

Delegate's Conference Report

The theme of the 57th General Service Conference was “A.A.’s Twelfth Step – are we going to any length?” I think this is something for all of us to think about. Throughout the conference, presentations and sharing sessions re-examined the Twelfth Step call – in relation to the past, where we are now and the outlook for the future. Some of the topics were inclusiveness in A.A., our primary purpose, working with wet drunks, and whether we are resting on our laurels.

The make-up of the conference 134 members was 93 delegates from areas around the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, the rest are Class A (non-alcoholic) trustees, Class B (alcoholic) trustees, the directors and staff of the two corporate boards, A.A.W.S., Inc., and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Some brief statistics about the conference; average age 55, oldest delegate 73, youngest 34, average length of sobriety 19 years, longest 40 shortest 9, average length of service 15 years, longest 35, shortest 7.

The conference officially began Sunday afternoon, April 22 with the roll call. However, many things happened prior to the opening. On Friday, I met Fred H. the delegate from North Florida and Linda S., the delegate from Louisiana at the airport, and we shared a cab to the Crowne Plaza Hotel. After dinner, we joined Howard L., the Southeastern Regional Trustee

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to see the Broadway show, Bill W. and Dr. Bob. The play was well done, and was based on an account of the years from 1925 to 1935 and how A.A. got its start. On Saturday, the hospitality suite was open, and I met many of the other delegates. In the evening, I attended the delegate's only meeting. Then on Sunday morning, I attended the unofficial Remote Communities committee meeting. There were some great presentations, and then we broke up into groups, and had some lively discussions. If you are wondering what it was all about, the Remote Communities Committee discusses how we can overcome the barriers of language, culture, and geography to better carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. I volunteered to serve on next year's committee. When the five of us committee members got together later, I was elected to be the chairman of the committee.

After the role call and opening talks, each conference committee met with the corresponding Trustee's committee. I was assigned to the Correction's Committee, and we met with the Trustees Correction's Committee, where they reported on how they came up with the agenda. We asked several questions, and the meeting wrapped up. After dinner, there was a multi-speaker meeting where all of the speakers talked about their experience in knowing Nell Wing, A.A.'s first Archivist, who passed away this past year.

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On Monday, the pace picked up quickly, 6:30 breakfast, 7:30 A.A. meeting (The Serenity Group) which only meets 5 days a year at the conference. Then at 9:00, I met with the rest of my committee. We spent 3 hours working on the instructional video for corrections professionals. We even brought in the publications director, and the people who put the video together for questions on how the video was made, and what it might take to edit it. When it was all said and done, we decided to make one change in the video. There was a scene in the video where a woman, who appeared to be by herself bringing a meeting into a high security men's prison. Our committee decided to remove the woman from that scene, and show the A.A. meeting from some other angles that would exclude the woman and better show the man (while keeping his anonymity), in that scene. The production people stated that they shot about 30 minutes from many different angles, so it would be easy to do the editing.

After lunch, there was a general session with some presentations, and area highlights. After dinner, we were back for another general session with more presentations and reports until 9:00. It was a long day.

Tuesday was more of the same; I really like the Serenity Group in the morning. At 9:00, we were back at it in our committee; we reviewed the contents of the corrections kit and workbook. We found a

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grammatical error in one of the pamphlets. Since it is service material, it doesn't have to go to the conference floor. We then had a lively discussion on ways to stimulate interest in corrections twelfth step work. After lunch, there were more area highlights, and some reports on inclusiveness in A.A. The rest of the afternoon was a trip to the General Service Office. On the way, a man felt like it was his responsibility to teach me how to use the subway. Let's just say he wasn't very polite about it.

We had a delegate's dinner, and delegate's only meeting to elect the new delegate chair for next year. France J., Area 89, Northeast Quebec was pulled from the hat. It ought to be interesting, as she speaks very little English.

Wednesday, after breakfast and the Serenity Group, the actual conference got started. In the morning, was a workshop, broken up into several groups. The topic of the workshop was "The Spiritual Value of Our A.A. Dollars". Then to the conference room for the completion of the morning session which consisted of area highlights. I read our area highlights and did not get dung. Lunch was broken out in regions. After lunch, the first order of business was to have elections for the Southwest, and Northeast Regions, we also elected a new Trustee at Large for Canada. There was a presentation on Our Primary Purpose, and a What's on your mind sharing session before

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dinner. After dinner, we were right back in the conference room until 10:00. Howard took all of the Southeast regional delegates out for ice cream afterwards.

Thursday morning started off after going to the Serenity Group, in the conference room with a presentation on Humility and responsibility. Then the committees started giving their reports until lunch, and more committee reports after lunch. Before dinner, there was a presentation on International A.A., where there was a report on the 19th World Service meeting, and a report on A.A. around the world. After dinner, it was back to committee reports until we adjourned at 10:00.

On Friday morning, I again was at the Serenity Group, and the conference began at 9:00 with a presentation topic; The A.A. Grapevine takes Stock. At 9:45, the committee reports got started and went until lunch. When we returned, the rest of the committee reports got going, and we were finished with the conference at 5:15.

Saturday morning's session was a closing brunch with farewell talks by the rotating trustees. We adjourned at 10:30, and the 57th was officially in the books.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service, and God Bless.

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Bill O.

Delegate – Panel 57

Area 15, South Florida, the Bahamas, the British &
U.S. Virgin Islands, Antigua, and St. Maarten