

We arrived in San Antonio, Texas on the warm, steamy afternoon of Sunday, July 27th, after a two-day drive from our home in Costa Mesa. The weather report predicted the possibility that hurricane Alex, lurking about in the Gulf of Mexico, might drop a significant amount of rain on San Antonio by Tuesday and throughout the week. Jim and I have attended five previous International AA conventions, none of which had been affected by a hurricane that we could recall....

We arrived several days early to attend the Past Delegates' Reunion, which, on convention years, takes place a few days before the convention begins.

We strolled up the Riverwalk to the first lock. Meandering through the city, the Riverwalk affords tourists and locals an interlude of tranquil strolls, healthful exercise, and water taxi transportation and tour opportunities.... The afternoon temperature was only in the 80s...not so bad.

The presentations at the Past Delegates' Reunion were inspiring and moving...they included a panel entitled "Life After Rotation" with sharing from five past trustees and past delegates; "AA Around the World" by past delegates and trustees from Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and South Africa; "GSO Service Highlights" moderated by a past GSO General Manager and sharing from four past GSO staff members. And lastly, and certainly a highlight, was excellent sharing from a past Class A Trustee and a past Delegate from California.

In addition to the convention itself and the Past Delegates' Reunion, we also attended the Past Trustees Banquet (I tagged along after Jim and am honored to be included in this wonderful group of dedicated and loving trusted servants) and the Delegates' Luncheon, where each of us join with other members of our own panel. At one

point I went searching for the Panel 42 table to say hello to Jim. As I found 47 and then 43, I said sort of to anyone nearby, "It looks like I may be close to finding my husband." From one of the tables came the response, "Today may be your lucky day!"

People started pouring into town on Thursday and green-shirted volunteers could be spotted everywhere giving directions, offering help and smiles and support. It rained off and on, but the hurricane had dissipated and I didn't see any serious effect on the general good spirits of the convention.

Our GSO General Manager announced later in the weekend that there were over 52,000 of us who registered for the convention....

Bars all over town were deserted (unlike in some other cities where the bars have rallied and served coffee, sandwiches, and soft drinks with big "Welcome AA" signs)....but there were long lines outside ice cream parlors and pizza stands. People greeted each other with smiles and handshakes and hugs... many struggling to speak and understand a wide variety of languages.

I thought I saw my mother one afternoon, hurrying ahead of me in the crowd...and how I wish it could have been. My beautiful, intelligent and funny mother was an alcoholic...one who never found AA and never got sober. She died of an intentional overdose of drugs and alcohol in February of 1978 in her home where I found her body, kneeling over the coffee table with her empty coffee cup still wet with whiskey in her hand. She would, I believe, have loved AA, although she would have had trouble with the "God" thing, as have I...but I know that, as I have, she would have found that the phrase "god is love" has deep and profound resonance in AA.

Although I didn't see my mother (who would now be well over 100 years old) in person in San Antonio, I saw her in every single sober woman...and man, for that matter....

They say that 10% of the population of the United States, and maybe the world, are possibly alcoholics...and the World Health Organization has named alcoholism as the leading health problem in the world. We are part of a just, loving and significant social cause, as well as a personal, life-saving journey.

International Conventions remind me that there are deep and abiding common interests and common understandings that can transcend all the other "important" differences we squabble, argue, fight and kill over. How much is a resentment worth?

There is much to be done and we, in the Mid-Southern California Area 09, can do much, much more than we already are...I hope all who attended the International Convention are inspired, as I am, to focus our sights, projects, and programs on how we can better carry our message ("having [] a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps") to the alcoholics in our area who still suffer and drink.

It has been estimated, from our own surveys, that there are approximately 48,000 recovering alcoholics in our area. 10% of the population of seven million, is 700,000, less 48,000 of us, equals **652,000 alcoholics**. Do they all know about us? Where are they? How can we reach them? What are we doing to let them know who we are and what our program is? Are we reaching enough professionals? Seniors? Remote communities? People with special needs? Those who speak other languages? Different cultural backgrounds?

Alcoholism is a chronic, progressive, fatal disease...each one of the people I saw on the streets of San Antonio last weekend is a walking miracle... I am so grateful to be part of this fellowship and to be serving with you, here in Mid-Southern California Area 09!

Thank you!

Linda C.