

Conference Report to Area 08

General Service Conference Panel 57

April 22 – 28, 2007

THEME: *Our 12th Step Responsibility – Are We Going to Any Length?*

Part 1

My name is Jerry, and I am an Alcoholic. I have the honor and the privilege to serve as the Delegate from Area 8, San Diego-Imperial, to the 57th Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference.

On page S48 of the Service Manual, I am instructed to report back to the Area, not only the actions of the Conference, but also "What I Saw, What I heard, and What I Felt."

This was an amazing experience this year. It was different from my first year; I knew what to expect this year, and yet I still felt the staggering humility to be part of it all. To be part of the Conscience of A.A. as a whole, and to participate in the procedure was just as humbling this year as it was last year. I did a few things differently this year, mainly because I knew the ropes, and understood the process; it was not new to me.

My flight was non-stop from San Diego to Kennedy airport in New York City. Imagine my surprise as I was getting my luggage in one of the two huge American Airlines Terminals when I turned around and who is standing there but Larry N, our past Delegate and Past Trustee at Large USA. We were on the same plan and didn't even know it. Larry was there to attend the Saturday evening delegate and trustee dinner.

Larry and I shared a ride to the hotel, along with Debbie J., the Delegate from Southern California Inland Area 93, and Gustavo T., the Delegate from Los Angeles Area 5. I

remember how Jim W. the Delegate from Area 5 helped me get around last year, so I tried to return the favor this year to our neighbors to the north.

The hotel where the Conference is held is the Crown Plaza Times Square, at 49th and Broadway, at the heart of the theater district in Manhattan. The Conference has been held at this hotel since 1992. I know this all sounds exciting and fun, but they work us from nine in the morning to after ten at night during the Conference. For all I saw of New York, I might as well have been in La Mesa.

The hotel rooms in this hotel are rather small. The same is true for most of the hotels in Manhattan. The rooms are relatively small with a very small closet. I was by myself so space was not a problem, but for those Delegates that are married and brought their husbands or wives, it is very close quarters. Once again this year through sheer dumb luck, my room was on the 45th floor. My room faced west and I had a striking view of the Hudson River. Just like last year, the constant noise of the City is never ending. There is constant background noise, of horns, sirens, and the muffled roar of traffic.

Friday morning, April 20th, several of us went up to the General Service Office to say hello, look around unhurriedly, and attend the scheduled Friday Morning meeting at G.S.O. For those of you that heard my report last year, please bear with me. I want to share impressions of the office with the new GSRs.

The General Service Office is located on Riverside Drive. To get there from the hotel, we take Route One on the subway, and get off at Columbia University. It is a short walk through Barnard College to the office. I expected a beat up old office building, and I was surprised. The office is located in the Rockefeller Charitable Building. This building houses many charitable and not for profit organizations. It is a gleaming multistory office building I would guess perhaps 25 stories high. The General Service Office and Archives take up the entire 11th floor, and the Grapevine has a portion of the 10th floor. Because the building houses so many none profit and religious organizations, I heard it is called the Rockefeller God Box.

The regular Friday 11:00 am meeting had so many members, Delegates, and friends attending, it was moved from the 11th floor conference room, down to the first floor of the building. Who should be leading the meeting but our old friend from San Diego,

Larry N. It was a wonderful meeting; to hear Delegates from all over the country share started everything off right.

By Saturday the 21st, almost all the Delegates had arrived. I met my Conference Buddy. Let me explain what a Conference Buddy is. The second year Delegates are assigned a first year Delegate to take under their wing. My Conference Buddy was Claude M. from Area 88 Southeast Quebec, Canada. Claude had his interpreter with him. He spoke little English, and I speak no French. We got along as best we could; I wish I could have shared more with him. Claude has 40 years of sobriety and is an asset to his Area.

Because this year there was no AA historic tour of New York, or trip to Stepping Stones, Madeleine P. our Pacific Regional Trustee, asked if we would enjoy seeing a play running in New York, called "Bill W. and Dr. Bob." Of course we would; all Pacific Region Delegates attended at our own expense. This was an outstanding production, charting the history and relationship of our Fellowship, Dr. Bob and Bill W. from the 20s up through 1935. The play opens with the actor playing Bill W. saying, " My name is Bill W. and I am an Alcoholic." The response back from the audience was a loud clear, "Hi Bill". The tears started rolling down my cheeks, and didn't stop until the end of act one. Someone told me there is a production in Los Angeles playing now too. If you have an opportunity, do see this play. I highly recommend it. It also gave me insight into Alanon, which I never had before.

Sunday April 22nd, the Remote Communities meeting was held prior to the opening of the Conference. This Committee started out as a meeting of Canadian Delegates to discuss the issue of service and communication for the Native North Americans in the remote reached of Canada. Delegates in the United States also voiced their concerns, and the meeting has now evolved into an organization to serve the needs of those members that are separated by distance, language, or culture. Almost all the Delegates attended this meeting. Rick H. the Delegate from Alaska Chaired with two speakers: Pat L. from Alberta/Northwest Territory Canada, and myself. We then broke into roundtables of 15 and had discussion until 11:00am when we adjourned.

The Conference began officially Sunday the 22nd of April. Our first order of business was to seat Hari B., the Alternate Delegate from Area 81 New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island, Canada. Hari was there taking the place of Adrien G. the Delegate who was too ill to attend the Conference.

Leonard Blumenthal our Chairman of the General Service Board welcomed us, and Greg M. the general manager of the General Service Office called roll. Each Delegate stood and answered "Present" when our name and Area was called. That afternoon we all broke out into our Conference Committees and had a joint meeting with the Trustees and Conference Committees. Here we were able to hear presentations from the trustees assigned to our various committees. I am assigned to the Grapevine/LaVina Committee.

Monday, April 23rd, we again met with our Conference Committee meetings for the entire morning. The afternoon session began by hearing Panel 57 Delegates report on their Area highlights. We heard the 7 Delegates for the Southwest region, and the 8 Delegates from the Northeast region.

Three important reports were presented. Leonard Blumenthal, our Chairman of the Board gave the General Service Board Report. Paul C., General Service Trustee, and AAWS Chairman gave the AA World Services Report. Arnold R., Grapevine Trustee, gave the Grapevine Board Report. The afternoon we also had a comprehensive presentation on Finances by Vincent Keefe, Class A trustee, and Chairman of the Finance and Budgetary Committee.

After dinner, the evening session was devoted to a presentation and discussion of our Archives by Herb Goodman Class A trustee and Amy Filiatreau, the Archivist. Amy presented an audiotape of Bill W. discussing Tradition Three.

Tuesday April 24th began with second meeting of Conference Committees. Here, discussion was completed and our recommendations and additional committee considerations were finalized. After lunch we heard Panel 57 Area Highlights from the 6 new Delegates from Eastern Canada, and the 4 new Delegates from the West Central Area. We heard three presentations on theme topics, and adjourned to visit the General Service/Grapevine offices on Riverside Drive. Here, all the Delegates are invited to tour the office, meet the personnel, examine the books and ask any questions we may have. The office and the operation are totally transparent.

Wednesday the 25th began with workshops on the topic: Spiritual value of our A.A. Dollar until 11:00am. We then went back into session to hear the Panel 57 Area Highlights from the 7 Delegates from our Pacific region, and the 7 Delegates from the

Southeast region. Lunch was a working lunch, making decisions on the location of PRAASA for 2010 and 2011, and the Regional Forum in 2010. For 2010, PRAASA will be held in Los Angeles, 2011, it will be in Hawaii. The Regional Forum in 2010 will be held in Torrance California. I would urge we begin work right now to try to secure PRAASA 2012 here in San Diego.

Wednesday afternoon, there were elections for the Regional Trustees in the Northeast and the Southwest, and one Trustee-at-Large, Canada. We later heard three Conference Theme presentations

After dinner we began our Conference/Committee process review. Each committee makes a full report of their Committee recommendations and additional considerations. Recommendations of Conference committees are automatically motions that have been made and seconded. The entire Conference may vote on a recommendation immediately, discuss the recommendation, and then vote, or even request an amendment to the recommendation, and then vote. To become a *Conference Advisory Action* a recommendation achieves substantial unanimity, which is an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Conference members voting. I have provided a full report of all Conference Recommendations and additional considerations in the appendix to Part 2 of this report. Part 2 of this report will have a synopsis of all recommendations and considerations we discussed in our Pre-conference Workshops.

Thursday morning began with Conference Theme presentations. I had the honor and the privilege to be one of the presenters. At 9:45am we began more Committee reports, discussion debate and voting. This continued through the afternoon and evening, with adjournment at about 10:30pm.

Friday morning brought us outstanding presentations on the Grapevine and La Vina. The final Committee reports, discussion and vote took place throughout the remainder of the day, There were 4 floor actions presented at the end of the day. Two were heard as floor actions, but not approved. Two were defeated, and the actions were not heard. This included a floor action to hear the proposal that a central office/Intergroup pamphlet be developed. The defeat of this action was substantial. I asked the Conference Coordinator if a count was made to verify the substantial unanimity, and he said no. The vote was substantial and no count was made. The Conference has spoken on this subject twice in two years. The one floor action that succeeded was an action to edit a scene in film being sent to aid training of Correctional Officers at their academies.

The close of the Conference on Friday evening is an emotional affair. Panel 56 Delegates, Trustees, and Directors that are rotating out have an opportunity to share and say good-by. I was fine until it came to my turn to speak. The realization that I had the privilege of being part of this Spiritual Fellowship hit me, and the emotions welled up. I fell apart.

Thank you for allowing me to serve.