

# FINAL REPORT

## WESTERN CANADA REGIONAL FORUM

JUNE 8~10, 2018

REGINA,  
SASKATCHEWAN

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES  
AND NON-ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Western Canada Regional Forum, which will take place in Calgary, Alberta on the weekend of May 29-31, 2020 at the Glenmoore Inn and Convention Centre.

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# WORKSHOP REPORTS

7:00—9:00 p.m.

## **“Supporting Grapevine: From Your Story to Service” (Moderator: Ami B., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor/Publisher / Reporter: Jacqueline)**

The workshop opened with an introduction by Grapevine Executive Editor/Publisher Ami B. Attendees shared the following ideas and themes for story submissions:

- Service kept me in the rooms
- Sobering up in a small town
- Meetings
- Roller coaster ride
- Awakenings
- Sobering up in spite of myself
- Hiding in my alcoholism
- Women in recovery
- Living in Step 12
- Forming a true partnership

Also discussed were, “How can we do more at a group level?” Members made many suggestions in ways to support the Grapevine and increase awareness of the magazine, such as: Talk about books; have workshops; use the Grapevine for topics in meetings; buy a Grapevine when someone reaches three months of sobriety; use it as a Twelfth-Step tool; encourage group members to be a GVR or choose a GVR from the group; distribute the Grapevine’s Newcomer package to doctors, prisons, etc.; use it as a 12<sup>th</sup> Step tool and use the magazine to raise awareness about the Grapevine.

## **“G.S.O. Archives: Local Archives: Where do I Begin?” (Moderator: April Hegner., G.S.O. Senior Archivist / Reporter: Michael K.)**

Workshop attendees participated in a workshop covering the topic of local archives. Attendees listened to opening remarks by the G.S.O. senior archivist about how archives and the items in them are important history that must be preserved for many reasons — among them because we can learn much from past events. It was mentioned that G.S.O. Archives have all the material necessary to start district or area archives on the A.A. website. If a group, district or area is interested in doing so, the best place to start is the Archives Workbook. A.A.s can also call or email G.S.O. with questions and/or concerns. Workshop attendees also listened to an audio of Bill W. discussing the origin of Rule 62.

The substantial collections of both Akron and New York were discussed — April shared that six or seven scholars use the New York archives regularly. It was noted that the G.S.O., however, does not judge the scholars’ work. Writers have to be approved by the trustees’ Archives Committee. It was stressed that the protection of anonymity is very important to A.A. Archives.

The workshop group discussed the benefits of central archives as opposed to several small ones. Members discussed how to best gather oral histories, the importance of recording long-timer stories and digital recording.

Members discussed the first steps of archiving. Deciding what to collect and sorting the material are the first steps. Members discussed how to whip up Fellowship interest. In response, the group shared that organizing, small, time-specific tasks was best, as well as using persistence. Activities were suggested to popularize the Archives.

**“Carrying the Message to Remote Communities” (Moderator: Gail P. / Reporter: Steve K.)**

The workshop members discussed two questions in regard to carrying the message to remote communities. The first question, “*What are some struggles faced by alcoholics in remote communities?*” generated many responses, some of which were that remote communities do not have a network of sober A.A. members; remote First Nations people often have multi-generational trauma and other issues besides alcohol; and there exists a distrust of those offering the A.A. message. In addition, members shared that there was a distrust that, after the first few contacts, the help would stay. Finally, it was shared that geography, cultural and language barriers often prevent meaningful contact.

Workshop members addressed a second question: *How do we carry the message to remote communities and what can G.S.O. do to help us do that?* Group members shared many solutions, such as:

- Reach out to communities and let them know that help exists and is available;
- Educate ourselves on the existing communication technology available to help carry message (i.e. satellite, video conferencing, etc.);
- Seek the help and advice of the local elders and officials;
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities and seek out those who are culturally literate to carry the message to remote alcoholics;
- Consider asking Grapevine to develop audio resources in the language of the residents of the remote villages (i.e. Cree)

**“A.A. Literature and Our Collective Experience” (Moderator: Bonnie Anne F. / Reporter: Arlene B.)**

Three topics were posed at this workshop. The first was, “*Do you have a literature chair in your home group?*” (Box 4-5-9 Fall 2013 and Winter 2013) Workshop attendees shared the following methods for increasing awareness of A.A.’s literature and the service position of literature chair: Some ideas included introducing other A.A. books by featuring one new book a month at a meeting and using A.A. Guidelines: Literature Service to ensure that service people have their literature service material and are informed about what a literature chairs does. In addition, a group member can bring out a new book to their meeting each month to introduce books. Members also suggested using the Service Manual to make group members aware of the literature. An overview of the substance and content of our literature is found in The A.A. Service Manual — use it to help others become aware of the literature that is available.

The second topic posed to workshop members was, “*How do we carry the message through literature?*” The shared experience offered included spending a few minutes talking about a pamphlet or Grapevine at meetings, using the literature (actual books and pamphlets) to read from — not pieces of paper with the information excerpted and encouraging sponsors to refer to literature and books for answers.

Lastly, members discussed how to use our basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Big Book), to encourage more A.A.s to become familiar with that piece of literature. Attendees suggested:

- Use the Big Book to read from (while at a meeting) — not from pieces of paper;
- Share that it is our basic text;
- Use the Big Book to share A.A.'s message of recovery — keep it unchanged;
- And consider getting an audio version for the car.

### **“Sponsorship” (Moderator: Roy B. / Reporter: Wendy C.)**

Workshop members discussed two topics regarding sponsorship. The first topic, “Active vs. passive sponsorship,” received input from the group. Many group members favored “active” sponsorship. They felt it was important to follow the Big Book and take people through the Steps just as they were taken through them.

Members also shared that they do not chase people if they do not call or show up and are not ready. There are others to help! Although some questioned their qualifications, great sponsors are not “qualified” -- except as A.A. members;

Workshop members also felt it was important to tell their story to sponsees, and to share what A.A. does and doesn't do (such as, we are not medical professionals) and how it worked for them. Members suggested then asking, “Are you ready?” Remember, a sponsor is only a guide to take a member through the Steps. It was suggested that sponsors follow the Big Book and use the available literature, such as pamphlets, books, etc.

The second topic that workshop members discussed was “How to encourage sponsorship?” Members shared that this has changed over time, “and it seems we have abdicated responsibility to treatment and detox centers.” Members shared that “We must pick up where they have left off.” Others offered a simple solution, “We can explain what A.A. is and is not, we can approach newcomers and we can hold out our hand.”

### **“A.A. Around the World” (Moderator: Scott H., Trustee-at-Large/Canada / Reporter: Judy)**

In this workshop, Scott H., trustee-at-large/Canada, shared his experience in a presentation about A.A. Around the World. In particular, the International A.A. Data Map and its purpose in communication and aiding in increasing awareness of A.A. around the world were discussed. Attendees were also invited to share feedback on the presentation of A.A. Around the World, as well as what else they would like to see or hear.

Workshop attendees asked several questions regarding the International A.A. Data Map project, such as “What was the main objective of the project?” In response, the moderator shared that it is a list of where A.A. is. The map allows the Fellowship to know what it looks like when we say A.A. is in over 170 countries. Another shared about a “positive experience in Africa where, as an alcoholic, . . . he was recognized as such.” Others questioned about cultures that have no A.A. presence – do we know why? In response, members learned that, in many cases, we don't really know why. Sometimes government is a factor, sometimes there are other reasons.

Workshop members learned that one of the A.A. “Map” uses is as a tool to aid trustees-at-large from both the U.S. and Canada in their travels. Finally, attendees asked about the

visibility of signage in his travels to some countries. In response, the trustee-at-large/Canada answered: “It varies. For instance, in Mexico City, A.A. is very visible. In Germany, there seems to be a stigma, so the signage is conservative.”

**“Supporting Grapevine: From Your Story to Service” (Moderator: Ami B., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor/Publisher / Reporter: Glenna B.)**

The workshop opened with an introduction by the Grapevine’s executive editor/publisher and the following questions/concerns were addressed:

- *When someone gives a gift subscription, is there a box to check if the giver would like it renewed?* It was answered that, 9 times out 10, a giver will renew. It was noted that the last reminder to renew goes to the recipient. Workshop member mentioned that he did not want to receive renewal reminders.
- *If I have a subscription can I listen to audio?* In order to listen to audio, you must have an ONLINE subscription. If you would like audio and print, sign up for Grapevine Complete for combination of print and online.

One member asked if it was possible to give a link (to app) for one month free to newcomers. In response, the items that were free or were available for a free trial were shared with the group, such as a free trial for 7 days (on the website) and access to a sample story. Those interested were invited to visit [AAGrapevine.org](http://AAGrapevine.org).

In addition, an A.A. group can buy a yearly subscription for the use of group members. This is a low-cost way to share the stories of the magazine and to share A.A.’s message. A member can also visit the website to get a Grapevine kit. This is generally used to introduce A.A.s to the Grapevine and to get them involved in the magazine.

Story selection was discussed, and the moderator shared that Grapevine editors (who are sober alcoholics) select from submitted material according to set criteria. Then, a mini group conscience is reached when three readers read the submissions and decide where the submission would be most appropriate. It was also noted that the Grapevine does not publish poems, lectures or tributes. One popular department is Letters to the Editor. Workshop members learned that the senior editor is currently looking for stories from the heart —stories that answer the question, “How did something in sobriety or some part of recovery touch you?”

Workshop members also learned what day the Grapevine is sent out, as well as how the Grapevine communicates with its subscribers (i.e. email newsletter).

Finally, answers to the question, “How do we let groups know about Grapevine?” were shared among the workshop attendees. Information that groups receive comes from the district level. In addition, as part of the announcements, the chairperson makes a statement, each meeting, about Grapevine information.

**“G.S.O.’s Archives: Writing A.A.’s Twelve Steps: 80 Years Ago!” (Moderator: April Hegner, G.S.O. Senior Archivist / Reporter: Donna M.)**

This workshop began with some opening remarks and a review of past influences on A.A., such as Bill W. and the Oxford Group, as well as some comments on Archives, including how most problems or questions about A.A. can be solved or answered by reading the books and history. A number of participants shared archival stories and thanked April for coming and for her presentation. Other questions, comments and concerns from the group included:

- Though the Medical community pamphlet was retired, one speaker found it useful. However, the pamphlet can still be obtained in archives.
- Another speaker commented that a Yahoo group on A.A. History discusses how the date of Bill W.’s sobriety was not June 10<sup>th</sup> but June 17<sup>th</sup>. Senior archivist stated that Dr. Bob said it was June 10<sup>th</sup>, so that is what we go on.
- Can the archives presentation be obtained? Yes. From [archives@aa.org](mailto:archives@aa.org).
- Is Grapevine archives separate? Yes, they are.
- After 9/11, A.A. members from NYC held meetings with first responders as a need was identified. Metal from the towers was used to create a circle and triangle so everyone could find the meeting room. The circle and triangle plaque from Ground Zero is in Archives.

**“Diversity and Inclusiveness” (Moderator: Erica N. / Reporter: Lyn P.)**

In this workshop, members addressed how to include all sections of society in A.A. meetings. Members also discussed how to better embrace diversity and how to work with special situations or special needs in A.A. meetings. Workshop attendees also shared their responses to two questions about A.A. and how to best incorporate diversity and foster inclusiveness: These two questions were:

1. *“How do we practice Tradition Three in our home group? Who are we to exclude?”*
2. *“Can we exclude people when we don’t know they are alcoholic or not?”*

In response to the first question, workshop members stressed that anonymity in the home group is important. It was also suggested that members turn to Conference-approved literature when and if questions on inclusiveness arise.

In response to the second question, workshop attendees shared their experience regarding exclusion, and how to best approach the issue. “Principles before personalities” was a helpful slogan to remember. Another member pointed out that A.A.’s “Traditions tell us we have diversity and inclusiveness.” Clearly, keeping A.A. inclusive and diverse is an ongoing endeavor.

**“A.A.’s Primary Purpose and Our Home Groups” (Moderator: John S. / Reporter: Dana H.)**

During this workshop, attendees shared answers to the question, *“What makes a good home group?”*

In response, members answered that feeling welcome, using greeters, finding familiar faces and forming bonds with others helps to make a good home group. In addition, it was recommended that Big Books be given to newcomers and to stress the importance of making



sure, while in early recovery, to find a home group. Also, good experience prompted members to try several meetings, find a format that they liked, find a group that has regular business meetings, and finally, find a contributing group that does not hold onto excess funds. Find a group that encourages members to get active in service and practice the spirit of rotation.

A second question, *“How can we help a struggling home group?”* prompted many members to share a wealth of experience:

- Take a group inventory;
- Try out different formats, i.e. speaker meeting, open meeting, closed meeting;
- Model other groups that are doing well;
- Attend quarterly meetings and assemblies;
- Use another group’s GSR or use your DCM for help;
- Remember, good sobriety is attractive;
- A group is its members — chat about how your group is doing well;
- Practice being good leaders and set an example;
- Fill service positions;
- Contact members on a phone list in order to stay in touch and to remind all of business meetings;
- And make your meeting fun! Plan things to do together.

#### **“The Role of the G.S.R.” (Moderator: Bob K. / Reporter: Roger C.)**

In this workshop, members discussed the roles, responsibilities and importance of G.S.R.s. In fact, it was said that the G.S.R. may be the most important job in A.A. In serving as a G.S.R., members shared that a person learns to understand how A.A. works. “You will become a better person,” said another.

But what are G.S.R.s supposed to do? In response, workshop members shared that they communicate what happens between the group and the district, they carry the group conscience to the area. In this role, communication is important, as a G.S.R. will explain how A.A. works to the group. Other workshop attendees shared that although it is overwhelming at first, it becomes easier. Study the Concepts. Serving as a G.S.R. gets you out of yourself, so you can recover and grow. Finally, as a G.S.R., members learn about A.A. to share with newcomers, they know to ask for help when needed. Help is available from many — talk to D.C.M. or delegate. Get a service sponsor. Show up, listen and learn.

One member asked, “As a G.S.R., can I hold another service position?” In response, members answered, “Yes.” However, in groups, though you sometimes have to hold other group positions, we give them up if others are able. One member cannot be a G.S.R. for two groups -- even though some groups do not have a G.S.R. (you can offer help, however). Finally, members said the role of a G.S.R. is about attraction, not promotion. Know when to rotate. Workshop members shared, “Remember that service is not for people to be important, it is about helping A.A. and the newcomer.”

#### **“Group Conscience: The Guiding Force” (Moderator: Becky P. / Reporter: Megan B.)**

In this workshop, members addressed two questions regarding the A.A. Group and its conscience. The first question: *“How important is group inventory?”* was met with much experience. Members shared that a group inventory was very important, though it is “often

not well understood and/or executed.” When a group inventory is done well, they share some common elements:

- Moderators for the inventory are engaged from outside the group;
- Members are prepared beforehand (with literature, discussion, etc.) so they know what is expected and how to participate. Preparedness = enthusiasm;
- Engage participation from all members (even the quiet ones);
- Use inventory results to frame action items for business meetings;
- Inventories create unity and enthusiasm among members (when done well);
- The inventory holds the group accountable for following Traditions and meeting our primary purpose

The second question, “*How can we get people to attend group business meetings?*” garnered many answers and suggestions from the workshop group. Among others, answers included:

- Personally ask members to attend — hold them accountable for not doing so;
- Business meetings need clear, defined structure (e.g. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month for 1 hour) and should be well advertised (e.g. announced at every meeting);
- Get creative about venues and “draws” to engage interest;
- Start holding business meetings, make changes as agreed, and encourage dissenters to attend next meeting and participate in the process;
- Any member of the group can encourage other members to participate (not just G.S.R.);
- And give everyone a job – if there are no spectators, then everyone participates!

# FULL FORUM PRESENTATION/WORKSHOP

**A.A.—A Solution for All Generations—Ed S.**, Delegate Panel 67, Area 91 Saskatchewan  
Hello everyone. I'm Ed and I'm an alcoholic. I'm honored, humbled and privileged to be serving as your General Service Conference delegate for Area 91.

I'm also honored to be here with you tonight presenting on our theme as an introduction to your full forum workshop covering "A.A.—A Solution for All Generations."

I can't begin to tell you how many times I sat down to begin preparing this presentation and just seemed to draw blanks. I couldn't seem to find the words to be able to share with you, and that's unusual for me!

I kept thinking, "What should I say? What does this mean? Where are the words?"

Then it dawned on me: "What *does* this mean?"

To begin with, this was the theme of our 68th Annual General Service Conference and, in doing some further research, it seems to be the 2018 theme of many assemblies and events throughout Canada and the U.S.

I'm sure that all of us here who have taken the time and traveled far to attend this weekend's forum will agree and have experienced that A.A. is and has been our solution, and that part is easy to talk about. But where do "all generations" come in, and how do we expand on that as a topic for tonight or anytime? Then some thoughts started to come together for me.

How many of us who faithfully attend our meetings and assemblies and other events are quick to welcome all newcomers that walk through our doors, both young and old? Are the older ones among us reluctant to approach younger newcomers, thinking they have nothing to offer? And what about younger members? Are they sometimes also somewhat reluctant when an older newcomer walks through those doors, also thinking they have nothing to offer?

For older members like me, I have witnessed many changes with each generation—as a father, brother, uncle, friend and as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I was a newcomer some time ago, there was not a huge difference in ages between newcomers and oldtimers. Our outlook on pretty much everything was fairly common, and our focus was on staying sober and hanging on to our great Fellowship in order to survive. Age, among other things, was never an issue and was never discussed.

Over time, I have had the experience of watching new people of different generations coming to our Fellowship and succeeding in the same way that many of us succeeded, and these people have continued to carry the message of hope and recovery.

More and more younger people have been coming to us and that's so heartwarming, because you younger people are our future. You will keep A.A. strong and alive and you will maintain a continued healthy solution for now and for those generations coming up behind you.

And we also can't forget about the older newcomers, the ones who have hung on to their disease as long as they could but are now desperate and ready to get sober and experience our solution for living. We want them to feel a sense of belonging as well as we practice our Twelfth Step.

The chapter "There Is a Solution" in our book *Alcoholics Anonymous* states:

"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action."

Both Bill and Bob, in some of their later talks, warned of the changes we were bound to witness and experience, and they suggested that we need to be ready to accept such changes and react to them in ways that would not allow A.A. to destroy itself from within!

So how do we make sure that the message of our common solution continues to apply to all generations? Are we doing everything in our home groups to welcome newcomers of all generations and make sure they feel that they belong to a fellowship that excludes no one but, rather, includes everyone? Are we carrying a strong message in our Twelfth Step work that gives a message of belonging and hope to those who are suffering? Are we adapting as much as we can to our technological age and getting on board with the changes that have come, not to mention the many more changes that will come as we move forward?

Are we doing our job in creating and developing a manner of living that becomes an attraction to others, so that they may see the solution working in our lives? Do we conduct ourselves and enjoy our great Fellowship and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, so that others will see and "want what we have"? As I mentioned earlier, the number of younger members is increasing steadily—or maybe I'm just getting older.

However, we are starting to see the younger generation become larger and stronger and more committed. We see young people joining together, and there have been large conferences held in some areas of Western North America and Hawaii. In our region, WACYCAA (Western Area Conference of Young People in A.A.) has an annual conference around the end of December each year. Many of you here who attended our spring assembly heard a young lady share on her experience at the last conference. It was very enlightening, and it was also an indication of the degree of success and their commitment to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. They also welcome the older members to these conferences, and the generational gap closes as everyone sees that they are working for a common purpose: to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.

We say in our Responsibility Statement that:

"I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am Responsible." It does not say:

"When anyone close to my age, somewhere acceptable to me."

If we say this declaration and mean it, then we should also be prepared to reach out to those of all ages and carry the message of hope and inclusion that they, too, may achieve sobriety and then help others to achieve the same.

As it states on page 120 in our book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*:

“Great suffering and great love are A.A.’s disciplinarians; we have no other.”

To me this means that, as alcoholics, we are one. Our illness knows no boundaries, and is neither selective nor gentle. Regardless of the generation we represent, we know of the suffering and the hopelessness and the desperation that comes with our disease.

We know that as drunks we can all end up in the same places: in hospitals, in jails or in a grave. Our disease has no generational selective process and we must always work together to help all alcoholics who are suffering and need our help, no matter who or at what age.

So, to me, this is why we have our meetings, area assemblies, WRAASA and this forum. In fact, to those who may be interested in what goes on when your delegate attends the General Service Conference in New York, I can tell you that the entire purpose of that Conference is to come up with new ways and improve current ways to continue to carry our message of hope and recovery. Anyone here from G.S.O. and any past or current delegate will be happy to confirm this.

And we need to hold these workshops so that we can exchange ideas and thoughts in order to improve on our primary purpose, which is to carry our message to those who still suffer. It will be interesting to hear your thoughts and opinions, and I thank you for being here for me.

**“A.A. — A Solution for All Generations” (Moderator: Cate W. / Reporter: Viki E.)**

In this Full Forum Workshop, the search engine “Google” was discussed in regard to showing results including the A.A. website. Is it reliable? A question, “Are we using current search engines?” was posed. It was said, “We are guardians, but we need to perpetuate and nurture our message.” Other questions were discussed, such as: “How do we break through rigid mindsets?” and “How do we “educate” drug users about singleness of purpose?” In response, A.A.s suggested using the Foreword in the Big Book as an introduction at [open] public meetings. Others suggested that the A.A. pamphlets: “A.A. Group” and “Problems Other Than Alcohol” were quite clear in how to respond to/handle these queries. Members also shared experience in being cautious and looking at the spirit rather than the letter of the message. Others urged flexibility. Other suggestions were: to use a “messenger” between meetings for discussions, spend time over coffee, and invite a newcomer to participate. Still other members shared their experience that “everything starts at the home group.” Some attendees suggested referring those with other addictions to another fellowship. Some other suggestions were to “keep it simple and share your stories with newcomers — no matter the age difference.” Finally, members shared that caution should be used when using online recovery alone, as it may create more isolation. All members agreed that supporting the Corrections Correspondence program was important.

The second question: “Do we still owe an obligation to insure this Fellowship survives? If so, are we demonstrating that?” received affirmative responses from attendees such as, “Yes, we need to be out there — not in here,” and “It is no longer about me, but the alcoholic coming into the door.” Still another mentioned that “sponsorship in all 3 legacies” was important.

# PAST TRUSTEES SHARING

**Vic P.**, Western Canada Regional Trustee, 2008-2012

As past trustees, we have a rather unique view — we are on the other side of the hill, since we've been through the service structure and now we're looking back. It has occurred to me that this whole revolving and rotation-inspired process (that is so clear at this forum), is such a spiritual characteristic of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It was good to see people get up and share, and to think that among them are all the delegates and trustees of the future. That is very reassuring — A.A. is constant in that regard. I always thought that one of the main reasons we involve ourselves in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous (beyond that of it being good for us) is that we put a lot of energy into keeping A.A. the same in a vastly changing world. And I thought, That's the bottom line — that we don't want A.A. to change. I like to think of the spiritual side and all the love that we experience in these forums, but I always go back to my old sponsor and what he said about having feet on the ground. It says in the Big Book that "He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth." One day, a long time ago, I was complaining to my old sponsor about something — maybe another person in Alcoholics Anonymous, and he said, "Well, if you like everyone in A.A., you probably haven't been to enough meetings."

So, you know, in my journey through service, I have to say that I saw people I didn't like. And I saw things happen that I didn't like. But somehow, today, it has become more or less automatic that I dismiss the fact that I don't like you or that or this because it is pretty irrelevant what I like or don't like. It doesn't really matter. The bigger picture is beyond me and that is service. It has become part of the way I see things.

Once, when I was a trustee, I was resentful at a very good friend of mine, also in service — another trustee. You see, the Western Canada Regional Forums used to be held in February. So, when I became a trustee, I chaired the Western Canada Regional Forum in 2012. As I discussed with another trustee, one of the absolute highlights in being a regional trustee is to preside over the forums. Well, lo and behold, by the time the 2014 forum arrived, the forum schedule had changed! The Western Canada Regional Forums were now being held in June — the same month I rotated off. So, I didn't get to chair it. The new trustee did. I wasn't (really) resentful.

But, in 2016, I was at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Forum that he chaired. A few weeks after that, he passed away. And I have never been so grateful that my friend got to chair two forums. Here, at events like this Regional Forum, I am reminded what all of this really about.

**Tom K.**, Western Canada Regional Trustee, 2004-2008

My first Regional Forum was held in 1986, just down the street at the Hotel Saskatchewan. I was 2 1/2 years sober. I didn't have a home group and I didn't have a sponsor, but I was a regular attender of meetings because I had never found anything, anywhere, quite like this. One Friday, a friend of mine that I worked with, asked me, on the spur of the moment, if I was available or busy because he could really use some help. He was on the organizing

committee. Reflecting back, I am so glad he put it that way, because if he had said “You need to come” or “you should come,” I doubt I would have gone. But, when he said that they needed my help, I went. I don’t remember anything I heard. But I remember what I saw and I remember what I felt in that room. And that really changed the sense of what I belonged to and what Alcoholics Anonymous was. The people I met at that Regional Forum went on to become the nucleus of my new fellowship with people. And that fellowship with people continued to grow and expand. Years later, it still grows and expands.

Shortly thereafter, my Higher Power placed me in a home group and I got a sponsor. Once I got into that home group I had the opportunity to start giving back and really start recovering. One time, I remember hearing a person say, “Your recovery doesn’t really begin until you start working for someone else’s recovery.” That is what the Third Legacy of Service accomplished for me and for all of us.

Here we are, on June 10, 2018, and I think about June 10, 1935. I also think about two failures in the parking lot behind City Hospital in Akron. One, a failed businessman and the other a doctor who had almost exhausted his practice because of his alcoholism. One fed the other a bottle of beer to steady his hands so he could go into the hospital and perform a delicate operation. And, from that failure and despair, a loving Creator fashioned what has become this life-giving Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We don’t wait to be recovered before we get involved in our Third Legacy of service. We come as we are, exactly *where* we are. There is no accident — we shouldn’t be anywhere else but where we are, right now — in our recovery or anywhere else. It is through our service that we become recovered. Service is not about not having any fear or even about feeling comfortable. You owe it to yourself, because whether you believe it or not, taking those actions will change your recovery and your life.

Recovery, Unity, Service — they are all one thing. To recover, I need to serve. In order to serve and recover, I need the unity that holds us together. Without one of these elements, I am compromised in the other areas. For instance, if I come to service and neglect my recovery until I’m done serving, I am going to compromise what my Higher Power can accomplish through my efforts. Why? Because what we do here directly impacts those people who have yet to hear our message. And so, balance is not only important for me, personally, in my recovery, it also impacts the effectiveness of what I try to accomplish. Thank you.

**Jo-Anne L.**, Trustee-at-Large/Canada, 2007-2011

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous and began to put up my hand, I was taught that if I went to an event and it started on Friday night and ended on Sunday then I should not miss one single thing. I’ve tried to keep that commitment most of my sobriety. I can still hear my sponsor’s voice telling me what to do at an event like this. She’d point and say, “Start there, and introduce yourself to that man over there.” I’d say, “Well, I don’t even know him!” She’d answer, “Well, you will, and just carry on around the room, because somebody in this room is afraid to do that. And you may miss meeting them.” These are some of the little things we learn in our sobriety.

I was a fortunate trustee. When I was trustee-at-large/Canada another trustee had passed away. So, I got to serve, for a few terms, as the trustee for another area. It was an amazing experience; we don’t usually get to see that in Canada we have fourteen areas. There are

four areas in Western Canada and ten areas in Eastern Canada. So, it was my good fortune to attend an assembly in every area of Canada.

When I came into A.A. in 1979, I sat with my head down until 1984. I didn't look up. I didn't get a sponsor and I certainly wouldn't have attended anything like this. But in 1984, God gave me the first gift of Alcoholics Anonymous: Desperation. It was a gift I thought I'd never have. I was the woman whose brother came and took away her child, saying, "You can't have her anymore." I was in a divorce where, when I went to the lawyer, I had no voice because I was too afraid to talk — and so I let things go. But I came to A.A., I found a sponsor and I went through the Twelve Steps with that woman, eye-to-eye. Through that I finally found my voice. And I found a boyfriend, too. I'm still with him. We're married since 1990, but we've been a twosome since 1985. That man taught me that I needed to find my own way, because as a woman, I had no voice. I'd say, "What are we going to do today?" and he'd say, "Well, I'm doing this . . ." And then he'd say, "Don't you have any friends, Jo-Anne?" I had to think about that. I didn't have any thoughts of my own. Then, someone invited me to something like this and I got involved in my group. All of sudden, I had a voice — an opinion — a voice that could be heard and it was here, with my feet standing on the ground, that I learned that I could make a difference in the world. You gave me the opportunity, and all I did was this. Everyone in this room has that same opportunity. Every one of you in this room, you are our future.

I love Alcoholics Anonymous and my greatest adventures were serving as trustee-at-large/Canada. Today, I am a grandmother. I have people in my life who love me. A few people have gone to the mike and said, "I'm so glad this event is free." I want to say that it is not. This is Tradition Seven at work. This is one of the reasons that your donations help A.A. to bring events like this to people like us. We get to benefit from that and the communication that happens. Through building relationships, we become stronger — this becomes the ground we stand on. We need each other. Thank you.



# “WE’LL GET BACK TO YOU”

## Unanswered Ask-it-Basket Questions

1. When did term limits start for board members? We had someone ask last night after hearing that Dr. Norris served on the board for a very long time? What was the reason?

*Rotation of Class A Trustees came into effect by action of the General Service Conference in 1966. At this Conference, delegates accepted the General Service Board’s restructure plan, which included, for the first time, a rotation schedule for Class A, nonalcoholic trustees. It was agreed that “Each new Class A trustee will be elected for a three-year term, which may be followed by two successive three-year terms. A.A. members on the Board will continue to serve four years.” Up until that time, Class A trustees would change if there were resignations or retirements.*

*Dr. Norris was elected Class A trustee in 1951, which he served through 1961. He was nominated as chairperson of the General Service Board in 1961, a position he held through his retirement in April 1978. Dr. Norris was highly regarded for his service to A.A., both as a professional in the field of alcoholism and as dedicated friend of the Fellowship. We have not yet found any documented rationale for his long-term service.*

*Rotation of Class B, alcoholic trustees was practiced as early as 1951.*

2. Why the different terms for Class A trustees, who serve 2 consecutive 3-year terms; Regional Trustees, who serve four successive annual terms; General Service Trustees, who serve four years; and trustees-at-large, who serve a four-year term?

*Regional Trustees, General Service Trustees and trustees-at-large serve four years on the General Service Board. There is no dissimilarity with regard to the length of service. “Four successive annual terms” and “a four-year term” denote up to “four year” commitment.*

*Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees serve 2 consecutive 3-year terms. Rotation of Class A trustees was affected with the GSB’s Structural change in 1966. At that time, the Board established a three-year term, followed by two successive three-year terms. This was later changed by action of the 1993 General Service Conference to limit the rotation to two (2) consecutive three-year terms but with the understanding that the Chair of the GSB, with approval by that Board, may extend an additional one (1) year term, where necessary. The two years of the first term allows for a learning curve, whereby new Class A’s gain experience and knowledge of A.A.’s principles, to better serve the Fellowship.*

*For more information on the roles and responsibilities of the different classes of trustees, as well as the distinction in how vacancies are filled, please refer to the GSB's by-laws.*

3. Would you provide shared experience on 50/50 raffles?

*The subject of raffles has been discussed from time to time at past General Service Conferences. We don't have a black and white answer regarding 50-50 raffles to offer you. As you may know, the General Service Conference is the closest thing we have to a group conscience for A.A. as a whole in the U.S. and Canada. I have included an Ask-It-Basket questions and answers from the General Service Conference, and also from Box 459 article (page 9). Here is a link to search if you would like to look for additional information [https://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/box-4-5-9-news-and-notes-from-gso](https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/box-4-5-9-news-and-notes-from-gso) .*

*Additionally, most A.A. conferences, conventions and round-ups follow A.A.'s Twelve Traditions. You can access the Guidelines (on) Conferences, Conventions and Round-ups on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site at [http://www.aa.org/default/en\\_pdfs/mg-04\\_conferenceandconv.pdf](http://www.aa.org/default/en_pdfs/mg-04_conferenceandconv.pdf).*

*As you may already know, some A.A. events that hold fundraisers to supplement the revenue expected through attendance at the event itself. Putting on such activities is up to the informed conscience of the committee. It would be a personal decision for other members as to whether they would support and attend fundraisers. Of course, in keeping with A.A.'s Seventh Tradition, funds are not solicited or accepted from outside A.A. It seems the concerns about raffles are most pronounced if (1) outsiders participate, (2) the prizes are large, (3) prizes are solicited from or donated by non-A.A.s, (4) they take the place of voluntary contributions, and generate revenue on which A.A. groups or other entities come to depend.*

*We encourage you to talk to your district and GSR as well for shared experience on how other groups view 50/50 draws at roundups, as well as speak to your delegate.*

4. If a GSR identifies themselves as a "drug addicted alcoholic" at an assembly, is it acceptable to be asked to leave as a result of him refusing to conform?

*Based on your question, it appears that the GSR you are describing in your e-mail is attracted to serving Alcoholics Anonymous and took the time to attend an area assembly. It would not be the place of this office to be the arbitrator of, or to dictate any policy on word usage within A.A. It might create a dogmatic atmosphere and a rigid interpretive tone that is really outside the scope of what this office provides the Fellowship.*

*It seems that most A.A. members choose to identify themselves at meetings as 'alcoholics,' so that others may know that they have a common problem as noted in our Preamble, "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share*

*their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.”*

*So, the topic of qualifiers has been discussed by many groups over the years as A.A. members are free to interpret the Traditions as they see them and so with the areas. On one hand, some A.A.s share a perspective that the use some qualifier is fine as long as they say they are alcoholics. On the other hand, there are members who are going to continue discouraging using any word in relation to being an alcoholic.*

*A.A. is a richly textured, inclusive spiritual society - perhaps one of the freest organizations ever envisioned or created. It is a deeply principled Fellowship with a foundation based on our Steps, Traditions and Concepts that are clear directions for all of us, yet are gifted to us as suggestions.*

*In our literature, “Problems Other Than Alcohol,” our co-founder Bill W. writes:*

*“Therefore, I see no way of making nonalcoholic addicts into A.A. members. Experience says loudly that we can admit no exceptions, even though drug users and alcoholics happen to be first cousins of a sort. If we persist in trying this, I’m afraid it will be hard on the drug user himself, as well as on A.A. We must accept the fact that no nonalcoholic, whatever his affliction, can be converted into an alcoholic A.A. member.”*

*He goes on to say “...a drug addict who nevertheless has a genuine alcoholic history” can be a member because of the alcoholic part of his experience.*

# CLOSING REMARKS

**Michele Grinberg**, Class A (nonalcoholic) General Service Board chairperson

Some of you saw me taking notes on my iPad this weekend. When I'm listening, I always listen for the unofficial theme of the forum. Every forum has an unofficial theme. Here is the theme for this forum: "Love and tolerance is our code." That was so present, all weekend. I'm so impressed with the good spirit that I've found this weekend with all of you. Here are a couple of things that resonated with me — for me, they brought forward that theme of "love and tolerance is our code." There were excellent delegate presentations, and I heard something that I just love: Service taught a delegate "to look for the good in others, instead of being "judgy"." I like that! I also appreciated a delegate recognizing the reality we face in communicating our message in the digital world — while also maintaining our anonymity: "We are trying our best to reach more of the alcoholics who inhabit the world."

From the Full Forum Workshop: "A.A.—A Solution for All Generations," I heard much sensitivity about older members linking up and welcoming newer members — whether they are younger or not. I heard really gentle and caring ideas. I also heard a comment about how A.A.'s Responsibility Statement is indeed addressed to **anyone, anywhere**. I say that statement all the time, but this weekend the emphasis really rang true. From the floor, I heard lots of kindness expressed about how to respond to people who show up in the rooms with dual addiction. There were lots of great ideas, but the thing that really resonated with me was the kindness with which you all spoke about it.

Among the presentations were how we are extending the hand of A.A. to share the "language of the heart" and to break down accessibility barriers. Of course, the Big Book being signed, in American Sign Language, is a powerful example of that. Also, the references needed for Punjabi materials in the United States and Canada. We have many different languages spoken in the United States and Canada. Are we sensitive to it? We have lots of material translated in different languages. Reach out to the General Service Office, maybe we can help. Of course, that's your dollar in the basket. When you put that in the basket, we can generate those translations and get the material to you, so you can put a hand out to somebody who has a barrier of language.

Last evening, the workshop on diversity and inclusiveness had lots of good ideas. Again, they were shared with a gentleness and kindness of spirit. This morning, after listening and thinking about it, and after having some sleep, I came away with a question that I want to pose: "What more can we do to make our service structure reflect our inclusiveness? That really stuck with me this morning and I hope you'll think about it.

I've thought a lot this year about the topic for the Full Forum Workshop which was also the theme of the 2018 Conference: "A.A. — A Solution For All Generations." I think this topic has at least two meanings. The first meaning is tolerance for all alcoholics who seek the A.A. solution. Bill wrote this, in *As Bill Sees It*, "Honesty with ourselves and others gets us sober, but it is tolerance that keeps us that way." The other meaning, for me, is that A.A. is timeless and can be a solution for all generations yet to come. That means it is up to all of us who care about A.A. to keep A.A. strong for those future generations. Listening to all of you, I know A.A. is full of passionate, smart, kind and gracious people who will work hard, do service, and keep

the hand of A.A. out there for whoever might need it. I will close by saying this: Please bring a person who hasn't been to a Regional Forum to the next Regional Forum with you. This is one way we introduce someone to what they don't know — the magic of service and the large interconnected world of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you so much for a wonderful weekend, your service to A.A., and I look forward to seeing you on that road of happy destiny.

