

Can I Get Some Service Here?

On Veteran's Day, I was thinking of service. I thought with appreciation and gratitude of the men and women in our armed services who have fought and who continue to fight to keep us and our way of life safe. I am very grateful to the men and women in uniform whose protection allows me to spend my time in the critical pursuit of making funny faces to amuse people and those are not just the uniforms of soldiers and sailors but also of police and firefighters.

Fighting wars and crimes and fires is important, but I am very happy to have someone else do it for me. That's what service is: doing something for someone else so they don't have to do it themselves.

There are lots of things in my life that I farm out to someone else, either because he/she can do it better or because I would rather spend my time doing something else. I have an agent negotiate my contracts. I have someone cut my hair. I have (when I'm flush enough to afford it) someone clean my house. I shovel my own walk, but my wife keeps muttering rude things about old men and heart attacks so I'll probably start hiring the kid across the street. Each week, I make -- consciously or not -- hundreds of decisions about what I will do myself and what I will have someone do for me. I also make decisions about whether or not to do things for other people, about what service I might do for others.

There is satisfaction and even joy in service -- whether it's letting my wife sleep in while I get our son off to school or overseeing the effective investment of the Equity-League Pension and Health Funds. Speaking of the Funds, AEA just held a little ceremony to honor Jeanna Belkin (about whom I wrote two months ago) for her 47 years of service to the Funds. Jeanna's entire adult life was one of service, and she continues to serve as an emeritus councillor and as a special advisor to the Fund Trustees. Jeanna's hard-won wisdom and long institutional memory are invaluable assets to AEA.

I have said in the past that AEA needs three types of councillors: recognizable working actors so producers know we have "skin in the game;" scuffling, trying-to-get-work, trying-to-get-12-weeks members because that is the bulk of our membership; and veteran councillors so this year's brainstorm doesn't undo the progress of ten years ago. Our biggest current need is actually a fourth category -- young members (and my definition of "young" is laughably elastic: someone under 40.) So if you don't remember Chevy Chase's impression of Gerald Ford on "Saturday Night Live," please run for Council.

Equity is now beginning the process of electing all of its officers and over 20% of its councillors. The opportunity for service is there: as Samuel Jackson's Martin Luther King says in *The Mountaintop*, "Pick up the baton." Is this something you are willing to do for others or is this something you are willing to have others do for you? Either choice is okay, but thinking of my talented fellow members, I am reminded of the parable of the talents: to the one who increased his talents by putting them to use, the master said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Are you willing to put your talents to work for others? Will you serve?