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## Delegate Report – May 15, 2010

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### Highlights of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference “Practicing A.A.’s Principles – The Pathway to Unity”

Before I share my experiences from the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference and provide some of the highlights of the work that was done the week of April 17-24, I would like to share some A.A. history leading up to this point.

In the spring of 1938, Bill W. began writing the Big Book – Alcoholics Anonymous, which was published in 1939. The 1940’s saw AA numbers grow; the Grapevine was published, and Bill wrote the Twelve Traditions. The main link between alcoholics around the country was Bill, Dr. Bob and the small secretarial staff in New York. In 1947, Dr. Bob was diagnosed with cancer. It became apparent to Bill that as death was inevitable, the future leadership of AA was in peril. Bill began to talk about a hand-picked advisory council or an elected conference of some sort. His proposal met heated resistance for fear that its adoption would create too much organization and problems with power. But Bill persisted and the conference plan was approved in 1950 as a five year experiment. Bernard Smith, a non-alcoholic businessman and lawyer was named as one of the six Trustees that formed the Alcoholic Foundation, later named the General Service Board. He was assigned as Chairman of the Trustees’ Committee to consider the proposed conference.

Bill decided that although the conference might one day include the whole world, the first delegates should come from the U.S. and Canada only. Each state might have one delegate with the provision that those containing heavy AA populations could have additional representation. To give the Conference continuity the delegates would be divided into two panels: Panel One to be elected in 1951 and Panel Two the following year. Each delegate would serve for two years, hence only half the delegates would drop out at one time.

A scheme was devised to choose committeemen (now known as DCMs or District Committee Members) from the assembly of groups (Area Assembly). The selection would be by written ballot with no personal nominations at all. From these committeemen, each state assembly would elect a delegate to represent them in New York. **So the groups were asked to form their Assemblies for the election of committeemen and delegates.** Eventually each state assembly was given a number to correspond with its alphabetical order. Thus, Maryland is Area 29.

The experiment was deemed a success. On July 3, 1955 at 4:00 pm at the Convention in St. Louis, MO 5,000 AA members, Trustees of the General Service Board, 75 delegates from the U.S. and Canada, directors from the A.A. Grapevine and A.A. World Service (our publishers) and secretarial staff of our world services in New York sat on the stage as the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bernard Smith, Chairman of the General Service Board, asked for a motion to accept Bill W’s proposal for a conference. A motion was made and seconded and the vote was unanimous. It was resolved that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous should become the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuator of the World Services of our Society, the voice of the group conscience of our entire Fellowship, and the sole successors to its co-founders, Dr. Bob and Bill.

What did the first delegates do? They inspected AA headquarters, met the service staff, and greeted the trustees. In the evening there was a briefing session under the name of “What’s on Your Mind”. One strenuous session followed another, morning, afternoon, and evening.

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I am here to report that aside from the inspection of AA headquarters which we were not able to

do this year, this is exactly what we did 55 years later. Here are some highlights of my experience.

### **Saturday, April 17**

I left Hagerstown at 8:30 am for the trip to Rye Brook, NY. The weather was partly cloudy, and traffic was light. I spoke to my sponsor on the phone to let her know I was on my way and to receive her words of encouragement. I listened to the CDs of the Mini Conference on my trip. I wanted to make sure I didn't forget anything. It was comforting to hear the voices of my friends and fellow AAs on this special trip. I felt totally prepared.

When I arrived in Rye Brook at 1:00 pm I was struck by the beautiful grounds of the Hilton Rye Town; the winding lane, the spring flowers in bloom, the peace and serenity of it all. It was nothing like the hurried, hectic trip in major traffic I experienced on my ride to New York two years ago as a guest of the Conference. Little did I know that when I parked my car in the parking lot, I would not see it again nor step outside for seven days! As I entered the hotel lobby I was greeted by two voices shouting "SWMBO!" It was Deb D., the delegate from Area 48 (HMB-New York) and her husband Keith, the Alternate Delegate. Excitement was in the air and I felt comfortable and at ease. I was here to work but have fun as our treasurer Bob C. had reminded me.

While settling into my room, I received a phone call from the front desk that they had a package for me. Several minutes later a HUGE basket of fruit, cheese, crackers and cookies was delivered to my room with a card that read ***"Good Luck! Do us proud! From your friends in Area 29"***. I cried.

So armed with a bag of Area 29 pins, I headed for the hotel lobby to start my adventure. Although the Conference did not begin until Sunday, there were activities outside the Conference beginning with the Remote Communities meeting from 4:00 – 6:00 pm. After dinner with the NERDs there was a Delegate only meeting with presentations by Panel 59 Delegates. That was followed by a NERAASA ad hoc committee meeting from 10:00 to 11:00 pm.

We began exchanging mementos right away. I can remember in years past watching political

conventions on TV and remarking how stupid all those delegates looked in their hats and pins, waving flags and signs. By the end of the week, we had so many pins on our lanyards we sounded like we were wearing cow bells. There were bookmarks, bracelets, stickers, miniature bottles of Tabasco and even a copy of the first 1951 Final Conference Report for everyone. Rule 62 certainly applied here.

### **Sunday, April 18**

Sunday morning we attended the **1728 Meeting** (12x12x12=1728) which featured two speakers sharing on Tradition 2 and Concept II followed by general sharing of Conference experiences by Panel 59 delegates to help orient the Panel 60 delegates.

Conference registration began at 9:30 am. We received the General Service Conference Manual which contained the agenda for the week, rosters of all attendees, copies of the General Service Board and General Service Office reports that would be given during the week, and committee sheets listing the names of the members of each committee and the agenda items for that committee.

General Service Board Chair, Ward Ewing, Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee, welcomed everyone to the Opening Session. At 10:00 am the **roll was called** by GSO General Manager, Phyllis H. As we went around the room and answered "Here" or "Present", there was a definite sense of the importance of the occasion, yet an air of levity also. When Phyllis called her own name, she mistakenly answered "President" to gales of laughter and applause. What an ice breaker! When it was her turn, little Kathy O. from West Virginia stood up on her stool with her tiara on her head and announced "Vice President", proving we are not a glum lot. Roll call was followed by greetings from our delegate chairperson, Lowell L. ( a NERD), and the keynote address was given by Bill Clark, Class A Trustee.

At this time the Conference body voted in alternate delegate Donna G from Area 33, Southeast Michigan to replace Derek D, the Panel 59 delegate who resigned. The Conference also voted to approve two observers from the General Service Board of Venezuela.

The Opening Session was followed by regional lunches. At the North East Regional lunch with

the Northeast Regional Delegates, or NERDs, we received our **NERD Survival Kits** containing such essentials as:

- 24-Hour Chip to remind us where we came from
- Tissues to dry the tears of joy and gratitude
- A candle to remind us to share our light with others
- Lifesavers to remind us of our primary purpose
- NERDS candy to remind us that we were never alone
- Funny glasses with nose and mustache to remind us not to take ourselves too darned seriously

The Conference Committees met for the first time Sunday afternoon with their corresponding trustee's committees for a one hour session to hear from the trustees what had transpired in this committee over the last year.

After an hour break to change clothes, we met in the banquet hall for the **Opening Dinner and A.A. meeting**. It was exciting to see Linda J. who was my guest; and Morgan J. who was the guest of Frank Z, delegate from Area 12-Delaware. We enjoyed a delicious dinner and pleasant conversation with our friends Gayle S, GSO staff member, and her husband Ralph. After the A. A. meeting that followed the banquet, spirits were high and photos were taken of anyone willing to stand still long enough. It was not necessary to say "smile" as it was hard to wipe the smile from our faces.

After Morgan and Linda left for their hotel, five of us walked upstairs to get a glimpse of the room where we would meet for the rest of the week. As we walked in the ballroom we stopped and you could hear an audible inhale. What we saw was the room we had heard so much about – the long narrow tables covered with white cloths; numbered microphones placed around the room; the dais with "60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference" emblazoned across the front and the miniature flags of the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico in front of the podium with the infamous timer. It was then I truly realized I was at the General Service Conference! We left the room in silence.

### **Serenity Group**

Monday through Friday at 7:30 am Conference members have the opportunity to attend an open

discussion recovery meeting. The Serenity Group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets only five days a year during the General Service Conference.

### **Monday and Tuesday, April 19 and 20**

On Monday and Tuesday mornings Conference Committees met from 9:00 am to noon to review, discuss and formulate Recommendations and Additional Considerations.

I am assigned to the Conference Committee on Finance. Our committee consisted of three Panel 60 Delegates, five Panel 59 delegates, committee secretary Don Muerer, Chief Financial Officer of AAWS, and his Finance Assistant who is on the staff at GSO. As we discussed agenda items, Don took notes and his assistant was on hand to begin typing any recommendations so that we could review them and make corrections as we worked.

After lunch and dinner on Monday and Tuesday we heard presentations, board reports and delegate Area highlights. Each session ended with "What's on Your Mind?" where Conference members could share on just about any topic. Tuesday afternoon we separated into groups for the workshop, "Discuss the General Service Conference Agenda Selection Process".

One of the most exciting presentations was on the new **Online Contributions** website which should be available this month. Some of the highlights of this presentation were:

- Contributions can be made by credit card and soon by electronic check using routing number
- Individual contributions can be credited to your name or your group, by # or group name
- If contributions are entered in the name of a group they will appear on the Quarterly Group Contribution Report
- Contributions are min. \$2.00 and max \$3,000
- Groups have to be registered with GSO to have contributions credited to them
- Even if your group is in an "Inactive" status, it will appear in the drop down box since it has a number.

I have a hard copy of the Online Contributions report given by Don Meurer. If anyone would like to review it or receive a copy to help share

the information with your districts and groups, let me know.

The last item on the Agenda for Tuesday was a Delegate Dinner and Delegate's Only Meeting. My Conference Committee opted to meet a third time from 9:00 pm until 11:00 pm to complete our work.

### **Wednesday, April 21**

The Wednesday morning session began at 9:00 am with Third Legacy procedure elections for Pacific Regional Trustee (Rod B from Salt Lake City) and Eastern Canada Trustee (Don C from Terrebone, Quebec).

At the Northeast Regional lunch on Wednesday I gave the presentation of Area 29's bid for the 2013 NERF which I reported earlier. Also during lunch the names of NERDs who had not been elected 2011 Conference Committee chairs, were placed in a hat to draw the name of the person who would be offered from the Northeast Region to possibly have the opportunity to serve as Delegate Chair for the 61<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference. My name was drawn!

Unfortunately, it was not drawn from the hat containing the names from all the regions. I'm sure that God has something else in store for me next year.

After lunch there was a presentation on the "General Service Conference Agenda Selection Process" with Class A Trustee, Rogelio Flores, moderating. Rogelio is a Superior Court judge for the State of California and on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

At 2:00 pm Conference Committee reports and discussion began and continued after dinner until 9:45 pm.

### **Thursday, April 22**

Committee reports and discussions started at 9:00 am Thursday morning and ended at 10:00 pm. There were breaks for lunch, dinner, and presentations. The NERDs gathered at 10:30 pm with our NERT for popsicles in the hotel, but we were all too tired to have much fun...not like the stories we heard of the Stardust from previous years. Maybe next year!

### **Friday, April 23**

Committee reports started early at 8:30 am Friday morning and although scheduled to end

at 3:00 pm, the last vote on the final of 17 floor actions took place at 10:10 pm. \*

Rotating Panel 59 Delegates were, at this time, given the opportunity to give their farewells. No one left the room as this was a very moving and spiritual event for all of us. There were many touching moments capped off at almost midnight by little Kathy O from West Virginia standing on her stool, wearing her tiara, singing an old McGuire sisters song, "May You Always". Below are the words you may read at your leisure. I felt they were worth including in this report.

#### *May You Always*

*May you always walk in sunlight,  
Slumber warm when night winds blow.  
May you always live with laughter,  
For a smile becomes you so.  
May good fortune travel your way,  
May the bluebird sing your song.  
May no troubles find your doorway,  
May no worries stay too long.  
May old heartaches be forgotten,  
May no tears be spilled.  
May old acquaintance be remembered,  
And your cup of kindness filled.  
May you always be a dreamer,  
May your wildest dreams come true.  
May you find someone to love,  
As much as I love you.*

There were few dry eyes in the house. The meeting closed with the Serenity Prayer in English, French and Spanish.

### **Saturday, April 24**

On Saturday morning all Conference members met one final time for the **Closing Brunch** where farewell talks were given by rotating Trustees, Bill Clark and Madeleine P. The brunch was a formality, as the time was taken to give and receive hugs, take pictures and say our farewells to the new friends we'd made.

While many members of the Conference headed to Stepping Stones, the final home of Bill and Lois W, I chose to pack up my belongings and head home. I had been given the opportunity to visit Stepping Stones two years before and I was ready to go home.

So I bid farewell to my new and old friends until we meet in San Antonio. Some I will see again in the Northeast Region at NERAASA, NERD and NERF. Others I will see next year at the 61<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference which is

returning to the Crowne Plaza in Times Square. Look out Stardust, the NERDs are coming!

I want to again thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve our entire fellowship. I encourage all of you to aspire to have this same opportunity on your service journey.

To view the General Service Conference Advisory Actions, Floor Actions and Additional Considerations, please go to [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) and print the Summer Edition of Box 459.

I encourage everyone to review the outcome of the Agenda Items. Use the list of Additional Considerations to formulate possible Agenda Items to bring to the Area for discussion. Full details of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference will be published this summer in the Confidential 2010 Final Conference Report which should be available in August.

### Statistics of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

#### Make Up of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

131 Voting Members  
 93 Delegates – 71%  
 24 Trustees, AAWS Directors, GV Directors – 18.3%  
 14 General Service Office and Grapevine Staff – 10.7%

Every Conference member has not only a vote but a voice; not only a right but a responsibility to express his or her views.

#### Statistics on Delegates (89 responses) 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

<u>Years</u>	
Average age.....	55
Oldest .....	75
Youngest .....	34
Average Length of Sobriety .....	19
Longest Sobriety .....	33
Shortest Sobriety .....	7
Average Length of Service .....	15
Longest Service .....	28
Shortest Service .....	5

#### What is an Advisory Action?

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations of the Conference committees, or floor actions that have been approved by the Conference body as a whole with substantial unanimity (2/3 vote).

(page S56 of The A.A. Service Manual, 2009-2010 edition)

#### What is an Additional Committee Consideration?

Additional Committee Considerations are items discussed, but no action taken or recommendation made, as well as committee recommendations which are not adopted. They do not rise to the level of policy, and are not voted on by the Conference. They are well-discussed and formulated for future action by the General Service Board, GSO, The Grapevine or next years' Conference Committees. .

#### What is a Floor Action?

1. Any member of the Conference can propose an item for discussion that was not on the original agenda.
2. Floor Actions must be presented in writing.
3. This year 17 Floor Actions were entered.
4. The Conference may elect to vote to decline to consider the item.
5. Or it may vote on the item, pass or fail (simple majority)
6. Or it may refer it back to a committee for further study.
7. The Minority Opinion is encouraged.