

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” While contributions cover each group's rent and other expenses, the Seventh Tradition is essential at every level of A.A. service. It is both a privilege and a responsibility for groups and members to ensure that not only their group, but also their intergroup/central office, local services, district, area, and the General Service Office remain self-supporting. This keeps A.A. free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose — to help the alcoholic who still suffers. The amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world.



BIRTHDAY CONTRIBUTION

What do Birthdays have to do with self-support? A good time to look back and be grateful, look ahead and be hopeful, look around and be helpful!

Speaking of AA Birthdays (Happy 84th to Alcoholics Anonymous), we know how much we enjoy celebrating our own sobriety birthdays. I ask; is the spiritual significance taking a backseat to our egos? We love to publicly announce our gratitude on various platforms, and receive coins that someone finances with much clapping and pouring out for our accomplishments. While everyone needs encouragement, I heard it said "To celebrate an alcoholic that doesn't drink is like applauding a cowboy with hemorrhoids for not riding his horse." When the darn things hurt enough and he has tried every way possible to ride without pain, he will finally stay off the horse.

Thus, the Birthday Plan was designed for those who want to give back on their AA birthday. The idea is to give back to AA a dollar or more a year or a penny a day on your AA Birthday. As written in BOX 459 (on many occasion), the 2009 article "Birthdays, Gratitude, and Twelfth Step Work" goes on to say; "It is not uncommon in A.A. to hear about old-timers who patiently fed orange juice and honey to shaking drunks or combed surrounding areas for those ready to hear A.A.'s message. Stories like these color the landscape of A.A. and create a model that many of us attempt to follow. But it's not as often, however, that we hear glowing tales of A.A.s who traveled faithfully and fearlessly in search of... money. Indeed, although the touch of human kindness is of inestimable value in the annals of A.A. lore, other qualities have also proved valuable in enabling A.A.s to reach alcoholics. When individual A.A.s take hold of the Third Legacy—Service—their actions can transform the lives of future members and the way present members practice the principles of A.A. In 1954, one principle in particular— self-support—was given new life when a passionate but practical A.A. member—Ab A. from Tulsa, Oklahoma—was inspired by an idea given to him by another A.A., and thus helped to form the Birthday Plan, one method of financial support for the General Service Office that is still in effect today" ... "In 1954, the General Service Headquarters (known today as the General Service Office, or G.S.O.) had the same basic function as it does today: It "serves all A.A. groups in the United States and Canada, and also offers services to A.A. overseas.... It serves as a clearinghouse and exchange point for the wealth of A.A.

experience accumulated over the years, coordinates a wide array of activities and services, and oversees the publication, all translations of, and distribution of A.A. Conference-approved literature and service materials." (The A.A. Service Manual, p.574) To those assembled at the Kansas State meeting in 1955, Ab shared that he had dropped in at the New York office during times other than the Conference. He said, "I was there at Bill's birthday last year. Did you know they were \$40,000 in the hole? We came up with \$39,000 of it, and do you know where this money is coming from that we are short? It is coming from the sale of the old Big Book." He asked those assembled to take into consideration the millions who have not yet found Alcoholics Anonymous, and said "this A.A. has turned out to be big business, and we are trying to run it on a shoestring." He continued, "I think Bill and the founders in giving us the Third Legacy gave us everything we need to work A.A. and to perpetuate it, except a permanent way to finance ourselves." Sixty years later; The GSO is still 30% reliant on Literature profits, we still don't use the Birthday Plan (affirmed and reaffirmed no less than 10 different times by the General Service Conference), and we are still falling short of being self supporting through our own contributions. Personally, when I put my money in the basket, I don't really want to be buying people's coins, but if it's the group's choice, then so be it. I have found self-support to be a principle that helps me and my sobriety more than any AA entity. I am self supporting because I need to be self-supporting. GSO Birthday Envelopes are available for free from the General Service Office or from your Area Self-Support Chair.