

57th General Service Conference Report

I arrived Thurs April 19 and met Gustavo Area 5, his wife, Jerry Area 8 and we also picked up Past Delegate and Past Trustee at Large, Larry N. New York has a unique energy and it was evidenced by our driver as he navigated the streets. I decided I would never want to drive in NY.

Friday morning

We met with some other Pacific Regional Delegates and proceeded to the General Service Office. It is across the street from a park and river and in quite a nice area. We went up to the 11th floor first where the General Services office are. As we exited the elevator we turned right and saw the symbol of the circle and triangle. I was actually more moved by Dr Bob's and Bill's last speeches on a board in the hallway. I realized the reason I was there was because Bill realized when Bob became ill that there had to be a method put into place to insure the future of AA that no longer depended upon Bill and Bob. As we toured the office, it was great to meet many of the people that we had talked to over the years as they assisted us in our work. When I went into our Archives, the first thing I saw was the ICYPAA Archives that had been turned over to GSO. I wandered the room, I saw some of Bill's handwritten notes, one of which was written to Ebby during the Christmas season. It seemed as if this letter was written during one of the many times that Bill was trying to help Ebby get sober. I also saw the Lasker award that I had read about in AA Comes of Age. There is a picture of it on the display board. This award was presented to AA in 1951 for "its unique and highly successful approach to that age-old public health and social problem, alcoholism". (You can read the text of the Lasker Award on page 301 of AA Comes of Age.) After leaving Archives we went down to the 10th floor and toured the Grapevine offices. I loved looking at the possible covers for the June 2007 Grapevine cover and it will be interesting to see which one is chosen. We had just wandered back to where they were hanging and we had an impromptu vote from many visiting Delegates. We also looked at some editions (one book from 1971) to see exactly what the "gray Pages" were that we would be discussing during the Conference. They were actually quite different than I had imagined. After our tour we attended the 457 meeting at 11am. It is held every Friday, but during Conference week it is held downstairs to accommodate the many visitors.

Saturday: Pacific Region Delegates and Trustee attended a play "Bill and Dr. Bob" This was a very fitting way to begin and the play ended with mentioned that when Bill and Bob learned Bob was ill, it became apparent that it was time to turn the future of the Fellowship over to the Fellowship. Seems like this sentiment was hitting me in the face everywhere I turned.

Saturday night we had our Delegate only meeting, with Delegate Chairperson, Darryl, leading the meeting. This was where we went around the room and introduced ourselves, panel 56 Delegates shared their experience from last year and Panel 57 Delegates were given a chance to ask questions.

Sunday: A meeting that is not official part of Conference is the Remote Communities Meeting from 9-11 on Sunday before the Conference officially begins. There were two ten minute presentations followed by two large roundtables. The seed of the idea of this

meeting started at the 50th Anniversary of AA in Toronto, A handful of Canadian Delegates met to discuss the problem of carrying the message to remote Canadian communities.. It is a forum for sharing ideas on overcoming barriers of culture, language and geography. The sharing in the roundtable that I attended was started off by a Native American Delegate from Oklahoma, named Paul. He shared that the problems he encounters and many other Areas encounter was not reaching the Native American on reservations but also in the cities. He sobered up in the city and even when he has tried to carry the message of AA to the reservations, he is told he is an “apple”- red on the outside and white on the inside. He stated that this level of mistrust from certain cultures keeps us from being able to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. The Delegate from Rhode Island, Jorge, shared that his Area has seen growth in the Hispanic membership. And his Area tries hard to be inclusive of all their members. Until fairly recently, they would all meet for certain workshops or assemblies or their Area convention and include Hispanic members by giving them a room to do their work. They realized this approach was still creating and emphasizing differences amongst their members rather than encouraging inclusiveness, So they have not closed off that room and have included the Hispanic members in all their work equally, All members regardless of culture or language are asked to share equally in the task of having all members participate in all aspects of service together. It seemed that the consensus of this roundtable was that all members be treated as alcoholics, not Native American Alcoholics, or Hispanic Alcoholics but that all labels other than “alcoholic” be left outside the rooms of AA and that this is the only way that true unity can occur. And that it IS definitely a two way street and the responsibility for true unity rests on all members’ shoulders.

Sunday Working Lunch: - Met with Pacific Regional Trustee, Madeleine and the Pacific regional Delegates for Orientation by region. We received further instruction on how business is conducted at the Conference. At 1:15 the Conference officially began. I walked into the room and was incredibly moved by the large banner proclaiming “the 57th Annual General Service Conference” Leonard Blumenthal(non- alcoholic) , our Chairman of the Board welcomed us, the Delegate from Alaska Area 02, Rick H, read an opening statement, then Greg M., our General Manager took Roll Call. This roll call is alphabetical and as he went thru all the names with “H”s and approached the letter “J”, I began to realize that I was really there, I was really going to stand up for Area 93 and with the simple word, “PRESENT”, be acting as your Delegate and working for the good of AA as a whole. It was an amazing moment, one that I cannot put into words, but one I will be eternally grateful for.

After this first session, we broke into the Joint Trustee and Conference Committee meetings. The Trustees that correspond the Delegate Conference committee advised us of their work over the last few months and gave us their report. For my committee, the Agenda committee, this trustees report also explains how and why the entire Conference committee is set up the way it is and how certain presentations are decided upon. For instance, the Archives presentation at the 56th GSC was so well received that it was again included in our agenda.

After that session, we took a break and then met for dinner and a meeting with a tribute to the recently deceased Nell Wing who as a friend of Bill and Lois W and a long time

worker at GSO from the late 1940s thru the mid 1980s. She was also AA's first Archivist. A Past Chairman of the Board Mike Alexander (non - alcoholic) and another member who has worked with Nell paid tribute to her and described how her friendship to AA was invaluable. She also worked with Lois on the Stepping Stones Foundation. You can read an interview with Nell in May's Grapevine magazine.

Monday April 23-I attended the first meeting of the Agenda Committee- this consists of 8 Delegates and our staff secretary Rick W., who many of you got to meet at our PreConference Workshop in March, As we began our committee deliberations, each of us chose about 5 out of the 41 suggested Themes or more than five if we felt strongly about certain ones. As our discussion progressed, we ended up combining a couple of the suggestions, replacing some wording that we felt might sound negative and came up the the Theme for the 2008 General Service Conference "Communication and Participation- The Key to Unity and Self- Support". This basically took up our first session and we began some preliminary discussion on Presentation Topics and pared down the list a bit, knowing we would have time before our next committee meeting to reflect and of course pray regarding the Presentation and also the Workshop Topics. I will tell you more when we discuss committee reports.

Then, when we broke for lunch, I followed instructions and sat with Delegates that I had not yet had a chance to meet. Our afternoon session began at 1:15 where we heard some Panel 57 Delegates give their Area highlights. Then we dove into the business of hearing Board Reports form The General Service Board, the AAWS Board and the Grapevine Board.

In the Board Report, Leonard Blumenthal, Chairman of the Board, advised the Conference of some recent travels and groups he had been invited to speak to, one of which was the Mexican National Convention in Guadalajara. 40,000 tickets were sold to this event and after those tickets were sold, the doors were opened to all who wanted to attend. In Turkey, he had the opportunity to share about AA on two television programs. In Ankara, the capitol city, it was reported to Leonard and staff member Doug R, who had traveled with him, that the phone at the local service office rang steadily after these programs aired.

In March 2005, the board began the inventory process of the three boards. An ad hoc committee was appointed to review the three board inventories (AA Grapevine, AA World Services and General Service Board). This ad hoc committee was to review the inventory reports and to prioritize all suggestions. On March 17-18, 2007 the General Service Board held a special meeting on Board Inventories to review the priority lists of suggestions of the three board inventories and the final reports from the ad hoc committee and to strategize and discuss plans of action. I felt this was so interesting because it reminded me of exactly how we decided to handle our last Area inventory.

Leonard also suggested that it is not too soon to think about the celebration of our centennial which is less than 30 years away and now is the time to start thinking of plans for the 100th anniversary. It was interesting to me that some thought there should be a grand celebration and some thought that it would not be in our best interest to have such a celebration.

AAWS Board Report given by Paul C., AAWS Chairperson. A net total of 986 new groups were listed with GSO last year. The board approved electronic distribution of the Newsletters- "MARKINGS"(our Archives newsletter) and "About AA."

Paul advised further about International travel and this was quite touching and he let us know that at the request of the Central Mexicana General Service Board, Greg M. and Julio E. attended the Central Mexican General Service Board Meeting in Mexico City. Central Mexicana trustees particularly asked Greg to share details on trademark and copyrights. Greg and Julio also responded to the trustees' concerns about periodic disunity within the Fellowship in Mexico. This reminded some of us of the recent Grapevine article on the report from the 34th World Service meeting. Many think the General Service Conference is WORLD SERVICES but there actually is a World Service Conference with Delegates from many countries (54 representing AA in 34 countries attended the last one) getting together to discuss AA in their country and their experiences, problems, solutions, strength and hope. The Grapevine article advised that the Mexican General Service Board had purposely – years ago – set up their General Service Board to be completely different from the US and Canada- because they wanted it to reflect their Mexican uniqueness (their words not mine) and that over the last 20 years they suffered through many problems. In their search for solutions, they utilized the US/Canada Service Manual. And in conclusion they reported that now their service structure almost exactly mirrors their neighbors to the north. (you'll also hear more about this later in my report)

The AA Service Directories were not published this year due to extensive delays in production and the board determined that it was best to suspend publication this year. This action was not a result of a request from the groups but a business decision. These directories are usually produced and sent to GSRS to distribute to their groups. There are 3 Regional directories, the International Directories and the Central Office/Intergroup and Answering Services. They have been produced to aid AA members when they travel or relocate

Paul also advised that we have lost our **copyright** on "Twelve Concepts for World Service." Early this year we learned that copyright protection on the original 1962 version of the 12 concepts expired December 31, 1990 because the copyright was not renewed prior to that date. I will be distributing a Fact Sheet on the loss of the Concepts copyright and encourage you to share this information.

Online Ordering: Any AA service entity meaning Area, district, Committee or Area or District OR any entity that has spent \$25,000.00 or more on AA literature in any one of the past three years can order literature online. This will not extend for groups as we do not want to cause any harm to Central Offices that supply many of the groups' literature.

The **Finance Green card** that was approved at the 2006 Conference is out and was distributed at the Conference and now be ordered through GSO. This is a wonderful card, that can be read when your seventh tradition basket is passed. It lets the groups know about contributing to AA service entities. I love the way this card is worded. Also, the booklet "Inmate to Inmate" has been revised and was being disbursed at the Conference and will be available through GSO now.

By the end of 2007 all items that are currently on video, will be available on DVD.

Grapevine: Arnold R., Chairperson reported to the Conference. One of his first announcements was that he was rotating out and that his replacement will be Dorothy H. . This year the Grapevine lost \$48, 874.00. They had projected about \$20,000.00 in profit so this was not a good year for the Grapevine. Some of these funds were spent to cover required pension plan contributions . However, even without this “surprise “ expense, we lost money because our subscriptions are down. In July the price of a Grapevine subscription will go up \$2.00. The last time we had a price increase was five years ago. The solution to getting us back in good financial shape is to increase our subscriptions by 9300 or 100 per Area. I would like to suggest that if you do not currently have a subscription you may wish to order prior to the price increase in July. Also one idea we heard years ago at PRAASA is that as soon as you start sponsoring someone, get them a subscription to GV. Even if they “go out” the subscription keeps coming to their door and may be a wonderful 12th step on them.

One exciting discussion involves a feasibility study to produce all issues of GV without staples like our annual July issue. Issues without staples are allowed in prisons and have been very popular with Corrections and H&I Committees. There is a projected cost of \$2, 000.00 per issued to make it staple free and since July already is produced in this form; it would be \$22,000.00 more a year to produce it this way. This is currently just under study but this may be something you want to talk about at District level and could even be suggested as an agenda item.

Another important solution would be to get Grapevine reps for meetings. This used to be a common group position, it is an easy and fun position, and they have their own portion of the AA Grapevine website

LaVina did much better this year than the Grapevine. It still reported a loss but it was less than budgeted and subscriptions were up about 10% over the previous year.

Here are some ideas to take back to the group members: Make sure your groups are aware of new Grapevine audio available on the website, the ability to download to an MP3, the release of new publications “Emotional Sobriety”, 2 audio CDs remastered from tapes of GV stories on the Traditions, The Home Group revised Spanish language edition, Best of Bill audio book in Spanish and English, The new book “In our Own Words: Stories of Young AAs in Recovery”, Pasos 7-12, LaVina’s 3rd CD.

After the board reports, we then took a short dinner break and when we reconvened, heard a wonderful presentation from our Archivist Amy. She played an audio tape of Bill addressing the 1968 General Service Conference and she set it up by reminding us of what was going on in the world in 1968.

Hearing Bill, under those circumstances particularly, was amazing. Amy also discussed past general service manager, Bob P.’s talk at the 1986 Conference, his last year as the General Service Manager where he advised that there was a trend of rigidity taking us further away from our co-founders .Amy let us know that there are countless examples and writings that show Bill as an extremely tolerant man. Amy is an amazing treasure that we have been blessed with, she is not an alcoholic. Yet she has a love of our history and the way she talks about it makes you feel as if you are hearing the most fascinating

story ever heard. I would love to one day have her come to our Area and speak to all of you.

Finance Report- Next we heard from Vince Keefe, General Service Board Treasurer and Class A Trustee (non- alcoholic) . I like to keep this portion simple and in numbers that I, as a group member, can understand and explain to my group. To be fully self supporting in 2007, the individual contribution would be \$6.37 per member or \$142.42 per group. Last year we experienced an increase in our contributions and Vince believes it is a direct result of the Delegates informing their Areas and the DCMs informing their GSRS and the GSRs informing their groups. So I want to keep of that tradition of letting you know the cost of services, how much each group would need to contribute and the percentage of groups in Area 93 that currently contribute. Area 93 had an increase in 2006 of 2% of groups contributing to GSO, so now we have 44% of groups contributing. I believe that if let the other 56% know that when we send money to GSO we are simply paying our share of the bills to keep our office open and able to carry out our 12th step work, that 56% would begin to contribute. Also, if you use the Birthday Plan envelopes and the member celebrating a birthday sends in their money and puts the group number on the envelope, we will also see an increase in contributions. He summarized some of the facts for 2006 for us noting: 1) We saw the Fellowship respond with a record amount of contributions to help pay the cost of our services 2) The percent of groups sending contributions increased for the first time in the last 5 years, 3) Increases in pension and retiree health care costs have added significantly to the annual cost of our office 4) Gross sales of literature showed only a very small increase over 2005, while the related gross profit was slightly lower 5) La Vina reduced the overall loss incurred in 2005 by approximately \$36,000.00 6) The AA Grapevine posted a loss of \$48, 875 instead of the budgeted profit of \$19,983.00 . So Grapevine had a rough year and really needs the support of the Fellowship it serves.

Tuesday- We began the day back in our committees.

All of the agenda items that you discuss and work on during the year and at the PreConference Workshop are truly worked on by the corresponding committee at the Conference. While an item is in committee, it is not discussed by Conference members until the committee has completed their work and given their reports. It is at these report backs that questions are asked and voting occurs.

The Agenda committee (the one I serve on) began work on the presentation topics and it was amazing to see how the whole picture started to come together. We had an incredible committee, there was an energy and excitement in the room and we could almost hear AA members all over the US and Canada talking about the items we were bringing together. This was one of the moments in my life where I felt overcome by gratitude, excitement, amazement, spirituality, joy –**Is there such and emotion called excited humbleness??** Our committee was chaired by Eric K. from Oregon Area 58 and he really kept us focused. From those presentation items, we moved on to the workshop topic. The theme for the 2008 General Service Conference is “COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION: KEY TO UNITY AND SELF- SUPPORT” . I have flyers for you today that show the presentations and the workshop topics. This is how you can begin discussions now in your groups for things that will be focused on from this time forward until the Conference in April 2008.

After lunch we resumed in the main room and heard some more Area Highlights and 3 presentations. Then we were off to GSO. Most delegates took the subway but I shared a cab with Eva S (Past Delegate of Area 5 who now works in our General Service office) and Jerry from Area 8 San Diego and Marianne from Area 7 California Northern Interior.

I figured if I was going to risk my life by going anywhere with a New York taxi drive, I wanted company!! When we arrived at GSO, we were greeted enthusiastically by GSO staff members and the office was decorated as if for a party. During this time, I was able to view Fellowship New Vision and realized this is more than a system for Registrars but it an interactive system that can really benefit us. I thought of Ken and was glad that he is our Registrar as he possesses the computer skills and the curious mind to thoroughly explore this new program for Area 93. When I visited GSO Archives, **many** Area 93 members were on my mind. I wanted to make sure to take a picture of the ICYPAA Archives that were recently turned over to GSO. I also was moved by an emblem from Ground Zero meeting that was held in the months after the devastating Sept 11 attacks and I took a picture of the Lasker award also. When you visit the General Service office I think you come away with the sense that there is no “them” and “us” – GSO IS US- it is truly our office. After the visit to GSO, we had Delegates only dinner and meeting where we discussed the Conference experience so far, how to improve it for Panel 58 Delegates and also different ways to give the Delegate Report when we returned to our Areas. John from Area 03, Arizona, mass produced a CD that he calls “Delegate on a Disc” that includes his talk and pictures from his Conference experience. Since I am not as talented as John, I can only tell you about this great idea. We then elected the Delegate Chairperson for the 58th GSC. This is a very simple process. Each region puts the names of their first year Delegates into a hat and a name is drawn and that person becomes the Regions candidate. My name actually came out of the hat for our Pacific Region. Then all the names for each region go into another hat and the name of the next Chairman is drawn from that hat. The new Delegate Chairperson is FRANCE from Quebec. She speaks very little English and did not appear to be happy with the selection. She figures she has one year to learn how to speak English! We all tried to reassure her that this must be God’s plan but she seemed to have her doubts! Wait till I tell you about France’s experience later in the Conference!

What I began to notice Tuesday night was that I began to feel more a part of, I thought so many times about members of Area 93, about the things that I have learned from you, and the discussions we have had. It was almost as if you were thinking of me and I could feel it.

Wednesday, the first very very long day! The Conference Members break into roundtables to discuss the Workshop Topic, which if you recall was “The Spiritual Value of our AA Dollars” The report from these workshops will appear in the final conference report that you will receive around August. I suggest you use this part of the report for meeting topics or to help talk about our voluntary contributions.

Then we had more Area highlights including our new Pacific Regional Delegates. It was a thrill to tell the Conference about all of you. We adjourned for a working lunch with our regions and we had a lot of business to take care of in the Pacific Region. We voted that PRAASA 2010 will be hosted by Area 5, Southern California and PRAASA 2011 will be hosted by Area 17, Hawaii. Although the room rate in Hawaii will be expensive, we know that we have to rotate PRAASA and Hawaii definitely needs our help so we will be there in 2011. I presented our bid for the Pacific Regional Forum for 2010 but we did not get the bid. Instead, the Forum will be hosted by Area 09 and will be held in August 2010 in Torrance, Ca. Area 09 had also never hosted a Forum.

Then there were elections for Trustees that we as the Pacific Region did not vote on but watched the process. The new Northeast Trustee is John K from Area 45, Southern New Jersey. The new Southwest Regional Trustee is Conley B, Jr. from Area 4, Arkansas and the new Trustee at Large/Canada is JoAnne L., from Area 80 Manitoba , Western Canada Region.

We then heard presentations on Our Primary Purpose, and I really was interested in hearing the one concerning Working with Wet Drunks. I think we will be talking more and more about working one on one, one alcoholic to another, which has been the key to our growth and survival in the past and will continue to be our solution.

Now it was 7:15 pm and we then began to hear the Committee reports, beginning with **Treatment Facilities**. This is where you will hear about Bridging the Gap programs as it is part of that committee. The committee recommended that "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" be revised, retaining only the script and that the sample footage or a progress report be brought to the 2008 Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities.

(Take note of any items that I say were recommended to be brought back to the 2008 Conference and you will have a good idea of what we will be asking groups to talk about for the next Conference)

This committee also requested that The Grapevine and LaVina consider producing a special section once a year on Treatment Facilities 12th Step Work. So if you are involved in this, such as through Bridging the Gap, please submit your article or story to Grapevine or LaVina and see if this is something that could become a special annual section. If the fellowship wants this to happen, it will.

We then heard from the **Policy Admissions** committee. Again, the admission of Alternate Delegate Hari B, being seated in place of Adrien G, Panel 56 Delegate who could not attend was discussed and voted upon and confirmed.

The Policy/Admissions committee also recommended that the 60th GSC be held April 24-28, 2010.

Grapevine: Lengthy discussion was held on whether to add back the "grey pages" with occasional articles about alcoholism to appear in GV. AA has a history of cooperating with our friends and it was voted that we would recommend that these pages appear again leaving the editorial decisions to AA Grapevine, Inc. There was lots of discussion, it was a hot topic, the question was called and this motion passed 82 to 35. But wait!!!!---- now the fun began. After the motion was passed, minority opinion was heard and there was another lengthy discussion, there was a move to reconsider, and the vote to reconsider failed so the motion passed. Did you follow that? That was the tip of the icicle for this first year Delegate. The bottom line is YES we have recommended to Grapevine that there be occasional article from medical, legal, social fields regarding alcoholism. This may make the GV even more valuable as a Public Information tool, if you like me, tend to leave them in Doctors office waiting rooms.

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Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) discussion began about 8:45 pm and this committee reported that they had viewed the progress report on video

segments directed to professionals and the preliminary clip of CPC video directed to medical professionals., The committee offered several suggestions to the Publications Director and video production vendor about script pacing, content, content security (which basically means it cannot be hacked if someone viewing on our website) This video came from 2006 Conference recommendation, to bring progress report to 2007 and now there will be 3 videos submitted for approval at 2008 conference.

Then we began **Trustees Committee** report.

At the beginning of the week, I had heard some rumors floating around the Conference the first few days about a letter that had been circulated by some Class “B” Trustees regarding hearing their minority opinion about a matter that had been discussed with AAWS, Inc. about the term of the General Manager’s job. It was the opinion of these folks that the General Manager Job should be subject to the principle of rotation.

It turns out that the originators of this “Minority Appeal” had sent an item to the Delegates Trustee committee on April 11, 2007 although the cut off for agenda items is January 15th. This item was indeed given to the committee and by doing so it appeared to come under the guidance of “if an item is in committee it is not discussed until the committee has completed their work and given their report.” However, some Regional Trustees had also sent this information out to their Delegates, who were not on the committee. This was a surprising situation and the letter and accompanying materials had been widely discussed. Many Delegates felt that since this had not followed the process for an agenda item, since the material had been disbursed to about half the Conference members, that it could not be seen as an agenda item in committee. It really created an upset since it appeared that the Trustees that submitted this minority opinion felt a sense of urgency and the need to be heard, but the reality was that the General Manager has already signed another 4 year contract. The AAWS Board had just declined to begin the search for a new General Service Manager, and right now it appears to be a personnel item. We did not object to the Trustee’s opinion or their concern, but their methodology did cause many objections.

. We all agreed that this had not been handled well. The Delegates Committee on Trustees however, DID work in our trusted committee process and referred this discussion back to the Trustees Committee and if necessary it can be brought back correctly to the 2008 Conference.

After this whole incident, some of us felt uneasy about having passed the recommendation to consider Class B Trustees for Chairman of the Board. There are many, many wonderful AAs serving as Class B Trustees. There are probably many emotional Class A Trustees. But we had just seen where the passion of some alcoholics can lead us. We thought back to the 1987 Advisory Action that suggested that we stick to our long standing practice of only considering Class A Trustees. Luckily if the Conference makes a mistake it can always be corrected. We shall see what the fellowship feels as their Delegates report this back to their Areas.

The end result of this was we began discussion of this committee report Wednesday night and stayed until 10:30 pm. We came back Thursday morning and continued this same report discussion again at 9:45am. At 3:10 pm we were finally finished with this committee report.

So we moved on to **Public Information Committee**. This brings to me something that I am so excited about and I know you will be too! The 2007 AA Membership Survey is about to begin and will be conducted on a random basis as was done in the 2004 survey. The membership survey was displayed at the last few PRAASAs and FORUM so some of you may have seen it. It is a very useful tool that you might, for example, see at a health fair. It shows how our membership is made up as to age, gender, marital status, jobs, etc. Imagine if you think AA is only for the alcoholic you may see on the street. Then you happen to see this survey and find out that members are doctors, receptionists, gardeners, CEOs of companies. That they are many, women and teenagers. This has proven to be a very helpful tool. Starting in June, I will receive notice and GSRs or group contacts will receive notice of groups picked at random to participate and advance information about the survey process. July 10- July 31, 2007, groups will receive white envelopes for survey results from the Delegate; August 1-14, 2007 groups will conduct the survey at one regularly scheduled meeting. Your group will then, following simple, clear instructions, have everyone attending your meeting on a certain night, complete the questionnaire and return it to me between August 14-27th, 2007. I will have to get all completed surveys back to the Public Information Assignment at GSO no later than August 31, 2007. I really would love for my home group to be chosen and as you bring this information back to your groups, I hope you present it to them as an honor to be chosen and as a direct means to carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers or the professional that may be seeing that alcoholic. I am completely thrilled to be given this chance to work directly with the groups on this project.

We then discussed the recommendations for certain public service announcements to be created. We will continue with previous Conference Advisory Actions that we produce a new PSA on yearly bases and that after the each year the oldest PSA be withdrawn. This year the new PSA is "Force of Nature" and it was recommended that this PSA be approved. This PSA was really interesting and used an approach I had not seen before but it basically showed different forces of nature such as hurricane, floods and then showed how alcohol has destroyed many of our lives. I hope that you get to see it by year end. Another exciting part of the PI Committee report is a recommendation that the committee request video/digital submissions form the Fellowship, with selected videos compiled and used in carrying the message of AA to young people. Guidelines have been drawn up and just need to be approved. Once they are finished, we will get a copy of them and be able to tell you how to make your submissions. A professional editing company will be used, as always, and will most likely use different parts form different submissions. It was recommended that a compilation of these submissions or a progress report on the project be presented to the 2008 Conference Committee on Public Information for consideration. This is where all of our budding film producers can let lose and these films may end up being used as a video, as something streaming on our AA.org website. Many websites already have young peoples experience in recovery on places like MySpace. This would give our members a chance to put out information as they would like it to be seen and heard.

Also the pamphlet “A Message to Teenagers was reviewed. There had been requests to change a portion that referred to how alcoholism can affect anyone and in part it said “Young, old. Rich, poor. Black, white/” It was recommended that these words be deleted. They declined to add any other language and just to keep it simple, especially since at this time the illustrations are being updated but not the entire text.

Next we heard from the **Corrections Committee** (in California this work is done by our H&I committees). **And yes it is still Thursday.** We got to review the draft informational media presentation introducing AA to training academies and in-service training programs for correction personnel. Now this film is not directed towards the alcoholic but towards people in correctional facilities that come across the alcoholic and that might be in a position to someday say whether or not an AA meeting can be held in that jail or prison. Two of our class A trustees that are highly credible in the corrections field are in this film, Allen Ault and Jeannie Woodward- non alcoholics- (Allen just rotated out after serving 4 years as a Class A trustee) There was one small suggested change, where the film had a woman, alone, leading a meeting in a prison, that will be corrected and then the producing and distribution will move forward. I was very excited by this committee report, in part I think, because when I served as Alternate Delegate and as our Area liaison to H&I, and was working on a PreConference Workshop, I had 2 members of Southern California H&I Intergroup come and give us 2 presentations. One presentation was about this film, the other was about updating the booklet “Inmate to Inmate”. And that booklet was just revised and published and we received the first copies at the Conference. In gratitude for our continued interaction and cooperation with H&I, I had the Delegates who served on the Corrections committee sign this first copy of the revised “Inmate to Inmate” and will have Alberto, our Alternate Delegate present it to Southern California H&I Intergroup for their Archives.

We took a break from committees and heard presentations from two members, Murray M, Trustee at Large, Canada and Doug R, GSO Staff assigned to the International Desk. **These provide a much needed break and also were valuable reminders of why we were all there.** I have the copies of their full talks and will be happy to give them to you and also want to remind you that they will appear in your final conference reports. Anyway the Topic was AA around the World. Murray started off and let us know about attending the World Service Meeting attended by 54 Delegates in 34 countries and zones gathered in Malahide Ireland for the 19th World Service Meeting.. It was the largest gathering of delegates to attend since the events beginnings 37 years ago in 1969. One important result of World Service Meetings in the recent years has been the development and enhancement of the International Literature Fund, This funds was set up in order that other countries might help provide some financial assistance to AAWS, Inc, and participate in its efforts to see that AA literature was translated and made available to more suffering alcoholics around d the globe. Just like AAs everywhere, some countries are very well off financially and some are very poor. But all have a desire to participate. One the morning after the 19th World Service meeting, Doug R, coordinator of the WSM, found an envelope tucked under his door with 2 crisp \$10.00 bills and represented a contribution to the Fund from the members of AA in the Ukraine.

We also heard about country to country sponsorship. Several countries also provided financial assistance so that delegates from less well- off countries might attend. Murray also reports how he had spent 8 days in South America in March visiting the GSOs of Peru, Uruguay and Chile. Both Uruguay and Chile expressed dissatisfaction with their service structure and a desire to more closely model the service outlined in our AA Service Manual. Murray referred them to our next door neighbor Mexico for their experience in this matter Mexico has been some of the most enthusiastic proponents of adopting our US/Canada service structure. They had had the experience of forging their own structure and writing their own service manual and had had increasing difficulties in coping with their problems inherent in their structure. They had finally come to the conclusion that the answer they sought was to adapt out AA Service Manual to their need and to replace theirs. The reason they saw the value in the US/Canada Service structure as the answer to their service dilemma was that it outlines the best model available for their needs so far.

Doug R spoke to us about many of his travels and experiences this last year. Historically, GSO receives a number of invitations form international AA service structures to visit other countries. The GSO staff person on the International desk participates and this has been Doug's assignment for almost two years (which means he will be rotating out about July!).He described going to Mongolia and sleeping in a "yurt" with the general manager- a yurt is a round ten-like structure. He said on a 27 hour bus ride in Russian Siberia , he added running hot water and flushing toilets to his gratitude list because there was a lack of both on that journey. He encountered medical professionals, media people, government administrators, police and military personnel, all looking to help the alcoholic. Doug observed how eager AA members in each country are to tell us what they were doing and accomplishing. They have many questions about service, Traditions and Concepts and how other groups and our GSO function. As Doug rotates out he expressed his hope that we stay closely connected to our AA brothers and sisters around the globe as our universal message of recovery and hope is carried across borders, cultures and languages, one alcoholic to another.

After dinner, the Public Information Committee began their report and after about 2 hours and many questions agreed to go back and meet again to work out an item that the Conference could not agree on as it was written. We would be back to work Friday morning with many more reports to be heard, items to be discussed and voted on.

Friday morning arrived and I am not sure if it was the rest we all needed but the morning began with the **Archives** committee coming back and stating that their report and not changed and their recommendation that any future proposed project involving widespread distribution of archival recordings be submitted to the Conference Archives committee so that the Conference might provide guidance prior to production passed easily.

Report and Charter Committee had many items to consider and this committee works on changes to the Service Manual which is revised constantly. For the next service manual some of the changes you will see are: (1) the description of the number of groups in a district will be broadened to reflect from 5 to 90 groups and that rural and

metropolitan areas vary greatly. Part of the reason given for this change is that there are some districts that have read the service manual as it is and see that an ideal district is 20-25 groups and as soon as they have those groups, break off and form a new District without perhaps taking into consideration if the 2 new Districts will be financially sound, if there will be enough service workers to fill positions, what effect additional districts may have on the Area. So hopefully with this broader guideline, Districts will make sure that prior to forming a new District that they have consulted with all their members and have studied how successful the newly formed District will be in growing and carrying the message and being able to fully participate.

(2) The inverted triangle graphic that used to appear to show the groups at the top will be brought back. It had been deleted a few years ago. (3) A District Information Change Form will be added to Chapter Three.

International Conventions/Regional Forums: Since local forums will now replace Special Forums, starting July 2008, there will be an annual inventory of the new Forum Schedule by the Trustees committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums to review the new Forum schedule and answer any questions.

Literature Committee: The suggestion to add the wording that many groups provide financial support for their GSR to attend service functions was passed with only one minority opinion who chose not to speak. Then there was an interesting discussion about renaming the pamphlet “Can AA Help Me Too?” subtitled “Black /African Americans Share Their Stories” . One point that we had not considered and was mentioned by a staff member was that not all Blacks like to be called African American and vice versa so he felt it was important to not use the “slash” mark between Black and African American but to state “Black and African American” and he felt this would prevent the need to revise in again in the near future. So after discussion the pamphlet will be “ AA for the Black and African American Alcoholic”. The pamphlet “The AA Member- Medications and other Drugs” will be revised and a progress report or draft brought back to the 2008 Conference. And the Spanish language Third Edition Big Book, *Alcoholicos Anonimos*, will go into production now and should be out by year end. The story deadline for the Native North American pamphlet has been extended until June 30, 2007. And we hope that we will have a Draft to review at the 2008 Conference. Regarding the request for an Intergroup; Central office pamphlet, the committee came back with the same recommendation as last year. And if you think about it, it was almost bound to come back that way because one-half of the Delegates committee that served in 2006 are back in 2007. So I would guess that if this was to be brought back for consideration again, it would be wise to wait for a new group of Delegates. (the 2008/2009 group of Delegates or Panel 58 and 59s). In the meantime, I would love it if our Literature committee could begin working with all of our central offices in Area 93, English and Spanish speaking and see if they come up with an Area 93 pamphlet. I would think if we can come up with a pamphlet that broadly described the nine Central Offices in Area 93, it might be a good example should this topic come up again in the future.

Finally the Agenda Committee- the committee I enjoyed serving on with all my heart. I have mentioned earlier to you the Theme and you can see the presentations. What I would like you to know that in the process, we really used all the suggestions, some of them came out of combined ideas. So I would like all group members, GSRs, Districts and perhaps the Area again to submit your ideas to me, beginning NOW for the Theme, Presentations and Workshop Topic for the 2009 General Service Conference. What would you like to discuss as a whole for the good of AA? Think of it on a smaller scale as if we were having an assembly with roundtable discussions. What would you like the topics of those roundtable to be? That is where you can get your ideas for the Agenda for 2009.

Finance Committee was the final report to be given. The committee recommended and it passed that the annual limit contributed to the General Service Board from an individual AA member will be increased from \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00 and that bequests from AA members should be subject to the same limit and be on a one time basis. They also recommended and it was passed that the language regarding financial assistance for GSRs to attend service events be added to the pamphlet “ Self Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix. ” I want to also refer back to the Delegate Opinion Polls that many of you completed and forwarded to me. When I asked the question” Does your group financially assist your GSR with travel expenses for service events” – almost all of the groups that responded “NO” also said that they did not do it because they had never been asked. The same was said about the birthday plan envelopes, so in our efforts to increase financial support, please make sure you have those birthday envelopes displayed prominently where all members can easily see them and get to them! If they have to ask for them, they won't. So even as this new wording goes into some of our literature, remember, it is still our job to explain to the groups about self- support.

That was it. Our work was complete in our committees, our decisions had been made, the Conference was concluded. It had seemed impossible on Wednesday night and Thursday that we would be able to finish. We knew there would not be any rushing or “rubber stamping” of any items because someone was tired or burnt out. The honor of serving with such dedicated, well informed, well prepared Conference participants was awe inspiring and humbling. We were now free to rest up for our Saturday morning brunch where four Class B Trustees and one Class A Trustee, Allen Ault, would say good bye as they rotated out of their positions. And we could begin to contemplate going home and informing our Areas of what had occurred in this very long week at the 57th General Service Conference.

Our Saturday brunch brought a poignant goodbye from our Delegate Chairperson, Darryl, from Kentucky, when he said “Well folks, we broke new ground at this Conference.” It was a bittersweet moment. Many exciting items and changes had passed but some things had occurred that were unprecedented. After all, this is **still just AA**, my friends. Then, France, our new Delegate Chairperson for the 2008 Conference was introduced and in going to the microphone on the stage, fell off the back of the stage and ended up breaking her foot. She still read a portion of Chapter 5 to start off the meeting and took her place at the table at the stage. But then some of us could see she was in pain and decided we

better go get her. Luckily I had my walker and we used it as a wheelchair and our Conference coordinator to the end, Rick W, helped her from the room . Rick ended up taking her to the hospital. It was a strange ending for a different Conference. So I have learned that just like any other meeting where alcoholics gather there is the possibility of wonders and the possibility of mis-steps. The overriding wonder for me was that the committee process still worked. When I arrived I had been given a document entitled "Trust" and I would like to quote a portion of it here: "That our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority".

There are future Area 93 Delegates sitting in this room right now. If right now you are saying to yourself " NOT ME", then you have just increased your chances of becoming Delegate. And you will be standing at a podium someday and instead of thinking "NOT ME", you will think "WHY ME?" I have been given such a privilege to attend the 57th General Service Conference and I thank every one of you for the opportunity,