

January 2019 Orientation Assembly Delegate's Report

My service in Alcoholics Anonymous took me by train out of town recently. Delegates from other areas are often invited to participate in Third Legacy Elections in neighboring areas. We try to reciprocate so elections can be facilitated by members who do not have a vested interest in the outcome. Like many experiences in A.A., there is always something to learn.

Deboarding the train, I ordered an Uber on my phone and in short time I was headed to my hotel. The Uber driver was friendly and talkative during the 30 min drive. Like many trips I've been on in the past, each encounter with people outside of AA, while you are in the service of A.A., comes with its own set of circumstances and questions. "What brings you to town?" "What's going on this weekend?" These questions can stump many A.A. members. While we practice a program of anonymity, we don't lie or deceive. I flash on the innumerable things I could say. "Visiting friends," which would not be a lie, or "It's just business," might also work. But what usually comes out is, "An Alcoholics Anonymous assembly event that includes an election, where I will participate by helping to conduct the election." I clearly state this, careful not to mumble, then I wait. There is usually a pause, but I'm never uncomfortable. The reply is often automatic. "That's cool," or "You don't say?" On rare occasions the stranger will admit their own membership in a 12 step program or their previous membership. A few will recall a relative who was "in A.A." It is during the pause that I shift my motive. I believe we find ourselves in these moments for a reason and I always think of my own relationship with A.A.

I knew nothing about A.A.'s program of recovery. It would surprise you that my grandfather had been sober in the fifties but I had no knowledge of this piece of family history before I sobered up. I know my introduction was no coincidence. I needed only to know that a place existed that might help me remedy my malady and once that happened, I became sold so swiftly that my path in A.A. was destined to include service. I knew my primary purpose before I even knew the 5th Tradition.

I became an ardent recruiter of young people in and out of meetings. I was focused on finding ways to draw young people to rooms through creative coercion. This, in time, led to active service in YPAA groups. I was headed for General Service and I didn't yet know what it was. When I talked about A.A., I talk in terms of furthering our cause. My futuristic outlook had its beginnings in Y.P.A.A. when I just wanted A.A. to be here for me "and countless others." But as my tenure in the program increased, so did the widening wake of tragedy and travails that befall all of us. I was going to be given the keys to the kingdom but I did not know it would be through General Service.

The first stage was to begin growing up emotionally. Adhering to the principles of A.A. began to take on new meaning. No matter what, I stuck to the principles. I bore children who were to test the very boundaries of my sanity and sobriety, forcing my self-centeredness and local view of the world to evolve, forming concentric circles ebbing outward, enlarging my perspective and opening my mind. It was no longer just about

me and my friends staying sober. Now it was incumbent upon me to do what we were entrusted to do—keep Alcoholics Anonymous here for all those yet to come. And now my new role had a name: General Service Representative. I was going to learn how the ideas we have in our groups are important to others around the globe and if I wanted to be part of the solution, I had to be part of the Area.

My work in Alcoholics Anonymous is directly related to carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, including the ones currently in my family and the ones yet to arrive. Learning to carry the message within the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous enables me to be more effective and protects A.A. from outside interference. Learning to understand the Service Manual and apply the Concepts to any “big ideas” I might have has taught me valuable lessons in humility.

So I do tell others what I am doing in town this weekend. It’s a clumsy conversation sometimes, but I don’t regret telling anyone that A.A. is in good hands because a few people are doing the work of dozens trying to make sure 12 step work can happen, anytime, anywhere. And for that, I am responsible.

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