

Delegate's Report Back to the Area

Good afternoon, my name is Brian and I am an alcoholic. I have a twofold disease that centers in the mind, coupled with an allergy of the body. And I work out my solution on a spiritual as well as an altruistic plane. My sobriety date is August fifth 1990 and my home group is The Wilbraham Group. My current service position is delegate, Area 31/Panel 62. And my Conference assignment is Alternate Chair of The Policy & Admissions Committee. My gratitude & appreciation go out to the Round Up Committee for their hours of love and labor put forth into this weekend. Thank you to the chair Mike, co-chair Jeff and the entire committee. As was written about Doctor Bob, in his mind in their deepest essence, the Steps simply mean love and service. I am so grateful to have been guided into Area Service and have met some wonderful people. The work and effort put into this position, and all my positions in Area Service, have proven to be more beneficial to my growth than to our fellowship. "You don't need me, but I need you." There have been opportunities presented to me that may not have been available to me if friends around me didn't encourage me to stand for positions of service I fulfilled and am fulfilling. My sobriety may still be intact and may even be relatively happy if these service positions weren't a part of my experience, but I would not be the same man. Thank you for having more faith in me than I, and allowing me to serve the best area in A.A. and the greatest fellowship on Earth.

Whether this is your first or you've been to several Round Ups, some may be new to the purposes of our Area Round Up and to the roles and responsibilities of an area delegate. Because of that it was thought of as an excellent opportunity to share where each individual member fits into the service structure as well as report back the happenings from the Conference. Quote from Chapter Six

in our Service Manual state ".....it is the delegate's responsibility to serve worldwide A.A. As voting members of the Conference, delegates bring to its deliberations the experiences and viewpoints of their own areas. Yet they are not representatives of their areas in the usual political sense; after hearing all points of view and becoming fully informed during Conference discussion, they vote in the best interests of A.A.as a whole." As a friend shared some parting wisdom with me at our Delegate's Lunch before Conference, "you are now a world servant and the details of the area are not your primary focus." A growing sense of responsibility was mounting for what I was to witness and be a part of at The General Service Conference. Therefore, communicating the actions and my experience of the Conference to area committee members, DCM's, GSR's, intergroup offices, committee chairs & co-chairs and all interested A.A.er's is the primary function of the delegate upon his return.

WHY DO WE NEED A CONFERENCE? (Point to the easel)

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of the board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: "We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life.

"We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing

overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

"We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is."

You may have wondered, or are wondering where you fit in A.A.'s service structure or what is our service structure? (POINT TO THE VISUAL AID). The groups, the groups that are represented by a *General Service Representative (GSR)*, have a voice in Alcoholics Anonymous. This, the top of our inverted triangle, is where the voice is initially heard. Our "*Upside-Down Organization*" or the inverted triangle chart shows us the groups are on top and the trustees at the bottom. The First Concept begins with the sentence, "The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services..." This is followed up in the next Concept where Bill makes clear that the groups "delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference the actual voice and effective conscience for our whole Society." From the delegated authority, the GSR, the home groups' conscience is relayed to the district and then all districts to our Area Assemblies. This is one of the reasons the Delegate, the Alternate Delegate and Area Chair visit the districts and committees on a regular basis. THIS IS WHY OUR RECENT MINI-CONFERENCE WAS IMPORTANT TO US AND A.A. AS A WHOLE. Ninety three Area Delegates were able to take their area conscience, formed

through the "upside-down structure", and share it at The General Service Conference last month. Out of the Conference come Alcoholics Anonymous World Services conscience and some advisory actions for the Trustees in A.A.W.S., Inc. and Grapevine Inc. which is at the bottom of the triangle.

At the beginning of January my conference committee assignment was delivered to me and I found myself on the Policy/Admissions Committee. Knowing nothing about this committee, as we don't have one at our area level, it was possibly thought of as an opportunity to learn more about our Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. structure. In all honesty that was my second thought, and as a good friend of mine suggests "we're not responsible for our first thought but we are for our second thought and first action." My first thought was I might be of better service to A.A. in the PI Committee or the Finance Committee because of my life experiences. It was a humble and welcomed lesson to learn that one of my favorite Concepts was to play a central role in the Policy/Admission Committee. One of our agenda items had us considering modifying the procedure for submission of Concept V minority appeals to the General Service Conference. After reading the Concept several times, along with other background information, further research was needed to get a better understanding. At our Area Concepts Meeting, had always wanted to know more about this De Toqueville character Bill mentions. This was a great opportunity to face my procrastination and learn more of Alexis De Toqueville and why Bill references him. It may not have helped the Policy/Admissions Committee but it surely developed a greater understanding for me.

The day before my departure for Ryebrook, NY the flu took hold of me and rendered me useless that Thursday night and Friday. A frequent occurrence after a bender would be to sleep fifteen

straight hours and not leave bed. But this was a first in sobriety to not be able to move from bed from 9 PM to 12 noon. There would have to be something more, something greater, to keep me from going. I would have gone on a gurney.

My friend Cheryl came down with me a day early so we could participate in an optional Bus Tour of Historic A.A. Sites In The New York Area. As someone who thoroughly enjoys the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, I jumped at this opportunity to learn more about the beginnings of our fellowship. Our first stop was Towns Hospital on Central Park West in Manhattan. This was the hospital Bill landed in four times between 1933 and 1934 for treatment of alcoholism, and ultimately had a spiritual experience there in 1934 that led to his sobriety. (Some would say the belladonna treatment he was receiving contributed to his spiritual experience, but whatever the agent that aided in his experience, most would agree the Power behind the cause.) Dr. William Silkworth, Medical Superintendent at Towns, treated 40,000 alcoholics there, including Bill W., and wrote "The Doctor's Opinion" in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Currently, Towns Hospital is an apartment building. It must have looked peculiar to peer down on the street on a Saturday morning and see 40 something people get off a bus snapping pictures and gawking at their apartments.

Our next stop was "Thirty Rock", 30 Rockefeller Center in the city. Here Bill met Willard Richardson, a friend of his brother-in-law, and the conduit to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Bill met Rockefeller in October 1937 in his 66th floor office, and told him about the A.A. program. The meeting went well, and in many ways Rockefeller helped the fledgling organization get started. Our tour guide related a story of another Rockefeller confidant who was in our fellowship, and when asked if Mr. Rockefeller ever mentioned A.A. he said "oh yes, he'd say they were very nice people but get them talking!" A few more drive by's in Manhattan were 468-470

Park Avenue South, which was the building that served as A.A.'s General Service Office for over 20 years (1970-1992), eventually occupying five floors in two buildings. Then the Roosevelt Hotel on Madison Avenue and 45th Street which was the site of over 35 General Service Conferences. Our last stop in Manhattan was the Calvary Episcopal Church on 237 Park Ave. South where Bill attended Oxford Group meetings from 1934-1936, and got sober along with Ebby T., Rowland H., Cebra G., Hank P., and many others. Samuel Shoemaker, source of A.A.'s spiritual principles via the Oxford Group, was the pastor of Calvary and originally brought Oxford Group Meetings to New York City. It was here Bill paid "witness" or what we call speaking from the podium, in a black out. And from his sharing he identified himself as a Vermonter. Ebby had been in The Oxford Group for a couple of months and they asked Ebby if he knew this guy. Ebby then put his nickel in the turnstile at the subway and made it over to Bill's kitchen table at 182 Clinton St. in Brooklyn.

That was our next stop and this home was owned by Lois's family for many years. Lois Burnham was born in this house in 1891. Bill and Lois lived there briefly in 1919 with her parents when they were just getting on their feet. They moved there again in 1930 when the couple's financial situation had deteriorated severely, after the stock market crash. Lois's mother was dying of cancer, and Bill's drinking was quite bad. Lois's father gave the home to Lois and Bill after he remarried a few years after his wife's death. It was in this house that Bill finally got sober - Ebby T. brought his message of spiritual healing and recovery in 1934, sitting with him in the kitchen at 182 Clinton Street. In 1935, Bill began hosting meetings at the house on Tuesdays, meeting with drunks constantly, some of whom lived there with Bill and Lois if they had nowhere else to go. After Lois's father died in 1936, the mortgage company took over the home, but the couple continued living there, renting the property, until 1939, when they were too

penniless to afford the rent. They were virtually homeless for two years, living with friends and above offices.

Our last stop on the tour was around the corner on 38 Livingston Street where Bill and Lois lived during the flush, high-flying years on Wall Street, from 1926-1929. Bill was a successful stockbroker during these years and the couple was wealthy. Lois and Bill knocked down a wall and converted two apartments into one to give them more space. These were also, however, the years of worsening drinking by Bill. (There was scaffolding in front of the building and as we were observing the building the superintendent came out and inquired what we were looking at. I told him this is an historic building. To that he replied "oh ya, Lenny Bruce once lived here and he used to throw some wild parties." I think he even said Dustin Hoffman was a frequent guest of his. We laughed and I shared with him who lived there and why we were there. And he had been the super there for twenty years and didn't know!)

Work was to commence at 8:30 AM Sunday as The Policy/Admission Committee met to talk about, decide and recommend two motions to the Conference at The Opening Session. We were to accept two visitors from India and accept an Alternate Delegate from Area 89 Northern Quebec, to replace the Delegate who resigned. We recommended both and they were passed unanimously. An additional consideration made by our committee was to "requested review of role of this committee in granting admission of international observers with concern for possible appearance of 'rubber stamp' activity of this Committee and provide a report to the 2013 Conference Committee." This consideration surfaced primarily as a result of a passage in The Seventh Concept which reads: "If, therefore, in the years ahead, the Conference will always bear in mind the actual rights, duties, responsibilities, and legal status of the General Service Board, and if the Trustees in their deliberations will constantly realize that

the Conference is the real seat of ultimate authority, we may be sure that neither will be seriously tempted to make a "rubber stamp" out of the other. We may expect that in this way grave issues will always be resolved and harmonious cooperation will be the general rule." Two gentlemen from their General Service Board came over from India to observe our Conference. They were already here and we felt or it seemed as if we were "rubber stamping" a decision already made by our General Service Office. By the way, I got a chance to talk with both of them separately during the week and catch a glimpse of A.A. in India. There are ten languages spoken in India and A.A. is only twenty-five years old. There are going through different growing pains and learned much in America. The Chairman of their General Service Board, and I won't attempt to pronounce his name, made an interesting comment in his closing remarks, that he had never hugged a woman in A.A. until he was greeted by Eva S. at the airport. Hmmm, A.A. is working in many cultures around the globe.

Then the excitement began. Immediately after roll call, this was after the Chair of A.A.W.S., Ward Ewing opening remarks, the delegate from Area 26, Kentucky made a motion for Ward's motion to go to committee. Ward's motion from the General Service Board to the Conference reads..... " The General Service Conference supports the General Service Board's development of a plan to restructure the current A.A. World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc. corporate and governance structures. The plan may, among other things, address the separate corporate existence of both entities, as well as issues of governance and operations. The plan will be designed to increase unity, better reach and connect the General Service Office and the Grapevine to the broader Fellowship while addressing financial stability. The plan will be submitted to the 63rd General Service Conference for approval prior to implementation."

After thirty minutes of discussion, where it was noted the GSB did not need to go to the Conference to make a plan but was doing so for transparency sake, it was agreed to be discussed as a floor motion after the agenda items were discussed and voted upon. It was here I observed people's reaction to the potential brew-ha-ha with their words, tone and body language and *knew* calmer heads would prevail. And that Grace had descended upon the room. I didn't know it was to stay with us for the week though. (More on this matter later as I'll try to stay in chronological order.)

After Phyllis H. addressed us with a Mechanics of the Conference and Eva S., our Conference secretary, shared a Review of Agenda/Manual we broke out again in our individual Conference Committee Meetings. Our next agenda item was reviewing the dates for the 2015 General Service Conference. Usually the largest concerns are the significant holidays and hotel availability. But I noted it was also a year The A.A. International Convention meets and we don't want to go too late into the Spring as it would give us an extra week to give our report backs if we chose the earlier week. So we voted to recommend 19-25 April 2015 and it was passed unanimously on the Conference floor later in the week. The fourth and last advisory action the Policy/Admissions suggested was "the use of electronic devices at the General Service Conference be approved in keeping with the "Guidelines for Electronic Device Users at the Conference" as presented to the 2012 General Service Conference, superseding the 2004 Advisory Action regarding the use of personal computers at the Conference." The big shift was the renaming personal computers to electronic devices, as most electronic devices *are* computers with different name such as smart phones, ipads, etc., and staying ahead of the quickly advancing technology curve. I have a copy of the new policy if anyone wants to read it.

Our committees most discussed agenda item did not result in an advisory action but did result in an additional committee

consideration. The committee considered modifying the procedure for the submission of Concept V minority appeals to the General Service Conference and took no action. We agreed that the policy approved by the 2011 General Service Conference sufficiently provided a policy for the "Right of Appeal" as described in Concept V - the procedure allows for a "well-heard minority" to be the "chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority", and it makes the "best possible use of minority feeling and opinion." After discussing the "tyranny of the majority" and the "minority's right of appeal" for hours the main factors that resulted in no action was the new policy was only a year old and had not been tested and we saw no logical reason to tinker with the policy at present.

It may be helpful here to briefly share what and where does an Advisory Action come from? This may be best explained in the process or Evolution of a Conference Advisory Action. Firstly, it emanates as an idea, suggestion, question, concern, or subject comes from A.A. members, GSR.'s, DCM's, Area Committee members, Delegates, Trustee's or GSO/GV Staff, and may be shared or discussed at the group, district and Area Assembly and sent to the Conference Coordinator @ GSO. Secondly, the idea is reviewed by the GSO/GV Staff and forwarded to the Appropriate Trustees' Committee. Thirdly, they may then refer the matter to the Appropriate Conference Committee which fourthly, meets during the General Service Conference week and makes recommendations that are presented in the Committee Report to the General Service Conference. Lastly, if a Conference Committee recommendation is approved, after full floor discussion, it becomes a Conference Advisory Action, which becomes binding when approved by the General Service Board.

For the next few minutes I'll be sharing Advisory Actions by committee unless otherwise indicated.

The Agenda Committee recommended and it was approved that the theme for the 2013 General Service Conference be: "The General Service Conference Takes Its Inventory - Our Solution in Action." They've come up with a long list titled "INVENTORY PLAN" which has specific questions for the next three years. The presentation/discussion topics for the 2013 General Service Conference are..... Spiritual Principles for World Service:

- a) The Triangle - More Than a Shape
- b) The General Service Conference Inventory - Why is it necessary?
- c) Self-Support - What Does it Mean to the Fellowship?
- d) Primary Purpose -Carrying the A.A. Message.

Archives had no recommendations.

Cooperation With the Professional Community (CPC) had a couple of minor changes in there literature. First one was regarding "Singleness of Purpose" in CPC literature, in which the word "Anyone" was replaced with "Nonalcoholic". And in our description in several of the pamphlets where the section "What A.A. Does Not Do" was modified and updated. Subject matter that is a given to us but may not be to the third party who directs the potential alcoholic to us.

Corrections Committee approved to revise the pamphlet "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell". It was very old and needed it! GSO did a superb job on this. They also made some changes to the pamphlet "A Message to Corrections Professionals" where they approved to replace "Release and Paroles" to "Re-entry and Parole". Like CPC they also looked at the "Singleness of Purpose" statement and approved, as did CPC, to differentiating nonalcoholics may attend *open* AA meetings but only those with a problem may attend *closed* AA meetings.

The Finance Committee recommended and it was approved to increase the delegates' contribution for Conference expenses from \$1200 to \$1600. In a floor action one time bequests from A.A. members to the General Service Board are increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000 passed after it had been defeated the first time it came to the Conference as an agenda item. It passed by an 84 to 42 vote which is exactly two thirds vote and what we consider substantial unanimity. The bequest from \$3,000 to \$25,000 had been disapproved.

The Grapevine Committee recommended two items. One, that AA Grapevine, Inc. move forward with audio strategy to have members call in and record their story on 3rd party recording technology. The stories will be subject to the same editorial process as print stories. The Audio endeavor will, at minimum break even financially. 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. And the committee requests that a status and financial report be submitted to the 2013 Conference Committee on the Grapevine as background. Secondly, A.A. Grapevine, Inc., carries out the "Sunset" proposal for Grapevine items. The "Sunset" proposal is a plan to phase out older or slow-moving Grapevine items and archive them digitally or make them available in another format.

The International Convention /Regional Forums had no recommendations. Although my notes do state that the theme of the 2015 International Convention will be: "80 Years - Happy, Joyous and Free"

The Literature Committee requested four recommendations. The first was the revision of the pamphlet "A.A. and the Armed Services" be approved. Two, the short form of the Twelve Concepts for World Service be added to the book *As Bill Sees It*. Thirdly, the final revision of the *Living Sober* booklet, with changes to outdated language or practices, be approved with minor editorial

changes. Lastly, the pamphlet "Circles of Love and Service" be revised, and requested that the trustees' Committee on Literature prepare a draft pamphlet or progress report for the 2013 Conference Committee on Literature.

There were some Additional Considerations taken by the Literature Committee to be passed along to the trustees' but did not result in advisory actions. They did discuss a request to add text from the dust jacket of the Third Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, to the dust jacket of the Fourth Edition of the Big Book. It was reviewed and no action was taken. The same happened when they considered a request to add the A.A. Preamble to the front inside pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The Public Information Committee had a full slate of agenda items and put in extra hours to present their recommendations. They were, one, that Membership Survey pamphlet and the one-way Membership Survey display be updated to reflect the findings from the 2011 Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey with minor editorial changes. Two, and probably the most emotional time at the Conference for me and maybe many others, was when we approved by a unanimous vote, the video public service announcement for the Spanish-speaking community, "Tengo Esperanza", developed by the trustees' Public Information Committee, be approved with minor edits. We were treated to the PSA which was spoken in Spanish.....and I understood it although my Spanish is limited. It was targeted to the women in the Spanish population which from what I understand is a difficult segment to reach for us. It hit the mark directly. And it did not matter to the audience if they were white or black or Asian or a man or woman. The dialogue and dialect from the PSA didn't seem to matter if you were of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican or any other Spanish speaking descent. The feelings, the emotions transcended every barrier, real or fancied, in the room. There was a current, a rhythm of a Power greater than anyone in that room, that moved

through our souls. It was a moment and a feeling I dare not forget.

The third recommendation was that the same public service announcement video be centrally distributed, tracked and evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$40,000, in addition to the work of local committees, and that the information gathered from the process be forwarded to the 2013 Conference Public Information Committee for their review. Lastly, the revised "Anonymity Wallet Card" be approved.

The Public Information Committee had many Additional Considerations. The committee reviewed the report of the Comprehensive Media Plan Subcommittee from the trustees' Public Information Committee, and expressed their support for the continued development of the media plan. Secondly, the committee reviewed the 2011 Annual Report from the trustees' Committee on Public Information regarding G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site and noted with appreciation the detailed information provided and the thoughtful consideration given to all items involving the Web site. Thirdly, the committee reviewed with appreciation the information on centralized distribution, tracking and evaluation of the "My World" public service announcement. Fourthly, the committee reviewed all the current A.A. TV public service announcements and agreed with the report of the trustees' Public Information Committee that found them all to be relevant and useful. They also assessed the need for new A.A. TV public service announcements and agreed with the report of the trustees' Public Information Committee that none was needed at this time. Next, the committee considered the proposed alternative packaging for the Public Information Kit and suggested that the Publications Department continue to explore options for alternative packaging that is durable allows for organization and containment of the kit materials.

The next two items probably bring the most concern and interest to the greatest part of fellowship. The first is, following lengthy and thoughtful discussion related to adding language referring to current media to Tradition Eleven, the committee concluded that the spirit and principle of anonymity at the public level is conveyed adequately in the Long Form of Tradition Eleven. Recognizing that suggested changes to Tradition Eleven have come to the Conference several times, the committee requested the trustees' Public Information Committee gather Area sharing on the effectiveness of the language of the Short Form of Tradition Eleven in addressing the needs of the Fellowship today and report back to the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information. Lastly, the committee considered favorably the suggestion from the trustees' Public Information Committee that A.A. establish a presence on Facebook for the purpose of providing information about A.A. to the public. Before proceeding, however, the committee requested that the General Service Board explore all aspects of this social media page and, if feasible within our Traditions, provide the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information an implementation plan that addresses the implications of such a page, including sample content and estimates for implementation cost and maintenance.

The Report and Charter Committee approved and recommended three agenda items. One, that all changes to *The A.A. Service Manual* be noted by vertical margin changes bars in the edition in which the change appears for the first time. Secondly, the following term and definition be added to *The A.A. Service Manual* in Chapter One: Introduction to General Service in the section titled Glossary of General Service Terms:

"Rotation - the spiritual principle of sharing the responsibility for A.A. through changing leadership."

Lastly, the current illustration on page S16 be modified in the following manner:

1. Replacing the bottom section of the illustration that deals with the *General Service Board* and its two operating corporations with the corresponding section from a previous version, minus the table-and-chair graphic. (Refer them to the upside down triangle and indicate the table & chairs and how a line will be drawn dissecting the bottom triangle in half with the *A.A.W.S., Inc* logo & the *Grapevine, Inc.* logo being on either half.)
2. Changing "District Committees" to "Districts".

Treatment Facilities/Special Needs/Accessibilities had no recommendations. They did forward several *Additional Committee Considerations*. These are "Items discussed, but no action taken or recommendation made, as well as committee recommendations which are not adopted, be included in a separate section of the Final Report." Of note were to add a suggestion to page 10 of the *Special Needs/Accessibilities* for "committees to gather local information and identify outside local resources regarding accessibility requirements and options." And the committee is hopeful that *A.A.W.S.* will format the pamphlet "A.A. For the Alcoholic With Special Needs" for alcoholics who are deaf, blind or have learning challenges as soon as fiscally possible as requested in a 2011 *Committee Consideration*.

The *Trustees Committee* recommended a slate of trustees be elected at the annual meeting of the *General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.* in April 2012. No surprises here, there are seven *Class A Trustees* and fourteen *Class B Trustees*.

Now, getting back to the letter the *Chair of the General Service Board*, *Ward Ewing* wrote on 21 February in which he notified the *A.A. community* of the *GSB's* intent to make a motion at The 62nd *General Service Conference*. That motion was a result of The *General Service Board's* inventory that took place in two cities just prior and reads as follows:

"The General Service Conference supports the General Service Board's development of a plan to restructure the current Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, Inc., corporate and governance structure, while retaining the Grapevine's independent editorial voice. The plan may, among other things, address the separate corporate existence of Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, Inc., as well as issues of governance and operations. The plan will be designed to increase unity, better reach and connect the Grapevine to the broader Fellowship while addressing financial stability. The plan will be submitted to the 63rd General Service Conference for approval prior to implementation."

For three and a half hours on a Friday afternoon a debate about this motion lingered on. The content of Ward's letter really sank in while at NERAASA and my mind and my heart told me there was something afoul here. It didn't smell right from the get go. It felt like I was at the receiving end of a forceful and poorly rehearsed sales presentation. Suspicion would have summed up my feeling in a word at that time. And distrust was a byproduct of this suspicion which was later discovered rooted in some unhealthy fear. A month or so after NERAASA it was at our Concepts Meeting the Fourth Concept aka "Right of Participation", gave me proof to rationalize the shifty motion the GSB was making. It read and still reads, "Every now and then a move will be made to abolish A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. It will be urged that these separate corporations ought to become "departments" or "committees" of the General Service Board, mainly managed by Trustees. To my view, it is vital that we preserve this traditional "Right of Participation" in the face of every tendency to whittle it down that we should here bring some of our pioneering experience to bear upon the problem." There it was! Here was proof to demonstrate who was right on this issue backed up by Bill W. himself.

Next we were at Roll Call on Sunday afternoon, which was after Ward's opening remarks where he gave the General Service Board Report, and the delegate from Kentucky made her motion to have the Chair's motion go to committee. After a thirty minute debate it was agreed upon to discuss it as a floor motion after the agenda items from all the committees were heard and voted on.

Now, we're back on Friday afternoon and the General Service Board's motion surfaces again. It was to be a spiritual experience that'll never be forgotten. My suspicions still needed to be assuaged.....there needed to be some explaining to be done. The sharing and debate for the next several hours had me listening honestly and looking at every conceivable angle I could understand. Not once did I see, hear or feel anyone in that room sacrifice principle for the sake of personality. And come to think of it, all week long there was nothing but principles before personalities. A seven day business meeting with all concerned with the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous and not one personal remark or action against another was heard or observed here. This was the second time this much Love was felt in a room full of trusted servants. The first was when Chip, our immediate past delegate, invited me down to the Opening Banquet of the 60th General Service Conference, the Light that buzzed around that room moved me. I yearned for more.

Delegates were heard in the first hour speaking against this motion and in the last hour speaking for it. The transformation was witnessed in others, and felt within. Upon arrival at Conference my views and intentions were to vote against the Chairs motion because of Concept Four and what I misperceived as politicking. It was later discovered that this was not the correct perception, and as a result of God's presence in the room, an opening appeared that allowed me to listen. Although the sounds came through my ears, there was a spiritual shift that was happening. And here is where a turning point came.

During the three plus hours of debate there was a coffee break. And upon entering the hall I noticed an empty seat next to a gentleman that was at our dinner table the evening before. We swapped stories at the dinner table but mainly I listened. He struck me as a statesman and also someone who was approachable. I had heard his name about but did not know exactly what he had done for A.A. but it was probably at the board level. The bottom of the triangle. His name is Lenard Bluementhal and he was a class A Trustee so his full name can be shared. So, I sat down and reintroduced myself and asked him a few easy questions before my real intent was realized. By the way, he was in the back of the hall behind a long table that sat everyone that wasn't a participating or voting member of the Conference. He is Chairman of the A.A.W.S. Board Emeritus. My real intent was to get his view on this matter. And his response was "this whole thing is a process", he's Canadian so he says process, "and we just have to let it work out." He went on, "this is a development of a plan and they won't even have it done by the next Conference. And the Conference has to pass it." It won't look anything like it is now and we have to trust the process." Before coffee break was ending I asked him if he'd vote for this motion and he said "yes, let's get this thing going."

Another factor in me voting in favor of the new motion was something has to be done and what's the harm or the fear in letting the board do its work and look at the current structure of A.A.W.S., Inc and the Grapevine, Inc. Would Bill W. have let its course run this far? Or would he have initiated some sort of change?

After extensive debate and amendments, the "Board Motion" was approved as follows:

"The General Service Conference supports the General Service Board's development of a plan to restructure AAWS, Inc. and AAGV, Inc. corporate and governance structure. The plan may,

among other things, address the separate corporate existence of both entities, as well as issues of governance and operation. The plan will be designed to increase unity, better reach and connect the Grapevine and G.S.O. to the broader Fellowship while addressing financial stability. The plan will be submitted to the 63rd General Service Conference for approval prior to implementation.” I shall forever take with me and attempt to share the spiritual process of placing principles before personalities. And it shall be laid to rest forever, in my heart and in my mind that A.A. Service Work is not all about politics.

We were now approaching dinner time and Ward Ewing asked for a vote to continue the floor motion and work through dinner or come back after dinner and work until midnight or beyond. We voted to work through dinner and handle the floor motions.

First floor motion was to develop a pamphlet for the Alcoholic with Mental Illness. This was withdrawn to make way for a similar motion to be presented. Second, was to increase the one-time bequests from AA members to the GSB from \$3,000 to \$5,000. It was approved. Third, to change the Conference Inventory 2013 Question G3 from to “What more could be done to insure the GSB remains transparent and thorough in their reporting to the Fellowship concerning financial condition.” (In effect, the change would have amended the inventory question by adding the words “concerning financial condition” to the original question.) Motion to decline to consider was approved. In other words we declined to discuss and vote on it before it hit the floor. Fourth, to recommend that the GSB form a subcommittee comprised of all stakeholders to develop a plan to address publication, distribution and finances of La Vina with the objective of self-support by 12/31/2015. Motion Disapproved. Fifth, that the Trustees' Committee on Literature develop a pamphlet for the alcoholic with mental illness, with a progress report to be provided to the 2013 Conference Committee on Literature with suggestions for content of

the pamphlet, including breadth and scope of the pamphlet. It passed then was reconsidered and then was Disapproved. Sixth that the pamphlet "AA and the Armed Services" include the subtitle "None Left Behind." After thoughtful and sometimes frothy emotional debate it was Disapproved. Lastly that "This body form an AAWS Committee to allow this motion to heard by a committee before coming to the floor for approval." Motion to decline to consider was approved.

We concluded with remarks from the rotating delegates and closing remarks by Ward and were out of there at the reasonable hour of 9.

The next morning, Saturday, we met for a closing brunch before those that signed up for The Stepping Stones Tour departed. Having visited Stepping Stones on several occasions I still wanted to go with the group and see some of them experience it for the first time. And the garage was under a conversion to a welcome center when I was last there. So I got to see a very professionally remodeled building that resembled an archives building. And I learned a new piece of history from the tour guide! When we up in "Wits End" a shack where Bill wrote in she pointed to the picture with the man in the bed. As long as I can remember it was known as "The Man In The Bed" or "AA Number Three". But she told us when the original was going through some preservation work and they removed it from the frame. On the back of the picture the artist wrote "Pass It On."

In closing, we had a few pithy passages from The A.A. Service Manual, blown up on poster board for your viewing and greater understanding of The Annual Conference Meeting, Why we need it, what can it do, and where do we fit in this upside down organization? And lastly, Leadership in A.A.: Ever a Vital Need which I'd like to comment on since our past and future Area Service leaders are in this room today. What's on the board are

excerpts from Bill W's article in the April 1959 Grapevine. The full article is in Concept IX of "Twelve Concepts for World Service." In this passage these are the qualities he describes that are most seen in good leaders. These qualities are many times a result of living our way of life as guided by The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. All of you have some or all of these qualities in varying degree, or you wouldn't be here today. I urge you to read and maybe reread this and strive for all of these attributes. Practice them in A.A. Service work and take them with you inside and outside of our rooms so you may become a better servant to your Employer.

"Thank You for my life."

(If times permits there's a slide show that was put together by my friend Patti from other Area Delegate's depicting some of the places we visited.)