

DELEGATE'S REPORT

Post-Conference Assembly 2015

Delegate's Report – Renae H.: Dear Friends, My heart is incredibly full as I am writing this report. It's been two weeks since I came home from attending my first General Service Conference in New York City, and my feet are just starting to hit the ground! What an extremely special experience it was to have had, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to proudly represent you all in service as Panel 65, Area 69 Utah Delegate at the 65th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Just so you know, I am having a crazy hard time trying to figure out where to begin. So I'll fall back on some words I kept hearing in my head from past Delegates and my Pacific Region Panel 64 Delegate comrades. Those words were to "*share about what you saw, what you heard, and what you felt*" while you were at the conference. Now, I'm looking at it like holy cow! How can I put all of this into words--let alone, into a report that would take no less than 8 hours to read! I'll do my best to give you a small snapshot of the conference in under 2 hours today. Let's start with the Conference weeks' agenda which unofficially started on Saturday afternoon with a hospitality gathering from 1:00-3:00pm for the conference members to greet old friends (panel 64 2nd year delegates), and to meet the "new kids" on the block (panel 65 1st year delegates). From 3:00-4:15pm, we were invited to attend the "1728 Meeting", which is a Group that was formed to help Class A trustees and other interested non-alcoholics learn more about the Alcoholics Anonymous program of recovery from alcoholism. This group meets during the quarterly General Service Board weekends and prior to the annual General Service Conference. During this meeting we heard wonderful presentations in which two Trustees shared on Concepts II ("*The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscious of our whole society in its world affairs.....*"), and on Concept III ("*To ensure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.---the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives---with a traditional right of decision*"....). After listening to these presentations, I felt keenly aware of just how important my responsibility is on behalf of Area 69. It seemed the "gauntlet" (Conference) was before us, and the tools had just been laid at our feet. We were there to carry out the very important business of Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide. I was very moved by the sharing. (I use the term "worldwide" as this is how it was described by Phyllis H., GSO General Manager, that the US/Canada General Service Board, Office, and separately incorporated services activities, are chiefly modeled by General Service Offices that have been established in 62 Countries around the world. The New York office is like the "mothership" of A.A. to most! Pretty cool, I thought.) Next--- from 4:30-6:00pm, I attended a "Remote Communities Meeting" where conference members (Delegates and Trustees) who are interested in remote communities work join together and share experience. We learned that some remote communities can be in our very own back yards. A few of these include not only distances, but also language, ASL communities, economic and financial barriers (i.e., the inability to afford electronic devices needed for on-line remote communities meetings, AKA "technological divide"), etc. What I heard in this meeting was much love and concern for the many alcoholics we have not yet reached. The great lengths that many A.A.s go, to breach these barriers is inspiring! (During a "What's on Your Mind" sharing session on Monday night, someone suggested making Remote Communities a secondary committee.) After the dinner break we joined for the "Delegates Only Meeting" where several Panel 64 Delegates shared their Conference experience, strength and hope with us followed by a Q & A session. I felt very excited for the next day---and maybe a little bit nervous too! Sunday April 19, 2015, the 65th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous officially opened with a "Welcome" from the General Service Board Chair and Class A Trustee, Terry Bediant, followed by Phyllis H., General Manager, G.S.O. conducting the "Roll Call". We were given the choice to answer with "here" or "present"...this was my first decision to make as an official conference member. After having some time to think about how I would answer before it was my turn, I chose to say "present" not only because I was present in that moment, but I also thought of the word "present" as a "gift" that I had been blessed with by my area to even be there! Thank you all. Following roll call, we listened to a "Keynote Address" given by J. Gary L. (Class B trustee) in which he made a comment of how "the 36 Principles are the bedrock of our whole fellowship." And of course he was referencing the Twelve Steps for recovery, Twelve Traditions for unity, and the Twelve Concepts for service---the Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous---and how the General Service Conference relies upon these 36 principles in conducting all its affairs. Sunday morning included a small orientation of the mechanics of the Conference, review of the Agenda Manual, and questions from Conference members, followed by 2 presentations given by US Trustee at Large Bob W. on the "23rd World Service Meeting", and by G.S.O. staff Rick W. "A.A. Around the World". I want to share with you some excerpts from both Bob W.'s and Rick W.'s reports that touched me.

PRESENTATION
THE 23rd WORLD SERVICE MEETING

The Three Legacies; Vital for All Generations

Bob W., Trustee-at-Large/US

“The 23rd World Service Meeting was held in Warsaw, Poland at the Sofitel Hotel October 12-16, 2014. Sixty-one world service delegates were in attendance, representing over 41 countries. The World Service Meeting is held every two years; one year here in New York and the other year’s location is awarded by bid to a participating country so it can be held in various locations throughout the world. The purpose of the World Service Meeting is to provide a forum for countries to share their experience of how A.A. is working within their structures. This meeting provides enormous opportunities for participating countries to strengthen A.A. in their land by learning the success stories of others. Many of the countries represented sponsor other countries.

This Year we welcomed four new countries, which was heartwarming to see. They were the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iran and Romania. I’d like to highlight a few thoughts on Iran. Their Delegate, Ali, shared how A.A. faces many different cultural and political barriers. Iran is an Islamic country with strict religious laws, therefore the government doesn’t recognize A.A. In fact, it is referred to by many as “Nameless Sobers” in order keep under the governments’ radar. Because of nonrecognition by the Iranian government, groups are not allowed to hold meetings in public buildings and are forced to hold them “underground” or outside in open spaces where temperatures range from 5 to 104 degrees in Fahrenheit. Despite these difficulties, A.A. in Iran managed to translate the Big Book into Farsi and is reaching many suffering alcoholics, growing to approximately 12,000 members and more than 300 groups.”.....

“Each participating country brings much of its translated literature to the World Service Meeting and it is displayed at the literature table. Seeing our literature translated into so many languages is tangible evidence of the good work of the World Service Meeting.”.....

PRESENTATION

International

A.A. Around the World

Rick W., G.S.O. Staff

“I’ve been asked to share with you, in five minutes, about A.A. around the world (pause and laughter). The International desk is the contact point at G.S.O. for those residing outside of Canada and the United States. It is a truly exciting assignment, where you can see A.A. springing up in places where it did not exist before. As the staff member on this desk, I’m commonly in touch with members on all continents. Even from the vantage point of this desk, what can be seen is only a small fraction of A.A.’s world activity. A.A. is at different stages of growth in countries all over the world. Currently there are 62 countries with their own general service offices, each of them autonomous.”..... “A.A. literature carries the message internationally, too. The Big Book is available in 69 languages, and A.A. pamphlets in more than 90. We have pamphlets in languages that I had never heard of when I came to work at G.S.O., including Twi (spoken in Ghana) and Shan (spoken in Southeast Asia). Working through the publishing department, A.A. as a whole carries the message in ways that my group and I could not do on our own. The Publishing Department is constantly coordinating additional translation to carry the message around the world.”..... During the afternoon session (following a Regional working lunch), we had presentations on this past years’ Conference theme and discussion topics “Our Common Welfare Through Gratitude and Action”--- 1) Diversity in AA---Our Heritage of inclusion; 2) Safety and Respect---Practicing the Principles Begins in Our Home Group; 3) Safeguarding Our Traditions Through the Evolution of Technology; 4) Inventory---Looking Back to Move Ahead. This session was followed up with Joint Trustee and Conference Committee Meetings. My Conference Committee assignment for this year and next, is Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC). This meeting is where we gather face to face with our respective Trustee Committee members to hear their committee activity report and to review Agenda item recommendations they have made. We then have time to ask any questions we may have about the report. The Sunday session concluded at 5:45pm. From 6:00-9:00pm the “Opening Dinner and A.A. Meeting” was held. We had the pleasure to hear sharing from a G.S.O. Staff member, 2 Panel 64 Delegates, a Class B Trustee, and from our soon-to-be retiring Phyllis H., General Service Office Manager. Our first Conference Committee Meetings started at 8:30 Monday morning, where we began focused discussion on our committees’ Conference Agenda items. There were seven delegates and Racy J., G.S.O. CPC staff and recording secretary, present. We met again on Tuesday morning concluding our committee business during my second working lunch. (Some conference committees met one or more times in addition to the 3 and a half hour time blocks we were allotted on both Monday and Tuesday). I know that in behalf of my committees dedicated efforts to do a thorough job, that all of the conference committees were just as committed to the very important work we were all there to do. All of the time, money and effort that goes into the annual GSC, is all time, money and effort spent in collectively developing the most effective means, ideas, and tools available in which to reach the still suffering alcoholics worldwide. Monday afternoon we listened to the General Service Board Report, the A.A.W.S. Board Report, and the A.A. Grapevine Board Report. From 3:00-4:00 David Morris C.P.A. (Class A nonalcoholic Trustee), Chairperson, trustees’ Finance and Budgetary Committee, delivered a presentation/discussion on Finance that was

very, very well done, but in some places, was very, very over my head! I have the full financial report in tow for anyone who would like to look at it today, and I can also make it available electronically if you are interested in taking some time to digest it later. This is a 13 page report which includes the following; consolidated Statement of Financial Position; Consolidated Statement of Activity; Consolidated Statement of Functional Expense; Consolidated statement of Cash Flows; Report of the Independent Auditor; G.S.O. 2015 Operating Budget; the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. 2015 Budget; 2014 Contributions; and the 2015 Budget Highlights. (*Note: 2014 G.S.O. records reported that Area 69 (UT) has 389 groups listed with only 161 of those contributing to G.S.O. which is 41.4%, with total group contributions coming in at \$34,893.) David Morris also put together a presentation called "Around the Picnic Table", (where the "Menu" is Finance!) It is a 69 page document/power point, complete with color graphics and charts to help visually enhance one's understanding of the million dollar figures that pay the bills and continue to provide all of the services we receive from our G.S.O.. I asked another Pacific Region Delegate afterwards, if he understood the whole presentation (because he is a business savvy kind of guy, right?), and his response was "honestly no". Even with all the highlights and graphics, he found it challenging. So, I no longer felt so dumb, and realized that probably a lot more delegates were feeling the very same way I was at that moment-- we're certainly never alone in A.A.! The presentation concluded with a "Trends" reported for **G.S.O./A.A.W.S.** : *Membership levels are flat; *Contribution levels are flat; *Literature sales show slow to no growth; *Expenses continue to grow slowly – 2%-3% per year. **GRAPEVINE**: *Subscriptions continue to decline 4%-5% per year; *2015 G.S.O., Grapevine and LaVina combined budgeted profit is \$23,000, following years are minimal profits or more likely losses. The final, final page of the "Around the Picnic Table" financial presentation included the following statement approved by the General Service Board in February 2014: **SELF-SUPPORT OF THE WORLD SERVICES OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** *"The A.A. spiritual principle of self-support enables us to pursue our primary purpose of carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic with a shared sense of responsibility for our lifesaving work and without interference or financial dependence on outsiders. From our Fellowship's earliest days, the expenses of the General Service Office, and the world services provided by it, have exceeded the amount derived from contributions of A.A. groups and members. As a result, providing these needed services has necessarily been supported in part by income from the sale of A.A. literature. It is the policy of the General Service Board that income from literature sales should only be in amounts required to allow continued provision of vitally needed services and maintenance of a Reserve Fund. We hope that the day will come when A.A. groups and members, through their contributions, will be able to fund fully the services provided by the General Service Office. If that is achieved, revenues from literature sales will only be needed in amounts necessary to cover the actual costs associated with literature production and to maintain a Reserve Fund."* It appears we all have our Seventh Tradition awareness work cut out for us! The remainder of that afternoon and evening was spent listening to "Panel 65 Delegate Highlights". These highlights were presented one region at a time and were scheduled throughout the conference week. Our Pacific Region was scheduled for Wednesday morning. We then heard the "G.S.O. Relocation Study Report". Relocation Studies have been conducted approximately every 10 years, the most recent consisting of the 2005 G.S.O. Relocation Study. These reports were conducted to determine an appropriate venue for the operations of G.S.O. and provide recommendations based on objective factors, such as financial considerations and cost effectiveness and on subjective factors that could impact G.S.O.'s ability to deliver its services to the Fellowship. The background information of this study goes back to 1977 which approved the following advisory Action as a Floor Action: "It was agreed that, as recommended by the General Service Board, it would not be in the best interest of the Fellowship to relocate the General Service Office at this time". Again in 1988, and then in 1992, following additional investigation of low-cost office space in New York City, the General Service Office moved to its present location at the Interchurch Center and, in so doing, incurred a relocation cost of about \$3,300,00. Again it was looked at in 1997 and as a result of this review process and the recommendations accepted by the General Service Board, the A.A.W.S. Board approved extending the lease with the Interchurch Center to 2008. In regards to the history and heritage of A.A.'s services, the 1997 Ad Hoc Site Review Committee made the following comment that was also repeated in the current report: *"The history of A.A. surrounding the New York area provides an anchor point for our Fellowship. The further we grow away from the days of members who knew our founders, the more we need roots."* In reviewing the 2005 Study, it was assessed that the current office location met the current needs of G.S.O...., and it was recommended not to relocate the General Service Office. Based on the 2014 current relocation study and conclusions (and consistent with all previous studies), the recommendation was for the General Service Office to remain in its present New York City location. I have a copy of the full report if anyone would like to read it. Tuesday began with the Second Meeting of the Conference Committees until noon, (lunch) followed by two more panels of regional Delegate Service Highlights. That afternoon we were treated to a New York City subway ride to the General Service Office Headquarters located on 475 Riverside Drive. Wow! What a beautiful location it is in! I was in awe that I was actually there, in person, walking into the heartbeat of our beloved Fellowship! The General Service Office is on the 11th floor, and the A.A. Grapevine is currently on the 12th floor. Planning for the late summer/early fall 2015 construction of the co-location of the G.S.O. and Grapevine offices on the 11th floor,

continues to progress. The construction will be divided into five phases, with completion anticipated by January 2016. It was amazing to me how relatively small the actual working space is compared to the enormous volume of work and services that are continually being carried out to serve our Fellowship worldwide. While going through the guided (and at times, unguided) tour, many of the Delegates were getting their picture taken in Phyllis H.'s office seated behind her desk...yes, I was one of them! She has a beautiful window view of the Riverside Church, (which was built with Rockefeller money in the 1930's) with the most beautiful architecture I've seen since I visited San Francisco on a high school field trip with my daughter for her art class. It was a beautiful spring day with the cherry blossoms blooming and a sky as blue as a Robbin's egg! This all added up to probably my most favorite memory I could bring home with me during the entire week. The subway ride back to the Hotel was every bit as colorful as the ride in! Ahhhh, then back to business! I attended the Delegates Dinner and Delegates Only Meeting that evening and went to bed early! Wednesday began at 8:30am, when 15 groups of five delegates and two, either Class A or B trustees and/or Staff members, were gathered together in separate rooms where we conducted the final phase of the three year General Service Inventory until 11:00am. The report backs from each group were given during Friday night's business at 5:00pm until approximately 6:15. We will be receiving a full compilation and report on the dividends of the 2012 Advisory Action of the 62nd General Service Conference which recommended the three year Inventory begin in 2013, 2014, and be completed in 2015. (This recommendation has been paraphrased by me. Actual wording can be found in the 2012 Final Conference Report.) Pre-ordered copies will be mailed to all areas upon completion. I believe I order around 300 for our area. The inventory was directly followed by two more "Delegate Area Highlights" panels. Next on deck was "Regional Luncheons for Delegates" where 4 of our Pacific Region Delegates made "bid presentations" to host the 2018 Forum. We were one of the four areas bidding and after conducting several substantial unanimity (Third Legacy) ballot votes and a final draw from the hat, the bid was awarded to Area 06 Northern Coastal, California. (Note: Area 06 has not hosted a Forum since 1993. Area 69's last Forum was held in 1996. We'll just try it again at the 2017 General Service Conference---FYI for the next panel 67 Utah Delegate whoever you are out there!) From 1:30-3:15 Elections for 2 Regional Trustees and 1 Trustee-at-Large/Canada were conducted. Each Region votes separately, and are roped off into a "voters only" section. In addition to the voting regional delegates, are voting conference members serving on the Trustees/Nominating Committee. In observing the 3rd Legacy voting process for each position being filled, I couldn't help but think about our Rod B. when he was Area 69's candidate elect for quite a few years in which I understand he went to the hat "like a rabbit" more than once, until he was pulled out of the hat in 2010 as the Pacific Region Trustee! What a special gift he gave to us through his service to Alcoholics Anonymous---thank you Rod! Following elections, (3:30-5:30) we heard the first "Conference Committee Reports and Discussion" beginning with "Agenda". As I had mentioned earlier in this report, the Conference Committee discussions (in which I have described as being similar to our Area 69 Round-table discussions) were 3 and a half hour sessions held on both Monday and Tuesday during the conference week (some committees met an additional 1 or more times beyond the 7 hours that were allotted on the conference schedule in order to complete their work!) This is when and where ideas, loving discussion, and thoughtful recommendations develop through this process at the General Service Conference. As a full conference body, we listen to these reports, we discuss these reports, and we shared our area's conscience when it is needed, and then we conduct a "substantial unanimity vote" to determine which action to either "take" or "not to take" on each 2015 Conference Agenda Item. This is where everything became fascinating, frustrating, exciting, exhausting, and sometimes very confusing! What a roller coaster ride these sessions were! I have created a 19 page summary report of the 2015 65th General Service Conference Actions that I will share with you what happened during these sessions, following this written report---in which my intent has been to outline some of the highlights and information that was part of the overall Conference experience for me. Following dinner, we resumed at 7:00pm with more "Committee Reports", wrapping up the evening with a short "General Sharing Session of What's on Your Mind", and we then closed Wednesday's session at 9:30pm. Thursday started out at 8:30am with an orientation on how to use our "one day, experimental, electronic voting devices" that looked a lot like a small calculator! At the beginning of each Conference, the body is given a choice of what procedure they want to use when voting---either by raise of hand or by ballot. In either case, manually counting and tallying the votes takes some time. Thursday's electronic voting experiment was a smash hit! Friday, when we went back to the raise of hand voting, it suddenly felt awkward to me knowing that people may have been watching how each other voted. I much prefer the anonymity of electronic voting at the Conference. I'm certain we'll hear more from our G.S.O. on the potential use of this device ("DOTS"---Data On The Spot) for future Conferences. after the dinner break, we spent the entire evening session listening to more reports, discussion, and voting, followed by a presentation on the 2015 International Convention being hosted in Atlanta, Georgia July 2-5, 2015. (If you haven't registered yet, you can go online at www.aa.org and follow the 2015 International Convention link---it's not too late!) We were then treated to a darling skit about the 2015 International, using the very, very talented actors and actresses of New York City...AKA the G.S.O. staff! It was a spoof on what you will find at the convention, and what you will not find at the convention, such as no child care services, no soliciting or peddling beautifully crafted and fashioned recovery jewelry and clothing, etc.,

anywhere on the convention site! It was cute how the staff became these wonderful, colorful characters. Which brings me to share about how approachable everyone was and is, that either works at the office, is a Class A or B Trustee, or directors of A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine, Inc., and of course, the General Manager, Phyllis H.. All are so willing to serve our groups, districts, areas, and anyone who needs the hand of A.A. Friday, last official day of the conference---8:30am until about 8:00 pm, the last of the Conference Committee Reports, and the longest day ever! We spent almost 4 hours on discussion, debate, making and seconding friendly amendments and some “not so friendly” motions, voting, re-voting, amendments failing or passing, creative “wordsmiths” to make a recommendation more palatable to some of us---confusion at its best, which often landed us back to square one! And this was time spent just on “one” Conference Committee’s Agenda Items (we had to take our scheduled lunch break in between all of this, which actually helped us to slow down and breath a little before voting on these items). Can I say, I’m so happy to be back home to our area’s simple interpretation and application of Robert’s Rules in our deliberations! After the final Conference Committee report and vote, we moved right in to Floor Actions. Floor Actions may be introduced any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions, and must be made without comment, submitted in writing by the maker to the Conference Secretary, and will come up for deliberation after all Committee Reports are heard,, and require a 2/3rds majority. There were six Floor Actions to be addressed, three of which were withdrawn, leaving three to be addressed. I am excited to share with you what happened with these Floor Actions as we go through the 2015 General Service Conference summary of Conference Agenda Item Actions that were handed out today. We concluded our evening session with report backs from each of the 2015 Inventory groups (Groups A-O = 15), followed by fond farewells from the Panel 64 Delegates rotating out at the end of 2015. We were finally sitting down at a restaurant at 8:45pm for dinner! We dined with most of the Pacific Region delegates and several Class B trustees, all dressed down and taking a deep sigh, knowing that we had collectively accomplished the 65th GSC world business of Alcoholics Anonymous... Saturday morning everyone joined together for the unofficial Closing Brunch and rotating Trustees’ farewell remarks. It was just remarkable. The words that they used and the things that they shared came from such a deep place of love for alcoholics and Alcoholics Anonymous. It was like listening to beautiful harp strings as I was spiritually moved by each one. I am so grateful to serve you and this miraculous, life giving program of Alcoholics Anonymous---my life has been changed forever.... Thank you! Renae H., Area 69 Panel 65 Delegate, In Much Gratitude, Renae H. Area 69 Panel 65 Delegate