

DELEGATE REPORT TO AREA 42 SEPTEMBER, 2011 AREA ASSEMBLY

My journey as your Delegate continued in a big way as I attended the General Service Conference held the first week of May in New York City. The GSC originated as a result of Bill W and Dr. Bob turning the business of AA over to the members. Bill announced at the 1954 Texas State Convention –“... here is the remainder of your Third Legacy. The Conference shall become our successor. To you we hand the last torch. Carry on. Face your destiny with surety and courage and God love you.”

So what goes on at the Conference you ask! The following description was approved at this year’s GSC and will become part of our Service Manual:

A typical Conference lasts a full week, with sessions running from morning to evening. The opening day features roll call, keynote address, an opening dinner and a five speaker AA meeting. Business sessions from Sunday to Friday include committee meetings, presentations, workshops, and new trustee elections. Each Delegate serves on one of the standing Conference committees, which meet early in the week and do the principal work of the Conference. (Some delegates also have a secondary committee assignment.) The committees bring recommendations to the full Conference for consideration as possible Advisory Actions (see Chapter Eight for more on the committee system), and generally the last two days

(or more) are devoted to discussion and voting on the committee recommendations.

Although outside the Conference, a delegates-only meeting is often held prior to the opening day of the Conference. On Saturday, following the last day of Conference business, a closing breakfast provides an opportunity for goodbyes, and for rotating trustees to say their farewells. On alternate years, a visit to G.S.O./Grapevine office or a visit to the home of Bill W. and Lois in Westchester County is scheduled.

I thought you might be interested in the composition of the GSC—who all was there. This year there were 135 voting members of the GSC. These people act together as guardians of A.A.'s World Services and guardians of the Steps and Traditions. Of the 135 voting members, 93 were Delegates like myself, 27 were Trustees, A.A.W.S. Directors or Grapevine Directors, and 15 were General Service Office and Grapevine Staff. The average age of the voting members was 57, oldest was 74 (not me!!), youngest was 33, average length of sobriety was 21 years, longest sobriety was 40 years, shortest sobriety was 8 years, average length of service was 16 years, longest years of service was 29 years and shortest years of service was 6 years.

Much has been published by AA on the actions taken at the GSC. Actions taken are called Advisory Actions which come about following unlimited open discussion and debate among the attendees, an open voting process and then a call for minority opinion---the same format as we use at our Area

Assemblies. You may recall that back in March summaries of all the agenda items being considered were available in English and Spanish at this Assembly and we held in depth roundtable discussions on many of these items. After the GSC, I posted a summary in both English and Spanish of the Advisory Actions on the Area 42 Website. Results have also been published in the recent edition of Box 459 and a complete report on all GSC activity, including the Advisory Actions, is published and available in both English and Spanish here at the Area 42 Assembly. So.....to spare you and not repeat all this information here this morning, I thought I would cover my impression and summaries of the most intense “loving discussions” that took place during the GSC, some behind the scenes stuff if you will. I will also take the liberty of updating these selected topics based first on input from the “additional” Forum in Woodland Hills, CA which I attended on behalf of Area 42 and secondly the AAWS Board meeting in NYC---both held just last month.

First, the English Grapevine, our Spanish La Vina and our French La Vigne magazines. As you may know, these publications are directed by a totally separate business corporation with their own Board of Directors. This business and its Directors report to the A.A.W.S. Board. At the GSC the A.A.W.S. Board declined to approve two new Grapevine Corporation Directors who had been nominated by the Grapevine Board because of concern about large financial losses for the Grapevine Corporation over the last several years. In 2010, the most recent reporting year,

the Grapevine lost \$394,000. I should remind you that our magazines cannot accept ads or direct contributions—their charter provides “outside” support from subscription revenue only (and of course subsidies from general funds). Average monthly subscriptions are running about 93M and the average subscriber is a 50 year old white male with 20 years sobriety. Beyond the magazines, Grapevine also has a catalog of items available including calendars, pocket planners, books, CD’s, etc. I must add that Spanish La Vina and our French La Vigne Magazine are both better supported through subscriptions than is the Grapevine Magazine. Going forward, there are many changes being considered for our magazines. We have a new Executive Editor and she has 25 years of publishing experience. One of the major changes we are seeing is availability of both magazines in digital form and some price changes that have just been announced. Be rest assured---there are no plans to discontinue the printed versions of our magazines. Things are more positive for the Grapevine so far in 2011---Revenue is \$142,000 ahead of plan and year-to-date loss is \$22,563 vs. budgeted loss of \$157,718 mostly reflecting good cost control. The Grapevine Board has concerns and will continue to discuss how social media may or may not constitute affiliation and how it affects personal anonymity. This discussion would include a working definition on promotion, advertising, affiliation and social media. It is projected that additional funding from the reserve may be required in 2011. Bottom line, the Grapevine continues to struggle from the standpoint of being a stand-alone financial operation but we have a good handle on the

issues and a bunch of smart, dedicated and focused minds working on resolutions of the issues.

One of the most controversial topics at the GSC centered in the Literature Committee around the consideration of publishing a pamphlet on spirituality which would include stories from atheists and agnostics who are sober in AA. I served on this committee this past year and will be alternate chair of this committee at next year's GSC. A minority, but a very vocal minority, expressed concern that stories from atheists and agnostics might be a violation of Traditions. However, a draft introduction to the proposed pamphlet was made available to the Conference members only clearly underscoring that the pamphlet was on spirituality and in keeping with our Traditions. This overall project including review of the 201 stories submitted to date and the development of the pamphlet was approved by floor action at the GSC and is going forward. After returning from the GSC I received a series of emails from Delegates in two other Areas indicating that AA meetings of Atheists/Agnostics were being challenged about their compatibility with and acceptance in the AA Fellowship. It would seem that this "loving discussion" can be expected to continue. One final Literature item--- At the AAWS Board meeting last month it was announced that "The AA member— Medication and other drugs" pamphlet is now available on the GSO's website and hard copies are available.

E-books are coming to AA. E-books are things like Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook, Apple Ipad, etc. The technical details for making these materials available in digital form appear to be close to resolution and The Big Book and The 12 X 12 are expected to be made available for digital/e-reader purchase and use this November. . One of the big issues has been how to insure that AA gets the revenue from the digital sale of these items rather than a third party. A solution is in hand and we have been successful in maintaining all digital rights to this material.

Another intense discussion centered on copyright issues. It turns out that while AA owns many copyrights on materials it publishes and makes available to the public, it turns out that we have lost the copyrights to some materials. Specifically, the U.S. 1st and 2nd editions of our Big Book and our 12 Concepts are now in the public domain. A big project is underway to catalogue exactly what copyrights we have and on what material and when they are up for expiration. An inventory and progress report was presented by a working committee to the AAWS Board in August. This will now allow us to develop a detailed plan so we do a better job of protecting our material. I have had some personal experience in this whole general area and we have to keep in mind that a copyright is only as strong as the owner is willing to defend it. We need to ask ourselves if we want to be spending a lot of money on legal fees to prevent someone from technically violating one of our copyrights when

they use a piece of our literature that then helps someone get and stay sober.

Financial topics always create a great deal of discussion and this GSC was no exception. The overall A.A.W.S. financial position is healthy. We have a well funded prudent reserve, our revenues exceed our expenses which remain tightly controlled and were reduced 1.2% in 2010 vs. 2009. All of these results reflect having absorbed the Grapevine losses through 2010. Group contributions are pretty flat—For Area 42 for example, the percent of groups contributing to GSO annually has steadily declined and for the first four months of 2011, 17.6% of Area 42 groups contributed vs. 19.3% over the same time last year. Publication revenue is driven by prices we set for the Big Book and 12 X 12. So.... We must assume that inflation will increase our expenses each year and if group contributions remain flat, we could be forced to increase publication prices. Again, there is no concern right now but we all need a general awareness of the situation going forward.

A caution was expressed about the future, however, and this future perspective was addressed by Ward Ewing, Chair of the General Service Board and a Class A Trustee, in his closing remarks at the Woodland Hills Forum. While estimates of annual AA membership levels are like trying to grab a cloud, it is fair to say based on all the information we have that growth in our membership is pretty flat—maybe +4% cumulatively over the past 4 years. Why???? God knows the world isn't running out of drunks. Ward hypothesized that maybe membership

levels are reflecting the fact that there are more 12 step program options or insurance coverage for funding treatment is more restrictive or the societal secular trend is fighting with the AA as a religion perception. Maybe service involvement is diminishing so recovered folk are leaving the Fellowship or maybe there are some unintentional ways we exclude people— e.g., dually addicted people, atheists, agnostics. No...no one is suggesting a big PR recruiting campaign to replace attraction with promotion. Facts are facts, however, and the fact is our Fellowship is not growing. What I heard Ward saying is that it's reasonable, no it's important, to ask and talk about why.

Let me now pass along some announcements that came out of the 2011 GSC. The panel topics and workshop topics that will be covered at next year's GSC were announced. Some of these topics will all be discussed here this weekend so you can get a good feel for these items.

The schedule of PRAASA's and Forum's for 2012 and beyond is as follows: Our Pacific Region Forum will be September in Fairbanks, Alaska and PRAASA will be in March in Bellevue, WA. There is no Forum in 2013 but our PRAASA will be in Boise, ID. Looking out to 2014, Our Forum will be in Boise, ID and PRAASA will be in San Diego, CA.

The 2012 GSC will be held in Rye, NY rather than in NYC. This is a normal alternate year location and saves AA about \$150,000 although it is more isolated and harder to get to. On a personal note, this location, the Rye Town Hilton in Rye NY is just 1 mile from my home for the 22 years I lived and worked in the NYC

area. I will have lots of special memories when I travel there for next year's GSC.

Two new Trustees were elected to replace Trustees rotating out. Clayton Vandivort was elected to represent the Northeast Region and Barb Kelly was elected to represent Eastern Canada. Just to remind you, our current Pacific Region Trustee is Rod Betonney who began his four year term just last year. Rod was born and raised on the Navajo Reservation in Utah and is the first Native American to serve as an AA Trustee.

A countrywide membership survey was conducted this year as it was last in 2007. Responses to this year's survey were due to GSO by Sept. 1. Groups chosen to participate were selected at random. Area 42 had 6 groups selected. Four groups met the deadline for submission, one group selected is "dark" and therefore did not participate and one group's response was unaccounted for.

As for the "personality" or atmosphere of the GSC---it's almost impossible to describe. One really has to be privileged enough to be there as I most certainly was. To me, it was the super bowl of sobriety—every attendee was steeped in the history, procedures, process, quirks, etc. of the AA fellowship. I would liken this to having the pleasure of being in a room for five days with 135 Ruth J's. One big difference than being in a room full of Ruth J's however-- never have I experienced so many talking for so long about so much... but all the time with love, dignity and respect for each other. I came away with a lot of

knowledge but with two important lessons. First, my patience and tolerance (and lack thereof) were taxed to the max. Being challenged on this personal character defect was indeed a growth experience. Second, the Fellowship of AA is safe, even from me. I am indeed but one voice in a very special and in many ways mysterious dis-organized organization. The whole of the AA Fellowship is greater than any one part and in fact greater than the sum of all the individual members.

Over the past several months, I have, of course, represented Area 42 at the GSC in New York. I have also attended the SAGSC Meeting May 8 where I gave a Delegate report on the GSC activities, another SAGSC Meeting July 10, spoke at the District 13 Speaker Meeting May 10, attended a wedding of one of my sponsees in Buffalo, New York May 22, attended Las Vegas Roundup Board Meetings in May and August, spoke at the District 6 picnic in Genoa, Nevada June 12 and gave my Delegate report at the NAGSC meeting later that same day. Happily, I was also able to continue my AA service work at the Henderson jail, squeeze in a quick trip to Costa Rica to visit our son's family including two of our grandkids, a trip to Norway to visit our Daughter's family including two of our grandkids and get a quick trip in to Colorado to see our Daughter's family and four of our grandchildren. And of course it is a pleasure to be here at our Assembly.

Let me know if I can represent Area 42 at one of your functions—Over just the next few months, I have future obligations for SAGSC Meetings, a presentation in Parhump, an invitation to speak at the Boulder picnic Oct. 1, the Native

American International AA Conference in October, and the AA Young People's Convention in January, 2012. I will also get to my 15th annual reunion at my treatment center in Minnesota in October.

Being your Area 42 Delegate is a dream come true—pinch me when I wake up and please, never let me forget what an honor and privilege it is.

Again, I want to thank Carol for her scheduling flexibility this morning. I don't want to take any more time on the formal agenda but I would be more than happy to answer any questions you might have. Feel free to grab me during the day, tonight or tomorrow morning. Most of all, thanks for your attention.