

61st General Service Conference Report

May 14, 2011

Good Day everyone, what a difference a year makes. To be able to attend the General Service Conference - Off Broadway and on Times Square is a memory I'll not forget anytime soon. I took lots of pictures just in case.

The Conference Theme this year was: "We Are Responsible for A.A.'s Future - Let It Begin With Us"

Unofficially we began Saturday afternoon with the Remote Communities Sharing Session and the All Delegate's Sharing Session after supper.

The Remote Communities meeting took on the same slant as in years past by separating the points in the mission statement and sharing individually on Language, Culture and Geography. This year there was mention of Special Needs. A few locales combine the Special Needs with the Remote Communities as we do.

The purpose of the All Delegates meeting is for the second year Delegates to answer any questions the first year Delegates may have.

Sunday morning was registration and the Conference opened officially with the Roll Call of the 135 Conference Delegates. This year I said 'Present' with a clear voice (my throat was dry last year) and without a tear in my eye - it is quite emotion the first time.

Later in the afternoon was the first meeting of the Conference Committees. This meeting was with the Trustees Committee to go over the thought process involved with the Agenda items applicable to your conference committee.

The day ended with the Opening Dinner of the 61st Annual General Service Conference. We heard five excellent speakers - two Panel 60 Delegates; a G.S.O. Staff member; a Regional Trustee and an A.A.W.S. Director. From here on the Conference is a marathon.

I'm not going to go over every Conference Agenda item but I will cover most of them. We only had five Floor Actions this year. Three were heard; one passed and two failed. One was withdrawn; one was ruled out of order by the Chair.

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The Floor Action that passed after an hour of discussion was as follows: “That the 61st General Service Conference express its appreciation and gratitude for the French-language magazine ‘La Vinge.’ The value it has for French-speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the respect ‘La Vinge’ has shown for the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.” This Floor Action was brought forward by our Panel 61 Delegate from Area 79 British Columbia/Yukon, Scott H.

Agenda Committee:

The theme for the 62nd General Service Conference is: “Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age.”

The Presentation/Discussion topics are:

1) Carrying the A.A. Message

- a) Still Our Primary Purpose
- b) Social Web Sites
- c) Young People in A.A.
- d) Importance of Sponsorship

2) Change

- a) Service: Our Third Legacy
- b) Spirit of Rotation
- c) Diversity - Let's Keep Our Doors Open for Everyone
- d) Archives-Where the Past Meets the Present

The Workshop Topic will be: “Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare”

The Agenda Committee also discussed reducing the number of Workshop/Discussion topics to 2 with 4 bullets from 3 with 3 bullets.

C.P.C. (Cooperation with the Professional Community) Committee: had no recommendations but did have some committee considerations that will no doubt show at next year's conference.

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Corrections Committee: made some changes to the pamphlet “A.A. in Correctional Facilities.” There were some committee considerations as well.

Finance Committee: became the battle of the Pie Charts again this year. The Pie Charts won this time. Most of this discussion centered around changing the wording to something generic. This becomes difficult in that there are about 93 meanings for the word generic. There were committee considerations here also: to receive stories regarding the Seventh Tradition and to develop a Finance Workbook. There is also a request to convert the F-19 Self Support packet to a Self Support Kit.

Grapevine Committee: This committee had a tough assignment. Agenda Item B was changed from accepting contributions to how to become self-supporting. The most positive point for the Grapevine this year is the fact that the Grapevine is now digital; you can get the Grapevine either as a magazine or in a format readable on your computer.

Literature Committee: the pamphlet “The A.A. Member-Medications and Other Drugs” was approved. There will also be literature developed which will focus on spirituality from atheists and agnostics. There should be a draft pamphlet for next year’s conference. The pamphlet “G.S.R. General Service Representative” also had some minor changes. After a short discussion, the adding of the Preamble to the Big Book was voted down. Among the considerations is the ongoing revision of the booklet “Living Sober.”

Report and Charter: was assigned the task of not only formulating an inventory process for the conference but also devising a minority opinion appeals process under Concept V and did an admirable job. It is about 6 pages long if you wish me to read it. The date for the 64th General Service Conference will be April 27-May 3, 2014.

Public Information: the 2011 A.A. Membership Survey will be conducted by area on a random basis as done in 2007. A policy was developed for actors showing full faces (remember the video “Hope”). Actors portraying A.A. members or potential A.A. members will not show the actors full faces.

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Pamphlet revisions included “Understanding Anonymity”; “The A.A. Fact File” and “A.A. at a Glance.”

Report and Charter: a description of the “Trustees Emeriti” was developed and reads - The General Service Board has designated rotating board chairpersons as trustees emeriti. Trustees emeriti are invited to attend quarterly board meetings of the General Service Board and the annual General Service Conference. They are a resource of corporate memory and are often asked to share their experience with past board decisions, how previous General Service Boards conducted business, and the processes they used to reach a group conscience. Trustees emeriti do not vote on any matter before the General Service Board or the Conference.

The nominating procedure on page S67 was changed. The section titled “Inactive Service Workers” on page S37 was amended and added to Chapters Two and Three.

Treatment Facilities/Special Needs-Accessibilities: the committee I worked on. We were a lively committee with 5 new members and discussed everything to the nth degree, in other words we explored every possibility. The much needed pamphlet for Special Needs was approved. The word Facilities will be removed from our committee name as reflected in our Composition, Scope and Procedure. Also, to change the pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Facilities” be changed to “A.A. in Treatment Settings.” This change will be reflected in all our literature. The reason for the change is because the service has changed, there are more outpatient clinics working that are in use now. By the way, the cost of changing any existing literature is minimal since reprinting doesn’t occur until the old stock is used up. We also considered editing the line “Uncle Sam’s not going to bail us out” from the video “Hope” and took no action. Our committee found a few more inconsistencies with the video, the main one being the use of the copyrighted song “Happy Birthday.” We asked that the Trustees to review the entire video. We also looked at some forms to be used for Bridging the Gap in the Treatment Kit and made some editing changes to make the form more generic so it could also be used with Corrections.

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Trustees Committee: the main task here ratify the slate of Directors, most everything here was straight forward with the exception of the Grapevine Board, they will be 2 members short for at least the next year.

The only two committees left aren't standing committees, Archives and International Conventions/Regional Forums. Probably the noteworthy item here is the profit from the International Convention in San Antonio, Texas last summer in the amount of \$844,545.

We had Trustee elections on the Wednesday of the Conference week. The new Trustee-At-Large Canada is the Panel 55 Delegate from Area 83 Eastern Ontario International - Barb K. The new Southwest Regional Trustee is the Panel 49 Delegate from Area 38 Eastern Missouri - Clayton V. The new Northeast Regional Trustee is the Panel 55 Delegate from Area 59 Eastern Pennsylvania - J Gary L. Nancy H. was also selected as a General Service Trustee for the Grapevine Board.

Tuesday afternoon we had the privilege of touring the General Service and Grapevine Offices. Now I can put a face to the name as well as have an idea of what they look like in their office and the view they have from the tenth floor.

The 61st General Service Conference ended the earliest in recent memory. We finished at 7 PM Friday night and by the time all the Panel 60 Delegates gave their farewell talk (some tearful) it was 9 PM. We officially ended the Conference with the Serenity Prayer in Spanish, French and English.

Saturday morning we met as group for the last time to listen to the rotating Trustees. The Southwest Regional Trustee Conley B.; General Service Trustee Dorothy H.; Northeast Regional Trustee John K. and finally, the Trustee-At-Large Canada Jo-Anne L. gave their farewell talks. These were truly dedicated trusted servants.

A full and in-depth reporting of the 61st General Service Conference will be contained in the 2011 Final Conference Report somewhere around August or September.

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While we had all the Eastern Canada Regional Delegates together we talked at great length on the subject of C.E.R.A.A.S.A. (Canadian Eastern Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly). We picked a night and met as a group. The main points are: each Area should submit \$250 for seed money to get the event going. A registration fee of about \$25 per person would be required. Area 87 has the translation equipment necessary for all 3 languages. The first event should be held near the center of our region - perhaps Montreal. We are going to keep in contact with each other via conference calling - Area 90 will look after this for the first year. This is the most progress I have seen with respect to getting this event going in the four years I've been involved with these meetings. A tentative date for the first C.E.R.A.A.S.A. could be March 2013.

I would like also to mention our 7th Tradition Contributions for 2010. As an Area we contributed \$96,463.73 to our General Service Office \$70,929.74 of that figure came from your groups. The group contributions per capita increased from \$5.45 in 2009 to \$6.23 last year. The total contributions per capita increased from \$6.90 in 2009 to \$8.47 last year. And that's not to mention what you have done here at home in Area 86 - THANK YOU! I pray that trend continues.

I have a busy year winding down towards rotation; if I can be of any assistance to help you with a localized problem, please don't hesitate to ask. I love the challenges this job has created for me but most of all I appreciate the trust you have given to me not only to do this job but to help out whenever I can. I would like to thank District 13 for the hospitality shown on April 2nd as I was asked to share on the service panel with Cheryl A. the Panel 56 Delegate from Area 50 Western New York. Thanks also to District 10 for inviting me to their service day on April 16th and District 2 for allowing me to share our Area message on the 17th. I will be heading to Midland after the meeting today and I'll travel to the Spring Fling next Saturday, a joint venture of Districts 10 & 21.

I would like to thank all of the Districts for your support and inviting me to your functions and service days.

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Thank you to the Districts and Intergroups for sending me your minutes, I do read them and it does give a better idea of what our Area Conscience is.

There is so much I haven't said since everything went by so quickly. I like those moments when you reflect on an isolated incident that makes you laugh or cry - there are plenty of those. I don't get to pick when they happen - they just do.

As the Conference was drawing to a close I was trying to think of something I could get as a reminder of the Conference and wasn't sure what it could be - pictures, pins whatever. I attended the Serenity Group meetings and didn't miss a meeting for the 2 years I attended the General Service Conference. This meeting only meets during the General Service Conference each year. During the week we have a Big Book and a Daily Reflections book for members to sign and on Friday we draw tickets to see get the books - I won the Daily Reflections Book. What better way to remember the Conference than starting each day reading from this book.

My exposure to the General Service Conference has deepened my love for the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I think of the journey that began with my first drink when I was twelve or thirteen and where alcohol took me. I recall that last drunk being awakened by cop knocking on my windshield and how that drunk got sober in Alcoholics Anonymous and stood shoulder to shoulder with other drunks and friends of Alcoholics Anonymous on the floor of the General Service Conference in New York. What a journey.

You have to give it away to keep it; therefore I'll be doing just that for as long as I'm able to breathe. I thank God, Alcoholics Anonymous and you for my sobriety for today.

I'll close with quote from Bill W. during his talk on the Three Legacies. He ended very simply by saying, "May God bless each and everyone one of us and Alcoholics Anonymous forever." Thank you.

As always, I remain yours in humble service as *your* trusted servant,

Dean T.
Panel 60 Delegate
Area 86 Western Ontario