



GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

FLORIDA STATE COMMITTEE NORTHERN AREA

March 29, 1971.

The second quarterly meeting of the Northern Florida Committee of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous was held in Gainesville, Fla., at 2:00 p. m. on Sunday, March 28, 1971.

Present was chairman Earl M. Committee members present were Dave C., Bert L., Bill B., Buck R., Marie T. and Lamar P. Absent were Jess P. and delegate, Sam I.

The meeting was opened by the chairman. The minutes of the first quarterly meeting (Jan. 31, 1971) were read and accepted. The treasurer's report was then read and accepted.

As Sam I. was absent due to illness, the chairman continued the meeting. The need for an alternate delegate was stated and Dave C. of St. Augustine was unanimously elected.

The following conference agenda topics were discussed:

1. Should GSO and AA service offices accept contributions from clubs formed by AA's for AA's?
The answer was no. It was felt that we must adhere strictly to our preamble and our traditions.
2. What can young people contribute to older members?
It was felt that we need to forget age; that we are all the same as sober alcoholics and have the same need for the twelve steps.
3. Is there a generation gap in AA? It was noted that there were young people's groups in some communities, but also noted that separate groups away from the main body of AA do not last too long. Reference was made to our pamphlet Young People in AA. Again, with strict adherence to our steps and traditions, age difference (generation gap) should pose no problem.
4. It was asked if sponsorship were declining. Some felt that it was not; that it was stressed in their district, while others felt that it may give the appearance of declining simply because it was spread out more widely, and because of the rapid growth in group membership. Still others felt that much less stress has been laid on sponsorship today than it was twenty years ago in AA; that twenty years ago new members were very definitely informed about the need for sponsorship.

This question was summed up in the need for our individual inventories - in how well we as individuals are getting the message across to the newcomer of his need for sponsorship, and in the need for group discussions on sponsorship.

5. The value of Traditions: It was strongly felt that with the death of our co-founder and with so many outside agencies interested in the illness of alcoholism we may be going into a new age in AA. It was pointed out that what the steps are to the individual alcoholic the traditions are to the group. That they grew out of our experience with group problems and are still the basis on which we solve our problems today. It was felt that we need more group meetings on the traditions and on the history of AA.
6. The topic of cooperation but not affiliation was summed up by Earl: "AA is compatible. If you fail, we will help." It was stressed that AA needs no prestige; that we stand on the record of our own recovery. More important, that we cannot allow outside agencies to tell us what to say at our meetings. We are effective because we are laymen. We can tell our stories as victims, not as experts.
7. Questions about future international conventions were raised. It was felt that the cost of tapes and panoramic photos was too high and should be greatly reduced.

Brief reports were heard from the chairmen of the public information committee and the institutional committee. Velma Hall pointed out that the State Convention is not paying for the transportation and lodging of inmates this year and that Louie Wainwright states that the inmates will not be able to leave the prisons unless and until the money is in hand. As a personal venture on Velma's part, a contribution was collected after the meeting.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer. No date or place has yet been set for the next quarterly meeting, but we will keep you informed.

Sincerely,

Barbara

Barbara S-N.,
Secretary.

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 M. 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 4-5-2 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 M.

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

Sincerely,

Barbara