

2014

2014 General Service Conference

SE TX Area 67 Delegate Experience

I could not have been more prepared. Primarily because of SETA 67 member's collective focus of getting me ready for the 64th General Service Conference. I had many preliminary thoughts about the agenda items that were discussed and voted on at the conference this year. I asked my higher power for guidance each day. I appreciated all the love, prayers and well wishes I received all during the week, especially the Diet Coke care package. The Hilton Westchester in Rye, NY., was a Pepsi only hotel!



Hello!

I want to thank each member of the Southeast Texas Area 67 for trusting me to serve you as your Delegate. I have taken some time to reflect on the spiritual experience of participating in the conference process and now it is time to share it with each of you. The main word that comes to mind to describe this year's conference is respect. Respect for the job that our General Service Office (G.S.O.) and Grapevine Staff perform on a daily basis. Respect for the service our 21 Trustees of the General Service Board performs for our benefit and those yet to come. Finally, the overall respect demonstrated by members for the committee, inventory and conference process.

Preparing to Go!

In February when I received and printed out the background material I remember thinking, SCORE, it is so much less than what I had to read for the 63rd General Service Conference (G.S.C.). The truth, it was almost the exact same amount of pages. What a difference one year and less fear can make. It was the first time I had the realization that "oh, I know what to do, I have done this before." One key difference was that I wanted to pass along more of my experience to Melissa and in addition, improve on what we had done last year as we prepared for the roundtables at the April Area Assembly and the 2014 SETA Final G.S.C. Agenda Summary Report. I sent her all the information that I received, but instead of reading it all alone, we decided to read it together. The goal was to determine which Agenda items we wanted to enlist member discussion and collective sharing. We sat together for three separate sessions reading, questioning, writing and discussing the agenda items and background material supporting the proposed changes. We were a little opinionated on our own. Good thing we were going to get help from the area 67 members!

At the April Area Assembly you shared a spiritual moment with us, you remember, you were there! To have the assembly stand on its feet and support our efforts to share as much conference information as we could was a moment of pure joy. Melissa and I were humbled in that moment. Post assembly it was time to read, read and read some more. I had collected exactly 115 Agenda Response Templates from the roundtables, standing committees, groups, and individual members. There was a significant increase in the number of templates provided back to me this year. It was proof positive that using the Final Agenda Item Summary Report has allowed our area to secure more group and member participation in the conference process. I suspect that future delegates will continue to amaze our area with new and inventive ideas that we have never even considered to increase area participation. That is an exciting thought! As Gus has shared with me many times, try to take what past delegates have done and improve upon it.

The Day I left for New York

I had set some personal goals this second year to fully participate in everything that I could. That meant several things for me. One, I would get out of my hotel room early in the morning and be one of those trusted servants who sat in the lobby and talked A.A with other members. Two, I would sit down at every meal and be the last one at the table. I wanted to meet my fellow conference members this year in a way that was even more meaningful and personal. Three, I would attend the early morning A.A. meeting. Finally, I wanted to make sure that I made the first year, Panel 64, Delegates feel welcome and safe, like I had been made to feel one short year ago.

Friday, April 25th was the morning I began my journey to my second and last general service conference. I was not nervous. I did not have the butterflies in my stomach like I had the year before. Once on the ground, baggage collected, I made the call for the shuttle to take me to the Hilton Westchester Rye. I walked out to the middle departure platform and instantly ran into Barb K., Trustee-at-Large/Canada. A familiar face! We shared the shuttle ride with two other members. One was a new delegate from our own Southwest Region. Vernon talked about how he had brought about twelve or more dress shirts, ties and many new suits. Boy, he sure was a first year delegate!

Once at the hotel and waiting in line to check-in there was a steady flow of new and old delegates chatting and excited and beginning to take it in that it was all about to start again. I had reached out to my friend Holly P., the delegate from Louisiana, to see when they would be arriving at the hotel. She and Nick, her husband, were still in Manhattan and not arriving until the next day and they were going to a Broadway show that night. I had decided before I left that I was not going to Manhattan or seeing a Broadway show this year, however my magical mind started working. I thought, hey, it is a long-standing tradition (only one-time last year) that I go see a Broadway show on the Friday I arrive in New York to attend the general service conference. You know how we are, always trying to recapture the fun and good times that we experienced the last time. So, I made a very personally expensive decision to go to see “Wicked” the musical and meet up with Holly and Nick.

Pre-Conference Activities

Saturday morning I woke up and decided I needed to continue my long-standing traditions and ordered breakfast in my room, as I had last year. That way I could relax, read, and get ready to participate in the hospitality meet and greet reception and other pre-conference activities. I was a little hungry so I ordered the following; pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, milk and diet Pepsi (Ugh!). Room service arrived and when I opened the door the waiter wheeled in a table set for two people. EMBARRASSING! Yes, I had ordered so much food and with two different drinks that

they assumed it was breakfast for two! The bathroom door was closed and I so wanted to shout out and pretend that there was someone else in the room, but, I took the high and honest road and just paid the man so he could leave.

I dressed for the hospitality room for conference members. The room was filled with G.S.O. & Grapevine Staff, Trustees and Panel 63 and Panel 64 Delegates. It felt like walking into your home group. Seeing the folks I had met and experienced the conference with last year, but, more importantly, I was so aware that I needed to reach out my hand to the newcomer. One of the first men I met was Cesar F., Delegate from Mid-Southern California. He greeted me with a huge smile and all the warmth that his area members had sent with him. Cesar was one of the Conference Committee on Public Information members. This experience happened over and over again all week. I was not worried about myself and how I was doing or feeling, I was concerned about the newcomer. What a blessing.

The next meeting that afternoon was called the 1728 meeting. It is called the 1728 meeting because that is the product of 12 x 12 x 12, representing our thirty-six (36) spiritual principles. Bob W. a new Class B Trustee talked about Tradition four. He shared something that hit me in my spiritual soft spot. He shared about the freedom we have in our traditions, concepts and steps. He shared, that we are responsible to not hit people over the head with them. To look at whomever I am sharing the program with and remember I may be the only reflection of A.A. that they may ever meet. He posed the question; how are you coming across to new people or potential members? It was something I needed to ponder. I had been in my home group recently and heard a member share that he can't wait until the traditionalist's die off so that real changes that need to be made in A.A. can be made, like updating the Big Book into contemporary language. My initial thought was to get angry, shout out how we (he) need(s) to follow our traditions. There is a better way. I certainly have seen members reflect this better way to me. Bob's message was a great reminder to me to think about what and how I share my experience, strength and hope about our program. I looked up two words that I wanted to share the definitions. As I think about, take action on, and share about our traditions I am currently attempting to remember the meaning of Respect for our Traditions.

re-spect noun \ri-'spekt

1. : a feeling or understanding that something is good, valuable, important, serious, etc., and should be treated in an appropriate way.

tra-di-tion noun \trə-'di-shən

2. : a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time.

The Remote Communities Meeting was next and the presenters brought forth some great actionable ideas for us to consider. First, we need to remember that far does not necessarily equate to remote. Remote can also mean difficult road access or geography as well as cultural & language differences. One member shared, we have remote communities, such as elderly AA members who can no longer drive to meetings. We have done little to reach out to different cultural communities in A.A., like Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese to name a few. One of the presenters shared that she knows these communities want our life-saving message because they are buying books in their own language at their local Intergroup. Some groups have decided to sponsor lone remote members by teleconference/video conferencing or carrying the message online or via email. I love it when we get together and share about a problem and possible solutions. It shows we really will go to any lengths to carry the message to the alcoholic that still suffers.

The last event of the day was the first of two Delegates-only meetings. The Ninety-three (93) delegates got together to ask questions and share experience about the week ahead. My name was drawn out of the hat to share some experience with the first year delegates. I shared my story of being selfishly disappointed at not being selected as the conference committee chairperson last year. I explained how a Panel 62 Delegate had gone to the microphone and shared he had the same experience and how he got on his knees and prayed and got out of self. Many delegates shared they were grateful that I was honest about my experience because they were feeling the same way I did.

Down to Business

The conference week began on Sunday, April 27th. As I have meditated on my experience at the conference, I have been trying to decide how to share the differences from last year in what I saw, heard, and felt. In a recent Grapevine Quote of the Day, a member shared, *“I have learned to keep quiet when I disagree and to give others freedom to express opinions widely different from my own – without giving in to the urge to “enlighten” them. I am grateful for all the voices of A.A.”* This says it perfectly. The discussions that took place all week during reports, presentations, committee reports, floor actions and general sharing sessions found me in my seat, listening intently to the voices of A.A. around me. I did not feel so compelled to go to the microphone as often as I had during my first conference. At first, I felt as if that meant I was not participating, but, I have realized that I was fully participating. I was listening to the voices sharing varied viewpoints, taking it all in and coming to my vote from a spiritual place. When I made my decisions I was trying to do what was best for A.A. as a whole. I experienced having to stand flat-footed by the traditions that I love and respect. I experienced the realization that something I started out believing in wholeheartedly was not ready to be passed yet and vote against it, even though it came out of my own conference

committee. I experienced the fact that we can't always fix problems with more literature or service material. I experienced the realization that we need to continue to explore new ways of carrying our message. These are some of the highlights that I want to share with you from the 64th General Service Conference.

Conference Committee on Public Information (PI)

Public Information is the conference committee that I have served on the last two years. The focus of the service work of the trustees committee and conference committee on PI is to "help the membership carry the A.A. message of recovery through the general public to the alcoholic who still suffers". I would like to share some of my experience during the Joint Trustee's and Conference Committee Meeting on PI. This meeting takes place prior to our conference committee meeting where we discuss and take action on our assigned agenda items. It is meant to help us understand what the Trustees have been working on all year and ask questions.

There are some dedicated and forward-thinking trustees who serve on this committee. Some of the service activities and projects they performed last year are: A focus on anonymity, oversight of G.S.O.'s A.A. website, ongoing development of a comprehensive media plan, development and coordination of our triennial membership survey, creation, review and distribution of our video Public Service Announcements.

PI Agenda item A. *Review 2014 Comprehensive Media Plan from the Trustee's PI Committee.*

- **Goal:** Increase awareness of what A.A. is and what A.A. can and cannot do
- **Target audience:** Individuals concerned about their drinking, professionals who may come in contact with alcoholics, media professionals, general public and A.A. members involved in PI service.
- **Message:** "If alcohol is a problem for you, contact A.A. It works."
- **New ways of communicating message in a changing world:**
 1. **Hulu pre-rolls:** Hulu is an online video-streaming platform that plays television and movies. How many of you have started or seen a YouTube video and the 15 second ad starts to run, prior to you being able to see the video you want to watch? That is what a pre-roll is, the brief videos that play before a program. We are thinking of submitting brief P.S.A.'s from our existing content to have them be considered to run. There is no cost to do this, but may provide another avenue to get our message out to the alcoholic who still suffers.
 2. **In-house video production for brief content:** One new idea is an Anonymity video to accompany the annual letter we send to the media professionals. Our committee agreed with the idea and requested that

they come up with a plan and use both Class A Trustees (Non-alcoholics) full face and Class B Trustees (Alcoholics), in shadow to really hit home how the media should film A.A. members.

PI Agenda item C. *Consider that the 2014 A.A. Membership Survey be conducted by area on a random basis as was done in the 2011 A.A. Membership survey.*

The PI conference committee members had prepared for this discussion by reviewing all the background materials, which included a 2012 trustee's sub-committee report that detailed information about the statistical validity of the survey methodology and well as some comprehensive sharing from the fellowship regarding the A.A. Membership Survey pamphlet and how and if they use it as a public information tool.

First the conference committee voted on whether we agreed that we should conduct the survey or not in 2014. We had a unanimous vote to conduct the survey. With that out of the way, the committee could focus on the content, methodology and use discussion.

- **Changes in survey questionnaire:** We made decisions on how to change some of the questions that are being asked. One statistic selection was changed from "Married" to "Married or Life partner". We did not agree to add survey questions about the awareness of the grapevine magazine or G.S.O. services. Seemed out of place in view of the historical survey content about membership characteristics and providing information about A.A. to the general public or professionals. The conference approved these changes with a few edits.
- **Methodology:** We determined that there are limitations, not easily eliminated, to the survey process, for example the 50% to 60% response rate of groups selected completing the survey. However, the actual sampling selection of groups is statistically acceptable.
- **Use:** The fellowship sharing was very diverse on the value of and how or if they use the A.A. Membership Survey Pamphlet. If the survey results are looked at in comparison to the membership of a particular home group and it does not match, A.A. members said they have found it not useful. When members realize that this is a snapshot in time of a random survey of A.A. groups across the U.S. and Canada and use it as a tool for PI or CPC presentations to the general public or professionals, then A.A. members shared it is a very useful tool.
- **Improvements:** The PI committee recommended improvements to the pre-survey communications to highlight the purpose and use to better inform the fellowship. We agreed that trends across multiple surveys should be included in the results pamphlet as this would match what is stated in the survey questionnaire "reasons for the A.A. survey".

PI Agenda item E. *Consider revisions to the Anonymity Card (F-20).*

This was the agenda item that I started out believing in wholeheartedly then realized, through the conference floor discussion, it was not ready to be passed and voted against it, even though it came out of my own conference committee.

The idea of changing the Anonymity Card came from the Trustee's PI committee, not from the fellowship. The reason for the desired revisions was an effort to come up with some sort of solution to stop excessive Anonymity Breaks that are occurring by our A.A. membership on social media and many other avenues. Another key motivator for change was to create enhanced awareness of practicing our tradition of personal anonymity at the public level as we approach our upcoming 2015 International Convention in Atlanta, Ga.

The change to the card the conference committee came to agreement on attempted to update the A.A. anonymity card announcement for reading at meetings open to the public, so it could also be used to read at regular open or closed A.A. meetings.

The attempt, which the committee voted on unanimously, quickly fell apart on the conference floor. Here are a few of the discussion points that changed my opinion and why I ultimately voted against it during floor discussion:

- “There was no request from the fellowship for a card to be read at A.A. meetings. This is an attempt to be helpful to A.A. groups that the groups have not asked for.”
- “Anonymity at the social media level definitely needs to be addressed, but not sure that this card does this. It does not read like A.A. language.”
- “Appreciate the effort to educate A.A. members on the importance of anonymity, I no longer see this as a tool to do this, this card is looking like we are telling people what to do.”

Now, do I think we don't have a problem with anonymity breaks at the public level, especially social media, absolutely not! When I got back home I was forwarded a Houston Chronicle Article by the G.S.O. of an A.A member who had broken their anonymity by stating their name, membership in Alcoholics Anonymous and having full-face pictures printed within the story. In addition, the member linked the article on their Facebook page timeline. So, we do have a problem. The question is what do you think we can or need to do about it? Is the answer better sponsorship, educational service workshops, sharing in meetings? Think of what ways we, as a fellowship, can better get the message out about the importance of our tradition of anonymity at the public level. Consider potential agenda items for next year's or future general service conferences.

Final PI committee message is look for the fantastic overhaul of our A.A. G.S.O. Website www.aa.org. Coming soon!

Conference Committee on Finance

Who knew that one of the conference's most spiritual moments would come from a recommendation from the Conference Committee on Finance? Translation was a hot topic during this year's conference. It started during the first general sharing session of the conference week. Translation requests for full-conference material in all three of our conference languages were brought forth and supported by one delegate after another. Several delegates, whose first language was French or Spanish, participated in this year's conference using full translator support during the entire conference week. I shared our Final Agenda Summary Report and Template by sending it to the Conference Coordinator and General Service Office Manager via email.

The following Finance Committee developed recommendation passed unanimously: *The Finance Committee recommended that GSO develop a plan to translate the General Service Conference Background Material into French and Spanish. This plan may include coordinating the use of the volunteer network throughout the fellowship, hiring professional translators or any other facilities the office deems necessary. The report should include costs and any other considerations deemed necessary to allow timely translations to occur.*

Speaking of finances, during my in-person conference reports to the Districts and Area Assembly I will be providing the latest information about our financial status.

Conference Committee on Grapevine

Grapevine Agenda item A. *Consider a request "to reaffirm the Right of Decision of the A.A. Grapevine Board to make formatting decisions for the A.A. Grapevine and La Vina magazines."*

My initial thoughts on this agenda item were leading me to doubt that I wanted to support it. The Conference floor discussion confirmed my opinion. One of my main reasons for not supporting this agenda item was the first question that was asked of the Committee Chairperson during their committee report out. A delegate asked "does this rescind the previous action of spiritual parity of Grapevine and La Vina from the 2010 Conference Advisory Action that was passed"? The answer was, yes.

To provide the context, here is the advisory action that was passed in 2010. *"It was recommended that La Vina achieve spiritual parity with the A.A. Grapevine, beginning in the following manner:*

- *Publishing La Vina as a bimonthly, perfect-bound, black-and-white-, 68-page issue at an additional estimated cost of \$21,400 per year for one year beginning in 2011 followed by a year of review and assessment in 2012. The results of this review and assessment will be brought to the 2013 Conference Committee on the A.A. Grapevine.*
- *Content and substance be of primary importance.*
- *An announcement will be published in La Vina magazine, beginning immediately and throughout the trial year, encouraging increased submissions and subscriptions, moving towards the goal of being self-supporting.*

In 2013, there was an additional committee consideration for the Grapevine Board to come back to this year's conference with a report and proposal that would significantly reduce the La Vina deficit.

Grapevine Agenda item B. *Review A.A. Grapevine Board proposal to the 2014 Conference Committee on the Grapevine to significantly reduce the La Vina deficit.*

The truth of the matter is that subscriptions for La Vina are going up and Grapevine subscriptions are going down, however, the A.A. Grapevine is making profit on sales of other materials, like e-books, etc.

Two positive actions have been put in place regarding La Vina that I anticipate will move us forward on some of the concerns that fellowship has regarding La Vina finances and self-support.

1. There is a new Trustees' Finance subcommittee that has been created and will be chaired by our very own Southwest Regional Trustee, Clayton V. to examine how the La Vina finances are reported to the fellowship.
2. The conference committee on Grapevine recommended an additional committee consideration that a new business plan is required for La Vina and requested that one be developed and brought back to the 2015 Conference Committee on the A.A. Grapevine for review.

Let's see how these actions work.

A few other comments about the Grapevine agenda items:

- The A.A. Grapevine & La Vina "Alcoholism at Large" section will continue to be printed in the magazines.
- There is a New Grapevine Book available for purchase titled, "Grapevine Daily Quote Book" 365-days of inspiring passages.

Conference Committee on Literature

Literature had a committee recommendation and a then a floor action that I experienced having to stand flat-footed by the traditions that I love and respect.

Literature Agenda item D. *Consider a request to add “Nonalcoholics are welcome to attend open meetings as observers” to the end of the Primary Purpose (Blue) card (F-17).*

The change to this card passed at first with a vote of 82 for and 41 against. The 2/3 majority number we were seeking to pass it was 82. Then the minority spoke and someone in the majority requested to change their vote, causing a motion to reconsider. The conference reconsidered and ultimately the recommended change to the primary purpose blue card failed.

To my disappointment, the conversation was almost identical to the one the 63rd G.S.C. had one year ago. Here are a few of the discussion points that made me hold my position to vote for the recommended change:

- “I won’t be able to take my parents to an open meeting to share during an open meeting anniversary celebration.”
- “Newcomers who do not know if they are alcoholics will not be able to share.’
- “Identification through sharing of my common problem is what made me realize that Alcoholics Anonymous was the place I could get help.”
- “There was a comment that with this card we are attempting to tell groups how to run their meetings.”

The fellowship is not in agreement with making this change to the Primary Purpose Blue Card. Though throughout several literature pamphlets we have published as a fellowship, this definition of an open meeting is stated the way this proposed change to the card is worded, except for the added word, “welcome”.

When I came home, I was invited to take part in a presentation to the clergy by our District 40 PI Committee. To prepare for the presentation I read the pamphlet; “Members of the Clergy ask about Alcoholics Anonymous” (P-25). The pamphlet has a question and answer format. The question “What is A.A.’s singleness of purpose and what about problems other than alcohol?” The answer provided states that “some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse”. Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Nonalcoholics may attend open A.A. meetings as observers.”

Why are we willing to share this message through Public Information service to try to educate nonalcoholics about our singleness of purpose and what A.A. is and isn't, but, we are hesitant to try different ways to educate our members the same way?

What do you think we can or need to do about it? Is the answer better sponsorship, educational service workshops, sharing in meetings? Think of what ways we, as a fellowship, can better get the message out about the importance of our singleness of purpose.

Literature Agenda item B. *Review the revised draft of the proposed pamphlet on spirituality. The committee recommended that the pamphlet on spirituality with the title "Many Paths to Spirituality" be approved.*

The draft pamphlet that was provided to the conference to review was a complete change from what I read last year. What I liked about it and why I voted for it was the way it had been rewritten and formatted, in addition to the title change. In my opinion it ties very nicely to the Big Book's chapter four, "We Agnostics". The conference received it well. We got momentarily caught up in trying to remove a certain sentence of one story, but ultimately, it passed with substantial unanimity.

Literature Agenda item G. *Consider a request to create a pamphlet for alcoholics with mental illness.*

The committee took no action. The item was revived as a floor action that recommended "*consider a request to develop literature which focuses on "Alcoholics in Recovery with Mental Health Issues"*".

Many personal stories were shared and compelling reasons for the idea of developing this literature. I went to the microphone and shared that I agreed with the Literature Committee that this subject is adequately addressed in current A.A. literature. In addition, a recent A.A. Grapevine Magazine article in the May 2014 issue, included a story of an alcoholic who happened to be bipolar, sharing their experience, strength and hope. I considered what conference members were saying about A.A. members not being welcoming to or knowing how to help people coming to us with this outside issue. In the end I did not think a pamphlet was the right solution for A.A. members to address that concern. Finally, the background material listed many existing support groups that members can feel comfortable to discuss issues of dual recovery on mental health issues and substance abuse, with people who share a common experience that offers a plan for dual recovery. I believe that we can't offer that. But, many members felt differently than I did. I believe this discussion is not over.

A final comment about the Literature agenda items:

- Circle and Triangle
 - Committee took no action.
 - Conference members decided not to discuss a Floor action.

Conference Committee on International Conventions & Regional Forums

The G.S.O. staff member assigned to coordinate the 2015 International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia is Eva S. She and several other staff and conference members presented a fantastic and funny skit about an International Convention. It would be so fun to do it in our Area! It dealt with inappropriate requests that come in from members about getting housing, anonymity breaks, selling items, etc.

- Housing information will come out later this summer.
- Keep a look out on the A.A. G.S.O. Website www.aa.org for the latest information about the convention.

2014 General Service Conference Inventory – Group K

The first ever General Service Conference Inventory is well underway. I was more prepared for this second year of the three year process. As a member of Group K, our questions fell under two main headers; General Service Boards/Corporate Boards and Leadership. The inventory group discussions took place on Wednesday morning during conference week. The sessions lasted three hours. The following are highlights of the full discussion of five questions assigned to Group K. I prepared by reading the A.A. Service Manual combined with the Twelve Concepts for World Service.

First, we discussed the question of whether the General Service Board exercises serious care in having the best possible assistance in carrying out their duties, the inventory group members felt like the process was thorough. During the discussion we learned that the interview process for hiring new staff, or filling service positions is quite extensive and thorough leading to solid candidate selection. Part of the interview process, which takes most of a day, you also have to tell you're A.A. story. Talk about your co-workers and managers getting to know you pretty quickly, sharing your experience, strength and hope will do it.

Next, we discussed if the role of the General Service Board most effectively addressed the needs of the fellowship. One idea I brought forth was focused on the diversity of the United States and Canada. Would it be helpful in reaching out to as many suffering alcoholics as possible, who may not speak or read English, Spanish or French, if we could make the literature that we have helped to translate in over 80+ languages available for purchase from A.A.W.S.?

Then, we discussed if the selection/election process for trustees and directors is effective, impartial/fair and if not, how would we change it? Since the choice of trustees, directors and non-trustee directors remains one of the most vital factors in ensuring A.A.'s future, I really wanted to understand if we could do any better. In reading the service manual I learned that areas put forth candidates for regional trustees, and trustees-at-large. The fellowship, through the delegates, is notified of openings for appointed committee members and non-trustee directors and request that qualified and interested A.A. members apply. Finally, General Service Trustees are selected from current or past non-trustee directors. One improvement I suggested is that better information be provided to the delegates about how the slate of trustees and slate of officers are serving. Have they been able to attend the required meetings? Are they being effective? What are their specific skills, qualifications, goals and achievements? Even though I trust the process and the nominating committee, delegates are being asked to approve recommended slates, so having such information could lead to solid decisions.

Finally we were asked to discuss how to improve methods of selecting and nurturing effective leaders and broadening diversity in our leaders. Through service sponsorship, specifically showing the member how to perform the service position, share what you have done. Be positive and share position expectations. This inventory meeting was prior to the conference committee report outs and my suggestion to broaden diversity was to make sure that all of our conference materials should be translated into all of our three main languages. With the finance committee advisory action requesting a plan to translate all background material, we are hopefully on our way to fulfilling this need. Language does seem to be a barrier. One of the things we could encourage is getting more folks involved in service who are bi-lingual as these members can be the bridge too many groups/members.

Look for this year's inventory question/answers in the final conference report.

Class A Trustee Openings

There will be some openings for Class A Trustee in the coming year(s) and I sat down with a Class A Trustee for lunch to ask how she became involved as a friend of A.A. She actually works in the field of treatment and has been a longtime fan of our program of recovery. In fact, folks in her treatment program, who are suffering with our problem are required to attend and participate in meetings. I asked her what we should be doing to put forth an effort for outreach to potential candidates. One of the things that she shared is to have a panel workshop of invited attendees or ongoing meetings with folks in the professional fields we normally seek for such positions. The people who are members of the clergy as well as professionals like doctors, lawyers, treatment counselors, media professionals, corrections officers, etc. Using the concerted effort of

all of our area standing committees we could begin a program of education and outreach that can reap benefits down the road. During this outreach, we are bound to find professionals, like her, who have some heart connection to alcoholics anonymous.

Change comes from within our fellowship

I want to remind everyone that our fellowship is precious and we need to work to keep it in fit spiritual condition. As I have mentioned there are several areas of concern that we need to continue to seek positive action and movement towards a healthy future. Some of the issues I have learned we need to focus on are:

- Protecting Anonymity
- Safety in A.A.
- Singleness of Purpose
- Self-support
- Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues
- What challenges do you think we are facing?

It is in our hands to utilize the conference process to seek the changes we would like to see to mold our future. I challenge each of you and your groups to discuss these issues and determine if there are any potential agenda items that you want to put forth to be considered for the 65th General Service Conference.

Goodbye to the General Service Conference

It was difficult to say goodbye the last day of the conference. I was emotional because I was thinking of Helen Mc., Panel 35, Past Delegate, and my good friend, who was instrumental in sponsoring me into service. I understood now I had passed through the same conference process she had many years before me. I was also thinking of coming home to SETA and all my friends and local service. I was thinking about how true the sentiment has been that I have shared over and over with everyone during my journey, that I really am just the person wearing the delegate shoes right now and it will all come to an end sooner than I hoped! I have passed my shoes, at least in regards to the conference process, onto the Panel 64 and Panel 65 Delegates.

In sincere love and service to our fellowship,

Patrick C.
Delegate, Panel 63, Area 67
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