
PRAASA Report 2023

Jeannie G., Chair

Hawaii Area 17 / Panel 73

March 3 - 5, 2023

Aloha everyone, my name is Jeannie and I am an alcoholic and serve as your Hawaii Area 17 Chair. One of the responsibilities as your Chair is to attend the Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA) annually and report back to the area body. Before I move on to my report I want to share with you the quiet gratitude I felt being in the presence of my alcoholic friends whom I love dearly!

Since I am a bit older, I like to arrive a day earlier, self-funded of course, so I can be rested. PRAASA can be a grueling schedule and if you are like me, you want to take advantage of every minute.

I was grateful I arrived early on Wednesday, otherwise, I might not have made it at all. The morning after I arrived, Kona Hospital called to say that a dear artist friend and longtime painting partner of mine was coding and I was his emergency contact. Luckily he was revived, but in terrible condition, and because he had no living relatives, DNR, or will, I agreed to be his medical surrogate. To my disbelief, he coded again a short time later and I found myself in an unfortunate situation and having to make a difficult decision. He died shortly thereafter. It broke my heart and I must admit I was a lovely mess but I was so grateful to have the support of a few close AA friends who walked with me through this tragic event. I was truly blessed.

As many of you know I lost four immediate family members last panel, either the day before, the day of, or the day after an assembly or committee meeting. It was and always has been the fellowship that has walked with me throughout my years in AA, in good times and bad. I am never alone and at PRAASA I was surrounded by 46 other members from Hawaii and sixteen other areas from the Pacific Region for a total of 1519 members present! Definitely not alone!

So, thankfully I was able to stay through PRAASA. I didn't miss a thing, took notes, spent my free time in the company of my friends, and went out of my way to make new friends, which is one of the highlights of any AA event. When I returned home, I had the sole responsibility to lay my friend to rest, and when it finally came time to sit quietly, review my notes, and write this PRAASA report, I realized that I was at PRAASA in spirit but perhaps not fully present. In saying this, I have done my best to share what I felt, heard, and saw.

So here goes. As many of you may have already heard, our Delegate Tommy G., represented us well. He gave a great report on the pamphlet "A Member's Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous". I felt like his proud older sister, adjusting his tie, and sharing words of encouragement before he took the stage because that's what we do, right? He looked so dapper in a suit, a sight we don't often get to see in Hawaii.

Deborah L, our Alternate Chair also gave an amazing report on Seniors In Sobriety – Are we losing knowledge, history, and connection? She shared her experience with the elders in her aa community so much so that at one point her report brought tears to my eyes. She also represented our membership beautifully.

Deborah S, our Alt Delegate and my travel roomie, well she served throughout the event, a lot. She woke up early, quietly got ready, crept out of our room, and went about her duties, either in registration or hospitality. I am sure she did a great job at registration and was a beautiful hostess in hospitality, a lovely representative of Hawaii, that she is.

Here are some of the many topics:

Safety in AA:

- Gina B our very own Archive Chair went to the mic and talked about how important safety in AA is but only after causing many members to laugh out loud several times. Love her sense of humor. She did cause a little bit of a ruckus but you can talk to her about that one.
- Speaking of safety: a presenter shared an experience she had about safety relating to singleness of purpose. When she was 6 months sober, a regular member stood at the podium talking about shooting heroin in his neck, he spoke with authority as he wagged his finger to the group saying we don't need a singleness of purpose here. She was grateful she had some time but she couldn't help but think, "what if I was a newcomer?"
- The Safety Card is a tool, our literature and pamphlets are all tools that can be used but it ultimately comes down to the groups and their members. Groups can develop guidelines and safety procedures for their meetings, on how to address safety issues before they arise. Members and groups have a responsibility to embrace our 12 traditions preserving our common welfare and primary purpose so newcomers have a safe place to come when they want to stop drinking.
- Another member representing Young People in AA said they created a Safety Code of Conduct for their conferences. What a great idea!

Inclusivity: Should we "de-genderize" our literature? Will it help with inclusivity?

- We have archives that preserve our historical literature and allow history to be accessible.
- There was a lot of talk about inclusivity and changing pronouns, etcetera in the Big Book. One member remarked, "let's leave the big book alone, the first 164 pages, and just change our pamphlets; the cost to degenderize would be minimal."
- We need to be as inclusive as possible, but we must also be careful that the quest for inclusivity does not cause us to end up being exclusive.

Big Book plain language edition:

- Surprisingly there was still talk on the plain language translation of the Big Book which is moving forward. Why so controversial? So many members wanted a big book that is relatable. 17% of those with less than a high school diploma are unable to read and comprehend our basic texts and this disproportionately affects persons in custody and those in remote communities who oftentimes don't have the benefit of face-to-face reading of the big book with another member.
- Other publishers outside of Alcoholics Anonymous have already created study guides, manuals, and other literature that our fellowship has no way of monitoring to ensure it captures the language of the heart.
- One of our founders, Dr. Bob, requested the Akron pamphlets be produced in an effort to ensure people understood our program in simple terms. I have always been curious about those pamphlets so I ordered them but unfortunately, they did not arrive in time for this assembly. I too have worked with two members who struggled with the language in our big book. We were fortunate because I could meet face to face and explain the meaning of words and phrases.
- It was said that agenda items continue to be submitted asking to stop work on this project. I found that to be disheartening.

The Hispanic Community:

- They were alive and well at PRAASA as usual and they really pull at my heartstrings, especially the women alcoholics. Hispanic women do not tend to stay in the rooms of AA. I remember at past PRAASAs the emotional impact these women had when sharing their personal struggles starting women's meetings and not feeling safe in mixed meetings. Those struggles continue to exist.
- Their community also expressed a need for literature written in Spanish rather than created in English and then translated into Spanish.
- I remember a gentleman a few years ago speaking about the 3rd edition of the Spanish Big Book and explaining that the English-to-Spanish translation sometimes translates differently. He gave some examples which were quite comical but in doing so they gave us a clear picture that what he was saying was true and something that should be addressed by producing a 4th edition Spanish Big Book. I hope that was the direction they took for the 4th edition. I need to do some research to find out.

Chair/Alt Chair Roundtable:

- What kept reminding me at the round table is how different Hawaii is compared to other places. Yes, other areas are considered remote communities like ours, but the difference between us and other areas is that we are only a short plane ride away to attend assemblies and committee meetings.
- Many areas are a 5-hour car ride and/or travel in treacherous weather conditions and areas so remote that flying is not an easy, safe, or even an option.
- We are also tiny compared to many other areas in terms of attendees at our events, with us at 100-125 and many at 800, and much more.
- What I found interesting was the talk of the influx of technology, how in many cases long-standing service positions for many members were no longer needed, and what was created was a handful of highly specialized positions for their members and in many cases services were farmed out at a high cost.
- I left the meetings feeling as though we are different and yet I feel so grateful to live in Hawaii and be a part of the Hawaiian culture in AA, where fellowshiping, unity, breaking bread together, serving together side by side, sharing rides, and opening up our homes to those we may not have gotten to know is an opportunity not to be missed. The desire to foster unity runs deep in our islands and is a vital aspect that our islands embrace and are not willing to give up.

Online vs In-Person: Are we serving the newcomer?:

- As technology advances and devices become more affordable we see an uptick across the board in online AA meetings. Society in general is estimated that some 85% of Americans own smartphones.
- Technology now allows groups to make online contributions to our various entities. It also gives us access to our groups, district, and area calendars. All of these technological advances help us stay connected to the program.

Should we include A.A. literature on the sponsorship of persons in custody by outside members?

- I liked this answer: So they can feel as free on the inside as we do on the outside. Agreed!

Closing Meetings at the International Convention:

- Results of a member survey on whether we should change the closing at the International Conference which currently closes with the Lord's Prayer. The result was 51% voted for the Lord's Prayer.
- Members were asked what they would want to close with.
 - #1 - Serenity Prayer
 - #2 - Responsibility Statement
 - #3 - Lord's Prayer
 - #4 - a private moment of silence
 - #5 - Declaration of Unity
 - #6 - 3rd Step Prayer
 - #7 - 7th Step Prayer
- Then there were a couple of different suggestions like singing Kumbaya and the "We" version of the Serenity Prayer.

Who was missing from PRAASA?:

- I noticed we did not see or hear from our members from Japan, which we very much did at our past PRAASAs. I missed hearing their heartfelt shares and the difficulties they incur.

Toward the end of Saturday, there was some quiet talk about the resignation of one of our Class A, non-alcoholic trustees resigning from the General Service Board. My first thought and always my go-to is Concept 3 the "Right of Decision", trusting our trusted servants and also not falling into contempt prior to investigation.

At the "Past Trustee Panel Presentations", they were asked to share what advice they would give to GSRs. Some did just that but others shared their thoughts and opinions on the trustee's resignation. Our Delegates, while attending the conference, will ask questions and hopefully get a clearer picture of what may have happened, and potentially more will be revealed.

We will get through this, we have been through many trials since the days of our Founding Fathers and I have faith that we will get through these. I rest assured when I remember what my dear friend Donna always reminds me, "That all will be well if I just leave room for my Higher Power". So in this matter, my humble opinion is that any entity in Alcoholics Anonymous will do well to follow the simple phrase, in our Big Book: trust God, clean house, and help others.

We serve the fellowship, our common welfare comes first and the individual comes a close second. The struggles our General Service Board has encountered can be resolved through active listening, ego shedding, peaceful contemplation, loving conversation, and an invitation to our Higher Power to be present at all times. We will not only survive but also come out stronger.

Some things I heard:

- I can be a part of this thing if I do the work!
- When one alcoholic relates to another, we recover.
- Traditions remove confusion.
- We cannot leave this work to our parents.
- Good and bad decisions are better than decisions made alone. The problem is the first step to the solution. Having problems is how we learn to work toward a solution.
- Had major literature sales but the costs were higher to produce so they actually lost money.
- The cost of goods on the budget for 2023 is 50% higher. April 3rd prices will go up to offset the increase in the cost of producing our literature.

Comments from Past Trustees:

- The fellowship needs to give direction to the Grapevine as to what we want.
- My first piece of advice to GSRs, make friends. Grapevine daily quote March 5th, 2023 from the Cradle to the Grave: there is always something wrong somewhere, something to rob us of enjoying perfection, something to bother us. When we put one thing right, another will surely go wrong sooner or later, so it behooves us to enjoy every minute we can for every minute we lost is gone forever.
- GSRs, claim your time in your home group to give your report. The secretary is not your boss. You are fellow officers.
- Please do not use acronyms when you're talking about service. Such as, oh you know the GSRs and the DCMs were on H&I and then they went to CPC but now they're on PI.
- Please do not use area numbers to tell us where you're from. Why do I have to memorize the physical locations of 93 different areas and when I tell you I'm from San Diego, why can't you just tell me you're from Nevada instead of Area 42
- As a chair, he was advised to take off his business hat and put on his spiritual hat.
- As a chairperson, I discovered that the chairperson's job is to facilitate our collective 11th step, to discern knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- When you are asked to do something and you can do it, you have to do it. So here I am. *So here I am.*
- Be familiar with our traditions. That's what holds us together. Be familiar with Tradition 2, tradition, Tradition 9, the 7th paragraph, and the third from the end, particularly for leaders.
- Read Concept 2 next to the last paragraph, Concept 3 next to the last paragraph, and Concept 9 on leadership. Definitely, Concept 9 if you are a leader or if you're going to elect a leader.
- General service is not a substitute for recovery. In fact, you absolutely need a spiritual foundation in order to endure our long discussions on commas and periods.
- AA is not exactly a hotbed of good mental health. We are like a powder keg and someone is always running around with matches.
- Rationalization is giving a socially acceptable reason for socially unacceptable behavior and socially unacceptable behavior is just another form of insanity. I'm either seeking God or am I playing God.
- I am easier led by example than ordered to obey.
- General service is not for everyone. Find your gift. Be a member first.

After PRAASA there are about 6 of us staying until Monday. We had fun walking around town looking for somewhere to eat only to end up back at the hotel where we enjoyed a great meal together. Of course one of our younger members, Adriana, suggested we pile into cars and head to the Hermosa Beach Alano Club for an incredibly crowded, standing-room-only young people's meeting. That was great and of course, we had to hit In & Out Burgers on the way home!

In conclusion, it was suggested to me at one of my first PRAASAs, to sit next to someone I don't know and strike up a conversation, and share meals with members I don't know. As uncomfortable as it is for me, I did just that and it always proves to be a rewarding experience. As I said at the beginning of this report, fellowshipping is one of my favorite highlights of this event or any event. We are relational beings and relationships create unity. I also realize how much AA is a part of me, it's where I get my breath, my hope, my unconditional love, and purpose, and for that, I am truly grateful.

It is an honor and a pleasure to serve by your side, throughout this panel, Panel 73!

In love and service,
Jeannie G
Hawaii Area 17 Chair