

My name is Anne and I'm an alcoholic

Thank you for being here. Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving Area 31 as your Delegate to the 64th General Service Conference that was held at the Westchester Hilton in Rye, NY April 27 to May 3.

I am having an amazing Round Up

This morning I went to meetings hosted by our Accessibility Committee, our Spanish Speaking members and by District 2. I have been moved to tears, motivated to future action, inspired by what you have shared, by what you bring to Alcoholics Anonymous, by what your service means to me.

I was having an amazing Round Up until about an hour ago...

My goal today is to inspire you to continue and expand your own service to Alcoholics Anonymous by sharing my conference experience to gain a deeper understanding of the conference structure and current work of the General Service Board, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and the AA Grapevine, Inc., a summary of the business conducted at the Conference and some thoughts about what's next...

I arrived in Rye on Friday afternoon, hoping to settle in and relax before the action started.

On Saturday afternoon, rested and full of anticipatory terror, I walked into the "meet and greet" Hospitality Room set up to Welcome conference members – there, the magic of Alcoholics Anonymous and my higher power helped me to see that I was right at home.

The first person that I met, as I filled out a name tag, was Tony J, a panel 64 delegate from Mississippi. Tony looked a lot like I was feeling, and so I did what you've taught me to do and I reached out to say hello. I learned that Tony had flown in an airplane for the first time in his life that day – how far we come, if we are lucky enough to find the rooms of

Alcoholics Anonymous. It was only a few minutes later that I met Roger B, who was here for his third conference. He told me that when he arrived as an alternate delegate to be seated in place of his area's panel 61 delegate three years ago, he spoke no English at all, and here he was making me feel at ease ... wow.

I met my conference buddy Astri, from Western Washington. The delegate "buddy" system is a tradition of the General Service Conference that I really appreciated. Astri and I had communicated before the conference and so finding her there on Saturday was a comfort. We connected many times throughout the week – she always seemed to know when I needed help, there she was; and she knew when I needed space, and she gave me that too.

At the Remote Communities meeting which followed, I had occasion to be grateful once again. Delegates from Alberta / NW Territories, North Western Ontario, British Columbia / Yukon, and Nevada reported on the lengths to which members must go to attend meetings and to participate in service. In addition to geographical barriers, people face cultural and language barriers to participation in AA as well. During a round table discussion that followed the presentations, I shared about the work of our Accessibility Committee to bridge barriers to participation for deaf members in Area 31. I sat with Rob B, Pacific Regional Trustee who was moved to tears after the meeting, when he showed me his first edition big book signed by Jack B and Billie B,

At the Delegates' Only meeting that night, panel 63 (2nd year) delegates shared words of welcome and advice to we 64s. It was our first opportunity to introduce ourselves as conference members. I felt the love and support of all those returning for their second conference, the enthusiasm for the work, and the promise of an exciting week.

It was after ten pm before I made it back to my room and the conference hadn't even begun yet!

Speaking at the 1954 Texas state Convention Bill W. said :
"So since 1951 we have been holding these yearly conferences, to see whether this movement was interested enough, was responsible

enough, felt those services were worthwhile enough, to maintain so long as God will need this society “

Conference registration began At 9:00 Sunday Morning

Shortly before 10, I signed in and armed with my manual for the week, I attended the opening session, the first order of business, after a few words of welcome from Terry Bedient, chair of the General Service Board, was the role call. The name of each of the 132 members of the 64th General Service Conference was announced, someone would stand and say “present” or “ici”. It is a powerful experience and I was overwhelmed by a sense of awe and responsibility. When it was over we stood as one, and applauded ourselves and Cathi C from Southern Indiana, moved as I was by the moment, crossed from her table to mine to share a hug, and I knew I would be ok,

So the 133 voting members of the General Service Conference included 93 delegates (among whom 3 were alternates serving in place of delegates unable to attend), 7 class A (non-alcoholic) trustees, 13 class B (alcoholic) trustees (7 regional trustees, 2 general service trustees, 2 aa grapevine trustees, 1 trustee at large canada, 1 trustee at large us); 2 non-trustee directors of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, 2 non-trustee directors of AA Grapevine, inc and 12 General Service Office staff members, 1 Grapevine Senior Editor, the Chair of the General Service Office and the Editor/Publisher of the AA Grapevine

“We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful....The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution...”

Members of the conference spoke English, Spanish, French, Navajo
We were from small areas and large
A common thread which bound us, of course, is our love for AA

Roberta L., General Service Trustee gave the Keynote Address in which she articulated some of the challenges we of Alcoholics Anonymous face in our efforts to communicate our legacies of recovery, unity, and service in our rapidly changing world. In the end, she said what I hear consistently in Area 31 at meetings, in conversation with members, and at area events – that our primary focus remains, as it ever has been – one alcoholic talking with another.

On Sunday afternoon, the delegates from the Northeast Region – NERDs – came together for the first of two scheduled luncheons of the week. At this one, we heard from delegates whose areas were hoping to host NERAASA 2017. After one round of voting, Area 30, Eastern Massachusetts was chosen.

After lunch, and the first of a series of Presentations on “Living in the Heart of AA”, I attended the joint meeting of my conference committee, Treatment / Special Needs-Accessibility and the Trustees’ Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community / Treatment / Special Needs-Accessibility. This was an opportunity for the delegates to meet and ask questions of the trustees. John Fromson, MD, class A (non-alcoholic) trustee, is the chair of the trustees committee. He and the 6 other members of the trustees committee (3 class A trustees, 3 class B trustees, 1 GV director) shared about their personal experiences related to the work of the committee, including, especially for the Class A trustees, sharing the AA message in their professional communications. These men and women devote so much time and energy to work on behalf of the still-suffering alcoholic...

At the Sunday night AA meeting which followed the opening dinner, as at each of the morning AA meetings during the conference week, I received a regular and much needed dose of reality. It was here more than anywhere else during the conference week, that I felt grounded, I was reminded that I was among family here, that regardless of our paths, we all come from that same place of anxious apartness, desperation, and ultimately hope

Every delegate is assigned to a conference committee – just as we did at our mini conference – I was assigned to TSNAC

On Monday morning the conference committees got to work considering the agenda items put before them. In my committee, the discussion of whether or not to revise the Bridging the Gap Pamphlet to broaden its scope to include the work of corrections committees. In many areas, and at the level of the General Service Conference, the work that our Institutions Committee does is done by two separate committees – a Treatment Committee and a Corrections Committee. For that reason, there was powerful opposition among committee members to expand the scope of the treatment committee literature

On Monday afternoon, we heard reports from the General Service Board and the two subsidiary corporate boards, AAWS and GV. Terry Bedient (class A – non-alcoholic trustee, and chair of the General Service Board) gave a report on the work of the General Service Board that included information and updates worth pausing for a bit to discuss.

Perhaps you recall “the plan” which was introduced as a Trustees Committee agenda item at the 2013 conference. The plan called for the merging of the two corporate boards (AAWS and GV) in an interlocking directorate to address concerns related to communication, unity, and efficiency. I’m sure you also remember that that agenda item never made it out of committee – it was not discussed on the Conference Floor and no Advisory Action passed - the plan was effectively defeated before it was debated by the full conference. However, some of you may recall that at the same time we learned about the proposal for an interlocking directorate (by which trustees would serve as directors on both subsidiary boards), we were also informed about 14 initiatives for changes in practice that were not subject to Conference Approval. At this Conference, in his report on the word of the General Service Board in the past 12 months, Terry reported that the board had agreed that the GSB would address the initiatives related to governance (initiatives 5-8), while “the AAWS board and GV board would work together to address implementation of the remaining initiatives and report progress to the GSB. Also, the board decided to add a 15th initiative with the working title of ‘Serving the Fellowship’. Each trustee was asked for a list of their

five most important questions / issues to be considered in working to better carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.” Two work groups have been appointed to address this initiative through a process of self-assessment and strategic planning, including consideration of these questions:

- 1.what is the mission of the GSB?
- 2.To whom should the GSB be providing services, now and in the future?
- 3.What is valued or needed by those we serve?
- 4.What are the results of the GSB?

The two working groups will continue their work on their original charges, and when that work has been completed, they will come together to deal with a final question

- 1.What is our plan?

Terry also mentioned that our own Bob W, Trustee-at-Large-US serves as “Switzerland” on the trustees Joint Task Force on the Initiatives.

In addition, Terry reported that the 2025 International Convention will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia. (2020 will be in Detroit.)

Our Northeast Regional Trustee, Gary L serves as chair of AAWS, Inc. The AAWS board of directors is composed of two general service trustees, two regional trustees, three non-trustee directors, the General Manager of the General Service Office and the Staff Coordinator of GSO. “The primary purpose of publishing activities and group services provided by AAWS and GSO ... is to support members’ and groups’ Twelfth Step efforts to reach the still-suffering alcoholic.”

Group services – a net total of 1921 new groups in the US and Canada

Website Redesign – “intended to provide visitors with greater ease in navigating the site, more intuitive search functionality, and a more contemporary design”

AAWS on-line store was launched in 2013; at this point, already 40% of literature sales is online

Financial – “over the past few years, the AAWS Finance Committee has centered its focus on self-support through member contributions – continuing to look at ways to help assure that our service structure can

become self-supporting through contributions from AA members and groups.

Publishing –

One piece of big news is digital publishing – in Dec 2013 the fourth edition of Alcoholics Anonymous became available as an ebook available on Apple, Barnes & Noble and Amazon formats. In January 2014, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions became available as well. Daily Reflections and Living Sober will soon be available as well.

The other most exciting piece of big news is the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Alcoholics Anonymous. As of February 28 over 100,000 pre-orders had been taken

General Service Trustee Nancy H is the Chairperson of AA Grapevine, Inc. The GV board currently consists of 8 directors – two general service trustees, a class A trustee, two regional trustees, two non-trustee directors and the executive editor / publisher. The purpose of the AA GV board is to serve the fellowship:

To oversee publishing operations of AAGV, Inc

To provide sound financial mgmt of the corp

To establish corp policies and set priorities

To engage in the ongoing process of strategic planning

To operate in accordance with the principles of AA as expressed in the 12 steps, 12 traditions and 12 concepts

Circulation – Grapevine's average monthly print circulation was 77,126 in fiscal year 2013 (this is less than budget by 1,634 and less than 2012 by 6,132). Following the May 2011 relaunch of www.aagrapevine.org, an online subscription was introduced as Grapevine Online (GVO), which as of December 2013 averages 5,175 subscribers. The average bimonthly circulation of La Viña was 10,145 (this is 945 greater than budget and 988 above 2012 levels).

La Viña – La Viña is published by A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and expenses not covered by income are funded by the General Service Board as a service to the Fellowship. La Viña had an average circulation of 10,145 per issue. Gross Profit on the magazine was \$54,758. This is ahead of budget by \$1,127. Revenue was ahead of budget by \$9,716. Gross Profit on Related Items was below budget by about \$2,349, and overhead exceeded

budget by \$14,271. The net cost for 2013 was \$142,545 or \$15,491 more than was budgeted.

Should the Fellowship desire that Grapevine and La Viña continue into the future — for alcoholics and friends, many of whom may not know about A.A. yet — additional subscribers will be required. Organization-wide support for A.A. Grapevine, Inc. is integral to our history and our future.

David Morris (class A trustee), chairperson of the trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee gave an extensive report on the Finances of AAWS and AA GV. There isn't time for me to share the details contents today. In short, The cost of services provided in 2013 by GSO, AAWS, and AA Grapevine Inc can be expressed in terms of groups - \$146.96 per group or in terms of members - \$6.84 per member. The cost of services NOT covered by contributions is \$1.87 per member per year.

Only about 42.5% of groups make any contribution to the GSO. In Area 31 we have about 280 active groups and about 52% of those groups contributed to the GSO in 2013. We're on our way to doing our part for self-support. (But 52% is still an F...)

David said that The Trustees' Finance Subcommittee on Self Support and the A.A.W.S. Finance Subcommittee on Self-Support have worked diligently during the past several years towards a goal of ensuring sustainable self-support initiatives. With the possibility that our print media sales might decline in the future, it is vital that our Fellowship embrace the Seventh Tradition.

Here in Area 31 I have heard discussions which referred to the past tradition of November Gratitude Month – this idea has been discussed in other areas as well – other discussion related to self support is the use of our Birthday Envelopes.

I would encourage your group or your district to invite me to share the financial report in greater detail in the weeks to come.

Tuesday morning was devoted to the second committee meetings; at the Second meeting of the Treatment / Special Needs-Accessibility Committee we reviewed the report that was to be presented on the conference floor and selected a chairperson for the next conference

Tuesday afternoon along with all of the Panel 64 (first year) NERDs, I got to share my area highlights. Despite the emotion I felt as I shared about the wonderful work you do in Area 31 to Carry the Message, you will be pleased and perhaps surprised to learn that I did NOT get buzzed away from the mic. Indeed, I had 4 seconds to spare!

Wednesday began with the Inventory work – In its second of three years, the Inventory process at the GSC was for me an opportunity

Then we had a report from the GSO Archives Director, Michelle M on the 75th Anniversary of the Big Book – she told the amazing story, through archival material of the challenges in advance of and following the initial publication on April 10, 1939 of 4,650 copies of the book. 2 orders for the book were taken in 1939. You all know the story of the Jack Alexander story and stories in Liberty Magazine and the Cleveland Plain Dealer... Through 4 editions and 75 years later 34.5 million copies of Alcoholics Anonymous have sold. And in 69 languages. She concluded her presentation, thus: “As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Big Book, there are now over two million alcoholics, in approximately 170 countries, all because nearly 80 years ago, one drunk shared with another”

At the Northeast Regional Delegates lunch we were joined by Bob W and a couple of “honorary” NERDs – Billy N and Albin Z

Business conducted here was the site selection for NERF (Northeast Regional Forum) 2017 – it will be in Area 60 – Western PA

The Wednesday afternoon session was for the elections of two regional trustees. It was a fascinating process in which I participated only as an observer of the third legacy voting procedure in action. In both cases, the winning candidate's name was drawn from the hat
Then the work of conference committee reports began

A word on the vocabulary of how the conference refers to parts of the decision-making process

Took No Action – the committee does not support the agenda item and did not bring the item up for discussion on the conference floor

Recommendation – a committee recommendation is treated as a motion that has been seconded; following the committee report recommendations are debated on the conference floor and voted on; a vote of 2/3 of the votes cast is required to pass; a favorable vote turns the recommendation into an ADVISORY ACTION

Additional committee considerations are thoughts and ideas put forward by a committee as suggestions or questions for the trustees committee, the gso,

- ⌚ The committee thoroughly considered a proposal to revise the pamphlet “Bridging the Gap” to expand its scope to include information on related corrections service activity and took no action. The committee acknowledged the desire in some areas for a generic Conference-approved pamphlet about bridging the gap. While some areas have combined corrections and treatment bridging the gap activities, they remain separate in many others. The sense of the committee was that revising the current pamphlet to include both treatment and corrections might not adequately address the variety of bridging the gap programs that areas throughout the U.S. and Canada have developed to address their specific needs. Some of these areas have developed service material tailored specifically to explain their local programs.
- ⌚ The committee requested that the General Service Board consider whether there is a need to develop a Conference-approved pamphlet addressing bridging the gap activities for corrections.

- ⌚ The committee reviewed the Treatment Committee Kit and Workbook and agreed that the current contents adequately serve the needs of local committees.
- ⌚ The committee reviewed the Special Needs/Accessibilities Kit and Workbook and expressed appreciation for the service material that is available to assist American Sign Language interpreters. They noted that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are available in this format, and requested that a service piece be developed of the Twelve Concepts for World Service for signing purposes.
- ⌚ The committee noted that the first line in Gloria's Story in the pamphlet "A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs" that says "I was 84 years old and 11 years sober (Although I've been in A.A. since 1962...)" might be confusing to newcomers. They requested that the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities consider whether this language might be clarified and bring back any suggestion for revision to the 2015 Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities.
- ⌚ The committee asked that the staff member on the Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities assignment explore ways to provide electronic versions of the Workbooks and other materials in the Kits to committee chairs as an alternative to automatically mailing hard copies.

On the agenda items related to producing a book in ASL, Reconsideration of the "Alcoholism at Large" section of the Grapevine, and changes to the pamphlet AA Grapevine & LaVina magazines – the committee took no action

Committee recommended that the text in the part of the pamphlet under "what AA does NOT do" be changed – passed

Recommended the development of a new video at a cost not to exceed \$70,000

Approved revisions to circles of love and service – this was a major revision – wait till you see the beautiful new pamphlet!
Approved pamphlet “many paths to spirituality”

Change from “The second edition added the appendices, the twelve traditions, and the directions for getting in touch with aa
To : the second printing of the first edition added the appendix “spiritual experience;; in the second edition the appendices on aa tradition, the medical view, and religious view of aa, the lasker award an information on how to contact aa were added and the appendix on the alcoholic foundation was discontinued

Agenda items related to changes to the pamphlet “Living Sober” , the pamphlet “questions and answers on sponsorship”, the twelve concepts illustrated, the blue card (primary pupose card), the use of the circle and triangle, and on the development of a pamphlet for the alcoholic with mental illness were all either defeated or had no action taken

Revisions to the anonymity card did not pass

The statement in the section *Referrals From Court and Treatment Facilities to A.A.* on page 4 in the pamphlet “If You Are a Professional...” which currently reads:

Referrals From Court and Treatment Facilities

Today numerous A.A. members come to us from court programs and treatment facilities. Some arrive voluntarily, others do not.

A.A. does not discriminate against any prospective member. Who made the referral to A.A. is not what interests us — it is the problem drinker who elicits our concern.

Proof of attendance at meetings. Sometimes a court asks for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.

- *Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have the A.A. group secretary sign or initial a slip that has been furnished by the court together with a self-addressed court envelope. The referred person supplies identification and mails the slip back to the court as proof of attendance.*
- *Other groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group's involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.*

Be revised to read:

Referrals From Judicial, Health Care, or Other Professionals

*Today numerous A.A. members come to us from **judicial, health care, or other professionals**. Some arrive voluntarily, others do not.*

A.A. does not discriminate against any prospective member. Who made the referral to A.A. is not what interests us — it is the problem drinker who elicits our concern.

*Proof of attendance at meetings. Sometimes a **referral source** asks for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.*

Groups *cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group's involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.*

*Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have **an A.A. member acknowledge attendance on a slip that has been furnished by the referral source. The referred person is responsible for returning the proof of attendance.***

The statement in the section *How to Make Referrals to A.A.* on page 5 in the pamphlet "If You Are a Professional..." which currently reads:

“Alcoholics Anonymous is listed in most telephone directories. (Some professionals call A.A. while the person is in the office, thus giving the individual an immediate opportunity to reach out for help.)

Or, you can contact the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous for help and information. Write:

*P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
(212) 870-3400
www.aa.org
Be revised to read:*

*Alcoholics Anonymous **can be found on the Internet at www.aa.org** and in most telephone directories by looking for ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ or ‘A.A.’ (Some professionals ask the person they are referring to call the local A.A. number while still in the office, thus offering an immediate opportunity to reach out for help.)*

Or you can contact the General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous for help and information. G.S.O.’s A.A. website www.aa.org can aid in finding local resources.

*P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
(212) 870-3400
www.aa.org*

On page 6 in the pamphlet “A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional” the following text be deleted:

“I can’t stand the smoking.”

There are nonsmoking meetings available. Check the local meeting book for them or contact the local A.A. central office which is listed in your telephone directory