

68th Annual General Service Conference
Area 48 HMB Panel 68 Delegates Report

First of all, I need to make a rather large amends to my friends in fellowship here in Area 48 and around the world. Despite warnings from Deb D and prayers from David S, two of our esteemed past Delegates, yes folks I did manage to break AA.

I had made arrangements with Bill W to stay Friday night in Hurley and then He would chauffeur me into the "Big Apple" Saturday. Having arrived at Bills around 5 pm and after being entreated to a wonderful meal we decided play a spirited prank directed toward our Area Chair and ALTERNATE DELEGATE.

Bill texted Tad and asked if he had heard from me as I was supposed to have arrived at his house by 4. There was an amusing exchange, at least to me, for about 30 minutes before we sent Tad a picture of the two of us enjoying our side of the joke. Remember, should anyone here have the good fortune to become Area Chair that does carry with it the responsibility of being available conference week should the Delegate be abducted by aliens.

I arrived at Times Square on Saturday afternoon around 2 pm in ample time for the Remote communities meeting. The focus of this meeting was members of the Military and their access to AA while on deployment or right here at home but on restricted bases. The point was also made that potential members may be isolated as the result of injury or trauma. This issue is personal to me as I have a close friend who is struggling with this disease and the isolation of PTSD. I left that meeting with the sense that the definition of "remote communities" may have over reached. The challenges of serving our members and potential members in the military would benefit from the vision and the efforts of an entire conference committee and GSO Service desk instead of being lumped into the same service category as Redfern NY or Churchill Ontario in January. Likewise, the remote communities of Alaska and Canada....and New York deserve our focus on finding solutions to those issues that complicate our ability to share the message that WE HAVE A SOLUTION to our shared disease.

After the Remote Communities meeting we had a dinner break and it was during this that the **first of what were to be several spiritual experiences occurred**. A fellow NERD and I went up to the Green Apple Diner and ran into some fellow Delegates from the Southeast Region. Jay from Puerto Rico and Moe from Louisiana. We sat in the diner and had a lively discussion. FYI the sandwiches and salad were good too.

I realize this news may surprise some, but the underlying topic of the General Service Conference was the Manuscript Litigation, the censure of the General Service Board and / or its reorganization. Moe was in favor of censure at a minimum and INot so much. What followed was a spirited, passionate and loving conversation about our Traditions, Concepts and Board responsibilities. No voices were raised no chairs were thrown and as the week progressed much more was to be revealed.

Upon our return to the Crown Plaza we had the Delegates only meeting. We were welcomed by the Delegate Chair Ben B from Oklahoma and Alt Chair Joanne L from Central California. This was a general

sharing session and the first opportunity to go up to the mike which I did eventually as instructed lovingly by Keith D among others. It is a little intimidating at first and while, I won't receive the Golden Mike award, I was able to overcome my fears and speak to the group, not only then but each time it was important.

Sunday

Another Spiritual Experience: All the documents I saw and Audio / visual material was translated into French and Spanish.

Opening Day of the conference – My mind full of weighty thoughts like should I say HERE or PRESENT when my name is called during roll call. No one remembers which I said but I was indeed there.

There was a motion recommended by the Policy and Admissions Committee that needed to be addressed immediately. This was to allow admission of Valley Kalaiyappa, General Secretary of the General Service Board of AA in India as an observer. The recommendation passed with substantial unanimity.

After roll call and lunch we proceeded to the Area Highlights. Northeast Region was first up. Thank goodness I had the practice of NERAASA and NERD behind me. I did not feel like I was shaking through the floor. After the Northeast and Southeast Regions gave their highlights we had a presentation about AA International and then we began the Conference Committee Meetings.

The Corrections Committee met with the Trustees Committee on Corrections Sunday evening. There was not a lot to discuss but they did share with us that the DVD A New Freedom was in production to add French and Spanish language tracks instead of subtitles. They also brought us through the request for the new pamphlet for Long Term Incarcerated individuals.

Monday

We began our Corrections Committee work at 9:00 am and fairly quickly dispensed with the idea of developing a new pamphlet. We decided not to recommend the new pamphlet because we felt we could better utilize the Pre-Release Form and BTG information to carry the point to every inmate seeking recovery upon release. We dutifully went through the entire Service Binder and discussed possible changes. We had reviewed the DVDs and it was discovered that one of the links to contact AA was broken and either needed to be fixed or changed to our current URL.

After lunch we had more Area Highlights East Central, Eastern Canada, and Southwest Regions presented. **ANOTHER SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE** Eric P the Delegate from Area 90 Northwest Quebec spoke no English really. I had had a conversation with him earlier for which he called one of the other Canadian Delegates to interpret. Eric got up and delivered his entire Highlight talk in English. Yes, he struggled and the strain was evident on his face but he did it and did it within the two minute time frame. Many of the English speakers had trouble with the time limit. His passion, diligence and care were an example to everyone and we all knew it.

Later in the afternoon we heard the Board reports

First was the General Service Board report delivered by Michelle Grinberg. She did express her regret that the decision to proceed with the Manuscript Litigation had caused so much pain within the fellowship and that she heard and understood the concerns. She also stated that the decision was not made lightly and that it seemed like the right decision when faced with the information they had at the time.

Next was the AAWS Board report from Rich P which also covered the litigation and went into the timeline in a little more detail than Michelle had.

Third up was the Grapevine Board report which happily stated that the Grapevine continues to hold in the Black, Subscriptions are up and expenses are down.

Last we heard from David Morris the GSB Treasurer regarding our finances with many slides and graphs all of which show a fairly positive outlook so we should stay happily broke but solvent for now.

Monday night closed with the last of the Area Highlights. Pacific Region,, West Central, and Western Canada.

Tuesday

9:00 am back in the Committee room – Our work pretty much done we discussed additional items. I spoke about an idea I have had to request participation from the Area Corrections Chairs in providing sets of specific data to the General Service Office Corrections Desk to quantify where we are carrying the message into facilities and where we can focus future energy. Part of this idea will be implemented in the form of a survey and included in the Corrections Binder possibly later this year.

We also discussed new restrictions on paper, bindings and ink especially in privately run prisons, and creating a new letter to Corrections Professionals to raise awareness of prerelease / BTG Volunteers.

At the end of the session we elected the Corrections Chair and Alternate Chair for the 69th General Service Conference. I was elected as Chair and Lisa W from Mississippi was elected Alt Chair.

There were presentations in the afternoon about Service in AA on the individual level, the Group Conscience and Getting the message out .

Tuesday wrapped up with the NE Region, the Eastern Canada Region and the SE Region going out for Ice Cream at Ellen's Stardust Diner.

Wednesday

Trip to GSO. Through the subway system from 50th St to 116th St and walk in rain. DUCKS

I did the tour of the GSO and was impressed with the layout and structure of our Corporate Office.

While at GSO I purchased 3 Big Books translated to Punjabi, one of the languages of India. One I had signed by the Delegates and Trustee of the Northeast Region which I gave to our visitor from India,

Valley K. the other two I asked Valley to sign and I now commend one to Wyatt W and our archives. The third has a place on my bookshelf in case I ever learn Punjabi.

Wednesday afternoon began with Trustee selection for Eastern Canada and Pacific Region. The new Trustees are Jan Lembke for Eastern Canada and Cathi Fowler for Pacific Region. Each will serve as Trustee for 4 years. After the elections we had another traditions panel and discussion on Technology, Attraction, and Inclusion. I want to share some of the points I found that resonated with me. 1) Bob and Bill used the cutting edge of technology of their time. We still have papyrus today we just don't use it. 2) Traditions are not there to protect me from you. They are there to protect you from me and me from myself. 3) A. A. Business model: Income = Newcomers and Profit = My Sobriety. All of these reminded me as we headed into the Committee Reports that Faith replaces Fear at ALL levels.

The Committee reports began in earnest Wednesday night and continued until 11:15pm on Friday night. I have with me each report and how the vote went in each recommendation for anyone interested. For the purpose of this report I will just touch on some highlights. Just for understanding the Conference body ONLY votes on Committee RECOMMENDATIONS. Most of the recommendations passed with substantial unanimity after some discussion.

Policy & Admissions Recommended that 2 consultants from Impact Collaborative be admitted to the 68th General Service Conference on Thursday & Friday as observers. This firm is contracted by the GSB to conduct a communications audit. Passed 110 No 22

Finance Committee Recommended the maximum individual contribution to GSO be increased from \$3000.00 to \$5000.00 this passed 118 to 13

Trustees Committee Recommended the slate of Trustees, this passed after lengthy discussion 121 to 12 and then the slate of officers to the GSB which also passed 127 to 9. This committee took no action on the requests A) to censure the General Service Board or B) to reorganize the Board. As I'm sure you can imagine there was considerable discussion on these topics. Remember my dinner with Moe from Louisiana on Saturday Night? Moe, who had so passionately stated the case for censuring the Board at a minimum stood up and with equal passion spoke to why the committee agreed that censure and reorganization were not recommended.

Literature Committee Recommended an end note to chapter 7 of the Big Book "Working with Others" That qualified the paragraph on page 102 and spoke to safety measures. I did speak against this proposal. Not because it was an addition or change to the first 164 but because it would change the meaning of this paragraph. "Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed". My statement in position was that If I am to be concerned with the watering down of AA's message – My fingerprints should not be on the hose.

There were 8 floor actions Friday night 4 of which the conference declined to consider and 1 was withdrawn leaving 3. 1) a revision to "Members of the Clergy ask about AA" which will now include more ways people can reach us. PASSED 2) Area Service highlights be published in their entirety. PASSED 3) The conference affirm the delegated authority of the GSB and operating Corporations to protect the intellectual property of AA. REJECTED.

Again, I extend to you my total gratitude for allowing me this experience. To see how we come together in fellowship and forward the movement of AA.

Don Strachan
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