

**61st GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE
DELEGATE REPORT BA CK
2011**

Sunday May 8, 2011: On my way home, I was reflecting about Conference week. I left Honolulu the evening of April 28th and arrived in Newark the next day April 29th about mid-day. By the time I arrived at the hotel where the Conference was to be held, there was time for a stop at the corner market for fresh fruit, cookies, and yogurt for the room, a quick meal, and then off to bed. The next morning, the Pacific Region Delegates and their guests met for a guided bus tour of A.A. historical sights, such as Bill and Lois' house on Clinton Street in Brooklyn and the building that used to be Towns Hospital. George D, past Delegate, past trustee, and past General Service Office manager was our tour guide. David E., past Hawaii Area Delegate and past General Service Trustee joined us. What a pleasant surprise it was to see him. Because David and his wife Tanya, also a past Hawaii Area Delegate, now live in Massachusetts, I hadn't seen them for a while. I wish Tanya had been able to come also. A funny thing happened while on the tour: the bus driver dropped us off across the street from what used to be Towns Hospital. We considered the building with awe given its place in the history of A.A. A narrative about our co-founder's several stays at the hospital and his spiritual awakening that took place there ensued, pictures were taken, and then we were ready to leave, but the bus had disappeared! After what seemed like a really long time (after all we are not a patient lot!), cell phones came out in attempts to reach the bus driver. At some length and much to our relief, the bus finally reappeared. The driver could not find any space at any curb to wait for us, so he had to keep driving and had trouble getting back to us. N.Y.C. is not an easy town in which to drive. And forget trying to park a bus to wait for a bunch of alcoholics while they behold a small yellow brick house.

Following the bus tour and another quick meal, I attended the Remote Communities Workshop, where I was a presenter. We talked about three aspects of what constitutes being a remote community: geography, language, and culture. In varying degrees, Hawaii qualifies in all three categories. Think of islands of people separated by fundamental differences yet bound by one common purpose. I would really like our standing committees to bear this aspect of our Hawaiian society and our Fellowship in mind when carrying on our committee work.

Some preliminary information: The conference is made up of 134 voting members, including the 93 area delegates of the US and Canada, the 21 trustees (7 class A & 14 class B), 6 non-trustee directors, and 15 GSO staff. In addition, there were 4 observers, 2 from Great Britain and 2 from Peru. During the conference, each delegate is assigned to a conference committee where the agenda items, some of which we discussed in April at the Inform-the-Delegate Assembly, were considered. Each committee then reports to the Conference as a whole the outcome of its deliberations in the form of recommendations or additional committee considerations. The Conference members then discuss each recommendation before accepting or declining to accept the recommendation. Additional committee considerations are not debated and are a way of reporting to the Conference

items that need further refinement or items on which the conference committee chose to take no action. For example, the Conference Committee on Literature considered a request to reconsider the 2010 Conference action to develop a piece of literature on spirituality. After careful consideration, the committee decided to take no action, effectively eliminating the reconsideration motion from further discussion. Remember that the 2010 Conference had already approved the new piece of literature. After each of the committee reports is heard, floor actions submitted during the conference are heard, possibly debated, and possibly voted on.

Sunday May 1, 2011: The first official day of the Conference. The theme of the Conference is “We are Responsible for A.A.’s Future – Let it Begin With Us.” During the opening remarks, we were cautioned to avoid distractions and not to water down the program of A.A. Our focus must always remain on our primary purpose and remember that before we came to A.A., we came to humility and despair. Following the opening, we broke up into our conference committees and met with our joint trustee committees, if we had one. I was assigned to Treatment Facilities/Special Needs/Accessibilities. That evening, there was a dinner and a 5-speaker A.A. meeting. Please note that each speaker had ten minutes and was timed. No exceptions to the 10-minute limit were requested or granted. In fact, each time at the mic during the whole of the Conference was timed, no exclusions!

After the Sunday night session, I returned to the room was asked by my roommate what I thought about the news. I said, “What news?” That’s when I heard about the death of Osama Bin Laden. To be in N.Y.C. when this notable even took place was a unique experience. Publicly, the city that was most effected by the 9/11 tragedy was elated over its perpetrator’s passing. I mention this event, not to bring up an outside issue but to illustrate the isolation from the outside world of the Conference members.

Monday and Tuesday May 2 and 3, 2011: Monday and Tuesday were filled with conference committee meetings, highlights from each of the areas’ Panel 61 Delegates and presentations. So this is how each of my days went: Up in the morning (please remember the 6-hour time difference and my life-long dislike of getting up before 9 AM), get ready, get to the assigned room by 9:00 AM; noon - or there abouts - break for lunch and hopefully find time to lay down for 10 minutes; 1:15 return to assigned place for afternoon agenda; 6:00 PM break for dinner, 7-7:15 PM return for evening sessions; maybe by 10:30 PM we would be done for the day. When the Conference started, I was exhausted by the long flight and an abrupt time change. After three days I was even more fatigued, so imagine my surprise when I heard someone say on Tuesday night that “tomorrow the conference begins.” I did not understand that statement and wondered what did she think we’d been doing for the last 3 days, but I was about to find out.

Wednesday May 4, 2011: A change of pace, we started the day with the Workshop on “How to Increase Participation in A.A. – Striving for Self-Support In All Our Affairs.” The sessions were started with a quote from Concept XII, Warranty Two: “Our attitude toward the giving of time when compared with our attitude toward the giving of money

presents an interesting contrast.” During the discussion about the benefits of A.A. service, members shared that:

- ❖ We can be useful as well as ornamental.
- ❖ Service makes A.A. possible.
- ❖ It is in A.A. that we move from our old way of life to a new way of life, that we move away from being self-oriented to a life of service.
- ❖ We learn the three T’s: time, treasure, and talent.
- ❖ And my personal favorite: Each group is autonomous, not independent.

When asked how we can encourage participation in A.A., the resounding answer is to have fun! Use active and aggressive attraction. Smile! Take our program of recovery and survival very seriously, but always remember Rule 62, never take yourself too damn seriously! That reminder came just in time because Wednesday afternoon, the Conference Committee Reports began - the so-called “real work” of the Conference process.

Thursday May 5, 2011: On one of my short walks, I noticed numerous policemen lining one side of the street and several police cars and other vehicles, all with lights flashing. I didn’t know what was up until I heard later in the day that President Obama was in the city and was going to visit the memorial to the fallen fireman of Company 54, thirteen of whom lost their lives in 9/11. The memorial site is only 3 blocks from the Conference site.

Meanwhile, back at the Conference, we spent from 9 AM to about 5:30 PM on Committee Reports and discussions. Some committee reports took minutes, while others took several hours and were hotly – I mean lovingly - debated. During one of these debates, the conference members started to become a little impatient (Did I mention that we are not a patient lot?) and irritated with some uncool remarks made by one of the Delegates. In response, another Delegate went to the mic and said, “We are all adults here. We know that Andy Griffith is not really mayor of Mayberry!” Of course, some of us were shocked to hear this truth. After the rigorously honest Delegate sat down and in one of those uncanny moments of silence, we heard someone in the back of the room whistle the theme song for the Andy Griffith Show. It was a great tension breaker! Thursday evening, we had a presentation and discussion on Alcoholics Anonymous in a Digital Age. I was not aware that online meetings can be registered with GSO and that there is an online Intergroup. One of the conclusions of our discussion is that the Internet can be a unifying force. Following the presentation and discussion, the Conference returned to – what else - Committee reports and discussion.

Friday May 6, 2011: Committee reports and discussions continued. For a while it looked as if, the official business of the Conference might set a record and finish according to the agenda, which had us concluding business at 3 PM. Not happening! I think we did finish around 6 PM and then had the floor actions to consider. Floor actions can be submitted at any time during the week but are not heard until all Committee reports and discussions are finished. We had only five Floor Actions this year. Of those,

one was withdrawn and one was ruled out of order. For the three remaining, the final vote was taken about 7:10 PM. Following the conclusion of official business, we heard the Panel 60 Delegates' farewells. I'd like to say a word about the emotional side of the Conference: by the end of the week we are all physically and emotionally spent. You all know that I am not given to frequent bouts of emotionalism (right!?), but the farewells really got to me. One of the reasons that the Conference members form such a strong bond is that those particular people with those exact experiences will never take place again. We bond because we have been in the trenches together and survived together. We also bond because we have each been honored and entrusted by you, the members of A.A., to carry out the business of A.A. The outcome of the business of the 61st GSC is binding on the General Service Board until the 62nd GSC and so on.

61st General Service Advisory Actions: (Bold sections refer to items discussed at our Inform-the-Delegate Assembly in April. This is not a complete list of Advisory Actions. For the complete list, please request from the Delegate via our area e-mail. The complete list will also be available in the Final Conference Report that will be available during the summer.)

Floor Action:

It was recommended that:

1. The 61st General Service Conference express its appreciation and gratitude for the French-language magazine "La Vigne," and the value it has for French-speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the respect "La Vigne" has shown for the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. (*"La Vigne" is NOT published by The Grapevine yet donates all proceeds to A.A.*)

Cooperation With The Professional Community (CPC):

No recommendations. All agenda items were either sent back to the trustees for further review or there was no action taken.

Corrections:

It was recommended that:

2. **(Summary) Replace certain text in the pamphlet "A.A. in Correctional Facilities" be changed to make reference to Step meetings, Tradition meetings, and Big Book studies as possible meeting formats.**

Finance:

It was recommended that:

3. An additional blank pie chart be added to the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” suggesting that each group has the autonomy to have its own distribution split.

Other Finance Committee Agenda Items were sent back to the trustees or there was no action.

Grapevine:

It was recommended that:

4. **(Verbatim) In the spirit of being self-supporting while also protecting our Traditions of attraction, anonymity, and non-affiliation, A.A. Grapevine be permitted to utilize digital channels and current (commissionable) support and distribution technologies, such as, but not limited to, smart phones, tablets, e-readers, applications and commissioned online stores for the sale and distribution of magazine, books and products. The committee requests that the Board ensure that all contracts protect our Traditions, with the option to discontinue any and all contracts at any time. The Committee requests that a status and financial report be submitted to the 2012 Grapevine Conference Committee. (Discussion on this item went on for over two hours and several friendly amendments. The item was accepted 10/9/16. A motion to reconsider failed)**
5. (Summary and comments.) The Committee reviewed a request on how best to support the Grapevine magazine. (The Conference made it quite clear that the Fellowship as a whole values the Grapevine Magazine but is unhappy with the Grapevine, Inc.’s financial performance.) Discussion on this went on for one and one-half hours and passed unanimously.
6. Editorial revisions made to the pamphlet “The A.A. Grapevine and La Vina: Our Meetings in Print” were approved.

Literature:

It was recommended that:

7. The revised pamphlet “The A.A. Member – Medications and Other Drugs be approved.
8. **The trustees’ Literature Committee continue to develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who**

are sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. The Committee expressed support for the trustees' efforts to develop a pamphlet which reflects a wide range of spiritual experiences of A.A. members and asked that a draft pamphlet or progress report be brought to the 2012 Conference Committee on Literature for consideration. (Carried 95/28, motion to reconsider failed.)

9. Certain wording in the pamphlet "When you are a G.S.R." was expanded to be more historically accurate.

Policy and Admissions:

The four observers, two from Peru and two from Great Britain were admitted. Two Alternate Area Delegates whose Delegates could not attend were seated. Dates for the 64th G.S. C. were set.

10. The General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan formulated by the Conference Inventory Planning Committee.
11. **Procedures for the submission of Concept V minority appeals to the General Service Conference were established.** (For further information, please see your Delegate or wait for the Final Conference Report to be released sometime during the summer.)

Public Information:

It was recommended that:

12. The 2011 A.A. Membership Survey be conducted by area on a random basis as was done in the 2007 A.A. Membership Survey.
13. **An amended "Policy on Actors Portraying A.A. members or Potential A.A. Members in Videos Produced by the General Service Board or its Affiliates was approved. The policy defines "video," and "potential A.A. member." A copy of this policy shall be given to all entities participating in the production of a video prior to commencement of production. The background documentation for the policy will always be distributed with the policy. (For complete text, see your Delegate or wait for the Final Conference Report.)**
14. New Spanish-language P.S.A be developed.
15. **The pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" be revised.**
16. The revised "The A.A. Fact File" be approved.

17. **The section titled “How You Can Find A.A. in Your Town” in “A.A. At a Glance” be changed to “How To Find A.A.,” and that that section be revised.**

Report and Charter:

It was recommended that:

18. Text will be added to *The A.A. Service Manual* in Chapter Nine regarding trustees emeriti.
19. *The A.A. Service Manual* will be revised in several places, notably in the section titled “Inactive Service Workers.” The current text on page S37 was revised, and text was added on pages S28 and S33 specifically to address inactive G.S.R.’s and inactive D.C.M.’s.
 - a. **NOTE: At our Inform-the-Delegate Assembly, we heard a presentation of the Agenda Item to consider a request to “address and remedy the inconsistencies between the Current Charter and the Original Charter as found in *The A.A. Service Manual*. The Report and Charter Conference Committee made a recommendation in this regard to accept the differences but then withdrew the recommendation and had the request sent back to the trustees’. A GSB trustee brought a similar floor action, which failed 24/98. The inconsistencies have to do with undocumented changes that were made prior to 1988.**

Treatment Facilities/Special Needs/Accessibilities:

It was recommended that:

20. The recovery pamphlet “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs” be approved.
21. The name of the committee be changed to the Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs//Accessibilities and that these changes be reflected in the committee’s Composition, Scope and Procedure.
22. The title of the pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Facilities be changed to “A.A. in Treatment Settings” and that the term “treatment facilities” be replaced with a more appropriate reference such as “Treatment Committees” or “treatment settings” wherever it appears in the pamphlet.

Agenda:

It was recommended that:

23. The theme for the 2012 General Service Conference be: “Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age”

24. The following be presentation/discussion topics for the 2012 General Service Conference:

- a. Carrying the A.A. Message
 1. Still Our Primary Service
 2. Social Web Sites
 3. Young People in A.A.
 4. Importance of Sponsorship
- b. Change – Essential to A.A.'s Growth
 1. Service: Our Third Legacy
 2. Spirit of Rotation
 3. Diversity – Let's Keep the Doors Open for Any Who May Suffer from Alcoholism
 4. Archives – Where the Past Meets the Present

25. The following be the workshop topic for the 2012 General Service Conference:
“Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare.”

At the April assembly earlier this year, I reported on the unaudited 2010 financial statements for A.A.W.S., the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. and the General Service Board. During Conference week, we received audited financial statements for 2010. There were substantially no changes. I do have the results here if you would like to see them. As I previously reported, the Grapevine magazine and La Vina have reported substantial losses in recent years and are heavily into the Reserve Fund. It was made abundantly clear, during the Conference, that the Fellowship is not at all pleased with the current financial trend. There is a new Executive Editor/Publisher, and we have urged greater oversight by the Chairman of the Board, so we expect changes made that will not degrade the magazines yet not drain finances. The new digital version of Grapevine magazine is one project that is intended to achieve great things both fiscally and spiritually. We would do well to remember that when it comes to the Grapevine magazines and products and all of our other literature that our literature does not carry the message, we, the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, must do that.

There was also much talk about the e-version of the Big Book. The first release should be rolled out in October this year. I will keep you posted as I have more information.

Finally, I cannot stress enough how much the focus of all the endeavors of the Conference is on the alcoholic who has not yet found us. Everything, including revision of existing literature and development of new literature, is aimed at the alcoholic who still suffers. The Conference is vital to A.A. as a whole and, as such, is vital to us. I encourage each of you to bring your opinions on A.A. matters, questions and considerations to the Area Committee. Let's try to bring questions on concerns we have because they may benefit other areas having the same concerns. We are responsible for A.A.'s future, and it does begin with us.

If you would like a full copy of this report or any other information that was not reported on here today, please email your requests to me at delegate@area17aa.org.

Respectfully submitted in love & service,

Linda McD

Delegate Panel 61, Area 17

DRAFT