agree with him. We have too much literature. But a moratorium means no more. That's not healthy. That closes the deal down.

What it did, it was precipitate lots of discussion. Out of the discussion came the realization that maybe we need to do an inventory of our literature. Let's see if we have too much. And that was passed on to some staff that took the year, bringing up the numbers as to how much of each piece of literature was actually sold. Is it being used or is it not worth having? We found we have a real problem because a lot of our literature goes out in packets.

So you can't evaluate how useful is this one because it's part of a packet. So it has to come back to where you and I look at our group literature and say, how long has all that been sitting there? How useful is that? Is this piece really necessary? We've had this for five years. Nobody's ever taken it. Then we can tell him, here's kind of how we feel about it. And he can take that back. See how that works? That delegate, by the way, became a trustee.

I was a thorn inside everybody. I love him. He is a passionate member of Alcoholics. And when he's right, he's by God right and creates lots of discussions. Love him dearly. What I think is probably the most important concept of all, because it's the principle by which we all will survive or die, is in the fourth concept. Throughout our conference structure, we ought to maintain all reasonable, all responsible levels of traditional writer participation.

Taking care of each classification or group of our world servants, there will be a lot of voting representation and reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge. Critical. I was on, I was chairing the trustees correctional committee. Now, understand these committees are made up generally of three trustees and a group of advisors from corrections, people who may or may not be AA members, because in the committees, any vote taken in the committee is not binding on anybody.

It's just a recommendation to the board in the conference. But we do vote in there. And then a staff member and a staff secretary. Now, because of whatever the reason the staff member was not allowed to vote, if you'll read the concept, it's very clear staff members also have a vote. They're voting members in the conference. They weren't voting members of the committee. Anyway, I got a call from the general service manager and he said, one of your advisors has dropped out.

Just wanted you to know, we'll pick you another one. I said, no, tell you what, we'll pick another one if we think it's necessary. At our next meeting, we'll decide whether we need somebody else or not. And in that kind of voting thing, if you're familiar with it, you need an odd number so that you have some way to gauge. If you have 10 people and it's five to five, you can't get anything done. You need 11 people to at least move it off the dime.

And it became clear we did need another member, but in looking at the concepts, we also realized we already have one. We have a staff member here who, by concept, should have a vote on this committee. So we went to the board with the recommendation that we don't need to bring in somebody else. We'll just give Sarah the vote. Boom. Chaos. For almost a year and a half this went on, because in every board meeting, I brought it up.

Boom. No. Next board meeting, I brought it up. Boom. Finally, one of the Canadian trustees says, damn, let's just give it to him so he'll shut up. And so they did. Then we did the legal work necessary, because we're a corporation and have to go by the laws of the state of New York. And it turns out that legally, only the trustees of a committee and a non-profit corporation are allowed to vote in committee. Legally. Which brought it down to three.

The rest of the committee, including our staff member by law, could not vote. And what this did was open us up to real effective functioning. Since only the three of us could vote, the rest of them had better participation. And we listened more closely because they could participate openly without that vote. They didn't have anything invested in it. So we became a much better committee based on the principle of participation rather than the principle of vote.

Without a vote, I can generally muster 14. With a vote, I have one. Participation is critical. One of the finest general service manager chair people I ever saw was John Bragg. John chaired the conference. The minority opinion becomes really, really important here. Those of you who have been around in AA service know that generally, quite often, the minority opinion is actually the best thing to do. John had a knack.

General Service Conference, the procedure of this mic is representative of that. Whatever we're going to discuss is brought up. Then all the conference members get to go to the microphone for two minutes and address it. They don't get to talk again until everybody who wants to has the opportunity to go to that mic. Then if we don't have a resolution, it goes around again. It goes until it has a thorough hearing. This was a case where after it was all done and the vote was taken.

It was really clear that this was still on the line. A lot of people hadn't participated. Some people can't just get up and go to that microphone. John had been watching because I watched him. After the vote was taken, he called on the minority, those who voted in opposition. By name, would you please address your minority opinion. After two or three of them who couldn't just get up, when they got called and gave their viewpoint, we had to turn the whole thing over and revote and it changed the entire vote.

Participation needs to be encouraged. I must be responsible enough to make sure you get your time at the mic. Yes. Does the minority opinion have to be brand new, unheard, undiscussed, undisclosed information? I don't see why that's true. No. I think we beat a dead horse to death sometimes, but not always. There may be a new way of saying the same thing. The key to the thing is the person who really is in the minority probably can't get up and say that.

It's hard to do when you're with your peers. It needs to be called up. If you call me and ask me it's a different deal. I'm willing not to say something. It's best if it's something new, but no, I would never cut that off unless if you've got five people at the mic are all saying the same thing, then the chairperson should say, is there anything new here? Okay. Now we're ready for a vote if we're all saying the same thing.

It's time to get consensus. So for me to be responsible and live by A services and my personal responsibility, if I'm in a position of responsibility, I need to make sure you get heard. You can guarantee I'll be heard. Now I need to guarantee that you will be heard. And quite often what will happen is that when the minority opinion speaks, it will cause a delay. Because what it will show up is we don't have enough real information yet to make a decision.

That's generally my opinion when I'm in the minority. It's not that I'm wanting to fight you. That you haven't given me enough information to make a decision yet. Take some time, shall we? Let's investigate this a little bit. I could talk forever on participation. The greatest of all human needs, I believe, is the need to be useful. As long as I'm useful, I can stay. When I become useless, I must go or die. And our new people have to feel useful from day one or they won't stay.

And our old people really need to feel useful. Don't put me out to pasture, please. I'm not a pasture animal. And if you put me out to pasture, what you have is a cranky old man. And you don't want me cranky. So the principal rotation, don't dump your old timeless. Find some useful way of using them so they become elder statesmen instead of bleeding deacons. Keep the provenance, keep the history. In our area, our delegates are all permanent non-voting members of the assembly.

And they periodically try to give us the vote. We don't want it. We are expected to get to the microphone as long as we're there and give the viewpoint from historical viewpoint. It's expected of us. They don't always agree. We don't care whether they agree or not. We're expected to get up and say on this particular thing, when in 1966 we did this and it didn't work. Or we did this and it did work. Or why are we doing this?

One of the greatest benefits of elder statesmen that I know is the question, why would I want to do that? I'm at that age where that's a legitimate question. You ask me to do something? Why would I want to do that? I don't have anybody left to impress. Why would I want to do that? Because most of what we do is to impress somebody. Yeah, I'm an age driver. That's true. Yeah. And each new group has to bring it up. Yeah, because it's a GSR.

You can come back as a GSR? Oh, I was asked to be a DCM last week and I had to tell them the truth. I would make a terrible DCM. I know too much. I would instantly go in there and try to fix that district. Absolutely no. I'll come in and do a workshop from the district, but don't ask me to be one. And I would make the worst GSR you can imagine. Oh, you don't want me there. Yeah. And then honesty. Shall we take a little

lunch break and then we'll wrap this up?

Oh, yeah. We'll end.