

2009 Pacific Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly Report
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I would like to first thank the District Committee for allowing me the privilege of representing you at PRAASA in Oakland this year. I am humbled by the experience and truly thankful for the experience. One of the biggest things that I personally took away from this experience is that the more I learned, the less I truly know.

I arrived in Oakland on Friday and shortly after getting to the hotel, it was time to get started. There were about 20 folks from Arizona there including our delegate, alternate delegate, area chair, area treasurer, area secretary, area Treatment Coordinator, 1 DCMC, 1 Alt. DCMC, 4 DCM's, a handful of GSR's, 2 past delegates, and 1 Intergroup Liaison. There were 1775 registered attendees from all over the Pacific region, Canada, and even from Japan! The General Service Office Manager for Japan was in attendance and hearing about how 7th Tradition dollars truly reach around the world was completely amazing. Our Pacific Regional Trustee presented her report and the Saturday speaker was the Trustee At Large Canada. I also did see a few folks from GSO in New York that I had seen at the Forum.

As with my forum report, I took notes, but there were also times when I just had to stop and be in the moment and listen. My written report will be a highlight rather than a running account, like my forum report was.

PRAASA began at Noon with a welcome from the host delegate and our Pacific Region Trustee, Madeleine P. We then had a chance to hear the delegates from all the areas give a 2 minute area update. I was amazed at the differences in how each area does business. Some areas have monthly meetings; other areas only meet 1-2 times per year. Some areas focus on GSR participation and others focus more on the DCM being the link between the district and the areas and GSR's don't participate at the area level much at all. One common theme, though, was "whatever works". Over and over again I heard "the Traditions are guidelines, suggestions, not laws".

The second panel, entitled "Our Commitment to Carry AA's Message-Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action" focused on the General Service Conference theme for this year. High points of this panel included "Sacrifice and gratitude go hand in hand", and "the more gratitude you have and the more you sacrifice, the more humility you will experience". In speaking of servant leaders, leaders who lead with sacrifice will find that they will have enthusiasm that is based in humility and gratitude. Spiritual growth is dependent on the practice of steps 10 and 11 and then carried out in step 12. Simplicity is the best way to carry the message. In the November 1948 Grapevine, Dr Bob wrote an article that stressed sticking to our own experience when talking to newcomers. That is the strength in the message that we carry. Remember to Utilize and not Analyze.

During the floor sharing following this panel, one person really struck me. The General Manager of the General Service Office in Japan got up and shared regarding the last presentation of the "Language of the Heart-Keeping it simple". He said "The Language of the heart transcends any language or cultural barrier". That was powerful!

The third panel was dedicated to the Grapevine and Literature. We were reminded that the Grapevine and La Vina are powerful tools that we can use to help carry the message. One speaker even related an experience of having a sponsee who had a hard time staying sober. Even though the sponsee kept going

in and out of AA, the Grapevine kept coming every month. These make great gifts to sponsees, friends and loved ones as well as tools to use in meetings for topics and truly is our meeting in print. We also found out during the Trustee's report that the Grapevine is now going to be stapleless (bound like it was this month) and in color going forward. This is going to be fantastic for our friends who are in institutions. Other highlights from this panel were learning pamphlets and using them as tools for sponsees and carrying the message. AA.org has numerous downloadable pamphlets, guidelines and other interesting pieces of literature available for members to go to.

We broke for dinner and then had roundtables. I attended the DCM/DCMC roundtable which was more of a forum for questions and answers. Several questions were asked related to fund raising, holding raffles and getting more GSR's to participate. I was very interested to learn that there are DCM's that have over 100 groups in some areas, and then others who have just a handful of groups but then a lot of distance between groups (Alaska). Some districts hold regular fund raisers and others operate on a budget of only \$300 or less. The differences between the districts seem to be just as vast as there are people in AA.

Saturday began early at 8am with a new round of panels. The first panel focused on Self Support. I was quite interested in the different ideas and experiences shared during this panel. As we know, 12th step work is the foundation of what we do in AA. The spiritual aspect of 7th tradition contributions was discussed at length. It is through the 7th tradition that we are able to do our 12th step work, whether it is through buying big books or going to the jail. Reaching out to professionals and visiting groups, all of these activities are spiritual in nature and are focused on reaching the suffering alcoholic. In October 1967 Grapevine article, Bill W. said that the more 7th tradition we have equates to more and better 12th step work. 7th tradition dollars also go to help GSO provide all the services to the groups that the groups need to help carry out their 12th step work. Providing service materials, publishing the books and pamphlets that we all use, maintain the website, fund the international convention, and other services are vital to the ongoing support that GSO provides. The bottom line is that our 7th tradition dollars keep it all going. Self support also was looked at in terms beyond money. Sacrifice and investment of time were stressed as indispensable. Action is the watchword when looking at this aspect of being self supporting. AA needs all of us. We are responsible to attract and motivate others to fully support AA with our time and our contributions.

The fifth panel focused on changing our perspectives. I was unable to take notes during this panel as I was invited to participate as the time keeper for this panel. Discussion surrounded anonymity both in life and after death. One thing that was stressed was the humility of Dr Bob and Bill W in that on their gravestones, there is no mention of AA or their founding of our program. The second presentation was about special needs, specifically for those who are deaf, blind, or have other disabilities. What struck me about this presentation was the story that the presenter related about attending a meeting that was predominantly a deaf meeting. At the end of the meeting, she wondered how everyone would hold hands and sign the prayer at the end. She looked down and saw everyone's feet touching. That story brought a huge round of applause. She stressed the need and importance of making sure that AA is accessible to everyone regardless of disability. The remote communities presentation was fantastic in that the presenter talked about having to go 40 or more miles just for the weekly AA meeting in one place he lived. In watching the audience, I really think that there were some there that had no idea that there are locations that are so far remote and removed from urban areas that there may only be one AA meeting a week or a month. The final presenter talked about whether or not AA is inclusive. What really came out of this is the inclusion vs exclusion of those who are agnostic and atheist. The saying of The Lords Prayer could actually be a way of excluding those who don't believe in it. It was very

interesting to note that all sessions began and ended with the Serenity Prayer and when someone called for a moment of silence, it was “to do with as you see fit”.

The sixth panel was all about cooperation. Cooperation both within the fellowship and outside the fellowship. The statement that AA does not operate in a vacuum was very powerful. We must operate within the traditions but also within the ethics of the agencies that we cooperate with such as institutions and jails. Treatment facilities meetings and sharing are not going to be just like AA meetings, but they shouldn't be either. They are there for treatment and not AA. We should cooperate with them and reach out to them and let them know of the resource that we are, but we do not take their place and do not try to overtake their rules and regulations. We have to remember that not all outside agencies are going to understand the Traditions. There was a very interesting talk about the differences between PI and CPC, but unfortunately, during this panel I was unable to hear the entire discussion due to a phone call about an injured child. The end of the panel that I did hear was about the young people in AA and how they are the lifeblood of our program. Being tolerant of some of the things that the young people do in our fellowship is allowing the fellowship to grow and people younger than we were when we got here are being spared years of loneliness and sickness. We should always remember to invite and keep the young people as part of the service structure.

We had a fantastic trustee's report from Madeleine P. She serves on several boards and gave numerous updates. Highlights are:

105,000-Grapevine Circulation

525,000-Grapevine readers online

10,400-La Vina circulation

125,000-Books and other literature circulation last year alone

All issues of the Grapevine going forward will be staple free and in color. There is an increase in the cost of the Grapevine starting July 2009. Annual subscription pricing will be \$27 per year (up from \$20). La Vina cannot yet be staple free due to the size of the magazine, but they are working on this. There needs to be an increase in the subscriptions for the Grapevine to be able to be fully self supporting. 2008 saw a net loss of \$95,000-mainly due to increase in postage. La Vina lost \$76,000, also due to postage costs. The increase in the subscription costs is to try to make the Grapevine and La Vina self supporting.

We have a new AA World Services General Manager, Phyllis H. who is a past pacific region trustee.

There were 38,435 pieces of mail personally answered in 2008 by GSO. This does not include all the phone calls, emails, etc that GSO gets. There were 1300 visitors to GSO. They distributed over 2 million big books. There were \$12.4 million in sales and 6.4 million in group contribution, which was @237,000 less than budgeted and \$88,000 less than 2007). There was a total loss of \$305,000 for the year.

Additional information on the Trustee's report can be found at www.area03.org.

The PRAASA business meeting followed. The financials were reviewed from 2008 PRAASA and approved by the body. Bids were submitted for the 2013 PRAASA for San Diego and Boise. 2010 is in Los Angeles, 2011 is in Hawaii, and 2012 is in Washington.

The evening capped off with dinner with some fellow area folks and then a speaker meeting with the speaker who was the Trustee at Large-Canada. Additional DCM/DCMC roundtables followed, however,

after sitting for almost half an hour waiting for everyone to figure out what questions to discuss and it was already 10:30 pm (California time), I was toast and had to get to bed.

Sunday morning began (Yeah Arizona time!!) at 8am with a general “Whats on your mind” sharing session followed by a panel of Past Trustees sharing followed by a Delegates Ask It Basket. I’m sorry, but I was pretty much exhausted by the entire weekend and did not take notes. We closed at noon.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to be of service by attending PRAASA and learning how to be a better servant to this district and AA as a whole.

Kyle H., DCM