

# **PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM**

## **FINAL REPORT**

**JULY 12-14, 2024**

**Las Vegas, Nevada**

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES**

**AND NONALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Pacific Regional Forum that will be held December 4-6, 2026, in San Diego, California, at the Wyndham San Diego Bayside.

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# INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Pacific Regional Forum was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. Registration for the forum was **918**. This included **588** members attending their very first Forum.

# UNANSWERED ASK-IT-BASKET QUESTIONS

**Q.** What do you say to those that say having a PI booth at a Pride festival is inviting controversy and implied affiliation?

**A.** As you may know, the General Service Office is the publisher of A.A. literature and a repository of A.A. shared experience. We are not the final authority. GSO does not give opinions on local matters, nor do we give directives to groups. The role of GSO is to research A.A. literature, correspondence files, and, at times, the Archives, in order to share the collected experience of groups in the U.S. and Canada.

Since GSO does not give directives to groups, we can't say whether your Area should have a table or booth at the Pride event.

What we can tell you is that whenever PI or CPC trusted servants carry the message at an event, we are not "affiliating with" or "endorsing" a service, an ideology or a perspective. Instead, our trusted servants show up because there is an opportunity to share the message with individuals who might need it.

As you can imagine, our trusted servants provide information at events for faith leaders, medical providers, community events, schools, etc. Some of these organizations might have perspectives we would not want to be affiliated with, but if we stick to our A.A. message, members have found that we are able to carry the message without getting caught up in "outside issues."

In some Areas, PI committees set up trainings or study groups using the pamphlet [P-40 Speaking at Meetings Outside A.A.](#) (formerly **Speaking at Non-AA meetings**) to make sure that trusted servants understand how to stick to the A.A. message in non-A.A. settings.

It may be useful to know that some Areas have decided that there are good opportunities for carrying the A.A. message at their local Pride events. Similarly, in past years, GSO has included LGBTQ+ Fairs in the list of national events where the office has had a booth. Our Seventh Tradition (we pay our own way) helps us to pay for this booth space to avoid affiliation.

Undoubtedly, other Areas have decided against participating in Pride events. Either way, we trust your Area to make a solid, well-informed group conscience decision.

If an Area does decide to have a booth at a Pride event (or any event where there might be media coverage), we encourage all trusted servants to let organizers and the local media know that it is essential that no A.A. member staffing a booth is identifiable in printed or broadcast media or the internet.

# DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS

## Addressing Barriers to Effective Communication Within AA

Eric L., Area 06, Northern Coastal California

My name is Eric L. I am an alcoholic, and I currently serve as the Panel 73 Delegate for the California Northern Coastal Area.

When I walked into my first AA meeting, I could not listen.... Too much anxiety, and the fog of heavy drinking (and a lot of drugs) made the world sound like all the adults in a Peanuts cartoon. "*Wah wah wah.*" You probably said wonderful things, but I could not hear any of them.

And if I could hear anything you said, I was convinced you were lying – no one could really stay sober for four years, and no one would ever be grateful to be an alcoholic.

Eventually, though, sobriety gave me back my voice – and, perhaps more importantly, my ability to hear and to trust. And what I heard were stories of recovery, of redemption, and of forgiveness. Stories that made me laugh, and some that made me cry. The best ones made me laugh and cry at the same time. I started to believe the things you shared, and I started to believe that the things that had happened for you in recovery could also happen for me.

From hearing your stories, I learned how to share my own. And eventually, I learned how to listen to your stories, not to produce a response, but just to bear witness to what you shared.

I would not be sober today if I had not learned how to listen and to trust. We are a Fellowship that thrives on the stories we tell each other. It is how we recover. We relate to one another, we trust one another, and we create those human connections that we lost in our disease.

But sometimes, we stop listening. I am not sure why. But it seems to happen most often when we disagree with one another, or when we just do not like what someone is saying. When I could not relate to speakers in early recovery, I was told to listen for the similarities and not the differences. But when we disagree with someone about an agenda topic, we somehow cannot hear their own love for AA, and their own hope that our program continues to serve people coming into our rooms.

I am concerned that we have stopped listening and we have stopped trusting one another. And that is, to me, one of the most significant barriers to our communication within the service structure. We are a Fellowship in a rapidly changing world, and change is hard and scary. It makes sense we would retreat into ourselves, stop listening to one another, be more cautious around new ideas and new people.

As Delegate, I have had a unique perspective on how communication works within the structure. Communicating up and down the service triangle is one of my principal duties in

this service role. And while I have seen some challenges with communication at the bottom of our inverted triangle – communication is sometimes slow or vague, there is an excessive use of acronyms, and language is too often not very direct – I have seen major challenges in communication at the top of the triangle, that's us, the Fellowship.

I have seen people make quick assumptions based mostly on fears. The Internet is a breeding ground for inaccurate communication. Some online forums had dramatically false information about the Plain Language Big Book, for example. So let me be clear. We did not change the Steps, it is not a “woke” version of the Big Book, it is not gender-neutral, and no one took God out.

I hope that we can learn to listen again, and I hope that we learn to trust again. When someone with information shares something, I hope we listen to them, not question their motives or disagree with facts. I hope that we stop relying on secret Facebook groups for our information, and instead trust the process that we have.

We already know how to address these barriers to effective communication within AA. We have been practicing for years.

Let us listen to one another. Let us look for the similarities we share rather than the differences that can separate us. Let us trust our trusted servants – and trust that the group conscience really is the manifestation of God's voice in our rooms.

I had to learn how to trust my Higher Power, how to trust all of you, and how to trust the process. And I had to learn how to listen to my heart – and to yours. I am so glad we have the practice.

## **Working Together, Increasing Trust**

Doug S., Area 05, Southern California

My name is Doug S. and I'm a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous! ¡Mi nombre es Doug S. y soy un miembro agradecido de Alcohólicos Anónimos! It's an honor and privilege to serve Southern California Area 5 as Delegate for Panel 73. My sobriety date is May 22, 1988, and for that I'm truly grateful!

I chose to present on the topic “Working Together, Increasing Trust.” Some of you may know the topic is also the theme for the 75th General Service Conference. It's also interesting because the Agenda Committee responsible for choosing the theme didn't have that as one of the themes to consider prior to this year's Conference. The theme was suggested during committee discussions at the 74th Conference this past April. There continues to be a lingering “trust” issue following the resignation of the Board Chair at the January 2023 Board weekend.

What are some of the ingredients of “Working Together” and “Increasing Trust”?

The first thing that comes to mind is communication. Something extremely vital to the health of our Fellowship, any relationship I've ever been in — including my “current” marriage, and, of course, member to member. A quick search in the A.A. Service Manual reveals multiple instances of the word *communication*. The first is on Page 4, in the section titled “How General Service Functions”:

*It might be helpful to think of general service as a kind of dialogue or communication between the groups, the trusted servants working on their behalf, and the General Service Office and General Service Board as they all manage the Fellowship's affairs. Questions, concerns, viewpoints and proposals travel from the groups “down the triangle” — and information and proposals head back “up the triangle” to the groups.*

The second instance is on Page 7, Chapter 1, The Group and Its General Service Representative, What It Means to Be a GSR, paragraph 2:

*The role of the general service representative, or GSR, is essential to the purpose of general service. Bill W. wrote in Concept I of The Twelve Concepts for World Service: “The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services.” The role of the GSR is essential to ensuring that groups can fulfill that responsibility. Only when a GSR keeps the group informed and communicates the group conscience can the truly act for A.A. as a whole. This communication is a two-way street, making the GSR responsible not only for bringing forward the group's voice, but for taking back to the group Conference actions that affect the Fellowship's unity, health and growth.*

Some other important ingredients of “Working Together” are skills, such as, time management, problem-solving, listening, critical thinking, and collaboration. With other elements being interpersonal conduct, well-defined roles, accountability, and a positive culture.

The 73rd Conference passed the recommendation that the Board perform an inventory prior to this year's Conference. There were two other Advisory Actions aligned with reaching the goals of the Board Inventory. Those are:

1. Report quarterly the fiscal performance of A.A. and Grapevine/La Viña Boards for the purposes of transparency and assisting in the reporting to the A.A. Fellowship. This helps address: “open and transparent communication and increasing trust.”
2. Conference members meet for general sharing sessions to discuss issues currently facing the Fellowship. This helps address: “working together, increasing trust.”

The inventory report, written by the Interim Board Chair, Mike L., was shared during Conference this year. It revealed several things to help the Fellowship “work together and increase trust” with the Board. Some of those items are:

Improve communication: standard, consistent messaging, and communicate with a single cohesive voice.

Critical/serious issues, e.g., the Board Chair resignation, should have quick, timely and detailed explanations to prevent controversy and misinformation.



Conduct leadership training to identify and address inappropriate behavior before problems escalate.

Ensure processes, policies and procedures are well-defined and followed.

Social media played no role in the resignation, but played a big part in escalating tensions where misinformation played a significant role in accusations from the Fellowship directed at the Board. With limited information coming from the Board, social media platforms filled the void following the resignation.

Engage in regional and area events, such as this forum, to help sharing of information up the service structure triangle.

The Board report included a very heartfelt apology made by the Interim Chair (on behalf of the Board). Many of the Board members spoke candidly at the Conference this year about the improvements, how they feel, and improved relationships they're experiencing among the Board and the Fellowship in particular.

As someone who was privileged to attend both the 73rd and 74th GSC, I witnessed a tremendous amount of backlash directed toward the Board. More so in 2023 compared to this year, but some hard feelings persist.

In closing, for the health and welfare of our Fellowship we need to work together, learn from our mistakes, commit to improving in all areas of our duties and responsibilities and try not to jump to conclusions without knowing the facts, which, as you all know, can be a difficult task.

Thanks for allowing me to be of service to A.A.

Respectfully submitted, Doug S., Southern California Delegate, Panel 73

## **What Shape Is Your Triangle?**

Alex W., Area 09, Mid-Southern California

I am an alcoholic, and my name is Alex W. I have the honor and privilege of serving Mid Southern California Area 09 as their Panel 74 Delegate. My home group is "Shut up and Cross Talk." We meet on Tuesdays at 8 pm at TLC. I have a sponsor and I work with others.

I got sober on January 4th of 2013 in the middle of my senior year in high school in South Florida. I can't remember where I learned about the circle and triangle, but it was my first home group where I learned about the Grapevine. I selected an article that I have never read, but couldn't have been more fitting, "What Shape Is Your Triangle?" (after the 1989 Grapevine article). The circle and triangle have been prevalent for as long as A.A has been around. I saw it for the first time in a third edition Big Book. To many and to me they represent the Three Legacies — Recovery, Unity, and Service. The triangle, symbolizing the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, inside of a circle, which stands for the world at

large. The triangle that was chosen, much like everything Bill did, was intentional and for a reason. An equilateral triangle: one having three equal sides. Since getting sober it was instilled in me that the three sides represent a bar stool, and one can survive a while with two but certainly the bar stool would fall over if it was down to one. Sitting with all three sides of the bar stool intact would allow for stability and comfort no matter what life might hand me. While reading this article I was able to reflect on my journey up until this point. What I know for sure is that what I have witnessed, and been taught, is only practical experience that can allow me to speak here today. The Twelve Steps for personal recovery, Twelve Traditions for group unity, and Twelve Concepts for world service have given me direction and purpose. As the article states, "The Three Legacies are the operative heritage of Alcoholics Anonymous. Surrender, faith, confession, restitution, ego-deflation, and other principles that strengthened personal recovery among early AAs, are handed down through the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

"Self-sacrifice, humility, tolerance, and singleness of purpose are among the measures that proved to foster unity within A.A. groups; they are handed down to other groups through the Twelve Traditions of Unity. And practices that contribute to smooth service operations—participation, rights of decision and appeal, discussion and vote--are passed on through the Twelve Concepts of Service." September of this year marks five years living in Southern California. I found to my surprise that people stayed sober even though the meetings were 90 minutes. To be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous means something different to everyone. To me that's what makes A.A. the most magical place on earth. Despite living in two places, there are still families being restored, and renewed. There are still people running to the mic and screaming passionately for their point of view to be heard, and I am still moved by the membership's ability to give up so much.

During my first year of sobriety, it was through the Fellowship that I experienced my Higher Power. I was asked to join the 2014 FCYPAA host committee, and I also was a part of a large sponsorship family. I watched how people were living and followed in their footsteps. We held parties, dinners, and camping trips. We had a community, we had each other and there wasn't anything we couldn't get through. The Fellowship was my solution. I simply did not know how to balance out the recovery and service side of my triangle, even though I could quote the book, and I could show up. I did enough service, did inventories to get by, but was committed to unity.

The depth and weight of all of the 36 Principles did not come until I met my current sponsor. How blind had I been to believe that I was active in my recovery and serving like a servant? I could quote the Big Book, and there wasn't a commitment I wasn't willing to take on. But it meant nothing to me. I was returning home with four years of sobriety from a three-month trip in India when the recovery side of my triangle was put to the test. The sponsorship family was no longer there, and my community had overnight been uplifted. I learned that dependency on anything third dimensional would always leave me empty. Desperate to be changed. Maggie and I started to read this book *The Spirituality of Imperfection*. The longest 18 inches I learned are from my head to my heart. Her eyes, soft and sincere, while she uttered the words, "No one cares how many meetings you're speaking at or how many people you sponsor." She would ask me things like, "How's your

relationship with your mom?" "If I called your boss, what would they say?" "Do you owe money?" "Are you dating one guy or three again?" "How about character assassination? still getting some guilty pleasure out of that?" "Are you still trying to control and manage your life and others or have you finally let go?" "Are you still holding on to the belief that you can wish away the parts in your makeup that you are not fond of? Or have you finally given that to your God?" The best thing that happened to me was the fetal position crying so deeply during years four through seven. It was only in the last couple years that I learned something of being a servant and service.

I was sitting in my car crying after an area meeting. I often ponder now, "Are you doing it right if you don't feel like throwing in the towel?" It was my last time serving as an Alternate Delegate and Area chair. This was a choice I am grateful for accepting but look back and realize what an ego-feeding proposition I took on, choosing to serve two positions in hopes that the outcome would lead to another position (Delegate). The tears came as I sat in my car outside of a baby shower and saw two friends and their baby walking into this party. Here's the reality check. Not only had I missed her being pregnant and the baby being born, I didn't even know she was expecting. Over the entire year of 2023, I gave up moments to serve my ambition. I gave up writing two reports. This was what they talked about: "hiding good motives underneath bad ones." I got lost in my commitments and missed the point. That was years 8-10. Holding commitments, and serving from a place of pride, ego, fear, perfectionism and my favorite resentment. I allowed the service side to run my life. It's been only in my eleventh year that I have begun to learn something of an equilateral triangle.

Much like the article, amongst the greatest gifts I've been given is cherishing all parts of the triangle. I absolutely love my entire life today. I live in Redondo Beach, California, where I have been gifted my dreams, my best friends, the love of my life, Stella, my home, purpose, service, adventure, and joy. I am grateful for the sobriety that I received in South Florida; my sponsor is still there. But it's been through living in two places and traveling all over the world with A.A. at every destination that I have been gifted my present life. When I call my sponsor with a new dilemma, I am stopped mid-sentence with the same question "Have you found it necessary to drink today?" We live life forward and understand it backwards. In General Service, everything feels like it's a big deal, at least it does to me. So, I can pause and remember the glorious fact that just for today millions of people all over the world have not found it necessary to drink. As the article states, like you old timers know, the best is yet to come. I hope the fire never dies in us. I hope we continue to carry the baton, and turn the light on for those stumbling in the dark. There is one thing for certain that I hope, and that's that God isn't done with us yet, rather we're just getting started.

## **Cultivating Future Service Leadership**

Pablo H., Area 93, Central California

My name is Pablo H., and I am alcoholic. My sobriety date is November 20, 1987. My home group is Grupo Aprender a Vivir in Linguistic District #2 in Bakersfield, California. I have the honor and privilege to serve as the Panel 73 delegate for Area 93, Central California. The topic I chose for my presentation is "Cultivating Future Service Leadership." I want to thank the organizers of this Pacific Regional Forum for their time and patience.

In my journey in Alcoholics Anonymous, I have seen the wonderful service work of my fellow members in group meetings, on various committees, district meetings, and area assemblies. I have always liked to volunteer to read the *Daily Reflection*, the Traditions or Concepts. To be honest, I still like to volunteer, and I smile when I tell the meeting, "It's because I'm still learning them."

At one time, I was a GSR and our Hispanic interdistrict meeting was taking place in our own district. We asked them what we needed to do to be good servants. "Make yourselves attractive by practicing the Traditions, read the Service Manual and get a sponsor," they told us.

These interdistrict meetings were key, because many experienced and knowledgeable fellow members would attend. They were quite dedicated to helping the newcomers in service, so we got the most out of the meeting. They were always ready to guide us.

Area assemblies have been very special for me, particularly the committee and officer meetings and reports, because they have always put our principles into practice to arrive at the best decisions, by referring to the Concepts, mostly, and, if necessary, by pointing us to the area guidelines, which are a mirror of all our principles.

All of this was a great motivator, and I started to do my reports this way, even when I was a GSR, and when I became DCM. Each one of these service positions was like going back to school for me: the main subject was service and how to carry it out. The district and area assembly always did their best to make sure GSRs were motivated to continue in their service and to make sure that the home group was being represented. Otherwise, we in the area would be deciding for him or her or for the group. I know for certain that among those new GSRs and DCMs, there is a future delegate.

So, humbly, I would suggest to you that you read, comprehend and practice the Traditions; read the Service Manual; and always have a service sponsor who is active in service. This will make it so that both service and trusted servants will attract the person who is ready to raise their hand and take a step forward to represent their group. Our program deserves the best from each of us. The founders did a masterful job. Now it is our turn to do the best, so that the spirit of rotation in service is attractive, and those

who have not yet served may raise their hands and say, “If Pablo was able to serve, so can I.” That is the great duty that each trusted servant has.

Being a GSR may well be the most important job in AA. Therefore, I must be careful about the way I behave and express myself, and try to avoid being arrogant, because there are always fellow members who are watching me. Let’s remember that the first impression is worth more than a thousand words. By doing good service, we ensure that the door stays wide open and that our program will endure for those who do not know that there is a solution to the problem of alcoholism... so that they may have the same opportunity we had in terms of getting sober. This will make sure that we abide by our singleness of purpose.

Service is the purest manifestation of gratitude we can undertake. To serve is an honor and a privilege we are called to have. At the end of the day, we experience the satisfaction of belonging to AA. One fellow member told me that it was guaranteed that the service would keep me safely away from drinking. Now I understand that if I do service, I will seek service sponsorship—and because I am an alcoholic, I will also have a recovery sponsor—so I will receive the guidance I need to stay in AA.

My first service commitment was as an RLV (La Viña rep), which I did for three years. I used to motivate people to subscribe and to contribute material to La Viña. I was able to sort out subscription issues by calling La Viña directly. I remember that the committee would buy packages of past issues of La Viña, which we would raffle off or give away at the groups. I used mine to give away while sorting out a subscription problem. I loved representing my group while working with La Viña.

Area 93 holds General Service forums. At one time, District #2 sent letters to group members, inviting them to create the host committee for the 12th Hispanic General Service Forum. When I got the letter, my sponsor suggested I should serve, reminding me that I had just gotten a divorce and that service was a good idea, that I would be able to meet new people, and that I was going to like it. That service allowed me to get to know our Hispanic districts and their members.

My dear fellow members, it has been twelve years since I had the honor of serving at the 12th Hispanic General Service Forum, and my sponsor’s words did not foretell everything that happened. I have met many wonderful fellow AAs. From that time until now I have been surrounded by good fellow AA members. These people are like the nutrients that seeds need in order to sprout, so that a plant may grow, flourish, and give fruit. We are like seeds of many varieties and we deserve the benefits that our program brings to those who need to experience what AA is.

When I was elected delegate, a past delegate came up to me and asked me: “Are you ready to serve?” —“Of course, I am,” I said. “That’s good,” he said, “because this service is something we do every day.” I was a bit scared at the time, but my sponsors were there to guide me in their own way, with their experience and power of example.

I follow their suggestions, and now I'm able to see the fruit of my labor in service. It is only through service that AA will endure.

## **Closing the Gap: How Do We Make the Voice of Every Group Count?**

Crystal S., Area 72, Western Washington

Crystal, Alcoholic. My sobriety date is May 21, 1993. My home group is Keep It Simple Sumner on Wednesday nights at 7 pm. I am humbled to represent the most amazing area in the Conference, Western Washington Area 72. I am a panel 73 delegate and I served on the Literature Committee and International Conventions Regional Forums. I will see you all at the Regional in Vegas and the International in Vancouver, BC!

When we ask the question, "Closing the Gap: How do we make the voice of every Group count?" We first have to ask what kind of group we want to be. There is no requirement that a group have a General Service Representative and participate in our service structure. The main difference between a meeting and a group is that A.A. groups generally continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelfth Step help when needed.

But if we do decide as a group that we want to participate in our ultimate authority and responsibility as outlined in Concept 1, it only works if we do it together as a group, not dump it on one person and label them the General Service Representative.

And honestly, what is the point of having a General Service Representative in a group that is not fully committed to our Third Legacy of service? It becomes a sad party for one filled with resentment and can burn an opportunity to be useful later.

So, let's talk about the group that has 70 percent of their stuff together because, honestly, that seems to be our way; we like being misfits to some extent, with room to grow!

This group has not only a General Service Representative but also an alternate GSR. They were chosen with care for the position and have a full understanding of the commitment they have made themselves available for. Most importantly, they have the full support of their group. They know when they come back and report what's going on at the district and area during their home group monthly business meeting, their home group members are going to show their gratitude by giving them their full attention while they give their report. This makes the GSR feel so good about the time they are spending that before the next business meeting, they take a few minutes to prepare, and they do an even better job. Together, the group makes a plan on how they are going to handle the pre-conference agenda items. They decide to only talk about 2 items for 30 minutes at their next business meeting. They know that it's not about taking a vote; it's about sharing together how to best help the still-suffering alcoholic.

I know the service manual lays out how the GSR is the voice of the home group, but a more meaningful question to ask is, How do we form the voice of the group? To me, it's when each member of that group takes part in their final responsibility and ultimate authority by participating in Tradition 2. Our GSRs are the conduit of our conscience. We don't abdicate to our GSRs the commitment we made to each other and AA as a whole by filling a position and calling it good. Every person in service I have ever met has one thing in common, a deep desire to belong. The best way each group can meet this spiritual need is by participating *with* their General Service Representative.

Tolerance, responsibility, flexibility, and vision do not begin at the Trustee level or the Conference level, they start at the home group. To me, the Conference is a direct reflection of the groups, and it is my belief that the Conference has lost sight of our purpose. We should be having an ongoing spiritual discussion about the health and well-being of our movement. Why are we not? Well, think in your mind what was your last home group business meeting like? What did you talk about? What decisions were made? Did you shy away from the uncomfortable conversation because discourse and disunity have become synonymous? What room was made for vision and prudence six months from now or a year from now on helping the still-suffering alcoholic?

So, what can we collectively do? It starts just like it has from the very beginning, one alcoholic sharing with another their experience, strength, and hope. Rebuilding our foundation and true purpose starts at the group, not at the conference or the board. This will take time and patience and most importantly, the vision that Bill not only talked about but embodied.

Now I know some of you are thinking, Crystal, you are cray cray if you think my group is going to do all those things.

But am I? Just because it's hard, just because it takes time, just because we don't do it perfectly, should we give up?

Should Bill have given up before he talked to Silkworth about why no one else was getting sober?

Should he have given up on publishing the book Alcoholics Anonymous when there was failure after failure?

Maybe he should have given up when no one wanted him to talk about the Traditions anymore.

How about when he wanted to form the General Service Conference?

I can think of no better way to collectively show gratitude in action to our founders for making the groups their permanent successors than making sure we survive for another

85 years or 185 years. And I have hope in abundance! My faith in the collective conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous with the ultimate authority being our HP is boundless.

“Closing the Gap: How do we make the voice of every Group count?” The answer is we do it together because we can achieve that which we could never do alone.



# WORKSHOP REPORTS

## Our Critics Are Our Friends

**Moderator:** Blas A., Area 03, Arizona Delegate **Reporter:** Cyd B., Area 03, Chair

The role of professionals is important to newcomers as they may not have any direction, and the professionals can help.

PI and CPC committees are door openers with professionals to deal with newcomers.

- Some groups have few members – good relations with the professionals are helpful.
- How to approach the professionals in a more efficient way?  
CPC has been around since the beginning. The GSO has learned a lot and can be a resource.
- One problem is groups and intergroups have difficulty getting volunteers to work on committees and it can be difficult to get professionals to work with AA
- Professionals are often the first people alcoholics contact

Opportunities to work with professionals.

- Become involved, read the pamphlets. It is important to be informed.
- The Spanish members were told not to get involved with the professionals because professionals would get them drugged up.
- Came to AA with a jail card – important to work with the professionals who also work with AA
- Professionals don't even know AA exists. Expand message to the business owners.

Groups

Should we stay away from the Professional?

- No – we need to cooperate. It is important to go to colleges, doctors, nurses.
- Some professionals think A.A. is religious, so they do not refer people to AA. AA is spiritual not religious.
- My son got a DUI and went to court. He was taken to AA meetings in District 19 – when he went back to court, judge asked what he had been doing to improve his life – he told judge he was going to AA and the judge eliminated his sentence.
- It is important to provide information to professionals on what AA is and what it is not.

Observations and places where more work needs to be done

- In LA, working with the professionals, they are using the triangle, using the name of AA, and then we are criticized because those people do not represent AA. We get criticized because we don't stay
- Use safety card, accept everyone (Third Tradition)
- Spanish members – use YouTube; they use faces and use inappropriate language, then people think this is AA.
- Misinformation on social media
- Continue to provide information.

### **Safety – Common Problems and Possibilities**

**Moderator:** Richard O., Area 8, Delegate

Some meeting members are in denial that predatory behavior exists. Just because it isn't affecting me doesn't mean that it isn't happening. Men can be victims of sexual advances as well as women. Some members can be unjustly accused of being predatory by just being friendly and welcoming. It is a myth that members cannot be victims of predatory behavior in same-sex meetings. Predatory behavior occurs in virtual meetings, especially in private chat.

Disabling virtual meeting chat can help deter this behavior. Many Hispanic A.A. Groups still deal with “machismo” and men asserting “ownership” over women. It is the responsibility of the men to step in and call out the inappropriate “machismo” behavior. Men do not have to continue the old behavior of predatorily seeking sexual companionship in the rooms. “13th Stepping” is a dangerous phrase to use; it may give newcomers the impression that it is actually a part of the A.A. program. We never know what traumas people come into the rooms with. Some “non-A.A. related announcements/pitches” can make newcomers/members feel obligated and may lead to them leaving the meeting. Cross-talking can make some very uncomfortable. Some areas have created Safety Committees as a resource for Groups.

Districts/Areas have hosted Safety Workshops to inform Groups. When visiting groups to discuss safety, districts should have several GSRs to attend and assist. Some Groups have created Safety Chairs or made time on their steering committees to discuss safety concerns. Safety statements have been incorporated into the meeting introduction or format. Some meetings have encountered safety issues with clients of treatment centers who are not familiar with A.A. meetings or Traditions. The suggestion that men and women from treatment centers should go to same-sex meetings. Developing an open line of communication with local treatment centers can be effective in resolving safety issues. If you see something, SAY something. If you see something, DO something. Groups should remain vigilant in addressing safety concerns. Every A.A. member is individually responsible for recognizing safety issues and stepping in when needed. Responsibility can be taught through good sponsorship. We shouldn't hesitate to call

the police if a clear and present danger exists in a meeting. A mass shooting has never happened at an A.A. meeting, but that doesn't mean it can't or won't. Practicing situational awareness is important. The A.A. principle of anonymity does not cover illegal activity.

## **Grapevine**

**Moderator:** Matthew L., Area 07 Delegate **Reporter:** Cathy N., Area,07

### Question #1

When will Grapevine be in all digital format?

Application download is \$2.99 per month; complete download is more.

Printed copies are in decline but will not go away.

Other countries need printed copies, the internet is not accessible.

Printed copies can be taken to jail and other facilities.

We do need to show support for digital forms.

There is a 5-year financial plan—it is to be self-supporting.

Try to get one person from each group to subscribe to aa.org, and it will become self-supporting (also subscribe to print and LaViña).

### Question #2

How do home groups recruit Grapevine reps?

Grapevine workshops, Grapevine workbooks, website, flyers

[www.glmwkggrp.org](http://www.glmwkggrp.org) **GLM WORKING GROUP - glmwkggrp.org** This site has all the information on Grapevine; 12 reasons to be involved; there are 15 employees who work on Grapevine.

### Question #3

How do we get published in Grapevine?

Write a story; do not worry about punctuation or format; they will fix it and submit it.

Submit photos.

There are workshops at aa.grapevine.org (a source for everything you want to know).

You can call to record your story.

You may be waiting a while for a response from Grapevine.

### Question #4

How do you participate in the Podcast?

You need to be recommended by the senior editor.

Being in the right place at the right time.

### Question #5

How to Navigate Grapevine App, fix bugs?

Call customer service.

FAQ on the website.

Restoring subscription.

## **Hybrid Meetings – Best Practices**

**Moderator:** JoEllen L., Area 2 Delegate **Reporter:** Alex W./Claudio, Area 9, Delegate/Alt. Delegate

The purpose of this workshop was to explore hybrid meetings and to discuss what is working and what is not working.

From our discussion, we hoped to refine our abilities when running a hybrid meeting, paying special attention to the interface of in-person and online attendees. As talking points, we identified three areas to explore: Comparison of best practices and where we are currently, Accessibility, and Security. It was noted that of the attendees, approximately 90% are using hybrid technology to some degree.

Also noted was the wide array of expertise - from technical professionals to those just learning by experimentation.

Much of the conversation started with people explaining what their area is doing currently, where they need guidance, concerns about losing some members because of anonymity confusion or a dislike of the virtual environment in general, and also the acknowledgment of how important it is to include those who cannot attend for whatever reason. As the conversation evolved, certain concerns and solutions were: Concerns: Lack of equipment and expertise, losing members who dislike the video conferencing aspect in general and how to get them back, security and protection from bad actors in the virtual world, how to easily conduct voting using zoom and in-person systems simultaneously, concern about cheating when having virtual voting, costs of buying good equipment, missing the young people who have a greater comfort and desire to attend events via virtual tech. Solutions: A mailing list will be created, and "How to" guidelines, training videos, etc., already in existence will be shared with those on the list. The technically savvy members in the room volunteered to be a resource for those less savvy. Advice from the room: "Keep it simple," "Don't be afraid to fail," use the technical help already available such as the Technology in AA (TIAA) forum or check out their annual workshop, form a tech committee for just this function, set up meeting rooms with an area that is "camera free" for those who do not wish to be seen by zoom participants.

Overall, those who attended were interested in improving the hybrid experience. The sharing of expertise that already exists is important. We need to ask ourselves, "Who is not in the room?"

**Inventories: Personal, Group, District, Area, GSO, Trustees**

**Moderator: Chris H., Area 58, Alt. Delegate; Reporter: Nick F., Area 58, Alt. Chair**

1) When do you take inventory?

Most of the sharing was focused on district and area inventories, and the group agreed that every two years or not at all seem to be most prevalent. The people whose districts, areas, or groups that had guidelines were much more likely to have regular inventories. If you're wondering how long it's been or if it's time to hold an inventory, IT IS TIME. Overall, it seems that groups who use inventories continue to do so because of their effectiveness.

2) What to do with the results of your inventory?

The bottom line was share, share, share. Email it, put it in your newsletter or website, report on it, and have copies available at your next group meeting/s and business meetings. To successfully share the results, you need to have great notetakers or do it virtually so AI can summarize for you via Zoom. There were suggestions to create ad hoc committees, bring action items to your next business meeting, and prioritize one item at each upcoming meeting. We also heard that district, area, and GSO archivists may be interested in the results. We had additional time, so we ended up going on.

3) How can the Fellowship be more involved in GSO inventories?

The main point was to dig deep into your research of problems in AA. Talk to GSO to get the truth vs reading private Facebook groups. If you have ways to share, ways GSO can do in the future, go through your delegate when possible. It will hold more weight with GSO and help you concentrate your opinion.

## **La Viña — Connecting Groups to A.A. as a Whole**

**Moderator: Jake S., Area 42, Delegate**

On July 13, 2024, at the Pacific Region forum, a workshop was held entitled “La Viña, Connecting Groups to AA as a Whole.” The workshop featured simultaneous English and Spanish translation. If you spoke in English, it was translated to Spanish. If you spoke in Spanish, it was translated to English. This was a beautiful way to do a workshop and is very good for the unity of AA. It would be great to see more workshops and meetings handled in this way when possible. The Area 42 delegate opened the meeting, and the La Viña editor gave a short presentation on her experience in AA and what connecting groups to AA as a whole through La Viña means to her. There was a lot of discussion about problems with the fulfillment of print La Viña subscriptions.

Members shared their frustration with not receiving their print subscription as well as problems with customer service trying to resolve these issues. It was reported that the La Viña office is definitely aware of these problems, and since the 74th General Service Conference, they have been working hard to resolve these issues. Some members

shared that they have had better service since the Conference. It was discussed that a lot of La Viña subscriptions come from anniversaries and other types of events.

Tips were discussed to help the office by making sure subscription forms have correct addresses and that they are legible. Some of these tips were to have only one person or someone who can help when filling out the subscription form. This is to remind people that if they have any apartment numbers or suite numbers, they should make sure those are included in the form. The person helping take subscriptions could get a phone number as well as check the address online to make sure everything is correct before it is submitted to the office.

Other members shared how much the La Viña has meant to them in their sobriety. One member shared that the first time he heard about AA was through La Viña while he was in jail. Some members asked questions about the “5-year plan” for La Viña, and their questions were answered by a trustee on the General Service Board present. Some members were concerned that La Viña might be discontinued.

## **DCM Sharing Experience About Their Connections with GSRs**

**Moderator:** Lisa G., Area 69, Delegate; **Reporter:** Mike F., Area 69, Chair

We had 12 GSRs and 24 DCMs/DCMCs that attended.

GSR School – Important:

- If a new GSR is coming to orientation, I’m already winning.
- Sending a kit, get a kit. Going over the new GSR kit with the new GSR.
- Sub GSR – 30 groups – Safety
  - Find a solution when a problem crops up.
- Read the Service Manual (know the duties of the GSR).
- Guest Speakers – Create enthusiasm.
  - Make General Service fun
- Go over Concept questions, to learn, not to just read for drill.
  - Servant Leader.

From Lisa:

- When he was DCM, he didn’t forward information from the Delegate.
  - DCM = Mini Delegate
  - As a Delegate – Lisa sends everything out, not for us to decide what is important.
- Time management, work 10 hours a day.
- Know the duties of the DCM – go to meetings that aren’t represented.
- Explain how the votes matter.
- GSRs may be the most important job in AA.

- Visiting the groups
- Pandemic effects. Decline in 7th Tradition, less participation.
- District and Area-level GSRs aren't there to vote. Group voice not heard.
  - Put on a workshop for GSRs and the importance of the connection with District and Area.
- Despite how bleak things look, it's our opportunity to find a solution. Old timers aren't stepping up.
- Set aside prayer.
- Ask yourself – "What would get me to come to a meeting?"

Controversial topics are opportunities.

- Workshops and assemblies can engage
- DCM = GSR Cheerleader
- Understand the power of your vote.
- Stroke controversy – to GSRs involved.
- Everyone is qualified, do your best. You won't break AA.

-Baby steps

- Ripple effect.
- Little by slowly.
- Won't Break AA.
- Do your best.
- Ask for help.
- Primary Purpose.

-Patchy participation

- How to inspire
- Teaching.
- Workshops
- Lead by example

## **Humility, Acceptance, Love, and Tolerance (HALT)**

**Moderator:** Kade W., Area 18, Delegate

Kade opened the workshop, explaining his version of HALT: Humility, Acceptance, Love and Tolerance. The workshop was then opened for general sharing.

On the topic of Humility, some talked about the difference between humility and humiliation, noting that Step work helped them through sorting it out. Emphasis was placed on Steps 6 & 7. One member shared, "It is only at the end of a long road of humiliation can I learn what humility is." Some participants talked about ego, and the solution to ego (Edging God Out) is a relationship with a Higher Power and working the Steps. One participant talked about humility being no better and no worse than anyone else. There was discussion surrounding the judgment of others and of ourselves, which

blocks us from a Higher Power. Being humble is growing and learning.

On the topic of Acceptance, some participants talked about what they believe the difference between Acceptance and Tolerance is, stating they would much rather be accepted than tolerated. A reference to page 417 in the fourth edition of the Big Book regarding acceptance was cited. A participant stated that love and tolerance come with acceptance, another stated that acceptance was one of their greatest gifts. Acceptance allows us to be teachable.

Much was said regarding the topics of Love and Tolerance. One participant defined tolerance as “the capacity to endure something without an adverse reaction.” One participant described tolerance as a judgment that should be replaced with compassion. Another participant stated that honesty, necessity, and kindness are the “gatekeepers of the tongue” and that with awareness comes responsibility. Many participants talked about experiencing love when they came to Alcoholics Anonymous and how they have learned how to return that love to others. Some talked about being loved by others until they could love themselves. One member stated, “Tolerance lets me allow you to be human. Humility allows me to be human.” One member stated, “God is love,” another, “Passion and love are contagious,” and another, “I wish the best version of myself and others.”

Overall, the discussion itself was filled with love.

### **Cultivating Future Service Leadership**

**Moderator:** David R., Area 69, Delegate; **Reporter:** Mike F., Area 69, Chair

Sitting down and facing the door as Trustees, Delegates, Area Officers, Area Standing Chairs, District Committee persons, and interested AAs entered the room, I realized how important this topic is to our Fellowship.

The sharing brought forth many great ideas. I will do my best to list all of them, and I hope you find some tools that will help your efforts as you trudge ahead toward personal growth and, more importantly, guiding future service leaders.

One thought that echoed throughout the workshop was that this is one of our greatest and most important responsibilities. That the future of our Fellowship will be a result of how well we do this.

One Alt-Chair suggested GSR workshops and orientations. Another thought it would be helpful if our leaders included more diversity to foster an inclusive environment.

A District Standing Chair stated that the stakes are as high as they can be. After reading a portion of Concept 9, they suggested monthly Tradition and Concept study groups.



An Area Liaison spoke of how their sponsor shared with them the idea that members who sponsored others had a higher percentage of staying sober. That leadership starts with sponsorship. Service sponsorship needs to be mentioned and discussed more. We need to be better at communicating this. Someone else suggested inviting members who are alternates to all activities. This will help them understand their responsibilities, especially if they have to step into the role at a moment's notice.

So, the group secretary shared about the spirit of rotation and how important it was to rotate so others could learn and grow. If an elder statesperson did not move out of the way, others would not think and learn for themselves.

Another member talked about helping service sponsees find where they fit. It may not be General Service. Maybe someone will find the path in corrections or central office work. It is our responsibility as service sponsors to help them find their way, not by mandate, but by love.

Cultivating future service leadership will be ongoing and vital work. Work that needs to be done with attractive enthusiasm, coupled with fun and the message of just how important this work is. Our actions need to inspire others. Our leadership has to be the best it can possibly be. The only way this can be accomplished is by bettering ourselves by working on our own programs with our service sponsors. Good service sponsorship is a legacy that has to be carried to the future.

I will challenge you to welcome new members of home groups, District and Area meetings, the same way we welcome and love the newcomer when they first arrive in our loving arms. The first experience of General Service could possibly dictate if a member stays or walks away. Be the reason someone stays. Ask yourself, "Is my leadership attractive?"

## **Integrating Our Online Groups Into the Service Structure**

**Moderator:** Thomas G., Area 17; Delegate **Reporter:** Deborah L, Area 17, Alt. Chair

Tommy opened by sharing the background history of his home group, Defective Characters, that transitioned from being an in-person meeting to an online meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic and remain an online meeting till today, with no plans to return to a physical meeting at this time. This meeting is part of District 8 on the island of Hawaii with participants from around the world as well as the island chain of Hawaii. Defective Characters is an active group with a General Service representative, and as a group autonomy, their GSR attends all area assemblies in person. Tommy shared the 5 virtual districts in 93 and the number of districts in North America; one is a virtual group originating from Hawaii that has made a decision to join through General Service Office that keeps this group connected to AA as a whole.

A question was made to the group concerning virtual meetings, How are the virtual meetings to be a part of the area's service structure?

Note: The following are comments that were made by the attendees at this workshop, including what they are noticing, concerns, and questions.

The attraction of virtual meetings is that they are open to members from around the world. The challenge for the local community is that it is disenfranchised by members getting into service from other countries, which causes the districts to go dark.

-The fact of members joining virtual home groups from outside of the area or district brought about concerns of not having a voice and how are they to bring their voice to its district?

-A district formed an ad-hoc committee for the area that opened up for groups that are online so that their voices can be heard at the district level to be brought to the area.

-A DCM from a district talked about the benefits of the district utilizing the virtual platform that increased from 8 homegroups to 48 homegroups that attend online district meetings. Standing committee chairs are utilizing the virtual platform and have their meetings online and believe that online meetings are not the cause for districts, as mentioned earlier by another member, to be the cause of districts going "dark." The biggest challenge that DCMs are noticing is the "time zones," with members that are not from the local community. Overall, it closed with mentioning the convenience for members that prefer online meetings, i.e., advantages can be for members having challenges that may prevent them from getting to an in-person meeting, ranging from health to mental health to geographics wanting to stay sober, making the online virtual meeting easily accessible.

- Question from a member at the mic: How do you solve the 7th Tradition contributions?

Response from a member — need to have a physical address using I-postal for tax purposes needed for the bank. The I-postal forwards all contributions.

- A DCM commented they have online meetings and hybrid for inclusivity; in the district, they have approximately 300 meetings, and only 30 online home groups show up.
- A member commented on how the group motioned to go hybrid and created service opportunities and suggested that it was necessary to go nationwide to get members into service so that, in accordance with the local autonomy, they can keep the service positions open for the local community, they have no lack of service commitments for groups/members online locally.
- A member said that a member from California commented that the group became an online meeting, and they do have a GSR that is registered with GSO.
- A member (GSR) from a home group attends hybrid assemblies, and the complication is that they are present and hear/see a lot of interaction; however, those that are hybrid feel that they are not included, not being acknowledged by the members that are at the assemblies, in-person
- Starting a hybrid meeting has been clumsy at first, but it is getting better; this member attends both in-person and hybrid/virtual meetings, and the difference

is that you can't hear anyone laughing when in a virtual meeting, like what do you do, hit an emoji face?

- A member commented that some people got sober going to virtual meetings and will never attend a physical meeting, and those that got sober in an in-person meeting will never go to a virtual meeting.

# PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING

**David N., General Service Board Trustee, 2013-2021**

Elder statesman or bleeding deacon? That is the question. I'm an alcoholic. My name is David. I served on the A.A.W.S. Board of Directors from 2013 to 2021 and then simultaneously served as a General Service trustee on the General Service Board from 2017 to 2021. After seeing how many past trustees were here this weekend, I cut this down to a four-minute talk, so if anyone wants to hear the other eight minutes that I originally wrote, let me know, see me out in the hall.

At recent PRAASAs or Pacific Regional Forums, I've expressed concerns about my perception of a loss of love and tolerance in our fellowship and rigidity around various aspects of our program. And my perception that many feel that there is a right way to do AA, only the right way to do AA. Today I want to tell you at least one of the reasons why I feel that way.

At an early point in my service on the A.A.W.S. Board, I was invited to become a member of an AA general service-oriented private Facebook group. I joined, but only occasionally did I check out what was actually happening in the group. Over a period of time, the atmosphere in the group became very ugly.

Comments had become filled with hate. The targets were conference advisory actions that the group didn't like, board members, delegates in their own or other areas that had supported those conference decisions that the group didn't like. People were mentioned by name and described in extremely derogatory terms.

Emotionally charged political words became attached to what had been done at Conference. There were even death threats expressed against members of the Conference.

It all made me think about my home group. My home group is a Twelve and Twelve group. When I attend, I see a bunch of people who show up every week to keep themselves and other people sober. When a newcomer shows up, they welcome them, and it really doesn't matter who or what they are. I see love and tolerance expressed through the actions of the group every time I attend.

And I see sobriety being offered. Not taught. Not demanded. Not dictated. We have a GSR. There's interest in what happens at the Conference and support for what has been done. What I see at that group that I don't always see elsewhere in AA, and often

not even in General Service, is a gut-level understanding of acceptance of the group conscience.

I believe that the front line of AA, the heart of AA, the group, is just fine. If most groups are like mine, they're continuing to do what they've always done; they're showing up at every meeting for their own and each other's sobriety. They're making coffee and offering it and a chair to a newcomer.

They're sharing stories of recovery and giving hope to those who need it. They are carrying the message of AA as required by Tradition 5. I trust that the true heart of AA is strong, that it continues to beat, and that it will do so as long as there is a need for us. Thank you very much.

### **Ginger R-B., General Service Board Trustee, 2017-2021**

Good morning, everyone. My name is Ginger R.-B. I am an alcoholic. You're all here at the forum because you want to learn more about general service and what goes on. So, I want to give you a snapshot of my journey in service. I got sober in 1987 in Western Washington. I got into service there.

At three and a half years sober, I moved to Eastern Washington. In 1996, I was the chair of the area when we did a divide in our assembly to form the new Area 72, which was Western Washington, and the newly created Washington State East Area 92. I lived in Eastern Washington. I ultimately became Delegate in Area 92 I was panel 48. I just loved being of service and going around to the various groups throughout Eastern Washington which is very much country with not much metropolis areas so that was a lot of fun.

I became a Non-Trustee Director on the Grapevine from 2007-2011 and then a General Service Trustee from 2017-2021 where I was also a Grapevine Director. I've had eight years on the Grapevine Board. And I heard this weekend that we finally have a strategic plan. We've had a five-year strategic plan every time I've been in service. They change as things change. That's exactly what it's for. You know, it's ongoing, unfolding. And when I was a Non-Trustee Director we printed the first color Grapevine.

So here we are now, when I was rotating, we had already moved into the digital world. And now we're farther along. So strategic plans change as the environment changes, and as we change. So, embrace the change but look at what we have and let's not destroy or get rid of the things that work that we have worked for years.

So, we have both ways to look at what's new and what we have in the past. So, thank you very much.

## **Joel C., Pacific Regional Trustee, 2014-2018**

Good morning, everybody. I'm Joel C. I'm an alcoholic. And my home group is the spiritual awakening group in San Diego, California. We're an LGBTQ group, but we also practice the Third Tradition. So, all are welcome if you're ever in San Diego, and you wanted to check in with our meeting. I'd love to have you there.

I served on the General Service Board as the Pacific Regional Trustee from 2014 to 2018. And I just want to share this morning some of the things that were meaningful to me, that we did while I was on the board and then also, I hope I'll have enough time to get to a little recent experience that I want to pass along.

Actually, I need to start earlier. I need to start when I was our area chairperson in San Diego Imperial Area 8. When I was our area chairperson, my alternate chair, Roy G, would constantly say to me when we were working on an agenda or working on an item or something like that, he would say, Joel, it's all about unity and saving drunks. Everything that we do is about unity and saving drunks. And so don't get — let's don't get distracted by anything else. And that really did become a kind of set of guideposts for me throughout the remainder of my time in area service.

Then when I came onto the board, those were guideposts that I brought along with me. And I feel really fortunate that there were a lot of things that we worked through while I was on the board that really did help with unity and that helped with saving drunks. And one of those was the development of safety resources. Now those had been desired by the Fellowship for many years before I came on the board. They'd been working on some before I came on the board, but they did come to fruition during my time in service on the board. And I'm not saying I did that, right? I'm just saying I got to be part of the efforts that put those resources together, and I know how vital those resources are. I know how useful they are because right now my own home group is grappling with some members who are concerned that other members are behaving in a way that's not beneficial to the safety of everybody. And we're turning to those resources and using those resources to help us move through that.

The "Mental Health" pamphlet was developed during my time on the board, and that's incredibly meaningful to me because my second sponsor bought into the idea that if you're taking meds, you're not really sober; he stopped taking meds, and he took his own life. And so, I know that that message that is not found in our literature - that message that if you're taking meds you're not really sober - is out there and that it does kill people. I'm just grateful that we have this resource that might save some more drunks.

"The Women in AA" pamphlet was revised, and new experiences of women, recent experiences of women, were brought in and are being passed along.

And the most meaningful to me, I got to be a part of the work on the revision of the “Gay and Lesbian” pamphlet to create the “LGBTQ” pamphlet to make that a more inclusive, more complete pamphlet. And that was so meaningful to me because when I was a newcomer, branching out from gay and lesbian meetings, going into mainstream meetings for the first time. If I saw the gay and lesbian pamphlet in the rack, I knew I was welcome there. And the fact that I was able to be part of making something that's even more welcoming and more complete as a resource for the groups just really is impactful to me.

I love the long form of Tradition 3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. I think it's like a gauntlet being thrown down to us. And all of these pieces of literature that I've been talking about, I think of as our Tradition 3 literature. It's all literature that says, welcome, we're glad you're here. And I think it's just super important.

Earlier this year, I was at the All-California Young People and Alcoholics Anonymous conference, and we had a workshop about the Plain Language Book, and I ended up sitting at a round table with a bunch of queer young people. And they were adamantly in favor of that book. They're thirsty for that group. They can't do that for that book. They can't wait for that book. They also shared with me this, and I want to pass this along. I hope, Scott and Bob you will pass this along to Patrick. One of the things that they said was at the International Convention. Let's please, please, please not only have welcoming panels, panels for the LGBTQ alcoholic, panels for the alcoholic of color, et cetera. But let's make sure that all the panels are infused with all of the membership, so that whatever panel a member goes to, they can feel like their experience is represented. Thanks.

### **Nancy H., General service Board Trustee, 2011-2015**

No easy task getting up here. My name is Nancy, I'm an alcoholic. And my home group is Free at Last in Tucson, Arizona, Tuesday night, 6:30. Everybody's welcome. In fact, another member of that home group is Kathy F., who called me this morning and said, I want you to please tell everyone how sorry I am, I can't be there. And if I were there, I would say something really profound. I will not say something really profound, so just hold that thought.

I want to thank Area 42 for their hospitality and for putting us in a hotel where we are the more sedate, quiet, unnoticed group. That's never happened before.

And this is my 20th forum, exactly, both as an attendee and a presenter. So, for those of you who are first-timers, do not worry if you do not remember or take in everything you have heard and learned. I hear new stuff every single time. So, I don't know what it takes to get to the end of what you know. But, we're not there yet. I'm certainly not.

I want to thank everybody who came, all the directors, the trustees, the staff. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet people and to see the resources available to us all. If you just look around the whole back of the room and the front of the room, there's an answer to any question you might have. Of course, the questions you really want answered, you will think of on the drive home, but that's why we have delegates and other trusted servants a little closer to home. You can still find somebody to ask and everyone in general service is always happy to pass along whatever it is they've learned.

I think what I want to talk about is that I'm very grateful for everything we've learned about the general service structure and the new and exciting things that are going on. I love the whole video for the deaf alcoholic thing. I think that's just a wonderful, amazing technical breakthrough.

There was another thread that I kept hearing all weekend that really struck me, and I passed it on in the hope that it resonated with some of you, too, which is what I really hear when we say the Responsibility Statement – “I want the hand of AA always to be there” - I really got it listening this weekend, that the hand of AA is at the end of my own wrist and that that's what my job is. I have to put my hand out.

And our home group reads literature and then has a discussion meeting and what we're reading right now is the “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” pamphlet. When that was proposed to everybody – eye roll uh huh – and we've loved it. We've all gotten a tremendous amount from it. You know, you think, okay, I have a sponsor, I sponsor people, I must know all these things. Well, no. And when we were reading last week I thought, why didn't I have this instead of Dr. Spock? I would have been so much better a parent to my children.

So, I urge you all to race home and take this pamphlet and read it. But what I'm getting at is that's exactly how we learn what we do. And we have to practice, over and over and over and hear about it over and over and over. I don't know what there is about alcoholics and retention. I think alcohol must kill that particular part of the brain. Thank you so very much.

### **Madeleine P., Pacific Regional Trustee, 2006-2010**

Good morning. My name is Madeleine, and I am an alcoholic. And I was your past Pacific Regional trustee from 2006 to 2010.

I know we were talking about elder statesmen, bleeding deacon. I prefer a trusted servant. I was thinking this morning about my relationship with people because that's what happens when you keep coming back here, is you make these relationships that are so incredibly special, and, young Bob, I have a picture from 22 years ago of him singing into a ketchup bottle, singing Barry White songs, if anyone wants to see.



But several years back, Bob had invited me to speak at the state convention in Massachusetts. After I finished there was the receiving line. And there was this gentleman who kept pacing back and forth by me and the people at the front of the line. You couldn't miss him because he had on the ugliest sweater I've ever seen. Finally, he cut the line, and he got right in my face, and he was like, you'll come back to Alcoholics Anonymous when you decide to become a member. And I thought I swear I had talked about being drunk and getting sober and working steps. And he said, your language was atrocious — my wife is so upset she had to go wait in the car. And then he ran chickenshit. And the people in line were mortified. They were like, "Oh my God, I'm so embarrassed." He was on his phone the whole time. He was so angry that they let a woman speak on Saturday night. That they allowed someone from the South to speak there, but they said he lost his mind when you said "ass," "crap," and "whore" in your talk. I don't think I mentioned his wife once, anyway.

But I say that because I don't know what kind of alcoholic you are, but when I went to bed that night, I laid in bed and thought about the one person who told me I sucked. And it was that epiphany, remember, Madeline, you're not here for all of them to like you. You're not here for a popularity contest. My only job is I hope one person leaves with five more minutes of hope. That's what we do here. That is the only thing that matters. I cannot get caught up in ego issues and all of that. And you know, I probably just wasn't his cup of tea. It was a great moment for me to think about what kind of trusted servant do I want to be and, with everything I do in Alcoholics Anonymous, what's my purpose, why am I doing it?

When I got sober and got discharged from chemical camp and landed at my new home group, there was this woman named Ruth, Grandma Ruth. She had her hair piled really high on her head, and the minute you walked in the room, she ran across the room, would grab you, give you this huge, Bugs Bunny kiss on the mouth, like, Mwah! "Ooh, honey, I'm just so glad you're here. Sobriety looks so good on you. How are you?" And it was a little off-putting at first. But after a while, you walked into that room, and you were looking for her because you could not wait to get your hug and your kiss from Grandma Ruth. And fast-forward, I knew that she had relocated, that she had gotten sober in Connecticut. But the next year, on our birthday night, she was picking up her chip. And I found out that she had only lived there for three weeks when I met her. She wasn't sitting in the back of the room waiting for someone to find her. She found every newcomer and made them feel special.

You know, we think about those people that kept us coming back in these rooms. And that's why it's so important. The only thing that matters is how did we make that person feel when they got here. Did they feel welcome? Did they feel accepted? Did they feel safe? Because we talk a whole lot of stuff, but our actions have to match it. We can get really caught up in some stuff in our business meetings and our group conscience's that have nothing to do with love.

At the end of the day, when we talk about taking that moment of silence and re-centering ourselves, it's so important...it is so important.

That is all of my time, and I am so grateful for everyone here and for everything you do for the still-suffering alcoholic. Thank you.

**Paul C., General Service Board Trustee, 2005-2009**

Good morning; my name's Paul, and I'm an alcoholic. I think today is Bastille Day. And I think we can celebrate with our French brothers and sisters in AA - our freedom from the imprisonment of alcoholism.

I want to thank the General Service Board and the corporate boards for their full-throated embrace of technology. And for vignettes about personal recovery and alcoholics anonymous. Especially Racy showing that video of all the staff members; that was so cool. And for showing YPAA video that reflected marginalized and underrepresented people in society and in Alcoholics Anonymous. A trans black woman and a young woman. All of us are welcome. In this life-saving Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Edwin Markham said this little ditty, which I love: "He drew a circle that shut me out. Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took him in." In Alcoholics Anonymous, we interpret our Traditions as inclusive rather than exclusive. And everyone who tries to become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

The interim General Service Board Chair in its inventory report to the Conference this year — my understanding was he apologized to the General Service Conference for some shenanigans. Okay. No one apologized to Linda Chezem for her unprincipled bullying that forced her to resign on January 29, 2023.

In 1987, a Western politician challenged an Eastern politician to tear down the Berlin Wall. And I call on the General Service Conference to tear down the wall of shame and make amends to Linda, for the staining of our service structure for its boorish and rude, and unprincipled bullying of her on that day of infamy in our service structure. Until then, I didn't know that we could attribute any moral authority to act on behalf of our Fellowship. Custodian ipso custodes, a Latin playwright from 2,000 years ago, who guards the guardians who watch the watchers. You do? We do. The delegates to the General Service Conference do.

It was wonderful to hear how our finances are doing and becoming. I think there's a little sprinkling of fairy dust on some of that, but that's me. I'm not a numbers guy. But I heard

a little about cost-cutting. And about spending money like drunken sailors. And I mean that as an insult to sailors.

I was 21 years old when I joined Alcoholics Anonymous. That was over 50 years ago. I went to my first international AA convention in 1975. I made a sign that said Denver Easy Does It and hitchhiked from San Diego to Denver. I've been to every International AA Convention since then, except one. And I hope you all take care of your jaywalking tickets and your felonies and your nonsense and make sure you can get across the border to Vancouver, because if you have never been to an International AA Convention, it will blow your mind. It will blow your mind as all of them have for me. And I guess I'm done. Thank you.

**Greg M., General Service Board Trustee, 1990-1994**

Hi, everybody. My name's Greg, and I'm an alcoholic. My sobriety date is February 14, 1978. And I've been continuously sober since that date.

I spoke to you yesterday a couple of times and the day before. And I want to follow up with one of the things I said about AA groups dwindling, and I've had some experience in that arena. I got sober in Maui, Hawaii, in '78. And I had a home group called Steps to Freedom, and that was for many, many years. Eventually, I moved to Manhattan and then up to Sleepy Hollow, and I was a member of the Pocantico Hills group. And, from there then I went back to San Francisco, where I was a member of the Language of the Heart group. And now I'm living here, and I'm a member of the Steps to Freedom group. So, it's a cycle that I went through. In each one of those, I always started off my service work being the greeter. Some I was asked to, others I just appointed myself because I wanted to shake every hand and meet everybody that came to our meeting. And those were AA groups. They were active. They had a life outside the meeting. And they played together. They did service work together. And as all of you know, it just warms your heart. It warms my heart.

So now when I see that the number of groups that are participating, some with their dollars, some with their writing gratitude letters to the office, is below 40 percent. And that just breaks my heart. You know, one day we may see, instead of groups at the top of the inverted triangle, we'll just see AA members. And our conference structure is in trouble. And we are responsible for it. That is where the life-giving sacrifice. That's what anonymity is about, making sacrifices and not telling anybody. And we need to do more of that. We need to re-create our structure in whatever shape we do it together.

I talked a little bit about the Seventh Tradition. I'm an old guy, but I'm a traditionalist. And I believe what it says that we, the members of AA, are the ones that support the General Service Board in this structure. We don't take outside gifts. We don't do that. We pay our way. And if we're in trouble with money because we had a pandemic, we

need to pick our pockets of every piece of lint and send it to the General Service Board with a note of thanks.

I want to talk to you very shortly about the prudent reserve of another money thing. I became a trustee in 1990, and at my very first trustee meeting, the board-sharing session was on the prudent reserve. And I sat there. I didn't say anything, but I listened to this room full of bean counters. Some very knowledgeable professional accountants, and they were discussing what the size of the prudent reserve should be. And, the bean counters, this was in 1990, they thought it ought to be about \$18 million.

And so we have really had this 12-month limit for too many years. I hope and pray that the General Service Board and their finance committee, I know recently they updated some of the policy, but pandemics are going to be in our future quite a bit or other distasteful eruptions in our ability to carry the message. I really hope the board has time to discuss that prudent reserve because we need to continue to deliver the services to the still suffering from alcohol.

I'm really impressed with St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis has told me it's about self-forgetting. It's not about me. It's about what kind of unconditional love I can bring to others. Thank you.

#### **Ruth J., General Service Board Trustee, 1986-1990**

Hi, everybody, I'm Ruth J-K, and I'm an alcoholic. Now you're getting into the long-in-tooth people up here.

The most important thing is I a member of the Second Edition group here in Las Vegas, which meets at 7 a.m., seven days a week in the Summerlin area, and you're all welcome there too. We'll probably have to move to two rooms, but that's all right, we'll do it.

I was a panel 29 delegate. That is '79 and '80 for those who don't know or are a little weak in the math section like I am. I was trustee from 1986 to 1990. 1990 is when our *Daily Reflections* were given to the Fellowship. That is one of the important things I feel. I was not on the literature committee, but I was part of the Conference that I gave it back to you when you said, "yes you wanted it." Of course it was like eight years you said, "yes, we want it." And, you know, it's slow to fruition. "Do you want a professional to write it, or do you want to write it?" You all said you want to write it. Okay. Send us some stories or send us some things about the Traditions or the Steps. Maybe a few hundred came in the first time. So it was, through the conference, "Do you really want to write it yourselves?" And, yes, and so the stories poured in. And people read something like 300 stories per trustee to cut it down to give you your *Daily Reflections* book. That's one of the highlights of my time.

And also, opening up the General Service trustees from being able to come from anywhere in our countries, U.S. and Canada, rather than just in the New York area. That was another change that happened back then.

I echo many of the things that were said. I fear some of our rigidity. We don't have laws, and the Traditions are not laws. They are groups of thoughts that work best for us. And they're very fluid. They're gray. You know, when we're drinking, we'll take that drink from anybody. Drink anything. Doesn't have to be in a whiskey bottle. It can be in a medicine bottle. And then we sober up, and all of a sudden, it's black and white. And you got to do it this way or that way. And I think it's good to remember how fluid we were in the beginning. And maybe this is right, and maybe that's right. It might be right for your group, but my group prefers to do this. Let's remember that.

I like Tradition Five. I tell people when they want to do an event, if you can answer the question that it's carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, it probably belongs in what you want to do. If you can't answer that, then maybe you better talk about it a little bit more.

The hand of AA needs to be there, not necessarily to bring the person into our Fellowship, but to greet them and guide them to the correct one and not shut the door on them if they're in the wrong fellowship. I agree with that too.

People told their sobriety. One of the meetings I go to, please teach people the difference between meetings and groups. I have 19,750 days of sobriety. And for those that don't do long addition, you know, long dividing in their heads, that's 54 years and about three weeks. It was not my plan when I first came to AA. I can guarantee you. However, it has opened my mind, and I have met people whom I never would have met had I not come to Alcoholics Anonymous. I woke up this morning and I got in my car, pulled it out of the driveway, and I had a flat tire. And I thought, oh, s---. My second thought was, be grateful you have a car. Pulled it back in the driveway and called a cab.

So, you know, we learn to be accepting. Acceptance is the answer to all my problems. I may not like it, and I don't; I've learned I don't have to like it, but I do have to accept some things. And certainly not the worst thing that's happened in my life.

I learned this weekend about how helpful our plain language book will be to the deaf. I had never even thought of that. And, it's a different translation. It's not a change in our Big Book. It's just a different translation for people who need it. And I'm happy to see it come to fruition. I am wearing the earrings, if anybody's interested.

You need to have some fun in your sobriety. I know people are checking the toilets. I'm happy. And I hope to see you again in the future. Have some fun with your sobriety.

## **George D., Pacific Regional Trustee, 1978-1982**

My name is George. And I'm an alcoholic. And this meeting is supposed to end in two minutes. And we might go two minutes over. But no more. You know, asking a ninety-seven-year-old man with over fifty years General Service experience to limit his talk to four minutes comes very close to elder abuse.

I have been around a while. You know, in the opening remarks, Scott mentioned Dr. Jack's formed a the delegate's committee. I was on that committee. And I chaired the first Pacific Regional trustee in 1978, as a recently elected Pacific Region trustee. So, I go way back.

You know, for years, people, those of you who've been coming here, I always try to say these forums are very impressive. We hear a lot about the organization, all the committees, the structure, the task force, and the working groups. But we hear so much that I'm concerned that some people don't realize that we are not talking about the organization of Alcoholics Anonymous. And it's pretty obvious because the Ninth Tradition says we're not organized.

The General Service Office and, the General Service Board, the Conference itself have no authority over any member or group in this Fellowship. And what we call a Fellowship, I think maybe it's really just an idea. The idea being that two people suffering from the same malady, to use Bill's words, alcoholism, can sit down without the need for professional help or any authority, and talk about their program, their problems, and what they're trying to do about it as equals. And I still sponsor people. When I sit down with a newcomer, I forget that I've got 62 years sobriety. I just share; we're peers; we're equals. One of the dangers, I think, in AA today is that we tend to give people too much authority as leaders, as interpreters, as instructors. And I don't think that when Bill sat down with Dr. Bob, he thought that he was there to teach Dr. Bob anything. He was just sharing as one drunk to another. And that's the idea. That's AA. And that idea has changed the world.

Now we are big, and we were very organized. We have a great spiritual movement, and I have thought through all my years in service we don't want to get too structured or too organized. We don't want an organization in spiritual movements can become self-serving and not serving the people they are intended to serve.

And just finally, complying with our chairman's suggestion — incidentally, one of the high spots of this forum for me was Scott's opening remarks that showed real humility; he is in a tough spot, and he certainly has mine, and I hope all of our wholehearted support as chairman, first class B chairman of the board,

So it's over 50 years in General Service. Prior to that, I just made about two or three hundred 12-Step calls, started groups, and did that sort of service. And it's really been a grand trip. I've met so many people that I've loved so much. So many, but so many that I knew through the years are gone, but I keep making new friends. It's wonderful. It's amazing. I don't know where else but in Alcoholics Anonymous a guy in his late nineties could still be making new friends. It's a wonderful, great trip and I'm glad to be here, and as we say in New York, safe home, folks.

# CLOSING REMARKS

## **Reilly K., Pacific Regional Trustee**

Thank you, Bob. Thank you, everyone, for participating in the questions and answers. So this is the closing of the 2024 Pacific Regional Forum. How'd we do? (clapping) Okay, that sounds good. Did you learn something that you didn't know before? Okay, good. I want to thank Area 42 for hosting this year. They did a great job.

When you get home, I hope you go to your groups and talk to people about what you saw, what you learned and what you experienced in your first service forum. How did the delegates do in their presentations and their workshop moderation? They are, they're wonderful. I love the Pacific Region delegates. They do such a good job. I'm so glad that they were all here for you, and you got a chance to meet them and got to know them.

In 1975, there was a feeling that nobody really knew the trustees. And not very many people would be able to go to New York at that time and meet the GSO staff. So we started to bring GSO to you. How are we doing with that? Okay.

I hope you know now that board members and staff members and the trustees, that we're real people. Some of us are not scary. And a lot of us are actually fun. So I hope you got a chance to meet all the people who are here today, serving you at the very tippy little, tiny bottom of the triangle. We support you. That's why that inverted triangle comes down to us, and we feel that weight of responsibility, and we love serving you. You have shown me one more time that we can work together in love and service and unity, and we can make recovery possible for those people who we haven't even met yet. And we're doing that every day. And you're here learning how to do it a little better. And I thank you for that. Thank you for allowing me to be of service to you. I appreciate that.

And now the counts. The final attendee count for this forum was 918 attendees. The first-time attendees, 588. Now there is no way I can do that in my head because I count on my fingers. I'm an accountant. And so somebody will figure out how many first-time attendees, what percentage of attendees there are who were here for the first time.

So when you go home and you talk about it, and the next time we have one, come back and bring somebody with you. So, glad to be here and get to know you. That's the other side of this. You don't just get to know us, although you get this opportunity that you might not have. But we get to come and know you. And this is my region, and you are my people, and I belong to you. And thank you for that.



## **Bob, General Manager, GSO**

So, Scott and Reilly, thank you so much for your service this weekend. It was wonderful to be here with you. All the delegates and the presentations were great. And for all of the employees of GSO and the trustees and directors that came really made this weekend special, and I appreciate that so much.

They were mentioned before, but I want to mention specifically two people who have been whispering in my ear for a long time, Amalia and Carlos our Spanish translators. Wonderful. And also, to our ASL interpreters, thank you very much for your work. It really, really makes this weekend inclusive and special.

So I mentioned, I told the story on Friday about how the sock thing started and blamed it on Scott, and it's really true. I forgot I had done this, and I packed these, and I don't wear these much anymore because they're special to me. I talked about my fourth-dimension socks. Those were the top of the three tier anyway. And I don't wear them much because I don't want to get a hole in them. Marita was kind yesterday. When we were in Cuba together, we were dancing at our little villa, and I'm unsure if Marita's still here. And I took my shoes off to dance out on the porch, and I had a hole in my sock, and my big toe was sticking out. She's going, "Oh my God!" So, anyway, I outed myself, Marita. But thanks for being kind about that yesterday.

But I got up this morning and I was thinking about this weekend's experience to sort of like get to my remarks here in that I feel like I have been rocketed into the fourth dimension. And I hope you feel like you've rocketed into the fourth dimension. And so, as I said, I choose my socks based on how I feel. So here they are if you can see them. But I mean, aren't those fourth-dimension socks? They've got circles, upside down triangles, squares, all of that kind of thing. And one of these days, I'm either going to rip my pants or get stuck up here. And Paul C., after he gave his talk, just came down and whispered to me, and he said, "I appreciate how you put your leg up there. If I tried to do that, it would be an orthopedic disaster." So anyway, I just love how that feels it's so good.

So, there you go. Thank you, Scott; I still have them. In fact, if I recall my first day on the job as general manager, I was sitting around the conference room table and took a picture of them, sent them to him and thanked him. I appreciate you, Scott; I really do. All the years, it's been wonderful.

As I mentioned in my opening comments and Riley just alluded to it, we're just all people. I hope that all of those that you've seen from the office, from the boards that you realize that. And I never, in my wildest dreams, thought that I would incorporate something like this into my opening comments. In relating to me, trying to show you that I am just a regular person. I use the analogy of putting our pants on one leg at a time. But if you came to the skit last night and you actually saw me, say, pull my finger, you know, how many people were in a role like that would say that? So, I have six kids, so I'm used to

saying that. Anyway, so by the time they all hit 2, they're like, No, Dad. So, anyway, I was glad to go back to my early days of parenting. It was nice.

So my hope, among hopes, is that you learned a bit more about our General Service structure and how we operate in this whole idea of a group conscience and how collective and deep and wide it is and how it's rooted in your groups. I don't think I shared a story yesterday, but one of the first letters that came to my desk when I was hired, it said, Mister General Manager, Change that preamble back right now. And I was like, well, you see, there's this thing called the General Service Conference. It's such a journey. It's not anyone at the office, and it's not me. It's all of us. It's such a "we" program, and we find those things out here. And so those words like informed and how important that is.

I didn't touch upon it yesterday in my presentation, but I have some of my favorite quotes on the walls in my office, in there to remind me of my role as general manager, but also as a board servant. And I hope that others who come in see it and read it as well. But it's the quote from Herbert Spencer that some people say that he didn't say, and I really don't care who said it because we steal everything from anybody anyway. Right? So, I should ask Michelle Mirza in the Archives. I probably have. But if for those of you that don't know, it goes, "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is contempt prior to investigation."

I talked about servant leadership yesterday and how much that ties into my servant leadership and how I carry out my role as general manager, and how that's important. So if I relate that to my role as general manager in relating how I try to lead in the office, is that things happen in life, and oftentimes you can have a quick thought to draw a conclusion, and then you react upon that conclusion to later find out that you were completely wrong and you hurt nine people along the way. You could lose a good employee, you could lose a friendship, all of those kinds of things. So I hope we can learn to keep that in mind from a forum like this. And that principle, that virtue of patience, of taking that patience and time, these types of characteristics, these are principles of servant leadership that we all need to follow and bring into our own service. And I can relate that contemporary investigation of all of our services within our boards and offices. And before we draw conclusions, we try to find out all the facts.

So I just wanted to talk just very, very quickly here about, we talked a lot about service. And I think I mentioned the other day that it's not what we do; it's how we do it. For all of us, our recovery is so important to make sure that we mind our Twelve Steps and that we bring that into how we carry out our service with the Traditions and the Twelve Concepts and how important that is. And I think I closed with this when I was here at PRAASA, but it means more and more to me as I go about my service. And these are lyrics to a song by Tim McGraw. "Humble and Kind - Don't take for granted the love this life gives you. When you get where you're going, don't forget to turn back around and help the next one in line. Always stay humble and kind." Thank you all so much it has been a great weekend.

## **Scott H., General Service Board Chair**

Thank you, Bob. I think I'm going to start with one of those "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" things [laughter]. This is my second Regional Forum since being elected as chair, and I think it's just a few minutes ago that I figured out that I get the last word! I've been married a while [laughter], so it has been a while since I've had the last word! Please do not tell anybody I said that, but this being chair is such a cool thing. If you stay in service, you will find that these unexpected benefits just pop up.

Truly it really has been a wonderful experience to be back with you in the Pacific Region. I said on Friday night that I'd had this special affinity with the Pacific Region, and I was just immediately welcomed back and invited to participate with so many of your wonderful delegates at an activity on Friday evening. I'm just so grateful for things like that.

I love people in Alcoholics Anonymous, but I will say I find a special kindness with those that I've met in service in Alcoholics Anonymous. And I spoke on Friday night about the reason that so many of us come back to these events time and time again, and I had that experience here this weekend. I had a chance to catch up with some truly wonderful friends, and I'm ever so grateful for that opportunity. You know, it's a miracle of being of service in Alcoholics Anonymous that this isolator, this natural isolator, finds so much joy in seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

For those first-time attendees, I really hope that you have met some new people - maybe that don't live so close to you, that you will look forward to seeing at PRAASA or at the next Regional Forum in San Diego in 2026. For those of you who are new, I hope that you have felt how important you are to us and how important it is that you're all here this weekend. Maybe for some of you, it's been a little while since you last got a gold star; it's been a little while since I got a gold star! You know, a gold star with your name on it. And I say that as a joke, but I want you to know how important it is that all 588 of you were here this weekend. And I hope that you have had that experience that I spoke about on Friday night. I hope that you've had an opportunity to see the enormity of A.A.

I have a friend who passed away fairly recently who served as a Trustee-At-Large Canada a number of years before I did. He often spoke about Alcoholics Anonymous being the biggest organization in the world whose members had no idea what it was that they truly belonged to. And I hope you got just a bit of a picture of that this weekend. A.A. is this big, complex, and yet simple at the same time organization. I think most of you heard about that in Marita's presentation yesterday that somehow, we're in Mongolia and yet, we're witness to that simple one-on-one experience with the still-suffering alcoholic. And that's what Alcoholics Anonymous is.

In the presentation that Racy gave yesterday, she gave us a chance to hear from the people who serve you in our General Service Office and help us carry out that work that Eric was just speaking of a moment ago – the work that we can't do as individual groups. That's so important to carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic no matter where they are, no matter what language they got drunk in. I hope that you saw this weekend the living example of that line that's on that green card that so many of us read

in our meeting – “It’s not the amount of our contribution, but it’s the spiritual connection that unites us with alcoholics all around the world.” I hope you had a chance to see that. I hope you found what my dear friend Bob just said, is that all of these New York people are just ordinary drunks – except for Kevin and Molly [laughter]; they’re not ordinary drunks; they’re just lovely people.

I want to echo the thanks that Bob gave to all of the office staff from both our General Service Office and our Grapevine office, all of the trustees and directors, and Theresa and Teddy, who came here on their own dime just to be with us this weekend. Thank you.

For those of you who came for information, I hope you heard everything that you hoped to hear. I hope that you’re going home knowing how to explain to all of those people in your home group what a Non-Trustee Director is [laughter]. I hope you all pass the test that comes with the survey [laughter] – there’s no test!

My time is up; I just want to say, from my personal perspective, thank you for all of the kindness and the words of encouragement expressed to me over the weekend. Thank you for all of your examples of how we can have differences of opinion, how we can have different points of view, how we can disagree and not be disagreeable with each other. That is so important to Alcoholics Anonymous. So many people here this weekend spoke about the need for unity in Alcoholics Anonymous, and it’s only going to be possible if we continue to be the representation of the message of Alcoholics Anonymous that we want the new person to find when they open the door.

Every one of us, you know we say this all the time – you may be the only Big Book that someone ever sees. And we need to remember that when we interact not only with the newcomer but with each other. Because sometimes those new people are watching how we are with each other, and we want them to hear that same message.

I want to thank you all because the best part of being involved in service is the opportunity to meet with you and have the experience of getting to know that little piece of God that resides in you. So, I thank you for sharing that with me, and I will invite you all to stand where you are, and we will close this event with the Responsibility Statement.

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.

Travel safely!

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