

## Rotation – July Quarterly 2014

Hi friends! I'm Carolyn and I'm an alcoholic, grateful to serve as your Panel 63 Delegate. I'm also grateful to have been asked to contribute to this panel on the topic of rotation.

It was in my first homegroup where I first learned about rotation. The group had previously been active in service outside the group but that had dropped off when the membership decreased. However, when we had our monthly business meetings our unfilled positions were always discussed. As the membership increased, we gradually began to fill all of our positions.

Early on, the oldtimers started asking me to take on some of the group chores and I started to rotate through the group positions. At first I honestly thought it was because no one else wanted to do it. When I said something to that effect they patiently explained to me that in AA we rotate, taking turns with the positions, and we don't do any job for a second time because that wouldn't be fair to the newer members and it isn't good for AA. I was told that everyone else had already taken their turn with these jobs and it was my turn now. When I had questions, they shared their experience and I was given the relevant AA literature and then I was told to do what I thought was best. They told me that I was their **trusted** servant and that meant that I could do the job in my own way.

Soon enough I started rotating on from these positions. It was when I rotated from group secretary that I learned the most important lesson I will ever learn about rotation. The new secretary was making a lot of mistakes, had a lot of questions and clearly needed my help. One night after the meeting when I was "helping" the new secretary one of the oldtimers took me aside. I was reminded that I was not the group secretary anymore, that I should trust our new trusted servant to do the job in his own way, and that this is what had been done for me. I didn't like it but I knew that he was right.

It was what he said next that was a little harder to hear, it went something like this: "What looks to you to be a mistake may actually be a better way of doing things. You need to leave him alone and let him do the job that the group gave him; it's not your job anymore. No one is going to want to do the position with you hovering around and correcting them all of the time. You need more faith. God and AA will take care of this group and while your participation is needed your supervision is not."

OUCH! At the time, I didn't like hearing it but knew he was right. Today, I am grateful to have had such a powerful lesson in rotation early in my service journey. I had the opportunity to see Traditions 2 and 9 in action thanks to the oldtimers who were willing to tell me the truth, even if it hurt.

Our groups and our services at every level need the new energy and new ideas that come with new people rotating in. Yes, I do need to share my experience and provide whatever relevant information I may have....but then I need to let it go. I have learned that I must rotate in title, in action and in spirit. I have since seen many times where harm is done when someone rotates in title only.

I learned that when I fully embrace the spirit of rotation I create the space for fresh waters to flow in, but when I hold on in any way I create a dam that results in a stagnant bog with me in the middle.

Another difficult lesson I have learned regarding rotation relates to Concept IX, which states (in part): “Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.”

When I was nearing the end of my term as General Service Representative the time came for District elections. There was one member who we all knew had his heart set on being the next District Committee Member. We all knew he was not the best possible candidate, some of us thought he may not even be able to do the job, but none of us had the heart to say anything. After all, he really wanted the job and he was the alternate DCM. Some of us felt it was his turn and that he was owed the position. This situation was made worse when we voted by a show of hands rather than by ballot – making it easy for us to put personalities ahead of principles. Our friend was elected DCM and he was thrilled. This story has a sad ending. Turns out we were right and he could not do the job. When he had to step down he was devastated. This was over 10 years ago and I have not seen him in a meeting since. I don’t know if he is still sober, if he moved away somewhere, or if he is OK. What I do know is that we (the members of the district) did a huge disservice to both our friend and AA when we elected him to a position when we knew that he was not the best person for the job. At this time I was the alternate DCM. I took on this position based on my misinformed idea that “the alternate doesn’t do much anyway”. I stepped into the DCM position ill prepared having given little thought to the real responsibility I was accepting when I was elected alternate.

What I have learned since is that the “alternate” is not a training position or a position that automatically rotates into the position. An alternate’s job is to fulfill the remainder of the current term in the event that the person elected is unable to do so. Nothing more and nothing less.

At the end of each rotation when we hold elections we much look at each candidate based on their own merit, their service resume, and the job description/qualifications for the position they are putting they are putting their name forward for. We need to each vote our own conscience. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Procedure suggests that elections are conducted by ballot, which is an important way to keep principles ahead of personalities. It is none of my business how anyone else votes.

I love in the service manual description of our 3<sup>rd</sup> legacy procedure that we are reminded that it has proven “highly successful in eliminating the influence of factions or parties that seem to thrive on most political scenes. The railroading of a candidate for election is made difficult, if not impossible, since voters have a wide selection of candidates to choose from. More importantly, a second-place candidate who may be extremely well qualified but without early popular support is encouraged to stay in the balloting rather than withdraw.”

In Concept IX we learn that: “It should be reported that some members still doubt whether choice by lot is ever a good idea. They say that the best man does not always win. In answer it must be pointed out that each time we have abandoned the “two-thirds vote or lot” in naming Delegates, there has been a sense of defeat and disturbance in the minority camp which is nowhere nearly offset by the advantage of naming the supposedly best man. Indeed the second-best man can often be as good a Delegate as the Assembly’s first choice; he may even be a better Delegate.”

The same can hold true for elections of all positions at every level. While Districts are autonomous and can choose whatever method of election that it may wish. It only takes 2 candidates to use the 3<sup>rd</sup> legacy procedure and it is my opinion that the benefits are immeasurable.

In addition to the painful lessons I have already described I have also learned a lot about rotation by watching others. I have seen friends who have failed to rotate (in title, in action, or in spirit) become spiritually sick. It begins when we become frequently right. Soon, others are increasingly wrong. Sadly, when this happens the special magic of service falls away and newcomers are not attracted to get involved. Next, we feel trapped in the position and resentful because no one else will take it on. This becomes a sad and terrible cycle for both the member who does not rotate and for the health of AA. I have watched this many times and it seems that the only way out is to take a big leap of faith and trust god and our fellow AA members to do what is needed.....without our supervision as the oldtimers told me.

Thanks again for letting me participate in this panel and thanks for my sobriety.

With love and service, Carolyn