

## Tradition Seven--another look

*This article was written by Tom M., a member of the World Service Board of Trustees, in November 1985. It represents his views at the time of writing.*

This is a program of attraction rather than promotion. One of my first attractions to this program was when I heard "you are a member when you say you are," and that it didn't cost anything to join.

When they passed around the basket I was skeptical; then someone reassured me that I didn't have to put anything in, and if I needed some, I could even take some out. Well, I never did take any out but it was a long time before I ever put anything in.

When I realized that we were self-supporting from our own contributions, that we paid for our coffee and paid rent for the meeting room, I figured it would only be fair to pitch in. So I'd throw a quarter in the basket, figuring that would cover my share. Oftentimes, I would contribute nothing. I didn't have much money, and I wasn't going to give what I had.

I knew someone had to be covering the main bill at the WSO, the phone, literature and the WSC. It just somehow didn't feel like it should be my responsibility.

As I grew and became more involved in the program, and as I started to make more money, I worked my way up to putting in a dollar when I felt I could afford it. Eventually, after I had been clean a long time, I made a commitment to put in a dollar whether I felt I could afford it or not.

~~In my region when we first decided to open up a~~ phone line and hire a 24-hour answering service, a bunch of us members made a commitment to see that the phonelines stayed open. We were willing to put up the money each month if the rest of the fellowship didn't contribute enough. It was the first

major thing we had done as a region. For years before that, certain members had been the main NA contacts. For some reason, we never did have to come up with the money, and the bill got paid every month through our contributions.

We did pretty much the same thing with our central office. Quite a few of our members put up pledges that could be called upon if there was not enough money coming in from the basket. But the money came in and the pledges were not needed.

We, like so many other regions, were experiencing such tremendous growth that we barely had the resources within our fellowship to keep up with its demands. We had to look at what our expenses were, and how much money was actually being donated by the groups. It was plain that the groups weren't donating enough money for us to be self-supporting. Our expenses for literature were skyrocketing. Our hospital and institution committee had become active as never before, and its need for literature was never ending, yet its primary purpose to carry the message to the addict who is locked up couldn't be ignored. Our public information committee was also getting more and more requests from the public, and that meant more money.

At the world level, it's astronomical. They literally cannot keep up with the demand. This year alone [1985] the World Service Conference passed a budget of over \$150,000--up from \$60,000 last year [1984].

What I am trying to get at is that it seems as though it is through our fund-raisers that we meet our financial needs. Time and time again at our local ASC meetings we see that it's been the fund-raisers that have pulled us through.

My concern for our future and the concern of many other members I have talked to is this: Where are we headed with these fund-raisers? We frequently become dependent upon them as the means by which we are self-supporting.

We are a worldwide spiritual fellowship. We take great pride in our Seventh Tradition, that we pay our own way and decline the offer of outside contributions. It has given us a sense of integrity about ourselves and protects us from outside influence. Yet through many of these fund-raisers, a

lot of money is generated from people outside of our membership.

Some of this might be unavoidable, yet the trend towards reliance on these fund-raisers as the means by which we support a lot of our service structure can lead us down a perilous path. The primary object of these functions is to carry the message to the addict who is still suffering and to enhance the quality of our own program through unity, love and service.

Last year it was mentioned that if each member in the fellowship donated \$2.00 a year to the WSC, that it would finance its budget. Just locally in my region we estimate that if each one of our members would contribute \$4.00 a month to our area service committee, it would support our local services. It is not mentioned enough at meetings about what our Seventh Tradition really is or what our needs are. I

put \$2.00 in the basket at each meeting, not that I've got the bucks, but because someone told me that that's what it basically takes for each member to contribute for this fellowship to be self-supporting. Now, I wouldn't have come up with that on my own, because I'm basically cheap when it comes to people passing around collection plates. It's an old idea that I've had to get rid of.

Interestingly enough, my God as I understand Him has always provided me with that \$2.00 at each meeting, whereas before, when I wasn't even aware of our needs, I never seemed to have it. For myself and many other addicts, there is nothing more fulfilling than being involved with putting on a function for this fellowship that is geared towards carrying the message and financially breaking even.

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