



GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

FLORIDA STATE COMMITTEE
NORTHERN AREA

February 29, 1972

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL SERVICE MEETING HELD AT COCOA, FLORIDA, SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 20, 1972.

The first quarterly meeting of the General Service Conference, Northern Florida Area, Alcoholics Anonymous, was opened by the chairman with the serenity prayer.

Present were delegate, Sam I [redacted], and chairman, Earl M [redacted]. Committee members present were Marie T [redacted], Dave C [redacted], Bert L [redacted], Jesse P [redacted] and Barbara S [redacted]-N [redacted]. Absent were Bill B [redacted], Buck R [redacted] and Lamar P [redacted].

Sam told of a meeting of delegates, past delegates, trustees and past trustees that he had attended in Atlanta on the first weekend in February, and at which they had listened to Dr. Norris speak on the history of AA.

After that we all discussed AA groups that operate under the title of "club." This will be one of the topics for discussion at the April Conference in New York. Some time ago GSO sent out a questionnaire to groups with "club" in their name, asking that it be returned to them. They are trying to find out how these groups operate, whether they pass the basket or pay regular dues. The object is to define what a club is and its relationship to AA as a whole. There was discussion about calling "clubs" "service centers." The service center in Jacksonville is operated as outlined by Jim H [redacted] which is as a meeting place and service center rather than as an AA group.

We talked about professionalism in relation to the government getting involved in half-way houses with Federal funds. We can cooperate with these outside agencies as individuals in our effort to carry the message but cannot become affiliated with them without diluting our common purpose. In the past, government agencies had sought out recovered AA members to manage their half-way houses but had required "x" number of years of sobriety as a qualification for the job. As they became better acquainted with us that requirement was dropped. They have also found that we need our anonymity in relation to the public and respect our Tradition which stresses that. In working with outside agencies our first obligation is to AA. Our primary purpose is to stay sober so that we can carry the message. We do not say not to get involved with outside agencies, but do say that we need to be able to cope with the situation. Extreme caution and a healthy knowledge of our Traditions is essential. Our aim is to cooperate - but not to affiliate.

Again we talked about the problem of being too anonymous within our groups and the fact that it does more harm than good where the newcomer is concerned. It is no favor to him to be told to call "Jim K." before he takes the first drink if all the information Jim K. wants to give him is the first initial of his last name. Anonymity is a promise to the newcomer for himself. As we recover we find that we can be more effective as we outgrow this early need for it. Moreover, the 1968 survey found that 58% of all newcomers to AA get here through another member. If we were not so anonymous (with doctors, clergy, etc.) the sick alcoholics would get to AA much sooner and perhaps in greater numbers. A good rule of thumb is "if it will help, then disclose it."

What about non-alcoholics who come to our closed meetings? Most groups stick to the Tradition that the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. Thus, people with no drinking problem do not qualify for membership. AA has always been inclusive rather than exclusive. We have found that there are few problems if we let them know that closed meetings are for the alcoholic but that they are welcome to sit and listen at open meetings. We welcome them to use our program but ask them to please not rob us of our time, explaining that we need to serve the sick alcoholic first. We have found that time usually takes care of the problem and that these people gradually eliminate themselves just by virtue of the fact that there is no common problem to share. Those with a dual problem of drugs and alcohol are made welcome. As they catch on to our program they eliminate their drug problem along with their alcoholic problem. After the meeting is over we can always take time to talk with the non-alcoholic and help him apply our program to his problems.

Are specialized groups good for AA as a whole? There are very few and sometimes we even force these people to form a specialized group of their own....doctors, clergy, etc. We also have women's groups and young people's groups. We can look to our 4th Tradition here. Specific groups are not restrictive. Often they just make it easier for the individuals to communicate among themselves.

As we all talked we became more aware that we need more concentration on our Traditions at our group level. Some groups have Traditions meetings. Others tie the Traditions in to their meetings in November, which is our Gratitude month. One member shared the experience of his group in presenting discussion of the Traditions. The chairman would present a short ten minute talk on one of the Traditions at the beginning of the meeting after which he would ask if there were any problem a member might like to have discussed. If not, would the group like to continue with the discussion of the Tradition. The result was that nearly always the group favored spending the remainder of the time on the Tradition. There is, incidentally, a new illustrated Traditions pamphlet available from GSO which sells for .30 a copy. We talked about the importance of literature in carrying the message and a suggestion was made for each group to take a group inventory to estimate how well they were carrying the message of hope and recovery. Page 34 of the AA Group pamphlet has a sample inventory. See also the last issue of Box 4-5-9 on how good groups get better.

The Institutional Committee gave its report. A suggestion was made that sponsors of the road camps be incorporated into a planned workshop and made a part of the Institutional Committee if they so desired. At present 14 small prisons over the state are being built and they will contain 50 to 56 men. Three are being built immediately in North Brevard, Leon and Orange Counties. Each will have to be sponsored and served. Their group secretary is our contact.

The treasurer gave her report and reminded us that it is again time for our groups to help defray expenses of our delegate's trip to the General Service Conference in April. Recommended was an increase in the amount we give our delegate for his trip. At present he receives \$250.00 after we first send \$150.00 to New York. Out of that \$150.00 New York pays the hotel bill. It is the minimum allowance based on excursion rates. South Florida gives its delegate \$500.00 and pays General Service \$150.00. A motion was raised and seconded to raise the delegate's money to \$600.00 which will include the \$150.00 to New York. It was resolved that when Sam returns from the April Conference he will tell us what the trip costs with the intention of increasing the amount to \$600.00 next year.

The General Service Conference needs a 100% response from the feelings of the groups in relation to the topics outlined in Box 4-5-9 and set forth here. Please obtain your groups opinions and feelings and relate them back to us. Also let your committee know of any other problems or topics that you would like to have considered by the committee as a whole.

After the April conference each committee member has been asked to set time, place, and alternate dates in his district so that the delegate can report to each one individually. His address is as follows:

Sam I.

The second quarterly meeting will be held in Ocala, Florida, Sunday, April 9, 1972. We will advise you of the address in our next letter. These meetings are for all members of our Fellowship and all are welcomed to attend. We need better communication among our districts and more sharing among our groups. The individual members are our grassroots and the strength of it.

The Southeastern Conference will be held in Charleston, West Virginia during August 9-12.

Sincerely,

Barbara