

## The Vital Link

“...an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.”

—Bill W., *General Service Manual*

Returning from the 76th General Service Conference, which concluded on May 2, 2026, I realized something simple but profound: all of this began for me the day I became a GSR. What once felt confusing and overwhelming has become clear. I just had to get out of the way.

When I first stepped into the role of General Service Representative (GSR), I was confronted with a whole new language—acronyms, committees, meetings, responsibilities. I was intimidated, mostly because I didn’t know what was happening and was afraid of looking ignorant. I wish I had done a better job of setting aside those self-centered fears and simply leaning into the experience. I understood intergroup, but I didn’t yet grasp what General Service truly does for the still-suffering alcoholic. I had no idea I was about to be introduced to a remarkable structure.

Being a GSR means my home group is connected to A.A. as a whole. It means our group conscience becomes part of the collective conscience of the entire Fellowship. It means attending District meetings, participating in Area 56 Assemblies, and serving as the group’s link to the General Service Office. It means being *the vital link* between my group and A.A. as a whole. I couldn’t fully appreciate that at first. I do now.

When what would become the GSO first opened, Bill simply wanted to help alcoholics and support a growing Fellowship. Back then, it was done by mail. Today, we’ve grown and matured, but our singleness of purpose remains unchanged: we are here to help the still-suffering alcoholic.

Service has given me so much. Any old-timer can talk about how working with other alcoholics is essential to their recovery. But something the GSO Chair said at the Conference struck me deeply: *“We are here to help the still-suffering alcoholic we may never meet.”*

Helping the alcoholic right in front of us is noble and necessary. But helping the alcoholic we may never meet—through the structure, through the process, through the quiet, often unseen work of General Service—feels even more selfless. And since selfishness is the root of my troubles, selfless service to the still-suffering alcoholic—seen or unseen—continues to be the path that saves my life.