

## **62nd GSC Delegates Report**

**May 20, 2012**

**Area 16 Service Assembly**

**By Tom H. Panel 62 Delegate**

I'm an alcoholic and my name is Tom. It is a privilege to serve as your Delegate and I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous here in Area 16 and at the 62nd General Service Conference (GSC) which was held in Rye, New York last month.

Before I begin my report I would like to recognize the new GSRs and first time attendees to this conference. Would you mind standing so we can give you a warm welcome? If any of the language used in my report seems foreign to you let me be the first to say, "You are not alone!" I just learned about some of it last month! I want to thank El N., our South East (SE) Regional Trustee for sharing her experience, strength, hope, and vision with us. If you missed El's presentation yesterday at the GSR Workshop I encourage you to see our taper at the end of this and get a copy of the CD as it was an excellent presentation. Later this morning you will hear from El again on a few things that I am not going to cover in my report. Lastly, this Assembly wouldn't be possible without the hard work of Tamera and all of her helpers.

I needed to say to all of those "thank you" not only because they are warranted but also because at 4:51am this morning I woke up and realized this is all about me, me, me, me, me! And as you well know it is all about what we can do and are doing for the still suffering alcoholic.

In my report this morning I will try and take you with me through that week of love and gratitude which consisted of over 70 hours of business meetings. However, I will not discuss every advisory action, motion to table, call the question, reconsideration, or motion to decline to consider. Therefore, I have written a report which includes every agenda item considered on the conference floor and it is posted on our website on a password protected page. To find my report (<http://www.aageorgia.org/reports.html>) on our aageorgia.org website go to the 'service' drop down menu and click on 'reports' then scroll down to the Delegate report section. There are full names in that report and it is not meant for distribution. I ask that you respect the confidential nature of that report. If you are not online I would be happy to mail you a hard copy of that report if you will let me know.

The day before the conference officially began our guest this weekend El N., arranged for a bus tour of some of the historic AA sites in New York City. What began as a fun thing to do for the early arriving SE Delegates turned into an event that included Delegates and Trustees from all over the U.S. and Canada. All total there were about 50 us on this bus tour. Our tour guides were Michelle Mirza, who is a non-alcoholic Archivist of our General Service Office (GSO) and George D., past General Manager of GSO.

On this bus tour we very poorly sang a song about the Bowery as we visited each place along the route. The highlights for me were: Towns Hospital where Bill W. had his spiritual experience that led to his sobriety and where Dr. Silkworth treated 40,000 alcoholics, also Calvary Episcopal Church where Bill attended Oxford Group meetings and where Sam Shoemaker was pastor, and lastly 182 Clinton Street. 182 Clinton Street was owned by Lois's family. This was where Lois was born, where Bill and Lois lived during the height of Bill's drinking, and where Ebby brought a message of hope to Bill in the kitchen. All of these places are frequented by those of us wishing to take a stroll down memory lane in gratitude for our sobriety. Calvary Church is still Calvary Church but Towns Hospital is no longer a hospital. That building has been modified and is now home to some of New York City's most curious residents as they were taking pictures of us taking pictures of them. In fact, while at what was Towns Hospitals one of the residents came down from their apartment, crossed the

street, and asked us why we were pointing at the building and taking pictures of it. The same was true of 182 Clinton Street as the owner came out to ask why we were taking pictures of his door step.

There is not another group of people that love and honor the history of their organization as we do. Even more unique to me is how we typically only see the beauty of recovery in these historical places and disregard the tragic nature of alcoholic drinking that also took place there. For example, 182 Clinton Street is in a well-manicured building in a New York City neighborhood. There are ten concrete steps up to the beautiful front door and the irony to me is how well this describes much of our drinking – as we try to maintain an image of control on the outside while inside a tragedy unfolds. This was pointed out with great imagery as our tour guide George D. painted a picture of Bill bloodied up from falling down and passed out on those concrete steps because he just couldn't make it one more step to get inside and his golf clubs strewn about all over the place while people walked by trying to ignore what they were seeing. And it isn't hard to picture poor Lois trying to get him up into the house.

These were thoughts that went with me as I started conference week and I tried to keep them in the forefront of my mind - the still suffering drunk just one step away from the safety of our doorstep and what can be done to best insure they come inside and feel welcome.

A personal highlight came early for me at conference and repeated itself throughout the week. At the Opening Dinner on Sunday night I sat at a table of fellow peers who had come into general service through young peoples AA with me. Christine H. was a Panel 47 Delegate and now serves on the trustees Literature Committee as an Appointed Committee Member (ACM). Christine was on the Michigan bids committee for the International Conference of Young People in AA (ICYPAA). Bill N. was a Panel 49 Delegate, served on the trustees Corrections Committee as an ACM, and now serves as a non-trustee Director on AAW.S. And Jennifer D. who rotated out this year as a Panel 61 Delegate. I served with Billy on ICYPAA's Advisory Council and all of us met along way at Young People's conventions all over the country. I have known these fellow delegates for many many years, we grew up together in AA, and were catapulted into service through involvement with young peoples meetings.

Perhaps part of Christine's journey in AA might best describe the kinship shared with these dear friends. While bidding for the privilege to host ICYPAA, the Advisory Council asked the Michigan Bid Committee how many of the committee were GSRs? Well, Christine didn't even know what a GSR was but she was going to make sure she could raise her hand as a GSR next year when Advisory Council asked that question. And so it began for her like it has for so many of us. To sit with these friends at the Opening Dinner of a Conference created to replace our Founders for the safekeeping of our program was very tender to me. I feel blessed by the friendships formed in young peoples AA and now cemented in General Service. There are 13 conference committees and much of the committee work is done during the first two days of conference. Also during the first two days we hear Board Reports and receive presentations from fellow Delegates. Then on Wednesday afternoon the conference committees begin presenting their recommendations to the conference body and I will share some of those recommendations with you.

For Corrections we approved the pamphlet *It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell*. The new version has some updated stories that are geared towards inmates with no chance of release from prison. This was requested to show the benefits of an AA way of life to those with no hope for parole. However, the recommendation to remake the video *It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell* did not pass. We watched the video and while it is out of date the conference body felt the cost of \$75,000 was not cost effective.

For Finance we did not approve increasing the individual maximum allowable annual contribution to \$5,000.00 nor did we approve raising the one time bequest to \$25,000.00. However, a floor action resulted

asking that one time bequests be raised to \$5,000.00 which did pass. So, the maximum allowable annual contribution by an individual remains at \$3,000.00 and the one time bequests maximum was raised to \$5,000.00. This actually disproved the theory that a knee jerk reaction in AA takes about a year and a half. In general floor actions are a knee jerk reaction to recommendations not passing and this one passed that week!

For Grapevine the audio strategy to have members call in to record their stories on 3rd party technology passed. The Grapevine Committee considered the proposal of incorporating the service responsibilities and duties of the Grapevine Representative (GvR) into the responsibilities and duties of the GSR and took no action. However, the committee requested that the AA Grapevine Board incorporate into all appropriate literature the 1962 Advisory Action that: "retiring delegates become Grapevine Representatives (GvRs) in their areas, with the objective of a GvR in each group." The committee also suggested for groups that do not have a GvR or La Vina Representative (RLV) to consider incorporating these duties into the duties of the GSR.

For Literature the revised pamphlet *AA and the Armed Services* was approved. Five stories were retained and 13 new stories were gathered from submissions or from the Grapevine (GV) vault of stories. There were also minor changes to the Q&A section in the back of the pamphlet. The subtitle *None Left Behind* was not approved. However, a floor action was made which read; that the pamphlet *AA and The Armed Services* include the subtitle none left behind. Floor actions are considered after all committee reports. The author spoke about the motion for two minutes and the Chair, following procedure, asked for a motion to consider to decline, which was seconded, but did not get the 2/3rd's needed (73 for declining to consider the motion and 45 against) so discussion ensued on the motion. There were many emotional appeals about the significance of 'none left behind' to the military. However, it means little or nothing to military personnel in Canada and this is a North America pamphlet which includes Canada. There was also discussion about the other places the statement 'none left behind' is used which included children, the hungry, etc. Apparently the term 'none left behind' is a widely used phrase. Then there was a comment about the low popularity of the pamphlet stating that military personnel don't read it and that the subtitle might help the pamphlet become more popular and in response to that comment was one of the great statements of the week in my opinion. A conference member shared a story about a lesbian friend who had never read the gay and lesbian pamphlet but stated that just seeing it in the literature rack at meetings made her feel welcome in AA. To me, this said it all about the importance of our literature and the emotional appeal for this subtitle was not enough for a passing vote. I voted for declining to consider the motion and I voted against this pamphlet having the subtitle 'none left behind.' I voted against for the reasons mentioned during discussion and for several other reasons not mentioned during discussion and one of them being the thought of every pamphlet now wanting a subtitle. Our Area was in favor of adding the subtitle to this pamphlet but I could not vote in favor of it after hearing all the discussion.

And perhaps the longest agenda item discussion of the week was over the final revisions of the *Living Sober* booklet. This recommendation passed and I voted in favor of the motion. Most of the discussion on the conference floor was about not knowing of all the changes to the book and therefore not being able to make a well informed decision. When there are pamphlet and book revisions all conference members are able to look at the new pamphlet or book prior to the vote. However, only those delegates on the literature conference committee assignment are allowed to view the changes prior to conference. So it gives the rest of the delegates little time to read the latest draft and the changes are not tracked in the draft. In essence you would have to read both the old version and the new version side by side to see what has been changed. In reviewing a pamphlet this is not such a difficult task but when reviewing a book it can be daunting. These were the main complaints from the conference floor. Editing a book on the conference floor might parallel discussing a budget line by line on our Assembly floor. We select a Budget & Finance committee to do this and

then present the budget to the DCMs for approval. Discussion on budget line items on our Assembly floor would take hours and would not be productive. So, imagine editing a book in this fashion! It is the job of the conference committee and trustee committees to make changes and present them to the conference and then we vote on the entire book, not discuss and edit each page on the conference floor. The discussion about tracking changes, friendly amendments, and the like went back and forth. There was a motion to table discussion at 10:20pm which was defeated. Then the question was called which passed and we voted on approving the book as presented. The recommendation passed and we approved the revised book Living Sober. Then minority opinion stated not knowing the changes that were just approved. The prevailing side asked for a motion to reconsider and Then there was a motion to table discussion again which also passed. This discussion was finally tabled at 10:43pm and I happily went to bed. As I lay in bed after that lengthy discussion which was to continue the next day I realized that the slogan Think, Think, Think was not conference approved so I stopped thinking about it and went to sleep.

The next day we were given a copy of the new book with the changes tracked. This took a monumental effort by GSO staff for us to review the edits. We went through the major editing points one by one and there were a few friendly amendments along the way that the committee accepted but the conference floor voted against. In the end the new book was approved and the one notable item removed was the reference to the A.M.A. which is found on the inside face page. I wrote down a few of the changes as we went along but it was too much to keep up with. The changes I remember were changing food references, adding the internet, retaining a singular author perspective, and just generally updating phrases used.

I'd like to take a moment here to share with you something that really stood out to be about how business is conducted at conference. I believe we have all been to a business or committee meeting where sharing on a motion went much longer than our patience. And if you are like me then you have said the silent "thank the Lord" when someone went to the microphone and called the question. For those who may not know when the question is called all discussion ends and we vote on the calling of the question and if the vote is two-thirds or greater in favor of the calling of the question discussion on the motion is over and we vote on the motion. In my experience whenever someone calls the question it passes and we vote on the original motion. But this was not case at conference. Many times during the week when the question was called it was voted down so we resumed discussion. What was so impressive about this to me was that even though when the question was called and the motion had already been effectively discussed at length the conference members remained patient allowing all the conference members lined up at microphones to say what they wanted to about the discussion. And it occurred to me how kind of a gesture this was and how it was in line with what Bill expressed about allowing us members to voice what we needed to so that in the end no matter how the vote went most would be satisfied that the conscience as expressed through a vote that was in fact well-informed. I share this with you to say that from my experience at conference the group conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous was expressed through the voting members. It reaffirmed in me that while I may not agree with everything that was passed or wasn't passed I felt very comfortable that the ultimate authority of God's will was expressed in the conference business.

The additional committee considerations for the Conference Committee on Literature were:

- The committee reviewed with appreciation the progress report from the trustees' Committee on Literature on the development of literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. The committee forwarded to the trustees' Committee on Literature, as requested, input and suggestions, and requested a draft pamphlet or progress report be brought back to the 2013 Conference Committee on Literature.

- The committee discussed a request to add text from the dust jacket of the Third Edition of the ‘Big Book,’ Alcoholics Anonymous, to the dust jacket of the Fourth Edition of the Big Book and took no action.
- The committee considered a request to add the AA Preamble to the front inside pages of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, and took no action.

On Policy and Admissions I just want to say that the representatives from India’s GSO were fabulous and they would like more information about the role of the DCM and I will be sending out a questionnaire to the DCMs so that they will have Area 16’s input. One of the guests from India went by the nickname “Lucky” and he shared with us that the population in India is 1.2 billion people. Of that 1.2 billion only 25,000 are members of AA and less than 0.03% are women. To put this in perspective there are about 18,000 AA members in the state of Georgia. The population of the U.S. and Canada is 348 million of which 1.3 million are members of AA India has more than three times the population of the U.S. and Canada and yet they barely have more AA members than we do in our state.

On Public Information it was recommended that the video public service announcement (PSA) for the Spanish-speaking community, *Tengo Esperanza*, developed by the trustees’ Public Information Committee, be approved with minor edits.

This passed unanimously. The watching of this new PSA was probably the highlight of the conference for me. It portrays a woman finding help for her drinking problem in AA *Tengo Esperanza* translated means, “I have hope”. Several of the Spanish speaking women at the conference praised this PSA for it reaches out to the Hispanic woman. There are three versions of the *Tengo Esperanza* PSA – a 20 second, 30 second, and 60 second. The English translation of the 60 second version is as follows;

“I never had problems with alcohol, but when Juan lost his job and we had less money coming in, we started to fight. I started drinking, just to deal with the stress. Without realizing it, alcohol took over my life. My sister suggested I look for help. I never thought that going to AA meetings would help at all. But I decided to try a meeting. Finding the courage to go to that meeting was the best thing I’ve done. I got help from people who know what I’ve been through. These meetings changed my life. And they’re still doing it. Now I know I can live without drinking and, more importantly, I have hope.”

Though this PSA has not yet been released you will be able to find it on AA’s website [aa.org](http://aa.org) when it becomes available. Once at the home web page for AA click on the tab ‘For the Media’ and then click on ‘Public Service Announcements’ to view all PSAs.

It was recommended that the video public service announcement for the Spanish-speaking community, *Tengo Esperanza*, be centrally distributed, tracked and evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$40,000, in addition to the work of local committees, and that the information gathered from the process be forwarded to the 2013 Conference Public Information Committee for their review.

This passed unanimously. In my opinion this is some of the best money AA has spent to get the message of recovery out to the public. By spending money to have our PSAs tracked and distributed we have effectively moved our PSAs to the “top of the stack” of PSAs that TV and radio stations have to choose from.

Following lengthy and thoughtful discussion related to adding language referring to current media to Tradition Eleven, the committee concluded that the spirit and principle of anonymity at the public level is conveyed adequately in the Long Form of Tradition Eleven. Recognizing that suggested changes to Tradition Eleven have come to the Conference several times, the committee requested the trustees’ Public Information Committee gather Area sharing on the effectiveness of the language of the Short Form of Tradition Eleven in addressing the needs of the Fellowship today and report back to the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information.

- The committee considered favorably the suggestion from the trustees' Public Information Committee that AA establish a presence on Facebook for the purpose of providing information about AA to the public. Before proceeding, however, the committee requested that the General Service Board explore all aspects of this social media page and, if feasible within our Traditions, provide the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information an implementation plan that addresses the implications of such a page, including sample content and estimates for implementation cost and maintenance.

For Report and Charter it was recommended that the current illustration on page S16 be modified in the following manner:

- Replacing the bottom section of the illustration that deals with the General Service Board and its two operating corporations with the corresponding section from a previous version, minus the table-and-chair graphic. And....
- Changing "District Committees" to "Districts."

This passed by an overwhelming majority. I voted in favor of this motion. Forgive me for not providing both graphic images here for I understand how difficult it is to visualize the above statement. In the old version of the upside down triangle in addition to the words in each section a graphic was used much like the *12 Concepts and 12 Traditions* illustrated pamphlets. In this case there were cartoon type graphics of tables and chairs which the committee did not want included when suggesting the old version of the upside down triangle image in the service manual. The current version has three sections at the bottom of the triangle and the old version had one 'triangle' at the bottom. We were shown the illustration on a large screen for purposes of this vote. The committee made a side humorous comment that they thought about adding a thin line from the current upside down triangle which would lead to the bottom of another triangle to represent the General Service Boards but then it would look like a martini glass and then they couldn't decide on who would be the olive.

For Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibility the committee recommended that the pamphlet "AA for the Alcoholic With Special Needs" be expanded to include additional stories of alcoholics with mental illness collected from the Fellowship, and that the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Need-Accessibilities bring a progress report or draft pamphlet to the 2013 Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities.

This recommendation failed by an overwhelming majority. Apparently stories of AA members with mental illnesses were requested and the response was poor. Many wanted to see a separate pamphlet for AA members with mental illness even though there are some mental illness stories in the AA for the Alcoholic with Special Needs and The AA Member - Medications & Other Drugs pamphlets.

The following floor action resulted from the failed committee recommendation;

That the trustees' Committee on Literature develop a pamphlet for the alcoholic with mental illness, with a progress report to be provided to the 2013 Conference Committee on Literature with suggestions for content of the pamphlet, including breadth and scope of the pamphlet.

The author was given two minutes to present their case and then the Chair asked for a motion to decline to consider as is procedure. The motion to decline to consider did not pass and discussion on the motion ensued. I did not vote in favor of declining to consider as I felt discussion on the motion was warranted. After much discussion the question was called and passed. We then voted on the motion which passed 81 for and 39 against. I voted in favor of the motion. The minority shared and someone voting on the prevailing side asked for a motion to reconsider which passed. I voted against the motion to reconsider. Discussion resumed and before long the question was called again which passed and I voted in favor of calling the question. We voted on the original motion again and it did not pass this time by a vote of 76 for and 48 against. I voted in favor of the motion. It is my belief that if the focus of the motion was for a report back on suggestions for content and

the scope of a pamphlet for mental illness then this would have passed (as it nearly did anyway and did pass until we reconsidered) instead of instruction for developing a pamphlet. I would not be surprised to see this come up again in the future.

For the trustees Committee we elected two new trustees. Andrew W. (from Area 49, new West Central Regional Trustee replacing Ken B.) and Marty W. (from Area 79, new Western Canada Regional Trustee replacing Vic P.) The General Service Board (GSB), AAWS, and AAGV slates were all approved.

The conference closed with closing remarks from rotating trustees and our guests from India and then it was off to Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois. I have been to Stepping Stones several times and it is always a special experience to sit at the kitchen table where Ebby brought the message to Bill or to sit at Bill's desk. This time I was touched by the desperate love notes Bill wrote to Lois in his bible. Written with such sincerity, resolve, and devotion and yet he would drink again and again. This reminded me of the utter inability to leave alcohol alone no matter the wish or desire. For me it was the perfect way to start and end the 62nd GSC with the history of AA. In closing allow me to share a personal note of one example how the language of the heart was expressed at conference. When passing my fellow French speaking Delegates in the hallway. I would say "bon jour" and they would respond "hi." This concludes my report, thank you.