

## 2015 International Convention – 80 Years – Happy, Joyous and Free

### Delegate Report

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Thank you all for allowing me to represent Area 17 at the 2015 International Convention, held July 2 – 5 in Atlanta, Georgia. I arrived on Wednesday afternoon, a bit jet lagged, and didn't realize at first that the large group of happy, joyous and rowdy lime-green greeters in the Atlanta airport were actually a small part of over 5,000 volunteers extending a warm welcome to the convention and the celebration of AA's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

There were many heartfelt, chicken-skin inducing experiences throughout the entire weekend. Just being in the presence of over 57,000 AA members, family and friends with their attitude of gratitude and passion for living was infectious. The good-will, tolerance of long lines and crowds and enthusiasm filled me with gratitude for AA and the life it has given me. Much like past Internationals and PRAASAs, there is just something in the air when you put a large number of us together. It touches my heart.

Hawaii was well represented. I saw many of us walking around the convention center, in hotel lobbies, and, of course, at the Pacific Region Hospitality Suite. I visited it on several occasions and was able to extend our Aloha to folks from the Pacific Region I know from PRAASA, the conference and Hawaii conventions as well as visitors from around the world. Our Hawaii exhibit, put together by Mary N., DCM 10, was amazing. (Check out the Mynah Bird for pictures of the display.) Pictures of meeting locations across the state were eye openers for many visitors. Meetings on the beach? How lucky are we, we live in Hawaii? Several folks from Hawaii were speakers and a large group of us sat together at the big meetings in the Georgia Dome.

I attended the delegate/past delegate/trustee/past trustee luncheon and was able to talk story with many I had met and make new friends. Sharing solutions to challenges that these experienced trusted services have faced was extremely valuable.

The convention officially opened Friday evening at the Georgia Dome. Terry Bedient, Class A Trustee (nonalcoholic) chair of General Service Board got us started. Following that, there was a parade of flags from around the world, 94 in all. Each flag was carried by an AA member from that area. Leading the parade was an Eagle Staff carried by an AA member from the Cherokee Nation, representing all of our Native American/First Nation members. What a great way to start the convention – recognizing the worldwide membership, a reminder that wherever I may travel, AA is there for me.

The diversity of AA was represented throughout the weekend –

- In the AA speakers – a deaf member, Michael B., shared his story in American Sign Language (ASL) with audio translation.
- Over 250 meetings were available in twelve languages -French, Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese, Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Finnish, Lithuanian, Swedish and ASL.

Saturday evening was time for the Oldtimers Meeting. Chaired by Phyllis H., GSO's general manager, it featured twelve members (drawn from a hat of over 100 names of members with over 50 years of sobriety) sharing their experience, strength and hope. A common theme in their shares was their gratitude for the life they have today as a

result of working the steps, following the traditions and living the principles of the AA program.

Sunday morning featured speakers from Connecticut, Georgia and British Columbia. Jason S., the speaker from Georgia, is currently an inmate at the Georgia Correctional system and had been cleared to attend the convention accompanied by corrections security personnel. Sober for many years behind bars, he showed the benefit of our corrections work and taking meetings into jails and prisons. As I serve on the Corrections committee at the GSC, I was particularly moved and interested.

As always, when I attend events on behalf of Area 17, I enjoying sharing with you “what I saw, what I heard and what I felt.”

- What I Saw
  - Over 57,000 happy, joyous and free AA members and guests celebrating AA's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, paying tribute to our founders and reaping the benefits of following our steps and traditions.
  - Over 5,000 volunteers – both local and from 33 countries – answering questions, giving directions and sharing with members. Volunteers and members were in good cheer, but I believe the volunteers were having just as much, if not more fun than the rest of us.
- What I Heard
  - Excited, happy voices in hotel lobbies, shuttle buses, meeting rooms, cafes, etc. Love and tolerance for delays and need for revising plans due to weather, crowds, etc.
  - The language of the heart allowing those who didn't speak the others' language to communicate their thanks.
- What I Felt
  - The collective energy of so many sober alcoholics living their lives based on the steps, traditions and principles of AA. What a peaceful, yet energizing experience it was for me.

Mahalo for allowing me to serve.

Cheryl N., Delegate

Area 17, Panel 65