

Dear General Service Conference member,

I'm writing to inform you of recent actions taken by the General Service Board and the A.A. World Services, Inc. Board of Directors to secure the 1939 Printer's Copy of the manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous, our Big Book. The Printer's Copy (also called the working manuscript) has handwritten notes from Bill W. and others and shows the evolution of what became the first published edition of the Big Book.

The manuscript was gifted to A.A.W.S. by Barry L., an A.A. member, who had received the manuscript from Lois Wilson, the widow of Bill W., a co-founder of our Fellowship. Although A.A.W.S. possessed the letter in its files at the time of Barry L.'s death in 1985, no one within the organization was aware of the gift or of our right to ownership until the letter was found in our archives in 2007.

We recently learned that the manuscript was going to appear at public auction in June. Because the manuscript undeniably belongs in the G.S.O. Archives, we have requested and were granted a temporary restraining order by New York State Supreme Court to prevent the manuscript from being sold.

Pursuing litigation is not something to be taken lightly. As you know, within our Traditions and Concepts, and expressed succinctly in the Preamble is the principle that we shall do nothing to incite public controversy. We focus strictly on carrying the message of recovery to still-suffering alcoholics and serving the A.A. groups. However, as part of the General Service Board's and A.A.W.S.'s fiduciary responsibility and to protect and preserve the manuscript in our archives – for A.A. groups, individual members and for future generations – the Board took the action described above.

It is important that the members of our Conference, as representatives of the A.A. groups of the United States and Canada, know what steps both A.A.W.S. and the General Service Board have taken.

We ask that all inquiries you may receive concerning the Printer's Copy of the manuscript of the Big Book be forwarded to the Public Information coordinator, Clay R. His direct line is 212-870-3119, and his email is publicinfo@aa.org.

We have requested each trusted servant (trustee, delegate, director) and employee in our office to use common sense and discretion, and not to attempt to answer questions concerning this ongoing matter, but simply to refer questions to the P.I. desk of the General Service Office.