

# Boomerang



## From the desk of the delegate

Change is in the air. The season, the leaves, area 28, districts and group servants. This issue reflects on change. Change is the only constant so “they” say. As we approach the end or beginning of a new position there is some trepidation that may creep in, it’s a prosaic response to change. I’ve heard as alcoholics we don’t like change, I challenge you to consider that we stretched to do everything we could to change our reality when drinking, which likely brought us here, to Alcoholics Anonymous. Try a little change on, lean into the discomfort of a new AA position. And just like that, 2 years will pass and you will find it was a growth experience like no other. Our new GSO General Manager, spoke with the NERDS in September and shared about his experience strength and hope through service to AA. As some of the NERDS are rotating on, his advice to us was “Keep your hand in the air”. In other words, stay in service. Recovery is a debt I can never repay, so I’ll keep my hand in the air as I rotate on. I look forward to watching us grow as an area, as AA as a whole, and my own personal growth from having served as a panel 70, area 28 delegate on the GV & LV committee.

Love through, Service,  
Nikki O.

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## What is Change?

The dictionary *says an act or process through which something becomes different*. Change happened to me in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. I started to feel and understand life differently and that obsession to drink was lifted. When Bill and Bob and the first 100 took people through the steps their lives changed, and they still do today.

Our text was published in 1939, the steps and the answers are all still in there but even our text has changed in minor ways with different editions and new books. When I found these rooms a few 24-hours ago I heard from so many that they found these rooms just like the one I had found, other than the fact there were no ash trays when I came in. Some would even say the way our message of hope and the way it was conveyed was frozen in time never to change.

But then a pandemic decided to show up in our beautiful fellowship of hope, and that changed. Technology and society are changing so rapidly, the way our message was conveyed was still the same but now we could not meet in person and put out a handshake or a hug to the newcomer, we could not pass on a piece of paper with our number and a suggestion to reach out. We couldn't even meet up with a sponsee/sponsor to go through our book and steps. And my favorite, pick up the newcomer and have the meeting before the meeting. But in 2020 we were literally rocketed to a new platform in some ways an even more inclusive platform if you were sick in bed or had no way to get to an in-person meeting you could still make it with a click of a mouse. I couldn't imagine

a few years back someone finding sobriety without going into a church basement, clubhouse or maybe a community center. Thanks to these new virtual platforms people have found recovery without leaving their homes in a pandemic and staying safe. I have even given suggestions and helped go through the book with people I have never met in person. The most incredible thing has happened, people have celebrated anniversaries without ever actually stepping into an in-person meeting!

Change is sometimes forced but for this alcoholic I must ask what has not changed. What I see is the genuity and love that is just as apparent and strong as it was in 1935 when Bob and Bill got together for the first time.

Change is inevitable but in times of change we are always reminded of the past and the beautiful thing of our fellowship is how we can use our steps, traditions and concepts to keep this amazing thing we call Alcoholics Anonymous alive! Even our General Service Conference was in a different way for the past two years. It was virtual and I was blessed enough to be part of it as a panel 70 delegate. Yes, this was a change but what didn't change was the 4 languages that were heard loud and clear: French, Spanish, English and the language of the heart! One thing that will never change for me is the responsibility statement and the reminder to be willing to go through any lengths to carry the message!! In-person, telephone or virtual, our fellowship is alive, and the message will be carried by us all one day at a time.

*J.J. Panel 70 Delegate, Area 81*





Greetings, fellow A.A. members! I'm most grateful and honored that your Panel 70 Delegate Nikki O. gave me a chance to write about something that has transformed the life of this cantankerous, stubborn drunk, who came into Alcoholics Anonymous on the north side of 50. Yes, I'm talking about sobriety, but also about what ultimately powers sobriety: change.

We have a Past Delegate in my Area who sometimes says, "Alcoholics hate two things: the way things are, and change." Can you identify? Changing ANYTHING in my life was the last thing on my mind when I walked into the rooms in early 2007. But as I slowly (and often unwillingly) trudged through the Steps with my sponsor, change occurred, and by the grace of God it keeps right on occurring.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Step promises, the phrase "sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly" first infuriated me – because I'm a drunk, I want instant gratification! But the longer I stay sober, and strive to practice all 36 Spiritual Principles of this extraordinary program, I realize one of the true gifts: it takes me quite a while to be ready to *accept* some of those gifts. For example, it took me over a decade to get out of the financial nightmare I had created for myself; but if I'd gotten everything back in the first year, would I have still had the desperation to work on my sobriety?

Another gift started to take place for me early in my recovery, one that I did not see coming at all: moving from the desire to *be served* to the desire to *serve*. I loved doing service in my home group from my first commitment as a coffeemaker (it got me out of my loner, "I am a Rock" mentality), and ultimately, I served in every group commitment that I could.

But at fourteen months I moved well out of my comfort zone and became a G.S.R. I was tricked into it, but that's another story...After several G.S.R. stints I dared to make myself available for other things, and started to inch my way down the Service Triangle. I figured that after I had completed my Step work, I had pretty much done all the changing I needed to do. Boy, was I wrong!

As the chair of my county's unity Breakfast, I learned about balance, and the importance of servant leadership. As a county DCMC, I learned to listen – *that* was a tough one! As Alternate Delegate, I learned about serving different communities, always with A.A. love. And what did I learn at my first General Service Conference this year? A most cherished gift – being open to a new perspective. What's the common denominator here? Change.

Serving at different levels has not only taught me the value of change, but it has been life-altering in my personal growth and spirituality. I urge you: if you're considering General Service, stand and make yourself available. Turbocharge your sobriety!

*Tom B., Delegate, Area 49, Panel 71*

**"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new"**

**~Socrates**



# Change: *The Only Constant*

**“Change is the only constant in life. One’s ability to adapt to those changes will determine your success in life.”— Benjamin Franklin**

A.A. was making use of online/virtual meetings many years ago as demonstrated by the statement below from the fourth edition of the Big Book’s forward in November 2001. “Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.’s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”

This is an example of agenda items changes from the 2021 conference:

The Policy/Admissions committee recommended that the U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group’s preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group’s primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as “International Correspondence Meetings.” **PASSED**

The committee recommended that the General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure. **PASSED**

The following is from “Our Great Responsibility” (page 104) “What our friends, the nonalcoholic, have done for this society is beyond anybody’s estimate. We live in an era of change. Our twelve steps probably won’t change: The Traditions not likely at all. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service-let us hope this goes on changing for the better, forever. There is a very natural resistance that we have toward change. We are apt to say, “Well it worked very well the way it was. Why change?” But after all, we have undertaken several tremendous changes. You will remember that in the very early days people said, “Why a self-appointed trustee-ship? Later people said, “Why a

book?” And now, in 1960, many people say, “Why a Conference?” I cite that to show that on good evidence, with the need clearly in sight, we are indeed ready to make all kinds of changes. Not that any great changes are in prospect, but I think we ought to stay open-minded on this matter of change. We reference the past and its lessons for so long as those teachings work. When they don’t, we readapt and we reshift. That has been our history.” After reading the above excerpt it reminded me of the changes from our 2021 General Service Conference. For example, approving a draft simple language Big Book to be brought back to the 2022 conference and changing the preamble from “*men and women*” to “*people*”. I don’t believe we will ever know for sure, but I think these are some of the types of changes that Bill was preparing us for with his wisdom and insight.

Paul H, Delegate - A31, W. M. Panel 70, Treatment and Accessibilities Conference Committee.

**Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women—people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.**

**The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. there are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.**

# Desperate Enough!

Greetings from Eastern Massachusetts, Area 30. My name is Jan. I am an alcoholic. I currently have the privilege to serve Area 30 as its Panel 71 Delegate.

I attended my first A.A. meeting knowing only this: drinking had stopped being fun and was now painful, and I wanted the pain to stop. A member of the group welcomed me and suggested I use her as a temporary sponsor. She told me if I followed a few simple suggestions, I could stay away from the first drink. She talked about “suggestions”, not “change”, and I was desperate enough to give it a try.

The first suggestions were easy: go to meetings, call her daily, take on a setup or cleanup chore at every meeting I attended, pray at the start and end of each day. I was overwhelmed by the Steps so she had me focus on the abbreviated version of the first three: I can't, God can, I'll let Him.

Soon enough my sponsor suggested it was time to formally take each Step as laid out in our basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous*. It didn't take me long to realize that working the program was more than just taking my sponsor's pragmatic suggestions. I was now facing my resentments, fears, character defects, and taking responsibility for the harm I had caused. It was an incredibly emotional and painful process! But as promised, I didn't pick up a drink.

I had just completed my final, and most difficult, ninth step amends when my first anniversary arrived. This last amends clearly and painfully illustrated the wreckage of my past. I woke up the morning of my anniversary with an incredible emotional hangover and a desire to throw a pity party. My sponsor suggested I spend some time writing about who I was a year ago, who I had become, and how I managed to stay sober for a year.

I realized that morning that I had come to A.A. with the gift of desperation. That desperation had led to a willingness to listen, to work the program to the best of my ability, and a willingness to change. My first year of sobriety was painful and there was plenty of work ahead of me. But not only had I stayed away from a drink, I also changed in ways I could not have imagined.

One day at a time, I have now been gifted three decades of sobriety. The desperation I once knew is gone. I have had times when I felt restless, bored, or just generally dissatisfied with life for no apparent reason. I have come to know these feelings as spiritual growing pains; as God's way of nudging me into a period of self-examination, housekeeping, and eventual growth. Today I know that change may be uncomfortable, but does not need to be feared. My experience in A.A. has shown me that change is necessary to become all that my God intends me to be.

In love and service,  
Jan W.

**Open the Gift Of Desperation**



# Most Great Ideas Seem Terrible...

## At First

The things that help me grow the most, are things I initially resist the most. I resisted joining Alcoholics Anonymous, writing a Fourth Step inventory, sharing my secrets with another person, and making certain amends. Despite my resistance, those very actions saved my life.

I cannot trust my knee-jerk responses because my mind will always try to keep me away from activities that will help me grow. I was similarly reluctant when I learned about service beyond the group level. I learned about a weekend-long event called the Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA), which required a very long car ride. I learned about District meetings, Area Assemblies, and a bigger world of A.A. My initial response was to talk myself out of it.

When I attended my first election assembly, I saw people standing for positions and I thought “I could never do that.” I am so grateful that I did not allow my inner doubts to rob me of what has been the most incredible journey of my life.

We can do as much or as little with our A.A. membership as we would like, and I decided to see if I could soak up all that A.A. has to offer. This has changed me for the better. Just about everything good in my life can be traced back to saying “yes” when everything in me was screaming “no.” At one point, I could barely put a sentence together on paper. Thanks to serving as an Area Secretary, I can take business meeting minutes that are coherent and clear. I once could not balance my own checkbook. Thanks to my experience with Area Treasury, today I can read some detailed financial statements and make sense of them. At one point, my word meant nothing because I could not keep any commitments, show up on time, or be responsible. A.A. service taught me how to have integrity. I can juggle demanding professional commitments today. I have lifelong friends and have a ton of fun. I never knew I could laugh to the point of nearly fainting until I took a road trip to a service assembly with some friends that choose to stay neck-deep in Alcoholics Anonymous. Today I look in the mirror and am satisfied with the person I see. As an Area election Assembly approaches, we might tell ourselves a lot of things, such as “I am not good enough,” or “I do not think I will like it.” Reminder: we usually resist those things that help us most. The more afraid and unwilling we feel about something might be the biggest indicator that the very thing is exactly what we need. We might consider putting ourselves out there and letting the group conscience make the decision for us—not our own fears. An informed group conscience is far superior to what I can come up with alone. I am grateful to know what taking that leap of faith is like, instead of talking myself out of it.

*Matt K. Area 11 Delegate, Panel 71*

What did the man  
with a slab of asphalt  
under his arm order?

“A beer please, and  
one for the road”



What do law students  
and alcoholics have in  
common?.....

They both have to  
pass the bar

# Popsicle Sticks

My first AA meeting was also my introduction to the "popsicle stick" format. The stick I pulled had "CHANGE" written on it in Sharpie, all caps. With the letters written so aggressively, that word "CHANGE" seemed less like a concept and more like a direct order.

It took me 39 years to reach the point of surrender that brought me to that meeting. I may not have gone had a friend from work not agreed to join me. As I listened to the other people in the room share what they thought about the words on their sticks, I realized that I felt safe there, at home, like one among many. I looked at the Steps posted on the wall, realized I'd already done the first one, and committed right there and then to do the rest of them.

I bought my Big Book after the meeting. I couldn't believe that thing was only 10 bucks. The first passage I connected with was the list of things that Bill Wilson and the founders of AA had done to control and enjoy their drinking. They had tried and failed to drink like normal people. So had I, but until coming into AA, I had thought I was the only one

who had gone through the struggle. Until coming into AA, I didn't realize there was such a vast community of people who had lived my life and found a way out. I wanted what they had.

I went to three more meetings that week. One of them led me to the Spiritual Experience appendix, which assured me I wouldn't have to have a single dramatic "burning bush" conversion moment. My change could be slow, incremental and intellectual and still be spiritual. I found the *We Agnostics* chapter, and after reading it, I found the God of my understanding. I also found my soon-to-be homegroup and sponsor that week.

I started changing before I even pulled the popsicle stick. I started changing the second I fully knew and accepted that I needed help, and committed to seek it out. AA has given me a foundation, a fellowship and a new life. My first year brought the most dramatic and unfamiliar results, but the three-plus years that have followed also have given me a new job, a new house, new friends and a happier family. CHANGE.

*Andrew H, Sobriety Sentinel Tri-County, MI. AA*



Why did the accountant do so well in A.A.?

He was already a Friend of Bills

Getting Involved in AA Service work has kept me interested in my own recovery. I have found the joys of sobriety in the most curious places: An AA birthday (for someone else), showing a new comer how to make the coffee, in the grueling work of the fourth step and then sharing it with someone. However, there has been nothing more satisfying than the nuggets of personal and spiritual growth I can see in myself and others than that which happens when a bunch of recovering alcoholics come together to carry the message to the sick and suffering alcoholic, the alcoholic who hasn't yet been born and the alcoholic who isn't sure if they belong here.

Service work saves lives: mine, yours and those who aren't here yet. Sharing at a meeting is a step in the right direction toward service, but it takes more than that to keep the doors open for the whole of AA.

There are business meetings, area assemblies, area, district and group committees that need our attention. We must elect and prepare our delegate to attend the General Service Conference.

My favorite people are in A.A., and my favorite people in A.A. are those in structured service.

Get involved, you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. ~Anonymous



## Return on Investment

My Name is Pravesh and I am an alcoholic. Thank you for the privilege of contributing to your publication. A huge thank you to each one of you for your service to Alcoholics Anonymous. Through service I learned that sobriety is not only a requirement but it is also a responsibility.

Service in our fellowship has been like my Step One, it had taken me a long time and when I got into it, I asked myself why I hadn't done it earlier. Eight years into sobriety I had not ventured past my home group and a few district commitments. I was always asked to get involved but opted out largely due to the people I was associated with in AA. Our Trustee approached me to apply for the position of Delegate, it was more an ultimatum than a request. I served as a Delegate and loved it. My perception of AA changed drastically and I fell in love with service. Next was Regional Trustee. At our second Board Meeting, Our Board Chair resigned with immediate effect and I was elected as Board Chair even though there were others longer than me in service. This gave me the opportunity to lead a team that brought about change. Our board meetings were rotated around the country and there was time allocated for interaction with the local fellowship. Soon the 'them and us' syndrome was removed and the Board was seen as just members.

Next, I was elected as WSD by the Third Legacy procedure. I was beginning to learn that as we get deeper into the triangle, the service positions become fewer and the 'bosses' become more. Acceptance becomes part of the learning experience and not being elected does not mean the end of service. In service all I need to do is put up my hand if I am available. God through the group conscience decides. My position as WSD meant I attended the zonal meetings at which my name was drawn out of the hat to serve as Chairperson. God was interfering in my life without my permission. Through all of my service positions, AA had made a huge investment in me. My return on that investment is to continue being available whenever our fellowship needs me. I also learned that I must be able to return to my home group and continue with the important tasks of setting the chairs and making the coffee. In 2015, I was invited by AAWS to share at a meeting in the build-up to the International Convention. What a privilege to have been there. As I stood in the meeting hall and looked onto the road, the pavement was a stark reminder of where I was coming from but the voice of God was telling me that HE had brought me from the pavement to do HIS work through service. A truly humbling experience as is all service. Unity insures recovery through Service. ~ *Pravesh A, Durban South Africa*

## What are the AA Principles?

- Honesty (step 1)
- Hope (step 2)
- Faith (step 3)
- Courage (step 4)
- Integrity (step 5)
- Willingness (step 6)
- Humility (step 7)
- Self-discipline (step 8)
- Love for others (step 9)
- Perseverance (step 10)
- Spiritual awareness (step 11 & trad 12)
- Service (step 12)
- Unity (tradition 1 & concept 1)
- Trust (tradition 2 & concept 3)
- Identity (tradition 3)
- Autonomy (tradition 4)
- Purpose (tradition 5)
- Solidarity (tradition 6)
- Responsibility (tradition 7 & concept 6)
- Fellowship (tradition 8)
- Structure (tradition 9)
- Neutrality (tradition 10)
- Anonymity (tradition 11)
- Conscience (concept 2)
- Equality (concept 4)
- Consideration (concept 5)
- Balance (concept 7)
- Delegation (concept 8)
- Ability (concept 9)
- Clarity (concept 10)
- Humility (concept 11)
- Selflessness (concept 12a)
- Realism (concept 12b)
- Representation (concept 12c)
- Dialogue (concept 12d)
- Compassion (concept 12e)
- Respect (concept 12f)



# What is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Procedure?

The third legacy procedure as described on page S21 in the current Service Manual is a unique electoral procedure used by A.A. to elect its officers, such as delegates, trustees and other general area officers. The process can seem tedious; however, it is a proven method for selecting our trusted servants. This system helps in the eradication of politicking and influencing. It has proven to be a clean, fair and spiritual way to select qualified people. To prevail in a third legacy procedure, one must receive 2/3rds affirmative votes of the voting body. Therefore, the number of needed votes must be determined in advance.

To understand it more clearly, I needed to break it down with simple math. Remember every Area, District, and Group are autonomous except in matters affecting A.A. as a whole, so some may do this process a bit differently, and that is okay.

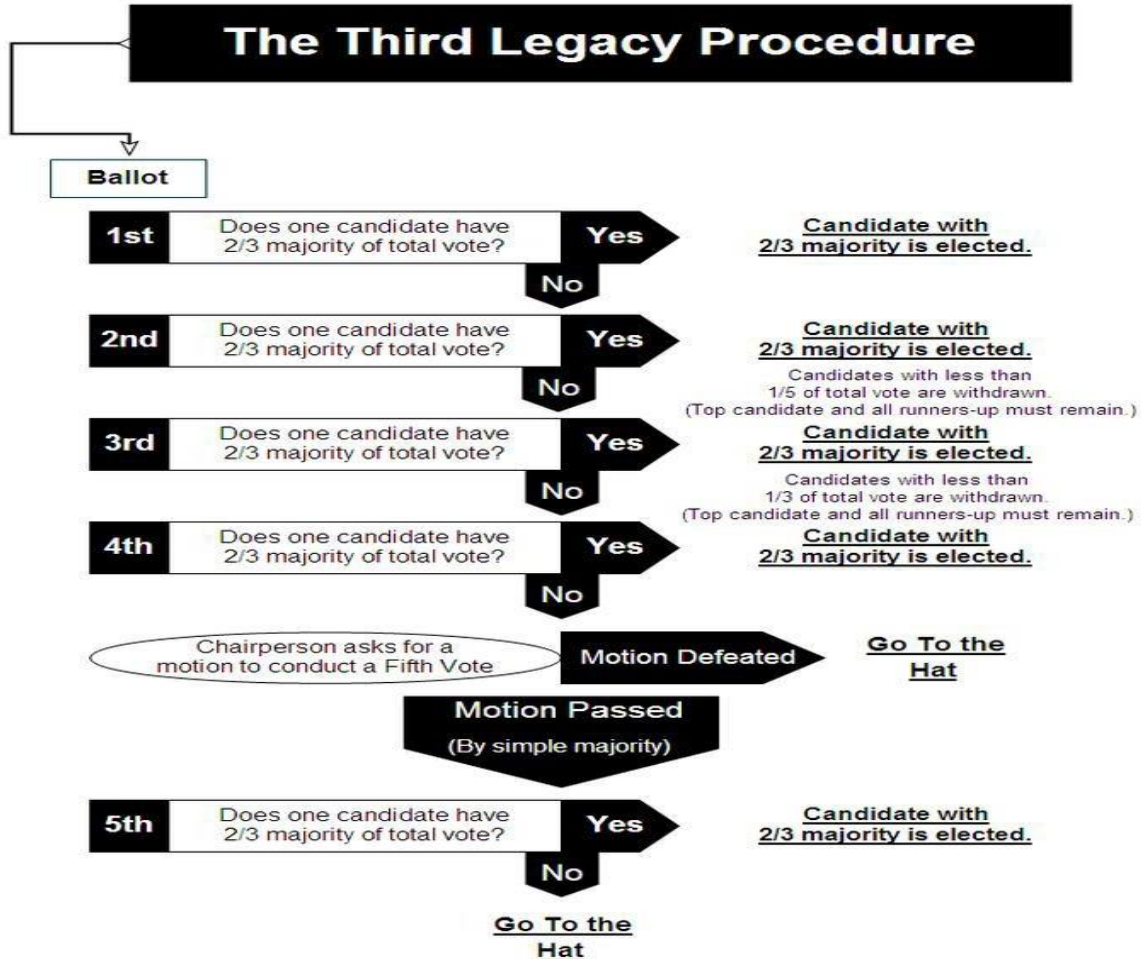
Let's say there are 112 voting members at an Assembly, first we need to determine 2/3rds, which is 74.66 some Areas round up, some round down. For this example, we will round up to 75. A prevailing candidate must receive 75 affirmative

votes in order to be selected in the first round. If no one receives 75 votes a 2<sup>nd</sup> ballot is cast. On the second ballot if no one receives 75 affirmative votes, anyone with less than 1/5 of the votes is removed from the slate of candidates. In this case, everyone with less than 23 votes is removed.

Without having received 75 affirmative votes a 3<sup>rd</sup> ballot is cast, this time anyone with less than 1/3 votes will be removed, so someone with less than 38 votes is eliminated. If no one has 75 affirmative votes a 4<sup>th</sup> ballot is cast. Again, on this ballot, 75 affirmative votes are needed to be elected. If none of the candidates has 75 votes then the Chairperson asks for a motion to conduct a 5<sup>th</sup> vote, a second and a simple majority are needed.

If the motion is defeated, the remaining names go to the hat. If the motion passes a 5<sup>th</sup> ballot is conducted. The prevailing candidate must have 2/3rds or 75 votes. If after the 5<sup>th</sup> ballot there is no candidate with 75 votes, the remaining names go to the hat.

The names are in the hat, and the newly elected officers name is pulled.



# Change is Inevitable

I am an alcoholic with nearly twelve years of contented sobriety. Thank God I found A.A. and finally became willing to change my life to become a better husband, father, colleague and friend. For me the key was to change what I was doing in order to better myself. Before I found A.A., I had a strong will and I thought I knew all I needed to know about how to get by in life. All I needed to do was to stay the course and everything would work out.

I had no idea that I was insane from alcoholism and that my philosophy was dragging me down the abyss and to an eventual death. All I needed to do was work harder, try harder, and all would go my way. What I got was a deeper depression and a drinking problem that was totally out of control. So, what was I to do? This was my life and it was all I knew. I'd gotten this far without too much trouble. When difficulties and rough patches occurred, I'd ease them with booze. Why not? It always worked before! After all, I was still doing well financially, had a roof over my head, food on the table and cars in the driveway. However, I became an empty man with dwindling self-esteem and a profound fear of the future. Eventually, "I became sick and tired of being sick and tired"; I hit my bottom. I knew I had to *change*, or die.

I joined A.A. and for some reason at that point, my fear of changing and doing whatever I had to do was lifted. My experience in the beginning was I heard my story from many people realizing I was not so unique and those people seemed genuinely happy. For some reason I trusted those people and became willing to follow this way of life. I could not believe in those early days, how my outlook began to improve. My disposition became more positive. My reluctance to change started dwindling and acceptance of it more welcomed. The more changes I made had more positive effects. This A.A. stuff was becoming welcome and my faith in the program and my Higher Power deepened. I realized my Higher Power was doing for me what I could not do for myself.

Emerging with my newfound faith, life became easier and I still have not found it necessary to drink. In fact, I believe even if I thought I could drink in safety, I still would not. My new faith has continued to squash fears of change that once paralyzed my judgement. The attitude now is to welcome change and tackle it head on as a new opportunity. It has always turned out better than the way I used to deal with it.

Change is, and always has been inevitable. So why did I almost always fight it? I became willing to now accept change as a part of my life. I have become honest, that's change. I'm getting older and that is an inevitable change. I have retired from a fulltime job and that is a welcome change. We have all had to endure a pandemic that forced us to change. Changes are coming folks, they always will. Point is, it's OK! How I or we deal with it is what makes a positive difference. Once I stopped fighting change and learned to accept it, tolerate it, and have faith that my Higher Power has my back, my fear of change is gone. All I have to do is the best I can and God will take care of the rest.

**Dan B.**

Who is Victor E.?

Victor E, a comic strip character from the Grapevine, gives inspiration. Victor E. first appeared in the July 1962 Grapevine. He had wanted to drink in almost every issue of the Grapevine – and every time has changed his mind. Some people wonder about Victor E.

When is this guy going to get the program? What is his problem? Why is he always hanging around a tavern? The key to Victor E lies in that he is an **AA Everyone** who represents all of us sober alcoholics at a critical moment of decision: to drink or not to drink.

Sometimes we all stand, at least symbolically, in front of those tavern doors.

**Why don't recovering alcoholics learn to dance?**

**They stop at twelve steps.**



# Have Meetings Changed?

What do you think? What has been your experience? I know over the past 52 years that they have changed a great deal in meeting times, meeting content, and in meeting attendees. The change has been gradual. Is this “the road to progress”? The answer is up to you. Meanwhile I shall continue to go to as many meetings as I can, in person or on zoom. Why? You asked me how often I drank, so what could I say. You said that meetings are an insurance policy. Ninety meetings in ninety days was added later.

In the old days, most meetings started at 8 or 8:30 PM so that members could get home from work, eat, get cleaned up, and get to a meeting. Meetings lasted usually up to an hour and a half. Another reason why meetings started late was that drinking usually started by those times, and so by the time an alcoholic got done with a meeting and got home, it was usually well after 10 PM. You also have to remember that there were not that many meetings so you had to drive a distance to a meeting. Add stopping off for coffee/ice cream afterwards, the time was more likely closer to 11 PM. It took care of the evening and safely got the newcomer over the hump. I wonder if today, with meetings starting at 6 PM and the later meetings being dropped, who is benefiting? I suspect it is the self-centered member, and not the newcomer. I know in Stonington, Maine, in the early 1980's, we moved the meeting time from 8 PM to 7:30 PM to accommodate local fishermen who had to get up before 5 AM. Recently, the time has been changed to 6 PM.

Meeting formats have changed. Whether this is because of the influence of treatment, I do not know. I have my suspicions. Most meetings were open. Most meetings in large population areas were speaker-type with a few discussion type meetings. Attendance was large at speaker meetings, while discussion meetings had few attendees. In rural areas, meetings were discussion type with maybe a speaker on an anniversary. Anniversary meetings attracted more attendees than the discussion meeting. Discussion meetings were more common on the West Coast, while in Boston, almost all were speaker meetings put on by a visiting group, whether in the city or country.

Slowly meeting emphasis changed. So-called “cross-talk” was discouraged. Sharing particulars, your troubles or questions, about your day was discouraged

and you could only share in a general way, and not what you would do in a particular circumstance. More emphasis is now placed on literature, and those who were Big Book Thumpers changed from being rare to what has become today as “this is what you should do”, by working the Steps with a sponsor, and having a tribe in both directions of sponsees and grand sponsors, etc., forever. No individuality, no autonomy, no freedom. Rigidity. This is THE way, not a SUGGESTED way. If you don't, you will get drunk is implied. I was told in 1969 that I was like a pigeon. The group and sponsors (mentors, AA friends), were here to help me find my way, answer questions, and share what worked for them. At some point, usually sooner, I was ready to fly on my own, and so was pushed out of the nest, like it or not. The relationship was not a lifetime marriage.

As for meeting attendees, we do attract a much wider group. We are becoming much more diverse in modeling society. Do the newcomers stay? Do they carry the message? I would say not so much. Do most of us sit on the sidelines and let others do the work? Is this in the spirit of “sacrifice” as the literature suggests? A few do, but the number of old timers who remain active does not seem as great as the old days, or maybe they are not that prominent. Should you sponsor the old timer who has pulled back? What have we lost? Maybe this is just my perception. Do you miss them? I do. What do you think? What do you do?

~Bob Dodge, Past Delegate, Panel 36 Area 28 Maine

## Who is the man on the bed?

**Bill D. from Kenmore, Ohio, sobriety date: June 26, 1935. He is A.A. number 3. Bill was a lawyer and the first to stay sober without a slip.**





# Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde

As the progression of alcoholism increased over time, as I drank more, the character attributes I had been raised with eroded. As alcohol had more control of my life, the defects of character rose to the surface. This was an unwelcome change that I could not see or could not acknowledge because my ego and pride wouldn't allow it. I was in denial, and protected my drinking at the expense of anyone who happened to be in the way. I was not the man I used to be, but I couldn't see it.

I was brought to my first meeting by an ex-girlfriend who had figured out why my behavior changed so drastically in our relationship. It was the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde routine. A very unwelcome change that even I didn't understand.

I didn't know anything about alcoholism, or recovery, and didn't have any intention on completely stopping drinking. I just wanted things to get better.

I was able to control it, but not for long. The relationship ended, the progression increased, depression and anxiety had set in. I had gone from top to bottom shelf. At the end, when I hit bottom and crawled into the rooms of AA after a grand mal seizure and 10 months in a nursing home recovering from the wreckage from the seizure, surprisingly I heard the message. I met some guys who picked me up every day and took me to meetings. Allowing someone to help me was an uncomfortable change, but I had no choice. I was terrified of drinking again, so I surrendered. That was something I had never done either.

The way I had been living, the standards that I had lowered in order to drink had almost taken the ultimate toll. I could have had a stroke, or heart attack along with that seizure, but I was spared.

So, when I finally started relying on AA, it happened pretty naturally. I actually liked and admired the people I met, I was able to identify with the sharing and readings. It felt right to just go to meetings, I didn't really think about it. My priorities changed, and somehow, I knew I needed to be a part of. I eventually moved to where I live now, Little Egg Harbor in Southern NJ.

Every now and then things would happen that seemed coincidental, but I started to recognize that God was guiding me. I never really thought of God when I was drinking, never prayed, not even a foxhole prayer.

When I went to look at an apartment, I didn't realize the manager had filled out the application for me. When I met her, she said I had been approved, and asked if I would like to see the apartment. When we got there, I saw the address, and it was the same as the place I had worked for 15 years in Manhattan. When she opened the door, it

was partially furnished. She was upset at first because it should have been empty. Then she realized through our conversations that I didn't have much furniture, and she was happy to let me have everything, even a washer and dryer. I knew for sure that God was working in my favor, I could feel the presence.

I called the local Intergroup as soon as I was settled, and went to my first meeting. I was welcomed the same way I had been every other time. A meeting list was passed around, and at the end of the meeting I had at least a dozen phone numbers. An older gentleman introduced himself to me, and asked for my phone number, his name was Pasquale. He spoke to me as if he had known me for years.

The next day he called. Asked what meeting I was going to, came and picked me up and took me to a different meeting. This went on for a few weeks, then after I got a car, he asked me to pick him up. He suggested I join a group, and explained that I should have a home in AA. I should make sure to attend the business meeting, and get a job. I took his suggestions.

My first home group was the Only Requirement group. Monday night speaker group. Two speakers and a leader, no discussion component. I attended every Monday night with Pasquale, and my new AA family.

Through the Bookers exchange, we did 3 outgoing commitments every month, carrying the message to groups who brought us the message every Monday night. Most times we had a carload going to share. We had a meeting in the car on the way, and on the way back home. I didn't know it, but the message was sinking in, and I was learning.

At my new home group, there was a woman named Donna S. They called her Jersey City Donna. She was very involved in service, and started inviting me to go with her. At a business meeting, she volunteered me to be the new Intergroup Rep. We went together, and she introduced me to everyone, sat next to me, and explained everything. I loved the atmosphere, and the enthusiasm. I got my first AA Service Manual that night.

Donna had something going on just about every week. Next was a Corrections Conference, then a Mini Conference, then she told me to join the Roundup committee. I was watching the Traditions, and some of the 12 Concepts in action without realizing it. As I read through the Service Manual, I learned how AA was set up, and it was amazing to me.

A new world filled with opportunities was unfolding for me, and in the meantime, I'm with my sponsor going to meetings in the daytime. My entire life was changing, and

it felt natural. It all just made sense. I was experiencing the joys of being a Member of AA.

I was so excited to give my Intergroup report. The responsibility made me feel a part of the group.

After rotating, I was elected GSR. I had read the description in the Service Manual, and was sent to our District meeting. The District had been inactive for a year, and the Area Chair suggested an election for DCM. Needless to say, I was elected DCM for District 15.

Thanks to the guidance of Pasquale and Donna, I was excited to jump in to this servant/leadership role. I had developed a love for service, and my career experience in management, along with the Traditions and Concepts led the way.

Three years later, I rotated out with about 12 out of 30 groups participating at the District level.

I made myself available for Intergroup Vice Chair. Chairing the steering meeting, and occasionally the business meeting gave me the opportunity to learn all of what Intergroup did in our area.

I was elected Chair of Cape Atlantic Intergroup, and I loved every minute of the action, and the people. I learned to face adversity, calm my emotions, rely on the principles of AA to guide our Intergroup through 2 years of service.

During my 3 years as DCM, I also was the Audio-Visual Chair at Area 45. I attended every assembly, provided audio, and did many group and district events over 4 years. I had built relationships with multiple Panel members, past Delegates, and Northeast Regional Trustees.

Before my Intergroup rotation, I received a call from a past Delegate suggesting I show up at the Area election assembly. I was nominated as Area Chair, and gratefully served for 2 years. My network has grown exponentially. I've attended 9-10 Northeast Regional AA Service Assemblies, and Forums, had many opportunities to carry AA's message of recovery, unity, and service. I have the privilege of being a recovery sponsor, and service sponsor. I am an active member of my home group, and I have the pleasure of serving as Alternate Delegate, Panel 70 of Area 45 now.

My life now does not resemble in the slightest my life while drinking. My perception of the world, myself, and all its inhabitants has shifted to a much kinder, compassionate, loving and spiritual plane.

I've experienced hardship during my spiritual journey, but the fear has been minimal. My spirit is full, I rely on the God of my understanding and every day is a gift.

*~Ken T. Alternate Delegate Area 45*

**On page 158 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* "Devil may care young chap" refers to Ernie G. He was 30 years old. He married Dr. Bob's daughter Sue, against Dr. Bob's wishes. Sue loved Ernie but he turned out to be a much less than likeable guy. Ernie wrote the story "The Seven Month slip" which was in the first edition of the Big Book.**

**In Akron, there was another member named Ernie G. He got sober later and was an exemplary AA member, and much was written about him.**

# FOREVER UNORGANIZED

Growing up on a farm, I lived in constant change. We watched for weather changes because we had animals that needed care and growing crops that could be flooded or blown down. A wind flattened field of corn is a big loss. The new crops and the newborn animals were much discussed at the dinner table. Change was mostly exciting and good.

On May 1, 2021, coming back to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous for Canada and the United States after almost 18 years away from the bottom of the triangle, I found changes! The changes do not appear to have made much difference in the home groups and meetings of the Fellowship with one huge exception; the impact of Covid-19! People long to see each other!

Some of the changes are good and some may not be so good. Some may be lasting, and other changes may disappear as people meet face to face, especially at the General Service Conference. Will there be good discussions and thoughtful considerations of the minority opinions in deciding what changes to keep and what changes to discard? Will the spirituality of A.A. be the primary underpinning in the reaching of an informed group conscience? Will A.A. hold to principles over personalities to guide and shape how A.A. faces the questions in its future? I am hopeful, but the jury is still out. The verdict will not be rendered by the service structure: The General Service Office, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, Inc., nor the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, Inc.

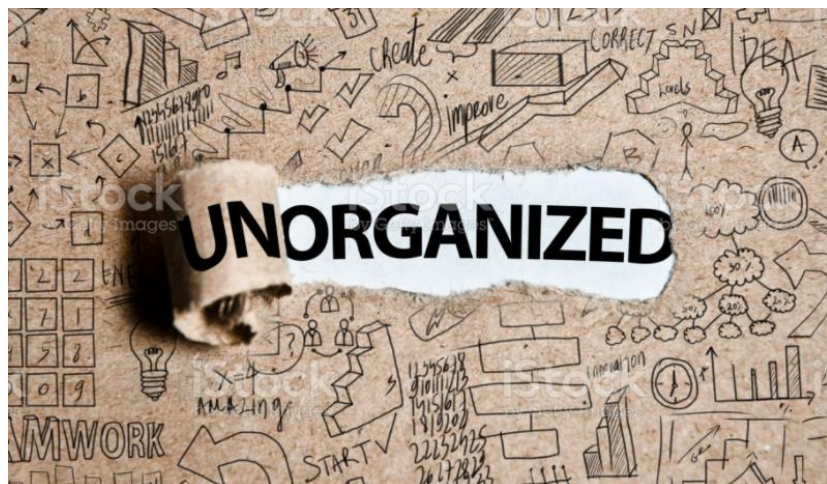
The real answers lie in the hearts and by the actions of the forever unorganized Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Time will tell.

Because of the abruptness of some of the changes, I am not the only one working to understand how this all might work out. Bill W. saw change as potentially beneficial and yet, reading the resolution adopted at “Four o’clock Sunday Afternoon,” he was totally clear that only the Fellowship through *the registered groups of the world* should have the final say on whether the Traditions and the Warranties of Article XII of the Conference Charter should ever be changed.

Interestingly, Bill’s last words on the subject of change for AA are, “A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard.” (from the letter read by Lois at the annual dinner given by the New York Intergroup Association in honor of Bill’s 36th anniversary—October 10, 1970.)

The opposite of change is stasis which is stagnation and no growth. Allowing no changes would be death for A.A. Just as I rotate corn and beans on our farms, the A.A. rotation of leadership positions provides opportunities for growth and allows new ideas and approaches to be tested. I am grateful for the opportunity to be of service as the Chair of the General Service Board. I hope that by focusing on principles over personalities, we can sort out the changes to keep and the changes that should be changed.

**~Linda Chezam, Class A Trustee, Chair of the General Service Board**





# Taking Chances

Change. That nasty word which, when we first come to Alcoholics Anonymous, seems impossible. “I only have to change one thing in my life – Everything! Hahaha.” How many times have we heard this at meetings and laughed along with the speaker, only to be terrified at the prospect of changing *anything*, never mind *everything*...

Change, we find, is a process. Gradually, we go from obstinance (I’m not doing *that!*) to consideration (maybe I *should* do that) to action (I’m *doing* that) to accomplishment (I can’t believe I’ve *done* that). And this is something I know because it is how I approached the Twelve Steps when I arrived in Alcoholics Anonymous. Who of us comes into our first meetings, looks at the window shades with the Twelve Steps and says, “I can’t WAIT to do that stuff!” Uh, no one ever.

However, we come to the point (hopefully) where we realize that there is something in Alcoholics Anonymous which we don’t yet have, and in order to get it, we must take some kind of action. We take the action, and we get results! Imagine! Doing things which seem foreign to my way of thinking, things which seem to have nothing to do with what I perceive to be my problem, things which my mind tells me I don’t need to do – *these* are the things which I must do in order to change.

The ideas that I brought along with me to A.A. are ideas which will repeatedly injure me. And so, I need to try new and different ideas. The ideas of Unity. The ideas of Fellowship. The ideas of Service.

When I got to A.A. I didn’t want to do the Steps. So, I did them. I didn’t want to learn about the Traditions. So, I learned about them. And I did NOT want to be involved with Service. Oh, I did Service, but it was the *real* Service of going through the Big Book with others, of going to Treatment Centers and our State Prison and carrying the message at those places. I was

(and still am) very active in that aspect of Service. But then a funny thing happened. A couple of the guys who went through the Steps with me were involved in that *other* Service. One was the Treatment Chair in our Area, and the other was the Area Chair or something like that. I constantly chided them for wasting their time doing that stuff, and I realized I had what I thought I was incapable of – *contempt prior to investigation*. So, I became a GSR, joined the Finance Committee, and joined the Corrections and Convention Committees (where I started writing plays for the Convention, but that’s another story).

Then came the day when I raised my hand to stand for Area Chair. And the only reason I did it was to make an amends to the folks in Service when it was my turn to qualify. Of course, the vote went to the hat and my name came out. Totally unprepared and terrified at the prospect of breaking A.A. I began my two-year commitment. Then I stood for Alternate Delegate, and began my two-year commitment. Then I stood for Delegate, and began my two-year commitment.

Ok, a couple of points. The first one is that this is the longest amends I’ve ever had to make, and it won’t end until I chair the State Conventions in ’23 and ’24. But the most important point is something I heard a couple years ago at NERAASA. “God doesn’t call the qualified. God qualifies the called.” I took a chance. I raised my hand and dove into something which I had no idea how to tackle. But that’s the beauty of the whole story. I don’t *have* to know how to do something before I do it. I take a chance and I *learn how* to do something. And that requires a change in thinking, which comes by taking those chances. Which requires a change in thinking. Which comes by taking those chances. Which one comes first? Doesn’t matter. They work together. And by taking chances, I’ve just attended my second General Service Conference. And you know what? I can’t believe I’ve *done* that.

~Steve L Area 61 Panel 70 Delegate



## What Changed? AA or Me?

When I became a judge in 1999 I was assigned to the Drug Court. It had already been started for a few months and attending AA was a requirement for the participants in the program. I knew little about Drug Court and even less about AA. I knew it was for alcoholics, there were meetings of some kind, usually in a church basement, there were steps, coffee and cigarettes. I had a lot to learn.

Over the next 20 years I continued to work with treatment courts and continued to refer participants to AA. At first, the “referral” was really an order. A court order, with a potential jail sanction if not followed. In court, I regularly asked about AA meeting attendance, step work, sponsors, and sobriety time. It was all part of the program. I explained to reluctant participants that they didn’t need to believe in God to be in AA. Maybe AA wasn’t for everyone, but it couldn’t hurt and it might help. Just give it a try. Many of the people who were ordered by me to attend AA were eventually grateful and became members of groups, sponsors, and active in service work. Unfortunately, there were some who had very different experiences.

My AA education progressed. I learned what service work was. I discovered the Grapevine and subscribed. I actually read the Steps. I attended treatment court trainings and learned it was a Constitutional violation of the First Amendment to order people to attend AA. When I became a Class A Trustee of the General Service Board in 2016 things really began to change. Concepts! Traditions! Singleness of purpose! ANONYMITY! How had I missed that?

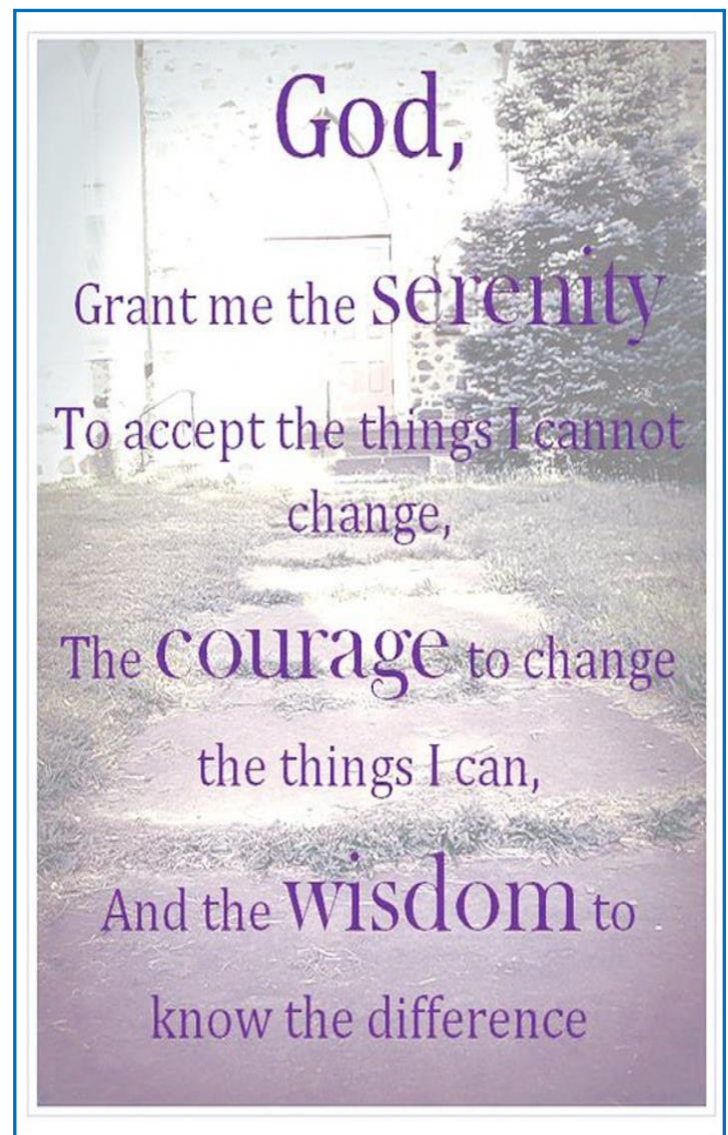
My decision to join the GSB was the result of much reflection about what damage I may have done over the years. I decided I needed to dedicate some time to bridging the gap between treatment court and AA. There is a lot of misunderstanding from both directions. Treatment courts work with people who suffer from alcoholism and also acute substance use disorders. Some people have both diagnoses. Unfortunately, the courts have tended to send everyone to AA regardless of their diagnosis. This practice has changed in recent years. A better understanding of the singleness of purpose of AA has contributed to this change. This has been accomplished by increased communication, usually through CPC channels. Protecting anonymity has also improved. Open court is no longer a place to discuss AA participation. Treatment court participants now have broader options in choosing a 12 Step recovery

support program. No longer are they court ordered to attend. The topic of religion versus spirituality is recognized and discussed.

We joke about moving at the speed of AA, but the last few years have forced us to focus on Change, with a capital C. Both AA and the courts have adapted to meet the needs of our members brought on by the pandemic, travel and meeting in person restrictions, the increased reliance on social media and virtual platforms and the psychological, physical, and emotional results of those events.

So, what changed? AA or me? The answer is pretty obvious to me; I needed to change and I did. I have done my best as both a Class A Trustee and a still active Drug Court Professional to educate both the AA community and the team members of Treatment Courts about how we can work together to help the still suffering alcoholic. There is always more to be done, and there will always be someone willing to carry the message. And part of that message will include CHANGE.

*~Hon. Christine Carpenter, Class A Trustee*





### 2021 Schedule

October 15-17 Voting Fall Assembly  
December 5, Officers SWAP meeting

All Area positions will be elected at the Fall Assembly

If you are interested in being a Committee Chair, please make yourself available to the newly elected Chair.

Come see what Structured Service is all about  
“Though you may come to scoff, you may remain to pray.



# N.U.T.S.

## Not Using The Steps

Thank you for reading the Fall 2021 edition of the Boomerang.

If you are interested in knowing more about the position of Boomerang Editor talk with our Area Chair

**See you at the Fall Assembly!**

