

**FINAL REPORT  
PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM  
AUGUST 29-31, 2008  
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON**

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Pacific Regional Forum, which will take place in Torrance, CA at the Marriott Torrance Hotel, the weekend of August 27-29, 2010.

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**ONLY LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES AND NON-A.A.  
EMPLOYEES APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

# PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM FINAL REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2008 Pacific Regional Forum in Spokane, WA brought together 696 attendees to hear presentations from area delegates, from A.A.W.S. and Grapevine directors and staff, and from trustees of the General Service Board. Over the weekend of wonderful sharing, there were presentations, workshops, general sharing/ask-it-basket sessions, and a viewing of the video "Markings on the Journey." Members lined up at floor microphones to ask questions and share experience. The Ask-It-Basket overflowed, and this report contains responses to questions we did not have time to respond to. On Sunday morning, we heard from five past trustees. The Forum concluded with remarks from General Service Board Chair Leonard Blumenthal.

## WORKSHOP REPORTS

**GRAPEVINE** (*Moderator: Robin B. / Reporter: Debbie J.*) The workshop began with a question-and-answer session led by Robin B., the executive editor of the Grapevine. In response to a question about whether Conference approval is needed to suggest a topic be covered in the Grapevine, Robin said that anyone may write an article for publication. The magazine belongs to all A.A. members, she said, and the contents of the Grapevine come directly from the concerns and interests of the Fellowship. In response to a question about additional anthologies – such as the CD on emotional sobriety – in the pipeline, Robin said an anthology on young people is being planned, along with one focused on old-timers. Among the ways to generate enthusiasm for the magazine, workshop attendees suggested: having the GVR talk at meetings about what is in store in a coming issue; giving copies to newcomers; and putting subscription forms on every chair at A.A. events.

**UNITY** (*Moderator: Gustavo T. / Reporter: Raul C.*) When we practice the Traditions, we learn about responsibility – to ourselves and to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, said those at the workshop. One outcome of making the Traditions a part of our lives, said one attendee is that these principles act as a brake on our egos. One expression of unity is the ways in which we make the newcomer feel welcomed, according to another point of view expressed. As one attendee pointed out, unity does not mean that we are always going to agree with everything our group is doing -- but it does mean that we must show respect for our fellow A.A. members. In general, according to the consensus at the workshop, the Traditions are about individual growth, about learning to be part of a group.

**SINGLENES OF PURPOSE** (*Moderator: Sharon B. / Reporter: Lianne M.*) Discussion at the workshop centered on the value of educating new members about A.A.'s primary purpose and its importance to the Fellowship. Among the ways of conveying such a

message to newcomers, one suggestion was for sponsoring a beginners' meeting to address the topic. One question was how to explain singleness of purpose to those outside A.A., including judges and those in treatment homes and recovery centers. In response, many at the workshop shared their experiences serving on P.I./C.P.C. committees and the value of one-on-one sharing with the organizations that interact with the drunk. The consensus at the workshop was that responsibility for our singleness of purpose depends on each of us.

**THE WELCOMING HAND OF A.A.** (*Moderator: Dave A. / Reporter: Chase B.*) The workshop attendees discussed several topics, ranging from working with wet drunks at the group level, to good practices to ensure newcomers are welcomed effectively, to whether chanting helps or hinders that process. When welcoming wet drunks at the group level, attendees agreed that some group members are better at this than others, especially if the drunk is unruly. Regarding chanting, some felt it could encourage newcomers, while others thought the practice carried the risk of making a poor impression. Members also discussed the merits of approaching newcomers at meetings and doing such things as introducing them to other members and supplying them with basic pamphlets and a meeting list. The consensus was that, whereas it is a good idea to be welcoming, boundaries should be respected.

**A.A. HISTORY – SINCE THE BEGINNING** (*Moderator: Rad M. / Reporter: Jan M.*) One of the topics was whether Alcoholics Anonymous should contract for a new history of itself, one to follow up on "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age." It was unanimous in the workshop that a new history -- one that picks up where "A.A. Comes of Age" leaves off -- would be a valuable addition to our literature. One point mentioned in favor of a new history is that the Big Book has been brought out in new editions over the years, most recently in the Fourth Edition. Another reason to do a history now, rather than to wait, is that people in the program who have firsthand experience with important events in the history of A.A. can be a resource – and these early members are not going to be around forever. Knowing our history is important in preserving the A.A. message, said those at the workshop.

**WHAT DOES G.S.O. DO FOR MY HOME GROUP?** (*Moderator: Mike D. / Reporter: Carol B.*) According to those at the workshop, G.S.O. does as much as A.A. members allow it to do. Among its work is: sending the new G.S.R. a kit; acting as a clearinghouse for A.A. experience; conveying the message of A.A. around the world through translations of A.A. literature, while keeping the message true to the original; and P.I. and C.P.C. work. It is the responsibility of A.A. members in the know to inform other members of the role that G.S.O. plays. The General Service Office is there when you need it, said one attendee. Put another way, we should care about G.S.O. because, as one attendee put it, 'we don't miss the water until the well runs dry.'

**LA VIÑA – THE VOICE OF THE SPANISH-SPEAKING FELLOWSHIP** (*Moderator: Paz P. / Reporter: Santiago S.*) Attendees were told that if they have any problem with their

subscriptions to the magazine – such as that they are not receiving issues in a timely fashion -- they should call the La Viña office using an 800 number provided at the workshop. One suggestion to reduce costs was to have online subscriptions to the magazine, which would save on printing and mailing. The La Viña representative at the workshop said that photographs are welcomed from readers, but that it is important to respect the anonymity of anyone in the Fellowship. One attendee spoke of the value of the magazine as a Twelfth Step tool, and another attendee said he would welcome more articles about service and the Traditions. There was also a call for guidelines on how a reader could go about having a story of theirs published in the magazine.

**A.A. WEBSITES** (*Moderator: Joe B. / Reporter: Melody T.*) Workshop attendees first focused on the value of keeping websites simple by, among other things, using html instead of java scripts and minimizing the number of clicks necessary to dig down for information. It was also noted that there is no need to duplicate the information found on G.S.O.'s website. To protect anonymity, use generic email addresses for contacts and do not post last names or home phone numbers. To build awareness of the website, put its address on material that is regularly distributed. In addition, let G.S.O. know about the site. For maintenance, use software to make it easy for any A.A. member to use, and also make sure the webmaster who rotates in understands the technology.

**HOW ARE DECISIONS AFFECTING A.A. MADE?** (*Moderator: Vernon G. / Reporter: Colin H.*) Those at the workshop discussed the process of the annual Conference, and the ways in which the voice of the Fellowship is heeded. There was discussion of the responsibility of trustees to reach out to the Fellowship, and the responsibility of A.A. members to inform themselves about the issues affecting A.A. as a whole. It was noted that dissent is healthy, even vital, for the Fellowship. Another vital element, said those at the workshop, is trust – though, as it was pointed out, that is not a one-way street. The question of the number of floor actions at the Conference came up, specifically, why there are so many.

**A.A. GENERAL SERVICE: A PRIVILEGE OR A CHORE?** (*Moderator: Julie S. / Reporter: Renae H.*) The first topic addressed was the ways in which those in service can generate enthusiasm among others for getting involved. One suggestion was to convey to others that A.A. general service is anything but a chore, that it is, in fact, a privilege. It was noted at the workshop by attendees that service is not drudgery, but can be fun. Above all, said attendees, it is rewarding. The consensus was that the attitude shown by those involved in general service is all-important. Another suggestion was to invite the uninitiated to business meetings as a way of easing them into the world of service. We do those a favor who we nudge into service, because getting involved is a sure way of improving – and protecting – our sobriety.

**THE GROUP CONSCIENCE AND SELF-SUPPORT: TYING THE TWO TOGETHER** (*Moderator: Gail N. / Reporter: Kim P.*) Our contributions to service entities become an

extension of our group's carrying the message, according to those at the workshop. We support G.S.O., intergroup, our area, and district because these entities occupy themselves with the A.A. work that is out of reach of groups and individual A.A. members. It is up to us, said one attendee, to make this connection clear to those who may be unaware of the work of A.A. that goes on outside the group. Despite the need to support the work of A.A., groups should not be holding fundraisers or raffles, according to attendees. Such activity violates the principle of self-support.

**HOW TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM BECOMING APATHETIC** (*Moderator: David F. / Reporter: Jo P.*) One of the first things we can do to ward off apathy is to change our orientation in A.A. to one of asking ourselves what we can give to the Fellowship, rather than what we can get out of it, said workshop attendees. Another suggestion was to get involved in service to counteract apathy, given that service is gratitude in action. Work to promote a positive attitude, one that leads to enthusiasm about A.A. and sobriety and life, in general. One attendee said that we as A.A. members can make it our mission to set examples for showing passion for the A.A. way.

## ASK-IT-BASKET QUESTIONS

Below are Ask-It-Basket questions (and responses) for which there wasn't time at the Forum.

Q: What is the policy for bringing up guideline changes at the area meeting? Can anyone bring a change up or just area officers? Also, if something is tabled, how long before voting?

R: This is a local question. Talk with your delegate or the area chairperson to see how this is handled in your area.

Q: As a member of A.A. since 1974, with that many years of sobriety do I stay on the sidelines when Traditions are ignored or do I speak out? i.e., at a closed meeting when an alcoholic brings someone for support or says "I'm \_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict."

R: A sponsor can be helpful in deciding to handle each situation with love and tolerance and a respect for A.A.'s Traditions. Members approach the situations described in a variety of ways. Some approach the individual afterwards to explain A.A.'s purpose. They may share the difference between closed (for alcoholics) and open meetings (which anyone with an interest in A.A. may attend as an observer). Welcoming newcomers can be a way of helping those who may not be familiar with A.A.'s Traditions, guiding them to places where they can get appropriate help. Members often encourage discussion of the Traditions at the group level, so that all members may become familiar with A.A.'s purpose and scope. This topic may also be brought up at group business meetings, and district and area meetings.

Q: I notice there are very few A.A. members from African American, Asian and other underserved communities here. Has there been much discussion about how to attract A.A.s from underrepresented populations like these to A.A. and service in the region and at the GSB?

R: The General Service Board, and the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards have taken steps to make sure that service at that level is encouraged by everyone in A.A., including minorities. Individuals with an interest in this question are encouraged to bring this topic up for discussion at the group, district and Area levels.

Q: Even after being requested, why were last names not put on nametags?

R: No request came to the Regional Forums desk to include last names on the printed nametags of members who preregistered. However, we have now updated the online registration to include a space to indicate how you would like your name badge to read.

- Q: Is it ok for a past delegate to be a DCM?
- R: In 1973, the General Service Conference recommended that "past delegates not hold office as G.S.R.'s or district committee members but find other ways to become involved in area service."
- Q: If good ideas can come from anywhere, then what is your definition of a good idea?
- R: Each member will have his or her own definition of what a good idea is, based on his or her experience. The group conscience considering the idea will determine whether the idea is worth implementing.
- Q: Is it possible to take into account expanding the role of the D.C.M. in A.A. literature to include encouraging taking time to motivate more women, especially Latinas, to participate in A.A. events?
- R: Changes to A.A. literature come at the request of the Fellowship. To suggest such a change, you may want to bring this up for discussion at your district or area and then forward it as a proposal for an Agenda Item at the General Service Conference.

### **A.A. GRAPEVINE / LA VIÑA**

- Q: Please include the letter/note from the editor on the Grapevine Web Site. Robin wrote a beautiful piece on anonymity. I don't remember which issue. I tried to find it online, but couldn't.
- R: The editor's note is now available online in print and in audio. Clicking on the image of the magazine cover will take you to the page where you can access it.
- Q: Are there any plans for making the Grapevine downloadable by subscription for electronic books like the "Kindle" and is any other A.A. literature like the Big Book available in that type of format?
- R: The Grapevine has no plans at present to do this. It is not something the Fellowship has asked us to do or to look into. You are the first! (See the "A.A. Literature" section for the response regarding the Big Book.)
- Q: What is the process for selecting photos of groups that are printed in the La Viña magazine? Are the photos that are not selected destroyed?
- R: The editor works with the freelance art director to select clear photos of groups from a variety of places. Photos that are clear enough to be printable are not destroyed. Digital photos are stored on disk; photos printed on paper are stored for future use.
- Q: Is La Viña funded by Grapevine or A.A.W.S.? If funded by A.A.W.S. is that considered funded by group contributions?

R: The 2001 General Service Conference asked that the Grapevine continue to publish *La Viña* because it was so helpful to Spanish-speaking A.A.s. Knowing that there were not enough Spanish-language subscribers to finance it, the Conference asked the General Service Board to fund it. The General Service Board draws on revenue from contributions to pay for this.

Q: What will it take to ask the Conference Grapevine committee to revisit the "Alcoholism at Large" section? It ignores A.A. traditions and muddies our message.

R: Any A.A. member can send a letter to the Grapevine Board asking that they forward the request to the General Service Conference Grapevine committee for consideration.

## **A.A. LITERATURE**

Q: Is there any way that we could combine the main four A.A. books to cut cost and to be better prepared and organized for sponsorship?

R: This is the only time we have heard this request. Changes in format are usually the result of a widely expressed need from the fellowship. Lacking this widely expressed need, we will not be creating this product at this time.

Q: A *Box 4-5-9* article mentioned that G.S.O. is developing guidelines for Bridging the Gap (BTG), and will they include information about Conference-approved and locally produced materials?

R: The Oct./ Nov. 2007 issue of *Box 4-5-9* included an article on how A.A. Guidelines on various topics are developed. However, Bridging the Gap is not mentioned in the article. The idea of Bridging the Gap Guidelines was brought up briefly at the Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend held in Vermont last year, and was also discussed at this year's in Kansas City, MO.

Q: In the First Edition of the Big Book "The Doctor's Opinion" was page 1. How did it get changed and is there a way to change it back?

R: This change was made when the second edition of the Big Book was published. Bill W. actively participated in the editing of this volume, but we do not have any background specifically documenting the decision to change the pagination. Apparently Bill did not consider "The Doctor's Opinion" a part of the main text of the Big Book. He wrote in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (published two years after the release of the second edition): "Then, as our only medical friend at the time, the good Dr. [Silkworth] boldly wrote the introduction to our book, where it remains to this day and where we intend to keep it always." An interesting note is that in the first edition "The Doctor's Opinion" started on page one, but "Bill's Story" was designated "Chapter One". To change the pagination back to the way it was in the first edition of the Big Book, the General Service Conference would need to pass an Advisory Action to that effect.

Q: What was the cost of the Spanish 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Big Book?

R: The Publications Department notes that since A.A. World Services did most of the creative work in house, and the A.A. members who helped were volunteers, it is difficult to pin down exactly what the cost of producing the Third Edition Spanish Big Book totaled. The known costs of phone conferences, proofreading, cover art and typesetting come to approximately \$10,840.

Q: Could people purchase the Big Book off of the Web site and then print their own book?

R: No. You can read the Big Book on the web or purchase the book, but we do not have it available for download. A.A.W.S. is currently working to make the Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* available for the "Kindle."

## ARCHIVES

Q: Who is Carl Jung? He is mentioned in the video *Markings on the Journey*.

R: Carl Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist, who was instrumental in the formation of A.A. His interaction with an American businessman who went to be treated by him is reported on pages 26-28 in the Big Book. Jung talked about the necessity of a spiritual experience in order for an alcoholic to recover. Jung's influence on A.A. is mentioned in several of our history books, including *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* and *Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World*, as well as the Grapevine collection of Bill W.'s writing, *The Language of the Heart*. Jung wrote several books himself, but none deal with Alcoholics Anonymous.

## FINANCE

Q: From the Finance presentation, what are the services that cost each group \$338.26 in 2008?

R: There is a list of service provided by G.S.O. available from the office. This list is nine pages long, and so is not reproducible in this report. You can request a copy of these services by contacting the Regional Forums coordinator at [regionalforums@aa.org](mailto:regionalforums@aa.org) or (212) 870-3120.

Q: Why is there such a difference between budgeted royalties and actual?

R: In 2007, one of the people who had been receiving a large portion of the royalties from books that Bill W. wrote passed away. Two people continue to receive royalties, and after they die, no further royalties on this literature will be paid.

Q: Why don't you pass the basket at the Forum? I came prepared to donate.

R: Forums are put on by the General Service Board, which pays for their coordination. The full cost of Forums is budgeted as an expense of the Board.

## **GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

Q: Which trustees' committee takes up the needs of the Special Needs (accessibility)/Cooperation with the Elder Community at the General Service Conference?

R: At the current time, there is a G.S.O. staff member who is assigned to support the Twelfth Step activities of Special Needs/Accessibilities Committees and this person is also in communication with committees that are working with elder communities. In October the first Special Needs Workbook was published and distributed to the chairpersons of all of these committees listed at the General Service Office. Collected sharing regarding the activities of committees and A.A. members who work with elder communities was distributed to these trusted servants at the same time as well.

There is ongoing communication between these committees and Valerie O. who is currently the G.S.O. liaison to these committees. You can reach Valerie at (212) 870-3476 or [specialneeds@aa.org](mailto:specialneeds@aa.org).

## **GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

Q: In the 2008 Final Report of the General Service Conference, an Area delegate referred to the Traditions, Concepts and Warranties. What are the Warranties?

R: Concept XII is a list of the General Warranties of the Conference. They are:

The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government; that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

Q: When were the areas designated?

R: They were outlined for the first General Service Conference, and more areas were added as the A.A. Fellowship in the U.S. and Canada grew. The current numbering system was implemented in the mid-70s. The most recent Area added was Area 93, Central California.

Q: Greg: You mentioned Friday evening that the Conference is perhaps focusing too much on details/tactics instead of vision. Do you have examples of vision?

Do you have examples of tactics? Assuming this is fear based, why do you think we have this fear?

R: Good question! Thank you! First, I recommend a through reading of Concept 9 which contains some profound words about vision.

Planning for AA future is a vital and important role that the General Service Board and General Service Conference have accepted and thus have assumed responsibility for AA's future and the generations of alcoholics yet to come. Below is a short list of subjects that may be of importance to AA's future.

1. Is AA attracting all races, creeds, cultures? What should we be doing?
2. Is participation in General Service Structure shrinking or growing?
3. How can we sustain our cooperative relationship with AA's Professional friends?
4. Is AA becoming a centralized agency?
5. Is AA growing?
6. Does AA seem religious? What should we do about it?

With love and gratitude for sobriety in one hand and complicated problems (legal, financial and spiritual) in the other hand we sometimes find ourselves exhibiting trepidation, not willing to accept the opportunities for growth that may be available to us through frank and open sharing for fear of harming AA. This attitude leads us to futility and limits our ability to exercise our collective vision. In this state of mind committees and boards seek comfort by (tactics) redefining existing policy or developing new procedures to insure AA is well insulated. AA is a set of principals whose application in our lives continues evolve and grant us hope and hope never disappoints us!

Q: Why were there so many floor actions at the last General Service Conference?

R: No one knows definitively why there were so many Floor Actions at the 58th General Service Conference. Many of the Floor Actions were topics already considered at some point in the Conference committee process by a Conference committee or trustees' committee and a Conference member perhaps felt these needed to be reconsidered by the whole Conference.

### **GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE**

Q: In Greg's talk on Friday, he mentioned G.S.O.'s HR department. I wasn't aware that G.S.O. had a HR department. If this is true, who is the HR director?

R: The name of the Human Resources Department Director at G.S.O. is Olga Mesonjnik.

Q: Why does a search for "AA Traditions" not return any results on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site?

R: A search for "AA Traditions" does not return any results on G.S.O.'s A.A. web site because the phrase "AA Traditions" does not exist on the web site. "A.A. Traditions" (note the periods after "A" and "A") does exist and will return results, as will a search on "Twelve Traditions" or simply "Traditions."

Q: Does anyone from the G.S.O. staff monitor the "Alcoholics Anonymous" entry on the Wikipedia site? For your reference, Wikipedia is widely recognized as the leading community based encyclopedia throughout the world.

R: No one from G.S.O. "monitors" the A.A. entry on Wikipedia. The General Service Board chooses not to get involved in a public debate, as these are actions that may incite public controversy. A.A. avoids getting into back-and-forth arguments with A.A.'s critics. Any concerned individual can make changes or corrections to factually incorrect information on A.A. presented on Wikipedia or any other Web site.

## **GROUP MATTERS**

Q: I have noticed more and more that "I Am Responsible" Statement being recited at the end of meetings versus the Serenity Prayer or Lord's Prayer. I am told many things about "why" this is happening. Some people are uncomfortable with the prayers and felt it's not appropriate. Yet and all a lot of people close their eyes when reciting the statement. It would appear when they close their eyes they turn the statement into a prayer. What's the difference? Is this not a double standard?

R: It is up to each group conscience to decide how they wish to close their meetings. The pamphlet "The A.A. Group" shares this in a section on suggested meeting procedures:

Many meetings close with members joining in a moment of silence followed by a prayer, or perhaps by reciting the Responsibility Declaration or other A.A. text. (p. 13)

Q: Those who speak Spanish would like to know if they can raffle literature at A.A. groups or events.

R: The experience gathered at G.S.O. indicates that some groups raffle literature or have a drawing for an A.A. book at their meetings. This is up to the group conscience.

Q: What is G.S.O. technical opinion on the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition money being used for purchasing birthday cakes, having picnics, and also groups having raffles and fundraisers that sometimes do not include all A.A. members and does this fall under outside contributions?

R: G.S.O. does not offer "technical opinions", but tries to share the experience that it has gathered over the years. This experience indicates that some groups cover the expenses to provide cake for group or individual anniversary

celebrations, or will have a special A.A. event. The group conscience for each group decides how they will spend their Seventh Tradition contributions.

The A.A. *A.A. Guidelines (on) Conferences, Conventions and Round-ups* offer shared experience on special A.A. events, and suggest that special events are most often financially supported by the members who attend and participate.

A.A. entities considering raffles usually spend some time considering them in the light of the Seventh Tradition that states that A.A. should be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. The group conscience usually considers questions such as whether non-A.A.s will participate, whether the prizes are large, whether prizes are solicited from or donated by non-A.A.s, and whether the raffle would take the place of voluntary contributions and generate revenue on which the entity come to depend.

Q: Meetings that are "special interest" (i.e. men, women, gay, medical) are they A.A.W.S. approved? How are these determined and where is the line drawn, before it becomes exclusive and discriminatory?

R: A.A.W.S. does not approve or disapprove individual groups, nor does G.S.O. monitor or oversee the activities or practice of any A.A. group. Groups are listed with G.S.O. at their request. The pamphlet "The A.A. Group" shares this about specialized A.A. groups:

Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups—for men, women, young people, doctors, gays and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group. (p.10)

Q: We just received the new Western U.S. A.A. Directory, and for the past two years, we have worked very hard to have our group information correct. My own home group has a G.S.R. listed in the new directory that is incorrect. I have copies from our Area Registrar which indicates to me that the problem is not at the group, district or area level, but at the G.S.O. level that the information is not correct. In the state of Washington, City of Vancouver, on page 311 top of the fourth column is the McGillivray Study Group and the Directory has listed Allen T. as a contact and he has not been living in Washington for the past year and a half. My questions is: does the General Service Office have a database that is so far out of date that they are having problems getting rid of or how does this old information continue to keep coming back. Is the General Service Office still having problems with the Directory?

R: G.S.O.'s records and the Directories published from them are up to date as the information provided by group contacts to G.S.O. Area registrars now also have direct access to the group records from their area, so they can update and

correct information themselves as well. If you are having a problem with your group's listing, please contact either the Records Department at G.S.O. or your area's registrar.

### **G.S.O.'s A.A. WEB SITE**

Q: Does A.A.W.S. have an electronic group search tool on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site that lists the group name, location, number and contact info?

R: No. G.S.O. does not provide a meeting directory. G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site provides a information on contacting local resources (intergroup, district, area, answering services) that have the most up-to-date meeting information. Group directory information from G.S.O. is available in print only.

Q: I have been spoiled by being able to print pamphlets from G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site or at least select/copy to a word document. I'm sad I can't do that anymore. That means I'll have to remember to carry literature. I still buy lots and lots of literature.

R: All material on the reorganized (2008) Web site is in read-only (PDF) format, searchable but not printable. This helps to support a consistent copyright policy, one that will insure that the A.A. message is not diluted in any way. Specific pieces of literature and service material that are made available free of charge by the office to the public still are able to be printed. NOTE: "*Substantially all of the publications and other material produced and distributed by A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine, including service material, are protected by copyrights that have been registered by the respective corporations. . .the reprinting and/or copying of these materials is carefully monitored by A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine in order to avoid any erosion or loss of the copyrights.*" (The A.A. Service Manual, p. S73)

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Q: Is there anything being done to enlarge our repertoire of public information vehicles/platforms/formats, such as pre-show advertising, public kiosks, airport kiosks, electronic message boards, streaming media on the internet?

R: At this time, there are no U.S. and Canada-wide initiatives to place A.A. public service announcements (P.S.A.s) in any of the venues mentioned above. However, we are aware of local P.I. committees that have placed A.A. P.S.A.s in movie theaters and linked to them from electronic message boards. The trustees' P.I. Committee is currently considering the possibility of placing A.A. TV P.S.A.s on other Web sites (in addition to G.S.O.'s Web site, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)). A.A.'s P.S.A.s can be viewed by clicking on the "For the Media" section on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

Q: Could the G.S.O. supply literature racks for one, three and six pieces of literature? We realize they already offer the single one in a paper type one.

What we are asking for is a plastic one. Utilizing the purchasing power of the masses, we should be able to get them at a much reduced price.

- R: Estimates indicate that G.S.O. would not sell enough of these items to be able to provide them to the Fellowship at a reduced rate. We are aware that some groups and local committees purchase literature racks from non-A.A. sources such as Staples or Office Max. Also, some creative members have built or created their own literature racks to meet specific needs.

## **REGIONAL FORUMS**

- Q: Could you clarify the concept of the additional regional forum?

- R: The General Service Board agreed to coordinate an Additional Regional Forum every eight years in each region, thereby adding one extra Forum per year to the Forums schedule. The date and location of each Additional Regional Forum would be chosen by a regional group conscience at the Conference Regional Lunch two years in advance of the anticipated date for the Forum. While not limited to this purpose, it is hoped that regions would use this Additional Forum to accomplish the purpose of Special Forums—which were normally designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas.

## **WORLD SERVICE MEETING**

- Q: A news release was issued on August 25, 2008 which stated that delegates representing Alcoholics Anonymous the world over will gather for the Fellowship's 20<sup>th</sup> World Service Meeting from October 26-30, 2008. My question is: of the 93 delegates that attended and participated in the 58<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, which (if not all) will be attending the World Service Meeting and how is their selection made?

- R: Each participating structure at the World Service Meeting may send two representatives. The representatives from our Conference are the U.S. and Canadian trustees-at-large. No Area Delegates from the U.S./Canada structure attend the World Service Meeting.

- Q: How is the World Service Meeting financed, considering that each area is asked to contribute toward the General Service Conference?

- R: The World Service Meeting is financed by delegate fees from each participating country, contributions from other participating A.A. service structures and by the U.S./Canada General Service Board.

## PAST TRUSTEE SHARING

**RUTH J.** served as Pacific Regional Trustee from 1987 to 1991. Ruth said that because A.A. has invested 38 years in her sobriety and over 30 years in service, she feels a responsibility to show up and share her experience. She stays active, not to tell newer trusted servants what to do, but to share what she knows and what happened in her past that may be helpful to them now. It is also exciting to her to see new people get involved and to meet the members of the G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs and members of the General Service Board.

Ruth offered some cautions about rigidity in A.A. She believes that rigidity goes against the grain of our code of love and tolerance. For instance, occasionally in her home group someone introduces themselves as an addict. If this happens, someone sees them after the meeting and gives them an N.A. directory or explains that many addicts are also alcoholics and maybe they can come back to open meetings to see if they are alcoholic. Ruth said she would far rather include somebody in our Fellowship who does not belong, than to exclude somebody who does belong.

Ruth called herself the "Anti-Chanter." She referred to an article in the February 2008 Grapevine that talked about the message we send to a newcomer when we take part in customs that are common to us, but that may be offputting to newcomers, such as chanting, holding hands, insisting somebody identify themselves as an alcoholic, or reciting readings such as "How It Works" or the Preamble from memory.

**JULIAN R.** served as Pacific Regional Trustee from 1995 to 1999. Julian stressed that while we have a structure, we are a Fellowship of equals. He also shared his view that in relation to the Seventh Tradition, participation is as important as giving. Participation represents a feeling of belonging, of ownership. In A.A. we have the opportunity to determine where our contributions go and what they are used for. As costs go up, we hope to increase income to match, and the best way to do this is to increase participation.

Julian shared the debt that A.A. owes to Class A trustees. They are not financially compensated, nor do they need to serve to stay sober; they serve out of love and dedication to A.A. They have been a tremendous example to him.

Julian emphasized the treasures that can be found in A.A. literature. He encouraged all of us to read our history, especially *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, *Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World*, and *The Language of the Heart*. They are a wonderful way to find out more about A.A., and to introduce the Fellowship to newcomers. The comic book versions of the Traditions and Concepts are a wonderful entry to these principles. *Markings on the Journey* and some recordings of Bill show us what he was like. In our

history, you can see how many times A.A. almost failed, and how the grace of God has worked.

**JOHN CHAPPEL, M.D.,** was the last Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee to serve for a nine year term, from 1989 to 1998. He mentioned that he met Leonard Blumenthal for the first time at this Forum, but their lives had intersected many times, both were born and spent quite a bit of time in Northern Alberta.

John was a career teacher in the field of alcoholism and drug addiction. A group he worked with received a grant to change the kind of education medical professionals receive about alcoholism and drug addiction. In John's day, there was only one hour of a doctor's education devoted to these topics.

As part of this new training, John began sending medical students to open A.A. meetings. Not long after this started, an A.A. member met with him to share that the groups were glad to have the students, but would prefer to have one or two at a meeting, rather than having a whole class show up at once.

John shared that one of the greatest lessons he received from A.A. was the difference between religion and spirituality. John explained his understanding that a spiritual experience encompasses the individual's experience of a power that allows them to do what they could not do by themselves.

**PHYLLIS H.** served as Pacific Regional Trustee from 2002 to 2006. She noticed that there had been very little discussion of the Service Manual over the weekend, and suggested that those in attendance dust theirs off when they got home. She shared about the indications that there has been a flattening of the membership number in the Fellowship recently, and talked about reaching out to the alcoholic next door.

Phyllis reminded all of us to focus on service, especially through our committees. This way we can reach out to all alcoholics and recreate the enthusiasm that is created when we accept responsibility for A.A. This is the enthusiasm that was generated when the membership took responsibility for our services as described in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. Our job is to include those alcoholics who are not sober in our circle of love and service.

**LARRY N.** served as Trustee-at-Large/U.S. from 1993 to 1997. Larry spoke about his welcome to A.A. and his introduction to service by a man who had been a Conference delegate and had met Bill. Jake S., one of the first people that Larry recognized as a leader in A.A., expressed how important both the Big Book and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* are. Larry told those in attendance that they are leaders in A.A., and encouraged them to consider asking God and their families and their jobs about making the sacrifices necessary to serve A.A.

Larry shared the impact that the work done through our service structure has had in helping A.A. grow around the world. He talked about the opportunity he had to travel on behalf of A.A., and of the loving expressions of gratitude offered by those in other countries for the efforts of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada.

Focusing on unity, Larry expressed his concern for countries like Mexico and Finland where the A.A. service structure has experienced a split. Larry concluded by sharing his gratitude for the leadership that current general manager Greg M. has displayed over the years, both to him personally and to the Fellowship, and expressed his gratitude to Leonard Blumenthal, current chair of the General Service Board.

## CLOSING REMARKS

**Leonard Blumenthal**, General Service Board Chair, closed the Forum on Sunday morning. He thanked the past trustees for their comments, and expressed his gratitude for the remarkable wisdom, experience and advice they share. They are a constant source of stability and assistance to those who are coming along behind them.

The Forum offers a tremendous amount of information in a weekend—the presentations about the different classifications of trustees, about G.S.O. and the Grapevine and La Viña; the thought-provoking workshops; and the wonderful video “Markings on the Journey”. All of this will take time to digest.

Leonard noted that we have all been lead to this room, by different paths, with different experiences, but we are all here together. He quoted the author Ken Blanchard as saying “None of us is smarter than all of us.”

Leonard noted the tremendous conversation that happened here, and always seems to come about in A.A., around the topic of money—the discussion of how much we have, too little or too much, the role of participation in the Seventh Tradition, and what we are doing with money. Which brings up the question “How much should we be putting in the basket?” Leonard said that people contribute what their sponsor puts in. Each member sets the example.

Leonard shared about the presentation on “A.A. around the World” that Dorothy W. made on Saturday. It demonstrated how far reaching the contributions that go into the hat in a home group can be. A.A. is not just in this room and in the home group and in the Area. All of us are part of a major international movement, with an A.A. presence in over 180 countries and the Big Book translated into almost 60 languages.

He said that the delegates from the Pacific Region are impressive. Their actions at the General Service Conference and the presentations they made this weekend showed that they have wonderful knowledge and experience to share.

Leonard stated that each of us is a role model for someone, someone’s hero. We need to remain attractive and to inform others about A.A. Leonard stressed the work that A.A. can still do to carry the message through professionals. Leonard encouraged each member to share personally with professionals in their lives about A.A. Leonard quoted World Health Organization statistics that indicate that approximately 25,000,000 people die each year from alcohol abuse. A.A. helps to save lives, and this is the importance of extending the hand of A.A.

As usual, Leonard concluded his remarks with a quote from the Big Book, reading the opening paragraphs from “Working With Others”.

