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# FINAL REPORT

## PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM

### JULY 11-13, 2014

### BOISE, IDAHO

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Pacific Regional Forum, which will take place in Waikoloa, Hawaii, September 30-October 2, 2016 at the Hilton Waikoloa Village Hotel.

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**ONLY LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES**  
**AND NON-A.A. EMPLOYEES APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WORKSHOP REPORTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PRESENTATIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>"CLOSING REMARKS".....</b>	<b>25</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The 2014 Pacific Regional Forum was held in Boise, Idaho. Registration for the Forum was 532. This included 305 members attending their very first Forum—many were welcomed at the Forum Orientation on Friday evening. In addition, there were many Spanish-speaking members in attendance who received simultaneous translation throughout the weekend. This allowed the Spanish-speaking members the opportunity to communicate freely in their own native language. Sunday morning included a session for sharing from first-time forum attendees, followed by sharing from past trustees.

Everyone openly expressed gratitude and affection to Pacific Regional trustee Joel C. for being with us and chairing his first Forum as Regional Trustee with his characteristic enthusiasm and great love for A.A.

### Ask-It Basket Questions (Not answered onsite)

- Q. What would be the procedure if a change would/was ever passed at the Conference level to change the 12 Steps or 12 Traditions or Article 12? Although clarification was asked for at the past Conference, the direction that process would take is still very unclear. With the General Service Office's around the world be consulted first? Would a list of groups be obtained?
- R. *The A.A. Service Manual*, p. S102 and S106 discusses this and describes the required sequence of events. The Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions or Article XII of the Conference Charter could not be changed or amended by the General Service Conference without first having "the consent of the registered A.A. groups of the world."
- Q. At the Pacific Regional Forum, the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions were on a table but not the 12 Concepts. Is there a reason for that?
- R. The Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts are not always on the same table. The Twelve Concepts are published with *The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service* and that was displayed with service kit contents and on the table for the General Service Conference.
- Q. Since nearly 50% of our demographic membership is 50 years or older is there is a lot of gray hair in this room. Why is there not more emphasis on Cooperation with the Elder Community (CEC) or senior issues i.e. hearing loss, handicap access and sight loss?
- R. At a Regional Forum, the various delegate presentation topics and workshop topics are usually selected from the suggestions provided in the Forum questionnaire from the previous Regional Forum in the region where the Forum is being held. We will add Cooperation with the Elder Community (CEC) to the list of suggested topics so that it can be chosen by a delegate in the region as a presentation or workshop topic at your next Forum.
- Q. Recordings of International Conventions are offered. Why are Regional Forums not recorded?

- R. The Regional Forum is a sharing and informational event and so it is not recorded. The only exception to this is the Sunday morning panel of past regional trustees, which is recorded solely for the General Service Office Archives.

## WORKSHOP REPORTS

**“La Viña Workshop”** (Moderator: Paz P. / Reporter: Rufino A.) Paz P., Grapevine Director, invited participants to discuss issues facing the Fellowship’s Spanish language magazine. A total of six questions and answers were recorded.

1. *How can we increase La Viña circulation?* Each member should have more than one subscription and buy gift subscriptions.
2. *How can we save money in La Viña distribution?* More than one subscription going to the same place can be placed in the same package.
3. *How can we increase subscriptions?* Motivating group members to subscribe and making the magazine more attractive, including professional articles.
4. *How do Grapevine and La Viña reps relate to each other?* We could do workshops and sharing in the two languages and invite groups from both linguistic communities.
5. *How can we reach self-support?* By increasing La Viña subscriptions.
6. *Is La Viña going to disappear?* No, La Viña is not going to disappear.

**“Getting to Know FNV (Fellowship New Vision): Area Registrar” Part I** (Moderator: Karen H. / Reporter: Mary W.) The workshop attendees were asked, “Who is an Area Registrar or a past Area Registrar?” Each January, for many years, G.S.O. mailed group information sheets out to each of the 93 areas. The group information sheets provided a way for areas to review the status of groups throughout the districts in their areas and update the information in preparation for publication of the coming year’s confidential A.A. Directories. With today’s Fellowship New Vision (FNV) database, it is no longer necessary for the annual group information sheet mailing that G.S.O. has done for many years. The database allows area record keepers to continuously update group information 24/7, making the information in the online database up-to-the-minute accurate. The FNV User’s Manual is a reference guide to keep records accurate in your area. Briefly, area registrars act as gatekeepers of their section of the database. They keep group records current with updated information — including current service positions. Regarding FNV duties, the Area Registrar is a 24/7-service position. FNV also allows record keepers to prepare spreadsheets reflecting group information in each district of their area and then distribute the e-mail spreadsheet to D.C.M.s for updates. D.C.M.s can report changes directly to the record keepers who can make the changes in the database immediately.

Using the above process can eliminate the use of “snail mail.” With the increased costs of postage, the expense of resending mail or disposing of returned mail (which cannot be forwarded) is skyrocketing at the G.S.O. Recently, in one two week period, there was \$631.00 of mail returned to the office. Workshop attendees were made aware of the importance of making sure information is accurate & correct at the time of submission of new group forms and group change forms.

There was also substantial discussion of the causes of lag time in the updating of records and sending of DCM packets, group registration and GSR packets. Moderator demonstrated website “FNV.” Many questions were addressed regarding problems with export to Excel. Note that there

cannot be two of the same group names in one city – even if it is spelled differently. New groups listed by Central Office/Intergroups must be sent to the Areas registrar in order to be in the G.S.O. F.N.V.

**“Getting to Know FNV (Fellowship New Vision): Area Registrar” Part II** (Moderator: Karen H. / Reporter: Barry S.) The moderator described the benefits of the Fellowship New Vision database to A.A. These benefits include making group listing easier, quicker delivery of new position kits, research access and increased accessibility to G.S.O. staff and areas in the United States and Canada. Recent program enhancements included registrar’s notifications and address verification. It was recommended for registrars to use FNV data to email GSRs to inform them of the registrar’s identity. Further, it was noted that the cost-saving due to mailing error limitation justifies the cost of program. Finally, communication between registrar and G.S.O. staff should occur after research. Activities done by staff: merge, city change, reactivations, deactivations, group name change, area change, and area committee changes at term beginning. The workshop concluded with a demonstration of FNV features and its report options.

**“Keeping Our Rooms Safe”** (Moderator: Padee McC. / Reporter: Alisa C.) The workshop attendees were asked to discuss safety in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, an issue that may not be openly (or often) addressed. The consensus of the workshop was that education on how to deal with the issue of safety is of paramount importance and is the key to keeping members safe. “Safety” may be expanded to encompass a variety of topics from environmental issues (such as a dark parking lot) to violence against members. Education (during a workshop or home group business meeting) is the key to ensuring that the hand of A.A. will always be there. A multi-step approach to safety concerns is important. It may be as simple as members escorting a disruptive member from the rooms to utilizing outside agencies such as the police or EMTs. All group members should be responsible for safety; being a bystander is not conducive to group integrity. In conclusion, the manner in which safety; issues are dealt with colors the newcomer’s perception of A.A. as a whole. How well do we “practice these principles?” The recognition of behavior against our common welfare — as well as how to facilitate healthy reactions to it — are symbols of our acceptance of the Traditions as a guide.

**“Carrying the A.A. Message through the Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.)”** (Moderator: Cherie N. / Reporter: Claudia B.) The workshop members were asked to discuss the question: “How can we best carry the A.A. message through the CCS?” The Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) is a Twelfth Step opportunity which links A.A. members on the “outside” with A.A. members in correctional facilities to provide a source of experience as it relates to problems with alcohol. Men are linked with men and women with women. Workshop members discussed the overall picture of corrections and how the CCS fits in. Through discussion, two basic questions emerged:

1. How can we carry the message to members on the outside that this service exists and that there is a need for outside writers?
2. How can we carry the message to inmates that this service exists?

The consensus of the group was that the answers to both questions require A.A. members to take this information to the group and to their H&I commitments in institutions. The other concern is that the process be quicker to match the insiders and outsiders.

**“Should We Still Rotate?”** (Moderator: Sharon G. / Reporter: Danielle A.) The workshop attendees were asked: “What is the role of a past delegate and do they have a vote?” The workshop members pointed out that past delegates are an integral part of an area — whether they have a vote or not. They provide invaluable experience, strength, and hope for everyone. Rotate on, not out.

The workshop attendees were also asked to consider the following scenario: “What do you do when someone refuses to rotate and the group supports their decision?” Members answered that groups are autonomous. After an informed group conscience, the decision is theirs. Good or bad, the process will prevail. A.A.s communicate, educate, and inventory to reach a decision.

Finally, workshop attendees considered the question, “How do we get people to fill service positions?” Many ideas were generated, including: assign, adopt, and find your own replacement. Sponsorship was also cited as a way to fill positions—A.A.s lead by example. Finally, members said that the position should be left open, and, when a service doesn’t happen (i.e. when coffee isn’t made or people aren’t greeted or committees aren’t chaired), someone will step in.

**“Seventh Tradition”** (Moderator: Garren T. / Reporter: Barry S.) Workshop members were asked to discuss some questions regarding A.A.’s Seventh Tradition. First, members responded to the question: “What are some ideas on getting Seventh Tradition contributions?” Members shared many ideas to increase contributions, such as:

- Reading the self-support card at meetings
- Use a comparison between dollar values – now and then
- Be excited about translation efforts
- Tell the truth: This isn’t free!
- Use fiscal conservatism
- Take a personal inventory to judge personal and group self-support
- Share that the General Service Board, not the General Service Office, holds the funds for the services provided by G.S.O.

Secondly, workshop attendees were asked to discuss, “What do we do with the Seventh Tradition funds?” Attendees offered a variety of answers, such as:

- Share with group members about what services are provided
- Personalize the services rendered
- Group members have a responsibility to share and communicate
- Use the literature to explain where funds go
- Make an annual review of needs and then make adjustments to meet the need
- Educate on services provided, it’s not just about money
- Get involved in services committees to learn the need for the services
- It’s not the size of the contribution, but the regularity of it

## **“Grapevine: The Grapevine Rep and More—Bringing our Message of Hope to Alcoholics”**

(Moderator: Ami B. / Reporter: Lance S.) Ami B., executive editor at the Grapevine magazine, introduced several topics to the workshop for consideration and discussion.

1. Is the importance of the Grapevine communicated enough?
2. What is the number of Grapevine Representatives listed--how can we get more information about the demographics of GVRs?
3. What is the area level of support for GVR/GV Chair?
4. What are the GVR duties/the importance of the Grapevine Chair and GVR?
5. How can we entice old-timers (who haven't read it) to read the Grapevine?
6. What are some ways to promote GV in a small area?
7. How can members get a story published/how to submit to the Grapevine
8. How can we encourage subscription purchases?

First, attendees discussed how to encourage interest in readership using the Grapevine Representatives. Many ideas were presented, such as:

- The GV Chair can distribute a free (emailed) newsletter to GVRs; “GV Jeopardy”; games
- Story archives: Should we make access free? What other ways to draw people to the website?
- At a meeting, read stories from GV books
- Help celebrate Grapevine's anniversary. Read a GV quote in each meeting during Grapevine anniversary month. Use contests to pique interest.
- Have Grapevine meetings. This is great for encouraging readership. To do so, give magazine copies as prizes in raffles or leave at institutions, tell members about all that the Grapevine is, stress that GV can be a substitute for a meeting in remote areas
- Become a GVR
- Have a writers' workshop on how to write your A.A. story. (It does not have to be long)
- Have a steering committee at meeting give a certain amount of money each business meeting to purchase Grapevine subscription for each service member of the meeting
- Hold raffles for winning a copy of the Grapevine
- How to subscribe: Don't use subscription cards, use new forms, go to website to use credit cards or money orders, or use postal mail.
- Ask people to order several subscriptions, and then create a lending library at your home group
- Share about the wealth of information and history in Grapevine books

The importance of Grapevine Representatives and Grapevine Chairs Workshop attendees were then presented with three questions. The first question, “How does the Grapevine choose articles and content for each issue?” was answered as follows: three A.A. members read each of the 150 stories submitted every month. Each of these stories is filed into a category and/or theme. The stories must have a problem with alcohol and the authors must have found a solution / hope in A.A. Stories can be either long or short, and address any of the different parts of the A.A. program. Second, the history of the A.A. Grapevine was discussed briefly. Where to find the complete Grapevine history was shared with workshop members ([www.A.A.grapevine.org](http://www.A.A.grapevine.org)). Bill W.'s desire that the Grapevine mirror the A.A. Fellowship was also shared with workshop members. Third, workshop members were asked, “How does the Grapevine carry the A.A. message?” Members responded that it could be used in the clubroom or at the home group for

all ages of members and all ages of sobriety. The stories can be read at meetings and the topics can be used for meetings. Print magazines can be used in a lending library. In addition, the Grapevine magazine or a subscription to any Grapevine media can be given as gifts. Finally, magazines can be given to professionals to better inform them about what A.A. is and for the message of hope and recovery that it carries.

The moderator also introduced the duties and importance of a GVR and a Grapevine Chair to the workshop. An A.A. member is elected to GVR at their home group or elected to Grapevine chair at the Area assembly. Duties of a GVR can include: inform group members on how to subscribe, have magazines available at meetings, promote the magazine with quotes, go to the GVR tab (or call GV office) for resources (i.e., workbook/handbook covers everything GV Rep or Chair needs to know), and call the Grapevine office to register as a GVR. As a Grapevine representative, you can ask your meeting to allot some time to Grapevine topics. Of course, it is important for a GVR to subscribe to the magazine him or herself – and to read it! Finally, Grapevine chairs can contact the Grapevine office for the names of GVRs in the area – and then visit to get them connected to the area Grapevine chair. A GV chair also visits area meetings and makes announcements regarding the need for GVRs.

**“How to be a More Effective Sponsor”** (Moderator: Juan M. /Reporter: Anonymous) The workshop moderator invited participants to share about the topic, “How to be a More Effective Sponsor.” A total of three ideas were written down. Those three and the discussion they prompted is as follows:

1. Sponsorship on the Twelve Steps: We need to teach the newcomer that the Steps are a tool for maintaining sobriety. Steps are done gradually and need to be practiced, one by one. A sponsor’s responsibility is to have practiced the Twelve Steps in order to be able to pass them on.
2. Sponsorship on the Twelve Traditions: As a result of practicing the Twelve Steps, one is able to live the Traditions. It is important to get to know the Traditions and to get ongoing sponsorship on them. In this manner, the Traditions can be alive at the group level and thus keep the group healthy. A sponsor should understand the Traditions in order to be able to provide good sponsorship.
3. Sponsorship on the Twelve Concepts: It is very important to get service sponsorship in order to be able to understand the Concepts.

**“CPC: How to be Friendly with our Friends”** (Moderator: Bruce D. / Reporter: Kevin F.) The workshop members selected three topics to discuss:

1. How can all service committees such as Intergroup/General Service work together?
  - Have liaison from a committee attend other committee meetings
  - Have one meeting “outreach” for all service entities to attend—be friendly with each other
  - Use new technology to communicate, i.e. “conference calls”
  - Use workshops or create annual meeting to define service roles or structure
  - Invite everyone to attend committee meetings



2. How can we have and get more members involved in CPC service?

- Have quarterly meetings with guest service speakers
- Share what the needs/request are from professionals
- Share passion for this service and share at assemblies
- Ask trustees to participate in local CPC conferences along with professionals
- Have areas work together on CPC events/conferences
- Talk about the foundation of CPC — going back to Bill and Bob at meetings
- Use CPC workbook
- Use CPC literature at professional facilities
- Contact social services and have A.A. members share story with them
- Invite all to workshop: seniors in sobriety, intergroup, etc.
- Develop CPC packets to make it easier to approach professionals
- Hold committee chairs responsible to do their job

3. How can we widen the scope of CPC?

- Find ways to attend professional conferences
- Become aware of professional conferences in your area
- Be persistent in cooperating with and contacting the professional
- Hold workshops at professional facilities
- Do local footwork with professionals—look for contacts
- Create qualified volunteers through proper training
- Be respectful of students and professionals at A.A. meetings and give them time and information after meetings
- Know the business of the professional you approach

**“Giving Freely without Recognition”** (Moderator: Ken K. / Reporter: Sheila W.) The workshop members listed concerns (voted on in order of interest).

1. Giving freely without recognition as a spiritual principle
2. When is it appropriate to recognize service at a meeting level?
3. Do I have to be recognized to feel good about myself?
4. Why do we put speaker’s names on flyers as speakers?
5. Bleeding deacons/elder statesman

Workshop attendees discussed the first three concerns. Members agreed that all AAs could contribute to service. We can do something kind for somebody and not tell them (this encourages spiritual growth); we experience personal growth through service (I am responsible); and, according to our principles, service is the right thing to do. In addition, we build relationships and sobriety through service. Finally, while service is between “us and God,” gratitude is important. Also discussed were character defects, pride and reverse pride, humility vs. false humility, and staying right-sized (ego) service.

## PRESENTATIONS

**Who's Doing the Work?** Dean B., Delegate Panel 64, Area 08 San Diego/Imperial California  
I'm aware that most groups in my local area may not be mindful of service opportunities around the corner from their meetings. But haven't we delegated responsibility and authority to area service committees to do work like cooperating with professionals in local neighborhoods? And wouldn't that alone create an awareness of Twelfth Step opportunities throughout our area? Let's dig a little deeper.

Concept II speaks to delegated authority in A.A. and its roots. It reads (in part) "they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference . . . the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society."

In the early days of A.A., Bill and Bob were literally the only ones (for the most part) taking on a lot of the correspondence and establishing the foundations of what is now Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. The action of delegating or turning over responsibilities to others began as a result of Bill and Bob not being able to do all the tasks that were needed to support the growing need for A.A. services on their own. It seemed as basic as them saying to themselves "This is too much work for two people—let's find some help!" Early delegation looked something like Bill reaching out to a trusted nonalcoholic friend to assist him with world services. Later on delegation took the form of Bob, who lived in Ohio, delegating authority to carry out the responsibility for the day-to-day operations to Bill, who lived in New York and who could make needed contacts easier than Bob could from Ohio. Fast-forward a few more years. It was acknowledged through a resolution at the 1955 St. Louis Conference that responsibility and authority for managing the operations of A.A. must rest with the groups. It was a result of this resolution that the general service structure we voluntarily operate within today was born.

Jumping forward to 2014, the Conference structure has been in place for 64 years, with its successful operation dependent in large part to its Conference committees. What is their purpose? They help carry out Concept II by reviewing proposals from the Fellowship that may impact A.A. as a whole. They have the time to serve on the committee because there are only a few physical meetings to attend each year at the General Service Conference. Can you imagine how well the committee work would go if, after reviewing and approving recommendations at the Conference, they also had to fly into Austin, TX to actually do the work that results? Some (or all) might say, "Uh, I might not be available for this delegate thing after all." The time commitment would almost be immeasurable if delegates also had to do the Twelfth Step work they are helping to enable by participating in the Conference.

Now flash back to our general service areas. The original responsibility of area G.S.R.s was stated as (according to *The A.A. Service Manual*, page S36): "In the beginning, general service assemblies were held only to elect committee officers and the delegate to the Conference meeting, and without such meetings, there might be no area service structure today." As a result of area assemblies, area service committees came into existence. Sometimes these are called standing committees. The purpose of standing committees is to—well, I can't really say what their purpose and responsibilities are now, because those responsibilities may change

throughout our Conference. What I will try to do is describe what I understand as what that may look like for many areas.

The area standing committees are mostly made up of G.S.R.s who already have a primary duty to carry information between the delegate and their group, and to help implement Conference Advisory Actions at the group level. G.S.R.s, possibly with the help of some volunteers, meet somewhere regularly outside of area assemblies and district meetings (two major responsibilities of a G.S.R.) and discuss “the work.” What is the work? For many committees it involves those members who actually go out into the area, traveling hundreds of miles each year, to do the job themselves. In many cases, if not most, the service committees’ work seems overwhelming for the few members that can serve a complete two-year commitment. Possibly, the thought of some G.S.R.s is that it can be daunting to join one more committee where monthly travel is involved for the actual Twelfth Step work (e.g. showing A.A. videos, presenting A.A. literature, making appointments with A.A. professionals, etc.). A fellow member said to me once (via e-mail) “They need to do the work! Who else will do the work if they don’t?”

That member’s email was proof that God was doing for me what I was having a hard time doing for myself. This leads me to pose the primary question: Does our local service committee structure possibly lend to the problem of low and less than full participation at the service committee level by trying to actually *do the work* instead, of limiting their scope to *be a resource to enable the work*? Maybe the committee work in your area is so effective you wouldn’t change anything. Or maybe there’s no clear answer here, and instead, questions of inventory at our local levels may help carry out our general service responsibilities to the groups.

1. Are we clearly defining the purpose and responsibilities of standing committees?
2. By small committees actually trying to do the Twelfth Step work that covers thousands of square miles, are we making it hard for people to serve on committees that might function best in advisory roles only?
3. Could cooperating with Intergroups to inform them of the specific opportunities that exist in the local neighborhoods lead more groups to say “We can help! Show us how!”?
4. Questions Four, Five, and Six? Those are for you to create based on your area’s service needs.

Through love and service,  
Dean B.

### **Wet Drunks in A.A. Meetings—Dolores E., Delegate Panel 64, Area 92 Washington**

My name is Dolores and I’m an alcoholic. I currently have the pleasure of serving as Panel 64 Delegate from Washington State, East Area 92. My topic today is “Wet Drunks in A.A. Meetings.” The issue of wet drunks attending A.A. meetings is as old as Alcoholics Anonymous itself. And why shouldn’t it be—where else should they go? Like us, they are alcoholics too, and for many we are in the last house on the block. Most of us have attended a meeting where an occasional wet drunk is present. I myself am grateful for those opportunities to see clearly what I was, what I am today, and what I could be again if it were not for the Twelve Steps of the A.A. program and the Fellowship. I have been in meetings where a troublesome wet drunk was asked to leave. I

am aware of one meeting where a sober member of the group got so upset he stood up and punched a wet drunk. I've also been in meetings where a disruptive drunk was guided outside or to another room by some members who attempted to help the drunk without disrupting the meeting. I have been in many meetings where a member was drunk but able to sit quietly and listen to the meeting.

Tradition Three states, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. . . . No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A." (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 139)

Based on Tradition Three, how to handle the wet drunk who attends a meeting and listens quietly is simple. The challenge seems to come when the wet drunk is disruptive. How do we handle this in light of Tradition One, which states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity"? Perhaps your home group may wish to discuss this at a business meeting so that group members have a common understanding of how the situation should be handled, based on group conscience. While each group is autonomous, it has been my experience that the following has worked best for the groups I've belonged to.

- If the drunk is quiet, no action is necessary. Generally someone will get them coffee and make sure a meeting list is provided.
- Disruptive drunks need not be treated differently than any other disruptive members. They can be asked to listen and be respectful of others. If this is not done, then two members of the same sex may escort the person outside or to another room for sharing.
- Should they fall asleep during the meeting, we can wake them before locking up and place a meeting schedule in their pocket.

A.A. is filled with members who attended a lot of A.A. meetings drunk before they got sober. I've learned that no one can get kicked out of A.A. We can ask a disturbing wet drunk to settle down or we might have to ask him to step outside for that day, but we don't vote to kick anyone out forever.

Early in my sobriety I picked up a young woman for a meeting who was very drunk. She assured me she would remain quiet and just listen. About halfway through the meeting she became extremely vocal and had a lot to say. Another woman and I took her outside and we sat on the lawn and shared with her. I took her home, gave her my telephone number, told her I would take her to a meeting the next day, and asked her to call me before that time if she needed to talk. A couple of hours later she called for help and two of us women went to sit with her. We drank lots of coffee and talked, and as night turned to morning she became more lucid. Her name was Shelly, and she said "You know I wasn't always like this." She shared that she was a graduate of Vassar College and she showed us pictures from a college reunion.

My friend and I left around 5:00 a.m. and we stopped at a coffee shop and drank more coffee. We shared with each other what a spiritual experience this night had been for us, and we were grateful. I took Shelly to meetings for a few weeks until she disappeared. About three years passed when I went into a bakery one day to pick up a cake, and the pretty woman behind the counter looked at me and said "I know you; you used to take me to meetings." I almost didn't recognize Shelly. She had gone back out but was now two years sober in A.A. I wonder if she

would have come back to A.A. had we not treated her with compassion and understanding at her first meeting where she was a drunken, broken-down woman with no front teeth. Thank God we all remembered that night that “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.” I am so grateful for Tradition Three and all of the Twelve Traditions. Thank you to the committee for allowing me to be of service.

### **Anonymity at the Public Level—Cesar F., Delegate Panel 64, Area 09 Mid-Southern California**

My name is Cesar and I am an alcoholic. I have the honor to serve Mid-Southern California Area 09 as Panel 64 Delegate. My Conference committee is Public Information. This is my fifth Pacific Regional Forum. Welcome newcomers!

I can remember, in my early years of sobriety in the 1990s, anytime an actor, actress, or some other famous personality would break their anonymity at the public level, rumor would spread like wildfire in the rooms of A.A. In meetings, members would whisper to each other, “Did you hear that so-and-so broke their anonymity?!” And the reaction was always the same: “Oh my God! Really?! I can’t believe it.” There seems to be this natural understanding among A.A. members of the importance of anonymity at the public level. Anonymity is extremely important to us. The very name of our Fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous, reflects that. And we have two, arguably three, Traditions devoted to it.

Nonetheless, there are some members who will want to broadcast their sobriety to the world. As a sober member, I understand why they may want to do this. It is one thing to feel this way, but it is another to act on it. We know directly from the short form of our Twelfth Tradition that “anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.” As Bill W. points out, this requires humility and self-sacrifice. We also know that anonymity has a practical application, I think, primarily to protect the newcomer and individual member. Newcomers need to know that their family, friends, or employers don’t know about their private lives. Until the recent past, most members did not have the means or perhaps the will to literally broadcast their sobriety to the public, even though they may have had a desire to do so.

Social media has brought in a high tide of anonymity breaks. It is a relatively new phenomenon. I am not an expert in social media; however, it is apparent that social media is incredibly popular. I suspect that most people who have a social media account, such as Facebook or Twitter, also use their full name or a personal picture. Social media is public in nature. There is nothing wrong with that. We need to recognize though, as respects A.A., that these sites provide a platform that almost invite anonymity breaks. When people post something to a social media site, most of the time they are doing so publicly, knowingly or unknowingly. Some users have gone to great lengths to ensure that their profiles and postings are private. But generally, for the average user, these are public. Even the experienced user will have trouble navigating the ever-changing privacy landscape of these sites.

I think the general public has never had such easy access to a public media platform as they do now. Privacy is not unique to A.A. I see in the news often about dangerous and damaging postings authored by someone who hadn’t considered the consequences. Social media has enabled us to act impulsively. All one has to do is press a button on their smartphone to “upload photo” or “update status,” and that is it. The bell cannot be un-rung. On the other hand, someone not familiar with the technology may post something unknowingly. For example, I know a long-timer who posted to her friend’s Facebook profile page, “I haven’t seen you at the Thursday night

meeting in a while.” She would never have posted this had she known that this would appear in the newsfeed of the 800 plus friends that they share between them. This can be very damaging.

Then there are the “normies” in our lives, nonalcoholics who know we are members of A.A. but do not understand our principle of anonymity. They may post something knowing that it will be public, but not knowing the potential harm it may cause. For example, someone may post to my page, “Cesar, my friend is having trouble with his drinking. Do you think you could take him to one of your A.A. meetings?” Then we have the members who “shout from the rooftops” about their sobriety. I know one member whose profile picture on Facebook is that of his A.A. sobriety chip. I know another who is consistently quoting from the Big Book (with reference to the book title and page number) and claiming what a good meeting she had been to that morning. These are examples of presumably well-intentioned members who are potentially crossing that spiritual principle of anonymity at the public level. I recently received a complaint about a member who posted a picture of himself standing next to a banner with the circle and triangle symbol. There was another banner next to it proclaiming a local roundup. In his comments, he noted about his volunteer work being done there and promoted the event. These examples should not be shocking. I am certain they happen tens of times, if not hundreds of times, every day around the world.

We are working toward a solution. At the 64<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, I had the wonderful honor and opportunity to be a part of the Public Information Committee. We provided the following additional consideration:

- In light of ongoing anonymity concerns, the committee suggested that delegates and other trusted servants utilize a variety of means, such as workshops, newsletters, panels, delegate reports, local A.A. Web sites, skits, presentations, etc., to stimulate A.A. members’ discussion on how to maintain anonymity at the public level. Because the ranks of our ever-changing membership exist in an ever-changing world, the committee acknowledged that such efforts truly have no endpoint, and might best be incorporated as a regular part of local A.A. discussions and events. The committee asked the staff secretary to explore both direct and indirect ways of sharing these concerns, and a list of A.A. resources on anonymity, with the A.A. Fellowship. The committee also asked the staff secretary to share the following suggestions with the 2015 International Convention coordinator for emphasis on anonymity at the International Convention via the following means:
  - Pre-Convention registration and communication materials, including AA.org.
  - Hospitality suite communication and materials.
  - Consideration of an anonymity booth or similar display.
  - Currently, it seems that discussion and education are our primary solutions.

Please, let’s get the word out and get to work so we may attempt to curb this tide.

**Concept I—A.A. Groups and the General Service Office Spiritual Connection—Kathi F.,**  
Delegate Panel 64, Area 03 Arizona

Hello Boise! My name is Kathi and I am an alcoholic. I am currently serving as the Panel 64 Delegate to Area 03, Arizona. This is my second time here in the last two years and I have really enjoyed your city. Thank you for hosting the Pacific Regional Forum! Also, your area has a wonderful delegate, Garren, who I have gotten to know over the past several years. My topic today is “Concept I—A.A. Groups and the General Service Office Spiritual Connection.”

Let me start by quoting a line from our Service Manual, because this encompasses the purpose for A.A. groups and G.S.O. staying connected. I quote, “We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.” (*The A.A. Service Manual*, page S1)

Well, we all know some of the ways our groups carry the message: sponsorship; keeping the doors open; sharing our experience; paying the rent and making the coffee; having A.A. literature on hand; welcoming the newcomers, as well as many other things. So, what is it that our General Service Office does to carry the message that our groups cannot?

Here are some of the services that G.S.O. does for all of us, including for those people who are still suffering: they maintain the archives so that we can learn from past experiences; they translate our literature into other languages (in fact, one translation that is happening now and is dear to the Pacific Region is the translation of the Big Book into Navajo, to carry our message to the many still-suffering alcoholics); G.S.O. sends a written Loners-International Meeting to those who cannot get to meetings; they address the public media and produce P.S.A.s for TV or radio spots; they communicate with the professional community and provide displays for conferences; they correspond with inmates and help them get connected to an A.A. on the outside; in addition to providing literature, they answer letters, e-mails, and phone calls about everything having to do with A.A. to those who reach out for help; they work with local committees to provide help; they send groups vital information and provide whatever the groups need, like *Box 4-5-9*, pamphlets, the group handbook, and general guidance; they meet with other countries to help them get established to carry the message; and they host the General Service Conference each year, where our delegates, trustees, directors, and staff come together on behalf of all of A.A. to work on things to further carry the message or to make sure the message is protected. This is truly a drop in the bucket of what the General Service Office does for us, our groups, and those still-suffering people all around the world.

So now that we know about some of the things groups do and some of the things that our General Service Office does, where is the spiritual connection? Concept I tells us the way in which we are spiritually connected. It states: “The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.” So, how do we, as groups, take responsibility for our services and exercise our authority? One way is by listing our groups with G.S.O. and electing a general service representative to carry our group's conscience to our districts, areas, and ultimately the General Service Conference, where our delegates bring our views on all matters affecting A.A. as a whole. Knowing that our founders were perishable, Bill didn't groom a successor to be a “Bill Jr.”—he chose a Concept over people. The Conference replaced the guiding forces of the old-timers with the collective and evolving

practices of A.A. It was founded on rotation of responsibility, and it elevated principles over personalities.

Within this system, every member has a voice. Any A.A. member or group may participate directly in the Conference by writing to G.S.O. or by giving their input to their G.S.R., D.C.M., or area representative. Other ways to shoulder that responsibility to carry the message could include: sharing with G.S.O. your group's experiences on challenges that you are facing in your group; keeping G.S.O. informed of changes to your group's G.S.R., location of meetings, etc.; telling newcomers about the General Service Office and what they do; and visiting the G.S.O. A.A. website at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). One of the biggest spiritual connections between our groups and G.S.O. is in the basket. We contribute part of our Seventh Tradition to G.S.O. to pay for all the services that are provided to your group, other groups, and especially to those that are still suffering all over the world. All of these services are so vital, our very lives are dependent upon group contributions to pay for them.

The spiritual connection can be clearly heard in our responsibility declaration in the phrase "anytime, anywhere" . . . "ANYTIME, ANYWHERE." This can only happen when groups and G.S.O. work together in our common solution. What groups cannot do individually, collectively we can, and this unity happens through the General Service Office. Through the spiritual principle of participation, any difficulty that may exist (like religious issues, political disagreements, remoteness) are removed so that the message can be heard. This connection transcends barriers, whether they are social, economic, hearing impaired, language, or bars on jail cells, so that the suffering alcoholic can be reached with the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Don't miss out on this spiritual connection. I can attest to the richness, joy, and happiness that I have received by being an active participant in helping this message of hope to reach the still-suffering alcoholics. As you can see, the spiritual connection between the groups and G.S.O. must remain strong for the survival of A.A. If your group is not spiritually connected, go back and talk to them about getting hooked up!

Thank you for allowing me to share with all of you today.

### **Service Sponsorship--Kelley M., Delegate Panel 64, Area 07 Northern Interior California**

Hello, my name is Kelley M. and I have the pleasure of serving as Panel 64 Delegate for the California Northern Interior Area. I'd like to thank the regional forum coordinator, Mary Clare, for the opportunity to make this presentation on "Service Sponsorship."

The 64th General Service Conference theme is "Communicating Our Legacies—Vital in a Changing World." Perhaps the least studied and understood of our Legacies is our Third Legacy of Service. Service sponsorship is one of the most important keys to improving communication with our members. I'd be remiss in a discussion of service sponsorship if I didn't thank my recovery sponsor who told me early on to get into service. My recovery sponsor encouraged me . . . well, strongly suggested . . . OK, what I heard was "Get into service immediately!" and I did so by helping set up, being a greeter, making coffee, becoming a Grapevine representative, a meeting secretary, and getting involved in general service.



My recovery sponsor did not have experience in general service, and so when it was first suggested I get a service sponsor as a G.S.R., my reaction was “What is a service sponsor?” The pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” states in part that “A service sponsor is usually someone who is knowledgeable in A.A. history and has a strong background in the service structure. The A.A. member is introduced to a new language: G.S.R., D.C.M., area assembly, minority opinion. They will become familiar with the Traditions, Concepts and Warranties, as well as *The A.A. Service Manual*, *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, and other A.A. literature. . . . The basis of all sponsorship is to lead by example. Service sponsors can impart to their sponsees the pleasure of involvement in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is best done by stressing the spiritual nature of service work and by pointing out the usefulness of simple footwork and faith.”

The pamphlet on sponsorship reminds us: “The service sponsor should keep in mind that all members will not have the desire or qualifications to move beyond certain levels and, thus, the service sponsor might help find tasks appropriate to individuals’ skills and interests. Whatever level of service one performs, all are toward the same end—sharing the overall responsibilities of Alcoholics Anonymous.” A service sponsor is not meant to have all the answers, but to share their experience, strength, and hope—and then ask for help from their service sponsor when needed. I’ll share a little about my service sponsors: My first, Will N., was active in general service, including serving as delegate on Panel 36 in 1986 and ’87. We would study *The A.A. Service Manual* and *Twelve Concepts for World Service* together. He shared many stories of his experience in general service and we would discuss my service opportunities and challenges as they came along.

What I loved about Will was that he was very direct and gave me extremely commonsense suggestions to concerns that I would bring up. While my questions were usually about general service, they really covered the gamut of Alcoholics Anonymous and a sober life.

When Will died I searched for another service sponsor, and Will’s sponsor, Annie B., seemed like a natural choice. She had over forty years of sobriety, had been an area officer, and definitely had her opinions about Alcoholics Anonymous. When we say principles before personalities we must remember it doesn’t say principles *without* personalities. Annie B. shared many memorable stories with me such as the time she became chair of California Northern Interior Area 07 and at her first assembly in Fresno she came armed with five motions to fix all of the problems she perceived existed with the area’s structure. To her dismay, all five of the motions were voted against by the assembly. She was very disheartened and thought about resigning on the spot. Then one member came up to her, a man who (as she said) “I didn’t particularly care for, in fact I couldn’t stand him,” and he said, “Annie, you’re doing a good job, thank you for your service.”

At that moment, Annie realized she was in the right place and was right sized. By sharing with me the mistakes she made in service she passed on amazingly valuable lessons.

Annie died the month before our election assembly in 2009 and I reached out once again to my next potential victim—I mean sponsor. Even though my two previous service sponsors had died that year, my current service sponsor, Lee W., never hesitated when I asked for his help. I try to pass on what has been freely given to me by making myself available as a service sponsor. Once a month I hold a regularly scheduled meeting with my sponsees to discuss the Concept and Tradition of the month along with the checklist questions and *The A.A. Service Manual*. We share our service experiences and challenges.

When my sponsor or sponsees, or for that matter any other member of A.A., has a different opinion on an issue, it's an opportunity for me to slow down, stay open and teachable—and listen carefully to their opinion. And then more may be revealed—or not. As I mentioned earlier, service sponsorship can be especially helpful to members understanding our Third Legacy of Service. In 1951, Bill W. clarified A.A.'s Legacy of Service contained in *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*. He wrote: "A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to 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."

In A.A. service I am not alone—all that is required is a willingness to ask for help when needed and, perhaps most importantly, reach out when I think I have a good idea and don't think I need to ask for help. Sponsorship is emblematic of the fact that this is a *we* program. My service sponsors have led by example, imparting a great respect for the Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous. By being good listeners, offering encouragement and constructive criticism, my sponsors have helped me grow on my spiritual path.

For all of the loving direction that I continue to receive, I am forever grateful. Thank you.

### **Alcoholism—Have We Forgotten It's a Fatal Disease?--Astri T., Delegate Panel 63, Area 72 Western Washington**

I attended my first A.A. meeting in 1978. I did not stop drinking for another year, but the things I saw and heard made an impression on me. The meetings I attended were at a fellowship hall that had a pretty bad reputation. There was a pay phone on the wall that would ring several times during a meeting. Sometimes it was someone checking to see if his or her spouse really was at that A.A. meeting. Sometimes a potential employer was calling to offer a job to a member who had no other phone. Sometimes it was Intergroup calling with a Twelfth Step call. I saw members jump at the chance. A longtime member would grab a newer member, and off they'd go to carry A.A.'s message to another suffering alcoholic.

When I sobered up in 1979 I couldn't wait to be asked to come along. After a while I got an offer to join. I accompanied old-timers to homes, hospitals, restaurants, etc. I saw alcoholics in the throes of withdrawal, DTs, and being treated for injuries received while drunk. We'd take them out to coffee or to detoxes or hospitals, all the while sharing our stories. Some became sold on the program immediately; some concluded they weren't that bad yet. Fremont was sometimes referred to as the Emergency Room of A.A. At our meetings we would see alcoholics shaking in withdrawal, who sometimes spoke to creatures none of us could see. We had members who were wet brains, and a member in a wheelchair who jumped off the Fremont Bridge in a suicide attempt but survived. We took road trips to prisons and jails, hospitals and psych wards. There was no question of whether or not we wanted to go; if we were available, we went.

At our meetings we heard the old-timers' "drunk-a-logs" over and over every night. We heard stories about Bill, Bob, Ebby, Dr. Silkworth, Sam Shoemaker, Carl Jung, and the birth of A.A. We heard stories about society's opinion and the treatment of alcoholics prior to A.A. In doing research for this presentation I found even more information along those lines. I found out that the idea of castrating and sterilizing us was a frequent proposal. In 1899, a Dr. Vines advocated passage of laws to prevent our reproduction. In 1905, Indiana law prohibited marriages of habitual drunkards. In 1911, Iowa law made drunken violent criminals eligible for sterilization. In

the 1930s, Nazis subjected between 20,000 and 30,000 alcoholics to forced sterilization. Between 1940 and 1950, alcoholic women committed to U.S. psych wards were frequently held back from discharge until they agreed to “voluntary” sterilization.

The aversion therapy currently used in some treatment facilities administers a drug that causes nausea when alcohol is introduced. Prior means of “aversion” included electric current, introducing a poison that produced temporary but complete paralysis; there were other means I found unthinkable. Prior to Dr. Silkworth’s appearance at Towns Hospital, the treatment there consisted of “un-poisoning the system” by administration of Belladonna, Hyosyamus (a flowering plant used as a painkiller and for sleep), Xanthorylum (aka Prickly Ash, used as a stimulant, digestive aid, and diuretic), Blue Mass (a pill for constipation and parasitic infection), and castor oil. Then a reconstruction treatment of tonics was begun.

In the 1960 and ’70s a Dr. Charles Lieber did research on the physical effects of alcohol on the body. In 1974 he demonstrated that alcohol changes the metabolism in the liver so it converts a number of harmless chemicals into toxins, leading to liver damage. He compared it to the pickling of a cucumber; once it’s activated you can never go back to normal. Perhaps this is the origin of our expression “once a cucumber becomes a pickle, you can never be a cucumber again.” Partly as a result of this research the medical profession and insurance companies accepted alcoholism as a disease and inpatient treatment was covered by medical insurance. The disease began to be diagnosed in its earlier stages, thereby “raising our bottoms.” The treatment centers then began to fill up and multiply. The phone stopped ringing at my meeting. I guess the alcoholics were calling the treatment centers directly. Fewer drunks arrived at our meetings with DTs. They arrived after completing treatment, healthier and cleaned up. We took them under our wings, to prisons, detoxes, and treatment centers, and asked them to tell their stories. To share hope with still-suffering alcoholics for sure, but also so that they knew their own stories so well that they would go off like a newsreel in their heads, to crowd out thoughts of drinking if tempted.

Soon treatment jargon started entering the A.A meetings. I would hear newer members say they got tired of hearing the same old stories from the same old-timers. They didn’t like spending so much time talking about the problem; they wanted to talk about the solution: recovery. They also thought everyone should have a chance to share—no matter how much time they had, we all just have one day, and whoever got up earliest this morning has the most time . . . and thus, newcomers started telling us how to recover. So with all this progress, you would think it would be reflected in our lethality statistics. Here’s what I found: a 2005 U.S. government study, a 2006 study by the Scientific Research Society, and current statistics collected off the Internet all share similar results. They note that 14 million people in the United States are addicted to alcohol; alcohol is a factor in half of the murders, suicides, and accidental deaths that occur in the U.S.; a third of the pedestrians killed by automobiles were drunk; 50 percent of state and 40 percent of federal prison inmates incarcerated for violent crimes report being under the influence at the time they committed the crime; 50 percent of mental health commitments to psychiatric institutions are also diagnosed with alcohol addiction or abuse; there are 50,000 cases of alcohol poisoning reported in the U.S. annually, and every week one person dies from this condition; 75,000 deaths per year in the U.S. are linked to alcohol; and, finally, 95 percent of alcoholics die from their disease and die approximately 26 years earlier than their normal life expectancy. So, obviously, it is still killing us—it is still a fatal disease.

I recently spoke with some friends of A.A. and learned that of the chemical dependency evaluations they are doing today, 20 to 30 percent are diagnosed as what we used to call "chronic late-stage alcoholics." On an average they wait two to three weeks to get into treatment. While on treatment waiting lists, they generally spend their time in homeless shelters, city or county jails, or detoxes. These friends of A.A. expressed their opinion that due to what they currently see happening with treatment, insurance, and funding (a whole other topic for some other discussion), they are hoping to see A.A.s getting back involved, carrying our message to the still-suffering in the way we once did: face-to-face with the dirty, smelly, shaking, and sweating alcoholic. That we will once again go to them, where they can be found still suffering, still looking, and maybe open to help as they try to stay alive just one more day. If we accept this challenge, maybe in the process the newly cleaned-up, sweet-smelling ones coming in will also see the reality of alcoholism's continuing fatality.

## PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING

**Rod B.**, past Pacific region trustee, 2010-2014

It has been an amazing journey these past four years. Thirty years ago, I was sitting in the drunk tank and I never could have imagined this. Forums are so educational; you can learn so much about the service entities and how they work together. It is great to meet the people from the General Service Office. It is an awesome thing about the increase in La Viña subscriptions. I have so much love for my area, for all they have allowed me to do.

We have two higher powers we obey — one is a loving, beneficent God, and the other is alcohol. And alcohol has no mercy and it doesn't care. I want to emphasize something I've learned in my four years as trustee. I've learned that we need to stick together and be compassionate with one another as we do the business of A.A. I'd also like to share something that I also shared in New York at the Saturday morning brunch during this year's Conference. It is from the first bulletin mailed out to all A.A. groups in 1940. Nearly 50 groups received this bulletin put out by what was then known as the Alcoholic Foundation. It began as an effort to develop a mutual idea exchange sheet to establish a closer feeling of fellowship between A.A. groups on the east coast and A.A. groups on the west. The Alcoholic Foundation also hoped it would prevent secession from the A.A. ranks by a San Francisco group who threatened to call themselves Dipsomaniacs Incognito. In the beginning, there was a central committee in Cleveland where, in October 1939, hardly more than four years after Bill and Bob met, a committee of seven was meeting once a month to coordinate efforts regarding hospitalizations and sponsorship. Dr. Bob was not only a supporter, but an active participant. According to fellow Akron member Dan K., "Doc used to play an important part in the central committee. That was the steering committee for the office. We'd meet the first Monday of every month and he always attended. There'd be a member from each group. During the meetings, sometimes, the words would fly like you were in a barroom. During one meeting, Dr. Bob stood up, hushed the crowd and said: 'Gentlemen, please. We're still members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Let's carry the principles of A.A. into these business meetings. You are servants of your group(s), here to take tides formulated by the committee. Let one man talk at a time, and let us conduct this business meeting as service to the Lord and a service to our fellow members of Alcoholics Anonymous.'" After that, there were no more brawls while Dr. Bob was there. Thank you.

**George D.**, past Pacific regional trustee, 1978-1982

I'm one of the oldest, oldest everything. I was on Dr. Jack's delegate committee in 1975 because the Regional Forums began as an experiment. I went to Vancouver for the second one. We did the program for the forum on Thursday night. There wasn't one until we wrote it up. We filled all the slots and we thought we had a really great forum. By the last day, Sunday, we'd run out of ideas. We realized that there were a couple of past Canadian trustees present who were also circuit speakers. We figured we'd put them on because they'd send everyone home all charged up and in a good mood. So, that was the origin of the past trustees' Sunday morning talk. We didn't have the foresight to realize that once we did this, all current trustees who knew about it, knew that they'd become past trustees up here, too. So we've never gotten this off the schedule! The first Pacific Regional Forum was held in Sacramento and I was a newly elected trustee in 1978. The Regional Forums have grown and have become better structured and organized. They have evolved. However, I hope that we don't become static. I hope that we continue to think of new things to do.

I'm going to read a radical statement: "Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization. There is no dogma. The one theological proposition is a "Power greater than one's self." Even this concept is forced on no one. The newcomer merely immerses himself in our Society and tries the program as best he can. Left alone, he will surely report the gradual onset of a transforming experience, call it what he may." Now, this was the A.A. that I came to — I've been a member for 59 years. The young people's group I walked into didn't ask me if I was an alcoholic. They just said, "Sit down. We hope you hear something that helps you." There were no questions, no requirements, and no one asked if I was dually addicted. On the east coast, in particular, I hear a lot about getting back to basics. I think that's great, but my question is: Whose basics do we want to get back to? The basics I'm talking about are in the statement that Bill W. read to the American Psychiatric Association in 1949 — the radical statement I just read to you. He thought about that statement carefully. No one forced the program down my throat, nobody told me what I had to do, or what certain language in the Steps meant. They helped me figure out what it meant for *me*. Those are the basics as I remember them. Thank you.

**Ruth J.**, past Pacific regional trustee, 1986-1990

My opening is usually, "To chant or not to chant, that is the question." And the answer, of course, is no. If you have any questions about my opinion, please see me afterwards. The reason I talk about this is because we've talked about impediments to meetings. We've mostly discussed physical impediments, but there are also mental impediments. Such as asking people, too quickly, why are you here? I'm going to read Tradition Five: "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." I ask you, when a newcomer first comes into your meeting, what is the impression your group gives? Is it by helping the reader read principles before personalities with a little chanting thing going on? Or is it chanting after a prayer? If so, what message does that send to a newcomer? I only ask you to discuss this in your groups — is your group sending the appropriate message to the newcomer? Because that is the only purpose for you to have that group — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Several groups in the Las Vegas, Nevada area have decided it wasn't necessary to chant. We even close with a prayer of our choice in our group. It may be the Serenity Prayer, it may be the Lord's Prayer, or it may be the Responsibility Declaration. We are aware that people coming to our groups today are not all white Christians, as it was back when A.A. began. Worldwide, it is not how we look anymore. Please make sure that your newest members know the difference between a meeting and a group; clubhouses host many meetings, but they are not necessarily groups. I think people rush, in a meeting, to suddenly make themselves a group, and then they struggle, because they don't have a nice core membership. Safety in meetings is also important. There was a workshop on that this weekend. And it is not only physical safety. We have people coming to us who are very, very young. I think we have to protect them — we not only have sexual predators (men and women), but we also have financial predators, too. There are people who think it's okay to ask sponsees or sponsors for money. There is some unfortunate borrowing going on. This is not part of what A.A. does. Protect the newcomer. If you are a member who has a little bit of sobriety, please watch out for the newcomers. We say our growth in A.A. is flat. I don't think it's because alcoholics out there aren't drinking anymore, I think maybe they are looking for other ways. Let's make the Fellowship as inviting as it was 44 years ago when I came and didn't want to be here, and 59 years ago when George D. first came. They didn't ask me what I was or why I was there. They said, "Come in, sit down, and let's see if we can help you."

**Madeline P.**, past Pacific region trustee, 2006-2010

In November of 1985, when I got shipped off to chemical camp, I didn't imagine I'd ever be standing up here. What I do remember is that I was hopeless. I was so hopeless that I made a phone call and asked for help. There are people in this room that know how hopeless you have to be to raise your hand and say, "I need help." I had never asked for help in my entire life, and I was in that perfect place that got me asking for help and having help be there. When I came in here I was bankrupt. I had no relationships. I sit in these rooms and I think about the relationships I have today – with two families. Today I have my blood family and this other family I had no idea how much I needed — you. I think about the people in our rooms and how I have watched them grow. Right now, go take two minutes to go and meet someone you haven't met this weekend. (Brief pause) I want to remind everyone that the whole purpose of general service is so that that there are feet on the ground. So that the hand of A.A. is there to reach out, that the meetings happen, the coffee is there, the literature is there, and the phone gets answered. More importantly, the whole purpose of general service is so that we get to be there and I get to give a real welcome to that person who is wondering if there is any hope left in their life. The whole purpose of us coming together and talking about bar graphs, publications, or anything else, is to make sure that we have the ability to serve, because to serve is to love. And to love is to serve Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you.

**Julian R.**, past Pacific region trustee, 1994-1998

Welcome to those of you who are here for the first time. What we have in Alcoholics Anonymous is a program for not drinking that we like better than the one we had while we were drinking, and that is why we keep coming back. I encourage your participation. It's a wonderful life. I want to talk about three subjects that have been on my mind.

First, I want to talk about change. A lot of people say A.A. is changing. I'm not so sure about that. Our culture is changing. Our society is changing. But is A.A. changing? I think back to my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in 1961. It was a speaker meeting. I don't really remember the content of that meeting. It was in the basement of a church, probably about 40 people, there were green glass coffee cups, full ashtrays, and smoke so thick you could cut it with a knife. Now, with that exception, that meeting could have just as well have been held last night. There was nothing different about the content, the format. Our culture and our society are going through sweeping and innovative changes. But we've had some other changes that have affected us more directly. The treatment industry has invaded the recovery field, and the way that we receive many of our newcomers is through a different process than in the past. But still, when we get the chance, it is still one drunk talking to another drunk, sharing recovery. That is the way we stay sober, and it has worked for us beginning with Bill and Bob, and it is working for us today. Another big change is that we've met with the digital age — computers and social media. Bill talked about the importance of the restraint of pen and tongue. Do you realize that I could get a clever idea, type it out on the screen, punch a button, and show the whole world my ignorance? Instantaneously and worldwide! The point is that A.A. is adjusting to it, so that our program doesn't change and yet we fit into the game.

My second area of concern is about membership. We've heard that since about 2000, our membership worldwide has not changed dramatically. By conservative count, we have about 2,162,000 members. We been talking this weekend about the growth of the Big Book, and I

think the figure I heard was in excess of 35 million copies have been published since its inception. Since 1985, we've had 69 translations going into foreign lands. Now, the size of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada may not have changed much, but we are spreading out worldwide. The message is being carried worldwide. The makeup of the membership is also changing. Now, although the same percentage of groups contribute to G.S.O., I'll bet they'd rather have an increase in membership than an increase in funds. This would mean that that the message is being carried to more and more alcoholics.

The third area of concern I wanted to share involves identity. Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization. And yet, some of the news media and courts have contended that, possibly, we were. A.A. is a spiritual organization for recovering alcoholics based upon spiritual principles and tools. A.A. is not a religious program. I wonder if we could take more of a look at this — perhaps one day we could consider a Conference theme involving alcoholics and spirituality. Thank you.

**Roberta L.**, past trustee, 2010-2014

One of the things I am left wondering about after my eight years on the A.A.W.S. board is “are we inclusive enough? Do we imply sets of rules and regulations for people who join our groups and rules and regulations for them to follow while they are members of our groups?” During the time I served on the board, we received communications from the Fellowship in which individuals complained that Traditions were being violated in such a way and in such and such a group, and so on. Of course, A.A.W.S. does not have policing authority. In A.A., each group is autonomous, so there wasn't whole lot we could interfere with or do. Those who complained about these things loved A.A. and wanted the best. Those who were supposedly violating the Traditions loved A.A. and wanted what was best. Now that I have rotated, I have more time to participate in local A.A. meetings. I have become even more motivated to do that by the sharing of a couple of members in my home group. They did rant, in a meeting, about how such and such a meeting is doing this or that. Of course, I had to go to those meetings and see what was going on. You know what I found? I found A.A. I didn't see anything they were doing that was harming A.A. as a whole. The chanting and pumping of arms are issues of concern to some, but if there are members who enjoy that and see it as a way of demonstrating their devotion to the Fellowship, who am I to object to what they are doing in that particular meeting? It's their group conscience.

How can I help A.A. best in my new position of “rotated everything”? I will give newcomers time to understand our program and help them with that understanding through sponsorship and friendship. I will not be quick to judge how another meeting is conducted. By the same token, I will not be quick to judge what another alcoholic shares. When I feel the format of the meeting is not about A.A. or is not helpful to the suffering alcoholic, I'm obligated to speak up or to offer suggestions, but to do so in a way that does not cause members or potential members to have a reason to turn their backs on A.A. All alcoholics are entitled to our life-saving message. I will look for the similarities in meetings rather than the differences, just as we have been told to look for the similarities rather than the differences in the sharing in meetings. As much as anyone present in this room here today, I want A.A. to be here for another 80 years. I don't think being rigid, judgmental, or dogmatic is going to assure that. What will assure that is my sharing my experience, strength, and hope as well as providing financial support through money in the basket and offering sponsorship. One of the most beautiful Traditions in A.A. is that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting A.A. as a whole. I have the deepest gratitude for the opportunities I have had to serve Alcoholics Anonymous.



## “CLOSING REMARKS”

**Terry Bedient**, Class A (nonalcoholic) General Service Board Chairperson

We are in the presence of giants of A.A. I'm delighted and privileged to serve with all of you. It has been said that 18 million people in the U.S. and Canada suffer from a life-threatening problem. Not drinking is not the solution. The solution is spiritual growth and application of the Twelve Steps in all aspects of our lives. Former Class A trustee, George Valliant, wrote that service is linked to survival and to spirituality. Spirituality includes and requires service. Your presence here this weekend demonstrates your commitment to service and to growth along spiritual lines. Dr. Bob said that it all comes down to love and service. I like that he put "love" first. This weekend, in Boise, I think that we have all felt that love. The spirit of gratitude has been alive and well here this weekend. We have talked about the importance of sponsorship, the need for inclusiveness, and special needs communities. I've sensed the serenity that comes not from the absence of problems, but from the presence of a higher power.

Fighting isolation is a key to ongoing sobriety. In today's world it is easy to buddy up with a laptop or a smart phone or a television instead of a real person. And that can be a challenge for all of us, just as we are challenged to effectively utilize technology to deliver our message of A.A. To deliver that message, it must be person to person. A.A. must be a clear and authoritative voice that can be sorted out and heard in the midst of misinformation, miscommunication and uninformed personal opinion. We are Alcoholics Anonymous, not Alcoholics Invisible.

Bill wrote a lot about building for the future – and for the newcomers and our youth. Today, every successful mutual help group in the world is modeled after your Twelve Steps. No other group in the world provides your kind of support to others suffering from a common illness. A member wrote, "When I drank, I had a drinking problem that I could not handle. When I stopped drinking, I had a living problem I could not handle." For those who are restless, irritable, and discontent, drinking is not the solution. As Bill said, our message to the world is not that we have succeeded in ceasing to drink, but that in ceasing to drink, we have succeeded in learning to live. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

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