

Spirit of Rotation – July 2014 Quarterly – Vernon BC

Hi everyone

My name is Trish and I am an alcoholic. Pleasure to be here with you, privileged to be asked to share on this topic.

I had some fun researching this topic, I can tell you. It's a popular topic, and that's not surprising. It needs to be talked about. It affects all of us very directly in one way or another. It's a manifestation of Step 3. It's an important element in Traditions 1, 2, 4, 9 and 12. It's key to understanding Concepts 9 and 11. It was the theme of the World Service Meeting of AA in 2012. It's been a topic in at least one Box 459. And it's also at the root of many issues at all levels of service.

But first a definition example that I think fits nicely. This is from my late father's Pocket Oxford Dictionary, circa 1934, the 1953 edition: (By the way, I adored my father. He died due to alcoholism, and his death was the gift of a life of sobriety for me). The example the Pocket Oxford uses is this: "rotation of crops: growing of different crops in regular order to avoid exhausting soil". Isn't that lovely? I think it fits so well – we need to move on, to allow new crops to flourish, to keep the vital soil that is the life-giving nutrient - our A.A. message of recovery – alive and flourishing. I'm fond of saying that A.A. changes every time a new person walks in our doors. Our program doesn't change, but A.A. does. And it is essential to get the current perspective of our fellowship so that A.A. does not, as Bill says, "freeze".

And getting that current perspective takes work, and the spirit of sacrifice. It says in the Group pamphlet that letting go of a service job you love can be painful. I know that from my own (painful) experience. When I had rotated on as your Panel 57 Delegate, I thought I had done just fine. I really did. I thought I had moved on in dignity and with a full and grateful heart. Until something came up when Scott was your Panel 61 Delegate. I can't even remember what the something was now, but at the time I was sure A.A. in Area 79 would wither and die without my incredibly important input. I called Scott with this incredibly important input on a subject I cannot even remember now, and realized shortly after that I had been a very good example of a bleating deacon – not an example of humility (Tradition 12) as expressed through the spirit of rotation. I called him and apologized for meddling. Scott of course was very gracious and called it passion. But it was meddling. It was not the spirit of rotation. One of the best examples I was shown was by Connie M. when she rotated as Panel 55 Delegate. We met to do a transition, and she passed me a pile of file folders. They were all empty – she was recycling and giving them to me to use in whatever way I saw fit. And she said that I knew what the job was and that I would be fine. And that was that. It was a wonderful example. You'll often see a clutch of Past Delegates sitting together, but you might also notice that we don't go up to the mike unless asked. That's part of the spirit of rotation. We need to hear from you, you don't need to hear from us. Our experience is something we will gladly share if asked, but we shouldn't be weighing in on matters unasked. That is not the spirit of rotation.

A former GSO General Manager, Bob H., was quoted in a 1983 Box 459 article from a Conference talk he had given. He was pretty darned direct:

“When servants in AA rotate out of office, they’re obeying “the letter of the law” but are they obeying the spirit if they still try to run the show? Inability to let go can become something close to an illness. Sometimes these unfortunate folk need help in learning how to really step down. We may even need to pry their hands from the helm, figuratively. But whatever needs doing to make them let go, do it! You’ll be doing everyone concerned a favour, including the reluctant ex-servant. “

My home group got very sick at one point. We had, with the best of hearts, allowed one person to gradually take over all of the key positions. When a new person came in, there was no room for them to be of service. We had to pry some jobs loose, and that person ended up being very hurt and left the group. But the group was dying. The spirit of rotation had not been followed and we had to change or die. That’s what we always have to do – change or die.

I remember a person at PRAASA getting to the mike on this topic, and saying that he had just moved to a new Area. He had served as a DCM in his previous Area, but he was not going to put his name forward for the same position in his new home, because he felt that was not in the spirit (not law, but spirit) of rotation.

I’ve done inventories at various levels where the issue that surfaces is one around the self-appointed volunteer positions (“well, I just do the clean up because everybody else wants to go home – it’s not a REAL position”), which lends itself to total ownership of a job – the opposite of the spirit of rotation.

We have a structure that is carefully built on the principle of rotating leadership – those two things are very much intertwined. All the way up and down the triangle, terms of service are

clearly spelled out. And we rotate on, not out. There is always something else waiting for us.

It's simply a matter of putting up your hand and being willing to try something new.

I really could go on and on – this topic is hugely important. But my time is up, and it's up to someone else now. In the spirit of rotation.

In love and service

Trish

