

# Ways & Means

A Quarterly Newsletter For The Fellowship Of Debtors Anonymous

Fourth Quarter 2010

## A Former Trustee Expresses Gratitude To His Adopted Program

In 2003, I received a call from a member of D.A.'s General Service Board asking if I would be interested in helping the Board revise its Bylaws. I had known this Trustee as a member of another 12-Step program, and she was aware of my background as an attorney. At that time, I knew little or nothing about D.A. I agreed to serve after receiving a brief description of D.A., but my understanding, at best, was sketchy. At that time my thought was that D.A. might be worthwhile for those who needed a 12-Step program to clear up a marginal problem in their lives—helpful, but hardly necessary.

After I began working on the Bylaw revision, I came to know several other members of the Board while working with them. They began describing their experiences in D.A. and discussed how the program of recovery worked. I began to get a better idea of the need and value of this Fellowship, without really understanding its nature and purpose. I worked on the Bylaws for about a year and then was asked by the Board's Nominating Committee whether I would be willing to serve as a non-debtor (Class B) member of the General Service Board.

Still knowing relatively little about D.A. or the work of the Board, I replied to the invitation, applied for membership, went through the interview process, and was accepted. I began my tenure as a Board member at the 2004 World Service Conference in

Sacramento. The next six years constituted a series of unfolding revelations about D.A., its members and the work of the Board.

That very first Conference I attended was an eye-opener. Over the course of that week, I met and talked to several dozen members of the D.A. Fellowship, and I began to appreciate the nature and scope of their difficulties with unsecured debt. One trustee described to me how her debting had resulted in her waiting at her place of employment for the police to arrest her for embezzlement. Others at the Conference described the feelings of hopelessness and despair that descended over them as their addiction progressed. Still others spoke of suicide attempts, bankruptcy, lost relationships, and destroyed marriages.

By the end of that first Conference I had begun to get an understanding of the fundamental importance of D.A. to those who are powerless over unsecured debt. The seriousness of the disease became apparent, and I was moved to the core by the struggles of those who suffered.

Over the next six years of my service as a Class B Trustee, I received other insights. One was the difficulty of the D.A. program. As a member of A.A., I was aware of how hard it is to put down the bottle. But, I had no idea of the difficulty faced by those who are committed to not incurring unsecured debt. If you are serious about not drinking, you can avoid people, places,

Editor's Note:  
Our apologies that the  
3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2010  
Ways & Means did not  
get published this year.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Ways & Means

Carrying The DA Message  
Since 1988

Ways & Means, an electronic meeting in print for the fellowship of Debtors Anonymous, is published quarterly by the DA General Service Board. It is a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of DA members, groups, and other service bodies. Articles are not intended to be statements of DA policy, nor does publication constitute or imply endorsement by DA as a whole, the DA General Service Board, or Ways & Means.

A PDF version of the Ways & Means can be downloaded free of charge from the world service website [www.debtorsanonymous.org](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org). Multiple copies may also be downloaded for distribution at meetings. The newsletter may also be distributed electronically via an e-mail subscriber list.

Submissions from readers on any aspect of DA recovery or service are welcome. If chosen, submissions will become the property of the Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, and will not be returned. As with all DA publications, everyone submitting writing, artwork, or other creative work will be required to sign a standard publishing release form granting rights to the work to DA and releasing DA from legal liability. Those submitting work to Ways & Means automatically acknowledge that they will not receive compensation for their work, and that the work may be viewed by an unknown number of readers in unknown locations.

Please submit work by e-mail to [waysandmeansda@hotmail.com](mailto:waysandmeansda@hotmail.com), or in hard copy form by mail to Ways & Means, c/o DA General Service Office, PO Box 920888, Needham, Mass 02492. Include your full name and mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. (This information will be kept confidential). Story ideas and questions should be sent to the same addresses.

Editing and layout for Ways & Means are done by the Communications Committee of the DA General Service Board.

# How Sponsorship Can Save Debtors Anonymous

**W**e have found it essential to have a sponsor and to be a sponsor. A sponsor is a recovering debtor who guides us through the Twelve Steps and shares his or her own experience, strength, and recovery.

I never understood the importance of sponsorship until I heard a D.A. friend say she considered it more important to be a sponsor than to have a sponsor. I was like, what!? After over 10 years of not debting, this came as a revelation. Her statement implied that I should focus on giving service, rather than on getting someone else to give service to me! What an uncomfortable idea. Uncomfortable because I am a compulsive debtor and one of the ways my disease manifests is in the belief that I am entitled to have what I want, when I want it, without earning it or paying for it. The difference between giving and getting goes to the heart of my debting

disease. I'm all about the get. Left to my own devices, I avoid the give whenever possible. I'm a debtor. Every day, the disease of compulsive debting manufactures a sense of impoverishment in all that I do and see. This sense of impoverishment convinces me that there is not enough in the world for me. My fear is that if I am the only one who gives service, no one will give service to me.

The more I thought about what my friend said, the more I understood what she meant. If I want to demonstrate my recovery, I need to take responsibility for it. I need to be the one to step up to service. I need to say yes to sponsorship. In fact, it is possible that the future of D.A. might depend on us all saying yes to sponsorship. But there are so many reasons not to be a sponsor, right? At every meeting I hear someone in the group say something like, "I can't sponsor anyone because I

(Continued on page 12)



A one-dollar bill ran into a twenty-dollar bill at the bank one day and struck up a conversation. "So, how's it going?" asked the One. "Where you been?"

"Oh, the usual," said the Twenty. "Restaurants, clubbing, went on a cruise actually, and made it down to Mexico a few times. How about you?" asked the Twenty.

"Oh, the usual," said the One ... "Meetings, meetings, meetings."

## Pole, Pole! (Slowly, Slowly!) A Long-Time Vision Becomes Reality

In Swahili, “pole pole” — pronounced po-lee po-lee — means “slowly slowly.” I recently learned that not only is that the best way to make my visions come true, it is the ONLY way to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro safely, sanely, and solvently. Yep, to celebrate my 60th birthday, I climbed the highest mountain in Africa, 19,343 feet, and I did it the “D.A. way” — without incurring any unsecured debt — or any debt at all.

It was the most difficult physical, mental, and financial challenge of my life, and it was an enormous five-year vision come true. It was even more challenging than paying off my 40-plus creditors over nine years because paying off my debts started with very small amounts that increased over a long time as my recovery grew stronger and my resources flourished.

To climb Kilimanjaro, I had to accept that my old way of compulsive spending wouldn't work and that I had to follow the D.A. way of pursuing my vision: First and foremost, I had to stay abstinent, pay cash for everything so I had to save money well ahead, plan my purchases, buy what I needed when I had the money, and spend what I had to spend to

prepare as well as I could.

I prepared purposely by developing and refining my spending plan with pressure relief groups over time. I prepared positively by reading in depth, watching videos of the climb, and asking questions of the experts at the travel service I used. And I prepared prosperously by paying trainers to work me out (or over!) 2-3 times a week for 18 months and buying the best clothes and equipment whether it was on sale or not. (I have a very hard time paying full retail price for anything!)

As I prepared for the climb and studied the physical challenges, I learned what my addict brain had always managed to avoid when I faced personal challenges before — it's not reaching the top that would fulfill my vision, but reaching the bottom on the other side! I didn't just have to be healthy, happy, and safe at the top, but at the bottom. Life is not a one-way trip up; it's a round-trip ticket our Higher Power gives us so we can return “home” to HP's loving arms. And “mother mountain,” as I call Kili, showed me how very true that is.

When I got off the airplane in Arusha, Tanzania (Kilimanjaro is in Tanzania, NOT Kenya, btw), I began a 10-day ‘fantastic

journey’ that I was as well prepared for as I could be. I had done my best. But my Higher Power had many pleasant and not-so pleasant surprises in store.

Pleasant surprises? Four days of perfectly blue skies above the cloud layer at 14,000 feet and four incredibly bright full-moon nights. A huge staff of 63 people — an 8 to 1 ratio — of guides, cooks, and “tough guys” to make sure 8 — only 8 — pampered middle class Americans had the easiest climb possible.

Even with all this support, we still had to make the climb ourselves, one “pole-pole” step at a time. I learned in retrospect that my recovery had grown strongest and my personal growth taken deepest root, when I worked the Steps and followed the 12 Step Way slowly, slowly — one day at a time.

The not-so-pleasant surprises were that despite all the preparation, I still was not prepared for the harsh reality of very cold nights alone in a tent and the unintended consequences of unexpected emotional and spiritual challenges. Anticipating these challenges, our leader, Samia,

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Slowly, Slowly**(Continued from page 3)*

the best in the country with 197 climbs to his credit in 14 years, told us that if we followed his directions, we would be fine. When I did follow his instructions and follow his simple guidance, I *was* fine. When I put my foot in the spot where the guide in front of me had put his foot, I knew it was safe.

When I tried to do it my way or argued with Samia, I inevitably suffered negative consequences — from simple stumbles on the trail to a slight bump on the head to injured toes on my too-rapid descent. No one comes down from Kilimanjaro the way you go up; everybody pays a physical and mental price for embracing this challenge.

The moral for my recovery is first and foremost to follow the winners—do what the winners in D.A. do. And every successful D.A. member that I know is out of debt, does not use credit cards, and lives a prosperous and happy life by working the steps, using the tools constantly, practicing the 12 Step Way of Life, and giving awesome service back to D.A.

The greatest spiritual challenge I faced was, for a control freak like me, letting go and letting Samia—certainly the physical manifestation of my higher power for this climb—lead the way. When I finally did so, I learned an extraordinary lesson in compassion. I am not a very compassionate person, and I was short, even rude with Samia and Humphrey, one of the assistant leaders, on several occasions as I

became more tired from lack of oxygen, lack of sleep, and the exertion of the climb itself. When I reached H-A-L-T (hungry, angry, lonely, tired), I became irritable and uncooperative and I felt unsafe so I tried to control what was uncontrollable—how I reacted to the worsening conditions as we climbed higher, the terrain became treacherous, and the air thinner by the step.

Yet, not only did Samia and Humphrey continue to treat me with respect, they went out of their way to make sure I made it to the top on my own two feet. When Samia saw I was becoming exhausted—well before I admitted it—he asked Humphrey to carry my daypack (15-20 pounds) as well as his own pack. And he did for the last—and worst—4 days of the journey: a 2,800-foot climb at 30- to 75-degree angles from 16,000 to 18,800 feet, a pre-dawn climb up a slippery scree slope to the top so we could watch the sun come up at 19,340 feet, the 9,000 foot descent (!!!!) the same day we reached the top, and the last day with a 3,500 foot descent through a rain forest on very slippery clay trails.

The last two days I had injured feet—the consequence of descending too fast and the wrong way—and could barely walk down the mountain, but I made it down on my own two feet as well. But only thanks to Samia’s compassion and Humphrey’s willingness.

Through their actions, I received one of the most important gifts my Higher Power has ever granted me: the gift of learning true compassion for total strangers. Yes, both of them were paid to help me, but they went far beyond what the job required. They could have let

me continue to carry my own pack and become so tired that I could not have reached the summit. When I became exhausted and irritable, they could have declared me unfit and sent me down the mountain without reaching the summit. They could have subtly made my life miserable in camp or on the trails. Instead, they acted with true charity and went beyond the job to show kindness to a struggling human being.

I left that mountain extremely humbled at the beauty and majesty of the mountain. I was humbled by not only the compassion but also the intelligence and talent of Samia, Humphrey, and their fellows. I was especially humbled by the strength and stamina of our “tough guys” who carried 50 pounds on their backs and heads 3-4 times faster than we could walk. I was humbled by the simple kindness, generosity, and compassion not only of Samia and Humphrey but also by the entire crew. They were hard working, experienced, cooperative, patient, and kind.

I was humbled by the unexpected challenges and the opportunities for spiritual growth I found in them (more like that were thrust in my face by my Higher Power, to be more honest). I grew spiritually by learning to accept help graciously and gratefully. I learned to view every person as a beloved child of God with special gifts and potential to share with the world—if you don’t think the “tough guy” who cleaned out and carried a large portable latrine every day has a special gift, try it for a day or two.

Last and most important, I was

*(Continued on page 6)*

# A Recovering Debtor Increases Her Seventh Tradition Contribution And Experiences The Promises In Action

*We will recognize that there is enough; our resources will be generous and we will share them with others and with D.A.*

—from the Promises of Debtors  
Anonymous (#7)

**F**rom all of D.A.'s beautiful literature, including our incredible Twelve Promises, the seventh one did not jump out at me at first as something to be desired or even possible. As a compulsive debtor, how could I ever be fulfilled or feel content if I could not spend beyond my means? Credit card debt was how I "rewarded" myself and got out of the rat race and pain of never having enough. I had to relieve the *terror, bewilderment, frustration and despair* the A.A. Big Book so aptly describes in "A Vision for You." I had no other solutions than debting and doing it compulsively. Even when I came into the program 7 years ago, I did not believe that I could have anything above the "break even point" in my solvency journey. Going to the grocery store knowing how much I had in my checking account and how much was in my spending plan for this category, so that I could stay solvent when I shopped, was a major relief for me. I lived on the edge financially all of my adult life before recovery. I mistakenly thought this was exciting—even daring and admirable. How else could you enjoy life without spending every penny you had? If God gave it to me, than I should use all of it and

use all of it for myself. If I had to buy a gift, I would charge it, spending more that I could afford so I would not stand out. Boring people had nothing better to do with their money than save it. Unadventurous, unexciting, uninformed people saved ahead of time for vacations, planned for retirement and gave money to their alma maters, churches or desired charities.

I have now been solvent for 5 years and my debt has been paid off for that long as well. My sponsor told me at that point that I was no longer an underearner. She had told me when I came in I was an "underworker," because I was only working 20 hours a week. Things could not be any more different now: I make six times what I made when I came in; I have 8 months of a prudent reserve; I have health insurance; I set aside \$1,000 per month in a 401k plan at work; I have travelled solvently to Paris, Cairo, San Francisco, and Miami.

I wish I could say that I came to the realization on my own that I could and should increase my donations to D.A. when my financial situation improved dramatically as a result of immersing myself in D.A. I did give liberally of my time through sponsorship, chairing meetings, giving PRGs and being involved in other D.A. events such as Wilson House retreats and Do Da Day. Putting \$1 in the basket at each meeting seemed adequate. That was

more than I could have done pre-recovery. It was only when I worked the Steps with a sponsor that I met through the Ways & Means newsletter that this changed. She wrote an article on PRGs that resonated greatly with me. So I found her and asked her to be my sponsor and help me go through the Steps. I soon learned that she was heavily involved in service and was able to pass on to me that giving back financially to D.A. generously was an inherent part of our continuing recovery.

Soon after, I got a bonus at work and I asked her what she thought I should do with it. I had visions of a trip to Europe (it was not that big a bonus) and clothes or furniture for my apartment. To my shock and disappointment she said, "You could give it to the World Service Office. They always need money." My first thought was that she was "boring, unimaginative, and dull," with no life. The "Vision for You" Big Book chapter also says, "Am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring, and glum?" I thought that this had clearly happened to her, even though she seemed cool, fun, and interesting. Despite my initial feelings, I had the willingness to take her suggestion. I have always been willing to do that with sponsors. I trust them, and I trust the program, and it has never failed me.

That week I set up an automatic

*(Continued on page 6)*

***Slowly, Slowly****(Continued from page 4)*

humbled by the awesome power of God that I saw, felt, and experienced every day. From the indescribable beauty of a completely clear full-moon sky to the special kindness of the chef preparing my food to fit my special needs, I was comforted by and carried to the top—and to the bottom—of Kilimanjaro solely by the grace of God.

As in my D.A. program, I realized that my recovery of 11 years without any unsecured debt and 20 years in D.A. requires a huge amount of constant support. I

would have died trying to climb Kilimanjaro alone; I will die if I try to “cure” my compulsive spending and debting alone. But pole, pole—slowly, slowly, I can grow in my recovery one day at a time, I can pay forward the remarkable gifts I have received, I can live in gratitude and humility, I can practice acceptance for everyone, and I can put my relationship with my Higher Power first in my life and trust, truly trust that He/She will make all things right one day, one step at a time, even when that step is a slow one up a very high and very challenging mountain.

—Robert P.,  
Reston, VA

***Seventh Tradition****(Continued from page 5)*

monthly payment of \$25 to the World Service Office from my checking account. She also told me to increase my Seventh Tradition contribution to my home group to \$10 per week putting \$5 in the GSR envelope and \$5 in the rent etc. envelope, as I am the GSR. I also send \$20 per month to the D.A. phone meeting that I attend regularly. How have I benefitted from this commitment to D.A.? I feel more a part of D.A. I love the monthly e-mail receipt (it is tax deductible) I get from the Needham, MA office. I feel more responsible during business meetings and encourage my groups to contribute to all levels of D.A. service. As a first time GSR, I went to the Denver 2010 World Service Conference in August. I joined the Resource Development Committee (RDC),

which focuses on increasing the revenue of D.A. through the Seventh Tradition.

I can never repay D.A. for all that it has given me, even if I contribute the \$3,000 annual limit allowed per individual, which I could do. I can at least contribute beyond my regular contribution to what the D.A. Service Manual suggests: *Special prosperity contributions with new job, raise, bonus or other blessing received as a result of D.A. recovery; anniversary gift; World Service Month.* If I may borrow from A.A.’s Dr. Bob on service in order to express my own views on putting money in the basket: *It is a duty, a pleasure, a debt payment to those who have helped me in DA and insurance for my solvency.* Thank God for DA.

—Maureen C.  
New York, NY

**Article Submissions**

Submissions are now being accepted for the 1st Quarter 2011 issue of *Ways & Means*, due out in March.

Articles addressing topics and issues of interest to the D.A. Fellowship, including issues related to D.A. groups and service as well as personal recovery stories, will be accepted. The ‘My 2 Cents’ feature is available for articles expressing strong opinions on DA practices and issues.

All submissions are subject to editing for length and clarity. Deadline for the 1st Quarter issue is February 1, 2011.

To submit an article, send by e-mail to [waysandmeansda@hotmail.com](mailto:waysandmeansda@hotmail.com) or by postal mail to *Ways & Means*, c/o DA General Service Office, PO Box 920888, Needham, MA 02492. Questions and comments should be directed to the same address.

my **2** cents

## *Why I Am Against Timed Sharing*

**F**rom the day I attended my first DA meeting, I have never ceased to be amazed at the subtle ways this Twelve Step fellowship works. From the meeting format to the Tools to the Steps and Traditions, it is a simple and powerful program.

On that first day in 1990, I sat and listened to others share. And I felt safe that no one would nudge me or call unheeded attention to me as the new guy. I was prepared to bolt out of there real quick if they did. Instead, a message to newcomers was read—to no one in particular—and I listened. People raised their hands IF they wanted to speak. No one called on me and said “Oh you’re a newcomer! What do you have to say???” Ugh. I would have run right out the door, thank you.

In my desperate state as a newcomer, I asked for a PRGM after having attended meetings almost daily for a few weeks and met with a man and woman whom I chose. Their simple suggestions began the process of finding a sponsor, working the first three steps, and allowing a Higher Power into my life.

I am eternally grateful for what I’ve received from this program. So forgive me if I get defensive when I feel that what I’ve received is threatened. Sometimes it seems like relative newcomers are constantly trying to fix the D.A. program. And that’s what

brings me to timed sharing.

Let me start by sharing a story. Years ago, in my first few years in DA, there was a woman who began to appear at meetings. She had chosen a funny name and wore a funny hat. She was witty and funny could throw around AA slogans like a machine gun and she made people laugh when she shared. Because of this, she was always chosen first to speak. In short, she drove me absolutely out of my mind.

I would run into her again and again at meetings all over town and soon enough I couldn’t stand the sight of her or the sound of her voice. All that joking and sloganeering, all the while avoiding talking about her debting or anything else related to the disease. Why wasn’t she honest? What did she know about D.A. recovery? Ha! I avoided certain meetings just so I wouldn’t have to see her.

A little over a year later, I attended a meeting and she was chosen to share. But this time she skipped the joking and shared straight from the heart. It was a story of immense pain and it moved me deeply. Right then and there I was forced to face an ugly truth. I had been intolerant. I had not accepted her for who she was. I was critical. Here she had covered over all that pain with the funny joking and the funny name and the funny hat. And I had responded by being critical and loathing her.

That moment did more for my recovery than many other things I can think of. And it wasn’t the only time this has happened to me in the rooms.

But sometime in the mid-1990’s, motions at Business Meetings for timed sharing came like a wave in meetings all over. I know those who did so were well meaning. The thinking was that addicts need to have boundaries set for them and that everyone in the meeting needs to have the opportunity to share. Unfortunately, I disagree with both assumptions. Addicts do much better setting their own boundaries rather than having others do so for them. And everyone in a meeting doesn’t necessarily get the opportunity to share.

The result is that in many such meetings, DA members are protected from having to face the discomfort of realizing their own self-centeredness. For me, I found it revealing and humbling to have to pay attention to how long I spoke, rather than having someone control my behavior.

In addition, in such meetings DA members are protected from the discomfort of having to face their own intolerance. “Time’s up! You can shut up now.”

As the doctor in the AA Big Book puts it on page 451, “The more I focus my mind on [a meeting’s] defects—late

*(Continued on page 8)*

**Class B Trustee***(Continued from page 1)*

and things that lead to drinking. But with debt, it is impossible to avoid the use of money and difficult not to use a credit card. In a debt driven society, there are constant encouragements to incur debt. The occasional ad for alcohol does not compare to the unremitting pressure to take out student loans, use credit and checking accounts moderately, and rely on the government's offer of assistance at a low rate of interest.

I discovered that D.A. was really "graduate A.A." The spiritual program that I had developed was sufficient to get me through the difficulties and temptations I faced about alcohol. But, I am really awestruck at how strong a connection with a Higher Power is necessary to overcome the impulse to debt when it has become an addiction. The spirituality required for a successful working of the Twelve Steps of Debtors Anonymous is of an entirely different quality.

I was impressed by the depth of commitment to service that I found in D.A. Members of the Board of Trustees put in the time and effort that is required of the full-time management team of a good-sized corporation. They do

this while holding down full-time jobs that are often extremely demanding. And, they manage to do all this with good cheer, humor, and enjoyment. Throughout the country, people serving as GSRs and intergroup workers provide the backbone for service and are often willing to undertake additional tasks. My only reservation with respect to D.A. service relates to the need to remember that D.A.'s service workers are not magicians. All too often, too much is expected of them and not enough credit is given. Where there is disagreement, it must be voiced agreeably, else D.A. runs the risk of scaring off those who are willing to serve.

At my last Conference in August 2010, I reflected on my hopes for this "glorious Fellowship." As I look back over the years, I am encouraged that these hopes will be fulfilled. D.A. will grow and prosper and its members will continue to serve. D.A.'s focus must always remain on the practice of the Twelve Steps "in all our affairs"; if this continues, the future will truly be friendly.

I thank D.A. for the opportunity to serve as a Class B Trustee.

—Paul S.

**Timed Sharing***(Continued from page 7)*

start, long drunkalogues...the worse the meeting becomes. But when I try to see what I can add to the meeting, rather than what I can get out of it, and when I focus my mind on what's good about it, rather than what's wrong with it, the meeting keeps getting better and better."

Putting up with my fellow DA's character defects is part of the price—and gift—of recovery. Sharing is service and a privilege. There is no guarantee at any meeting that I'll get to share, nor is it necessarily the right thing for me to be doing so at every meeting I attend. When it's time for me to shut up and listen, other people get to share instead of me. Or they get to go on and on till my tolerance is stretched to its limits. But it's their responsibility, not mine, to do their own inventory and reach that level of recovery when they realize that they are being self-centered.

What would I like to see? I'd like to see my fellow debtors give up trying to control their fellows through timed shares. I'd like to see my fellow debtors let go and let God when it comes to sharing. That maybe what I hear today is what I need to hear, for reasons beyond my understanding at the time.

Of course, having said that, I have to admit that this article shows how I struggle with accepting the group conscience! Truth is, I have accepted it and have learned to accept timed shares for years without resentment (well OK, maybe a little!) However, that doesn't mean my minority opinion is wrong nor that timed shares are the right thing for us to be doing in our meetings.

—Anonymous



# Letters To The Editor



## United Kingdom D.A. Responds

Dear Ways & Means,

Recently an article was written in *Ways & Means* entitled "Special Focus Group In 'Battle of Britain'" dated Second Quarter 2010. It has concerned D.A. United Kingdom Intergroup greatly that this article was written without consulting with anyone representing the D.A. UK Intergroup or confirming the accuracy of the statements therein.

D.A. intergroups do not distinguish or discriminate against any group, no D.A. group has had their status disputed by us. D.A. UK Intergroup are represented by all types of groups in the UK. Please, in the future, consult with us before publishing this kind of article and help support the loving fellowship worldwide and all those who are wishing to not compulsively debt one day at a time.

Yours in fellowship  
Tracey, Chairperson, D.A. United  
Kingdom Intergroup

## Primary Purpose

Dear Ways & Means,

I have to admit I have mixed feelings about the latest edition of *Ways & Means* (Second Quarter, 2010). I've been in D.A. for more than 10 years, and solvent since September 2009. A lot of D.A.s would consider me a hardliner. I was once fired as a pressure woman by some very "high profile" local D.A.s for asking, "Did you not make your house payment?" So on the one hand, I do appreciate the clear call for a return to focusing on

our primary purpose. But even I bristle at some of the language in this one.

Multiple authors seem to go out of their way to slam Overeaters Anonymous (for introducing the concept of abstinence) but, in my experience, the O.A.s I know in D.A. are generally far more serious about their solvency than the others. And, like many, I used to use the word "abstinence" in D.A. because it used to be one of the tools of the program. That's like saying one of the "tools" of A.A. is not drinking. I always thought that was a conceptual mistake, but I did it to promote "unity." I don't enjoy being vilified for it now.

I was also upset to hear that D.A. HOW (which sounds to me like our only chance of surviving another 10 years as a useful fellowship) was outlawed in Great Britain. How could B.D.A. be a part of D.A., but not D.A. HOW—a formal way of working D.A. in which sponsors require their sponsees to actually use the tools of the program?

Finally, there are (AGAIN!) conflicting and angry articles about whether paying a bill late constitutes debting. Two authors carefully lay out for all of us backsliders why they are the only ones who are right about that. It's disruptive of unity to publish a newsletter announcing that there is only one definition of debting, and that it's simple and has always been

simple, and then to follow that up with two articles with drastically different definitions of unsecured debt. It's as if A.A. announced a return to basics, took a tone of disciplining the strayed, and then published two articles disagreeing about whether beer is alcohol or not.

If not paying our bills when they are due is NOT debting, then I have 10+ years of solvency. The issue of whether I *could have paid* them is not relevant to the people I owe money to, so why should it be relevant to my sponsor? It's challenging to be constantly saying "I have 30 days" or "I have 11 months" when other DAs who chronically "forget" to pay bills are claiming multiple years of solvency. I try to be forgiving and focus on the Serenity Prayer. (Other people's recovery definitely belongs to the category of "things I cannot control.") But I have to admit I'm having an upwelling of resentment about it all now because of this contradictory *Ways & Means*.

Anonymous

## Meet the DA General Service Board

I would like to commend the Board on its most recent *DA Focus*. It was informative, well written and well thought out. I particularly liked the "Meet the Board" column. Great for newcomers and everyone in the Fellowship to get to know our Board members. Thank you all for all you do for DA.

—In gratitude, Monica A., GSR,  
Monday Night B.D.A. Pasadena Mtng,  
Group #548

## Three D.A.s from the United Kingdom Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

### Discovering the Joys of Service

I can't begin to express my gratitude for D.A., but a quote I once heard was that "Service is Gratitude in Action."

I began my D.A. recovery in 2001 and stopped debting one day at a time on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2002. I was out of debt within a couple of years. I shared yesterday about not knowing what needs and wants were. I remember questioning if I needed a kettle and my only glimmer of hope was that I may be low enough to be entitled to live in a hostel. I had friends in London about 200 miles away, who came to D.A. and I was desperate. At that time there were no meetings outside London and I had no idea about phone meetings or even if they existed. With help I set upon an action plan to move to London for my recovery.

My life has changed immeasurably; spiritually, physically, mentally, financially, materially, abundantly and prosperously. Through working the steps, having home groups, doing service, using the tools, giving and receiving PRG's, praying and meditating, asking for help, having visions, keeping figures, not debting, having a spending plan, and doing this all simply and imperfectly, my life is beyond my wildest dreams.

A few years ago I became GSR for my home group and started attending Intergroup. It took a

while to work through the stuff around voting for my group, reporting, and speaking up, but I became more and more confident and after a few times I really embraced it. One of the business discussions was: Could the UK host the World Service Conference? I joined the working group and we realised that, if we were to bid, someone would need to attend the WSC to really understand if it were possible. In that moment I realised I was willing to attend.

I do find it difficult to put into words the journey that has now taken me to the WSC twice! Firstly I got all the files and work from the previous UK delegates; I checked I met the requirements and that I could commit to the time involved of attending and the service work in the following year. I had many PRGs about all the preparations to go to the States. I haven't travelled often—getting a flight, insurance, booking hotels was all terrifying to me—and at the same time feeling not worthy of being 'the one' to go even though I had checked this out many times with many members and was voted in by my group and Intergroup.

It took 17 hours to get to Dallas; I arrived the night before the conference. The first day was registration and introductions with reports from the last year's committees and board; I was excited meeting members from all over the States and one member

from each of Ireland, France, and Canada. I wrote down every word and made a decision to say yes to everything I could sleep after. This felt like the most important job and the biggest responsibility I had ever had. Day Two the business of the conference commenced for the following year. I joined the Public Information Committee. A process of gelling, brain storming, and voting was again pure HP. We began the days with many ideas and much input and ended up on Day Three in a total unanimous agreement of our recommendations and motions to be presented at the convocation on the last two days of conference.

The whole experience was very humbling and fun. It's incredible the work that goes on beyond group level to help the still suffering debtor. I attended the WSC again this year (2010) and I didn't actually think that a second time could beat the first. Well it did. I was no longer quite the newcomer and the continuity helps everyone. I had been working through the year on the conference calls. I saw progress, actions, and results from all the committees. Also the UK was more involved in many aspects and issues that I personally felt emotional and privileged to be a part of. D.A. is amazing.

— Victoria D.  
London, England

*(Continued on page 11)*

**United Kingdom D.A.***(Continued from page 10)***Getting Meetings Started in Manchester**

In 2004 I was advised by my sponsor (in another fellowship) to start a D.A. group here in Manchester. At that time there were no meetings in the north of England—and we are still the only one. My sponsor shared that working the D.A. programme would shift the issues underpinning my other addictions.

So in December 2004 a small group (all members from other 12-Step fellowships) began meeting in a room in a suburban hospital. Rent was by donation. Over the next few years we continued to meet regularly but without much growth. Often one member would sit on their own, week after week.

(I experienced a very powerful meeting alone, reading from *A Currency of Hope*. I read five stories and it felt as if those authors were in the room with me. I don't often cry in public, but I shed many bitter tears that night.)

One night a member of a London group, who was in Manchester on business, joined us for a meeting. He strongly suggested that, for our growth, we move to a city-centre location. "But we can't afford the rent!" we responded.

The rest is history. We moved in January 2007 to a city-centre location. We have always made the rent (thank you HP!) and there is a steady flow of new members. We are a core group of 10 regulars and our Intergroup Representative attends Intergroup regularly. Members attend Conventions and National Workshops. Many

members have sponsors, are working the Steps and have solid recovery.

In January 2009 we began a B.D.A. group and in April, a Visions meeting.

I will finish this history as we end our meetings – with words of gratitude...for the advice of my sponsor all those years ago, for our Higher Power who is always with us, and for the recovery we have and can share with others.

And, on a personal note, working the D.A. programme IS bringing recovery from my other addictions!

—Reba  
Manchester, England

**Getting Meetings Started in Scotland**

My name is Mary, and I am a lifelong member in another fellowship. One day seven years ago in July past, I had a phone call from an American member of my other fellowship looking for some accommodation for the Edinburgh Festival. I was able to offer her a room and she duly arrived.

As you all know when people are comfortable in a fellowship you can get into very intimate conversation very quickly. I ended up telling her about the trouble I had with my credit card and she told me quite clearly that I was making a god of the card instead of relying on God for help and abundance.

The upshot was some of us, with this person's help, started a group here in Edinburgh. We also have a small group in Glasgow.

E-mail as you all know is a wonderful tool and in that first year or two we were onto her often in San Francisco for help and support

and encouragement.

The following year both she and her husband came and stayed with me. He too is in D.A. and they both shared at our now well established group.

On a personal level, I quickly had a PRM and got my finances looked at. Within less than two years, I was debt free and, lo and behold, money came in from all over the place, so that by now I also had a bank book for the first time in many years! I started working the steps and saw how wrong my motives were for a lot of my spending.

My goal was to be debt free by the time I was sixty and this was the case. I have now had several debt free years, still have to be vigilant, and often run purchases past people. Just in the last week I have had to come home early from holiday in Portugal because of ill health, and I had to find the money for two unexpected flights and transfers to airport. This I did without a moment's hesitation as I knew I had more than enough cash in my high-interest bank account.

The freedom from fear, shame, and guilt and freedom from debt has lifted my soul beyond my wildest dreams.

I still go to my other fellowship, but I know I could walk away if I wanted. I could not walk away from D.A. I owe everything I have to D.A. and I am so grateful for the lightness of spirit that D.A. has given me.

Lots of love and God bless.

—Mary  
Edinburgh, Scotland

## Sponsorship

(Continued from page 2)

haven't worked all the Steps myself," or "I don't have time to be a sponsor." The tool clearly says: "We have found it essential to our recovery...to be a sponsor." Is this really true? Maybe these things that people sometimes say are just D.A. myths about sponsorship.

Here's my attempt to debunk some of the sponsorship myths.

### Myths about Sponsorship

**MYTH 1:** *I need a sponsor in order to stop debting.*

No, I don't need a sponsor in order to stop debting. What I need to stop debting is a relationship with a higher power that is big enough to remove my compulsion to debt. I establish and grow this relationship by working D.A.'s Twelve Steps. The disease of compulsive debting is cunning and my brain is often its biggest ally. Whenever my brain tries to convince me that my recovery is contingent on someone or something I don't have, like a book, a workshop, or a sponsor, I know that fear is driving and I'm headed for the cliff. The solution to my debting disease is spiritual.

**MYTH 2:** *I need a sponsor to work the Twelve Steps.*

No, I don't need to have a sponsor to work the Steps, although this is a wise suggestion based on the experience of

many recovering debtors. However, if I am unable to find a sponsor, I can work the Steps on my own and share my Fifth Step with someone I trust, like a good friend, counselor, or pastor. I have found that Step work is more fulfilling when I work the Steps with a sponsor, because I can benefit from the sponsor's wisdom and experience. But if I can't find someone, the best alternative I have found is to offer to work the Steps with a newcomer, using the guidance of D.A.'s Twelve Step pamphlet and A.A.'s Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. In any case, the most important thing is that I work the Steps, whether I have a sponsor or not. God can't change me if I don't do the work to be changed.

**MYTH 3:** *I need a sponsor before I can sponsor anyone else.*

No, I don't need to have a sponsor to be a sponsor, although it is helpful if I have worked some Steps myself before I try to share what I've learned with a sponsee. (It is important, however, that I have refrained from debting for at least 90 days before I offer to be a sponsor.) What is critical here is that I be a sponsor. It is much less important to have a sponsor than to be a sponsor. Being a sponsor keeps me humble, honest, open-minded, compassionate, and grateful in a way that being a sponsee never did.

**MYTH 4:** *There is only one way to work the Steps.*

No, there are many paths to the spiritual awakening. How we get to the spiritual awakening is much less important than that we try one day at a time to get there.

**MYTH 5:** *Once I am done with the Steps, I'll never have to do them again.*

No, Step work is the foundation of the spiritual awakening that makes it possible for me to live life without debting. I am always in the process of moving toward what my higher power would have me be. I doubt I'll ever arrive at the destination. My human quirks and foibles are always near the surface, ready to steer me off the cliff. I work the Steps around specific issues to be reminded that alone I am powerless and that the higher power is the solution to all my dilemmas.

**MYTH 6:** *The D.A. Steps should be worked quickly, like they do in A.A.*

Maybe. Maybe not. While A.A. has much wisdom to offer D.A., there is some benefit to taking a moderate pace. Lately I have heard the five-week Step workshop format has become popular. People meet in person and on the telephone in little groups led by someone who learned to work the Steps using the same method. Using a strict set of questions, they blaze through the Steps and then move on to the D.A. pamphlets,

(Continued on page 13)

**Sponsorship***(Continued from page 12)*

which they devour at a break-neck pace. Their speed is commendable—I don't recommend anyone linger too long on any one Step. But after talking with a few of the survivors of these speed-Step workshops, it seems clear to me that what was lost in the whirlwind of sharing was the time to reflect and assimilate the spiritual growth. And I have since found out that many people simply listen to the workshops and never actually do the work. There is something to be said for choosing a thorough and searching process, even though it may be more painful.

**MYTH 7:** *Once I get a sponsor, I am stuck with that person for life.*

No, sponsorship is not marriage. Nor is it friendship. It is a relationship based on working the Twelve Steps. At least, that should be the foundation of the relationship between sponsor and sponsee. Sometimes I have become friends with my sponsors and sponsees, but I never expect it, nor do I seek to make friendships happen. And sponsorship comes with no obligation. Both parties are free to move on at any time, no explanations required, no strings attached.

**MYTH 8:** *Once I get a sponsor, I am part of that person's life forever.*

This is related to the previous myth. In A.A. and maybe other programs, sponsees tend to stay with one sponsor until one or the other dies. I suppose this leads to close relationships that grow deeper with time.

However, in D.A. we don't have the luxury of staying with one sponsor, not if we want D.A. to grow. We should turn our sponsees loose after Step 12 with the suggestion that they go out and find sponsees of their own to work the Steps with. If everyone did this, more people would work the Steps with sponsors and D.A. recovery would become the dynamic recovery process envisioned by D.A.'s founders in 1976.

**MYTH 9:** *I am too busy to be a sponsor.*

No, I am not too busy for my own recovery. To refrain from debting, I cannot afford not to be a sponsor. The paradox of the Twelve Steps model is that, in order to keep what I have been given, I have to pass it on to another debtor. That means I have to help another debtor work the Twelve Steps. Step 11 reminds me that I will find my Self only through Self-forgetting. In other words, I need to think about what I can give, not about what I can get. When I ask God how I can help, without thought of reward other than the daily reprieve from incurring debt, suddenly there is enough—enough love,

enough time, enough. "A sponsor helps his or her own recovery as much or possibly more than his or her sponsee's recovery by his or her willingness to be of service to another compulsive debtor." (*Sponsorship*)

Sometimes people ask me to be their Sponsor. I usually say, "Call me, and let's talk about it." If they actually call me, I know they are serious. I've sponsored many people in D.A. Some are newcomers, some are longer-timers. Some are local, and some are in other cities. Some sample the first Step and move on to another Sponsor. Most stop after Step Three. Some leave the program. A few actually work all Twelve Steps. Long before they get to Step Twelve, I send them out to find a sponsee of their own. Then when they finish Step 12 with me, we celebrate and say good-bye. Not good-bye forever. Just until the next time I see them trudging the road of happy destiny. We wave and smile at each other, because we have shared the journey toward a spiritual awakening. This is the happy outcome of sponsorship. When I help another work the Steps, I help maintain my own recovery, and in the process D.A. thrives and grows.

—Carol B.  
Portland, OR

# Around The Fellowship



## Registration Surges In September

The month of September 2010 saw a new milestone—13 new D.A. groups registered with the General Service Office. This is believed to be the largest number of groups ever to register during a single calendar month.

The groups are a diverse lot. They included 12 weekly meetings and one Intergroup. Ten are domestic (inside the U.S.) while three are overseas meetings (two in Paris, France, one in London, England). Interestingly, 12 are face-to-face meetings, while one is an online group, diverging from a recent trend in which a large number of newly registered groups are telephone meetings.

England and France continue to set the pace for D.A. growth outside the U.S. The United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Ulster) has surpassed Canada to have the second-largest number of groups of any country. France continues its bilingual tradition, with some of the meetings there being conducted in the English language, and others in French.

## Former Trustees To Gather In Chicago

One of the Fellowship's greatest long-term assets is the men and women who formerly served as trustees on the D.A. General Service Board. These dozens of individuals have gained invaluable experience during their terms on the board and, after they rotate off, usually return to their home groups and intergroups to put that experience to use on the local level.

Many of the trustees who have served since the G.S.B. was founded in 1982 are still active members of D.A., but until recently, there has been no attempt to formally organize them. Last year, a group of former board members established the D.A. Former Trustees (DAFT) and held a first-ever gathering at the Northwest Regional Convention in Washington State. A second, and larger, meeting will be held on April 30, 2011, in conjunction with the Great Lakes Area D.A.

Intergroup's annual Fellowship Day in suburban Chicago at Lutheran General Hospital, 1775 West Dempster, Park Ridge, Illinois.

The trustees' reunion will be a separate and distinct event to be held at the same time and place as the GLADA Fellowship Day, but is organized separately. It is open to all former Class A and Class B trustees who have rotated off the General Service Board and are no longer voting delegates to the World Service Conference. More information is available by sending an e-mail to [formertrustees@gmail.com](mailto:formertrustees@gmail.com).

## N.Y. Newsletter Is Back In Print

One of DA's oldest and most venerable regional newsletters is back in print after a hiatus of nearly three years. *The Bottom Line*, published by the Greater New York Intergroup, published a June 2010 issue, its first since 2007. A lack of volunteers to produce the publication was the reason for its absence.

The four-page issue features recovery stories by local members. Future issues are expected to also include news of local D.A. events. It is not certain how often the newsletter will be published.

*The Bottom Line* and Los Angeles' *Checks & Balances* were the first two periodicals ever started in Debtors Anonymous. Both debuted in the early 1980s, although it's uncertain which one was established first. The interest shown in New York and California in having these regional newsletters led to the first national D.A. publication, the *Newsletter To The Groups*, in 1986, and a revamped publication, *Ways & Means*, in 1988. *Ways & Means* still exists as the fellowship's world-level meeting in print.

*Checks & Balances* has been published reliably on a monthly schedule ever since. *The Bottom Line* has changed its publication schedule frequently over the years, appearing sometimes monthly, sometimes bimonthly, sometimes quarterly, and at other times sporadically.

Ways & Means likes to hear about interesting and inspiring things going on around the fellowship. Please send submissions by e-mail to [waysandmeansda@hotmail.com](mailto:waysandmeansda@hotmail.com) or by physical mail to Ways & Means, c/o DA General Service Office, PO Box 920888, Needham, MA 02492.