

Special Native American Forum

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Welcome and Opening Remarks

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Leonard Blumenthal, Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee, Chairman, General Service Board: "Welcome and Opening Remarks"

Welcome to this Special A.A. Forum! This Forum is designated 'Special' because it is held outside of the regular Regional rotation and is meant to be more available to those who might have difficulty attending a regular Forum.

My thanks go to the Tribal Council of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians for opening

their doors to us and enabling us to have this Forum here. We ask that they pray with us that this event will assist in as many as possible being exposed to this life-saving program.

Over the years, the General Service Board has received sharing outside the purview of A.A., including sovereignty, independence, funding, mistreatment, treatment centre procedures, etc.

What you will see and be part of over the

weekend is an explanation and discussion of how your General Service Board can assist in carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic and how this program has enabled alcoholics to gain and maintain sobriety.

Hopefully we will hear your voices this weekend and work together to serve your communities.



Role of the Class A Trustee

Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees have been an integral part of the service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous from the very beginning. The alcoholic trustee members are referred to as Class B trustees. The original board of the Alcoholic Foundation was composed of two alcoholic and three nonalcoholic members. Today the board consists of seven Class A and 14 Class B trustees.

The A.A. Service Manual describes the role of the trustees as follows: "The trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous are concerned with everything happening inside and outside A.A. that may affect the health and growth of the movement. However, as the Charter points out, their duties are essentially custodial. Whenever a decision on movement-wide policy is needed, they turn to the Conference. And because trustees are members of the Con-

ference body, they participate in policy-making -- but as individual Conference members, not as a group. The trustees do much of their work through two operating corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. and through trustees' committees."

Class A trustees are similar to Class B trustees in that they receive no compensation, serve as voting members of Committees, and attend all quarterly meetings as well as the Conference. They also attend numerous local and state A.A. functions throughout Canada and the United States.

Class A trustees are different in that they are nonalcoholic (and therefore not members of A.A.), serve a term of six years, and are selected because of their professional experience. Since Class A trustees are

not members they do not have to be concerned about anonymity. They can use their names and show our faces when dealing with the media. Class A trustees have included psychologists, former judges, experts in social work, clergy, wardens, and business executives. Class As usually come to the Board with little actual knowledge of the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and bring a different and valuable perspective as trustees.

The A.A. Service Manual makes this very clear distinction for Class A trustees: "Whatever their backgrounds, the bylaws make one key provision for nonalcoholic trustees: they 'shall be persons who are not and have not been afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and who express a profound faith in the recovery program upon which the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is

founded.'"

In seeking candidates for Class A trustee, the board looks for men and women with a proven track record in their own fields, and with a demonstrated interest in Alcoholics Anonymous and some experience in working with A.A. and its members.

We would like to encourage you to continually look for individuals who you believe would make good Class A trustees. The Nominating Committee maintains a file of interested candidates, and we strongly encourage you to stay alert for new candidates. There will be one opening this year as Allen Ault, corrections professional rotates, and one opening in 2007 when Vince Keefe, Treasurer of the General Service Board, rotates.

Role of The Class B Trustee

The General Service Board has 21 member trustees, seven Class A (non-alcoholic) and 14 Class B (alcoholic). Of the Class B trustees, four are General Service trustees who are selected for their diversity of professional skills and talents. Two are trustees-at-large, one from Canada and the other from the U.S. The remaining eight are regional trust-

tees, representing six geographic regions in the U.S. and two in Canada.

The trustees of the General Service Board, through its 10 trustees' committees and two service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., carry out the wishes of the groups as expressed in the group conscience of the General Service

Conference – truly a year-round process.

Class B Regional Trustees serve four-year terms, the middle two years of which are spent also serving on one of the two boards - A.A.W.S. or Grapevine. Trustees also serve on two or three of the 10 trustees' committees.

Class B Trustees are always grateful for the support of A.A.

members who extend the hand of A.A. service every day to home groups, districts, and areas. They consider it an honor and a privilege to serve the General Service Board and the Fellowship throughout the United States and Canada.

Role of the Trustee-at-Large

Each year, the trustees-at-large, U.S./Canada attend the annual General Service Conference, quarterly meetings of the General Service Board, and, on average, two Regional Forums. Over the course of the four-year term, each trustee-at-large might attend a Regional Forum in each one of the eight regions that make up the U.S. and Canada service structure. They also attend various conferences and con-

ventions in other countries, when invited to do so.

The trustees-at-large are assigned to the International Committee as well as to two other trustee committees. The International Committee makes policy recommendations to the General Service Board regarding carrying the message to alcoholics overseas, particularly in countries where there is no or a newly emerging service structure.

The trustees-at-large act as World Service Meeting delegates representing the general service structure of the U.S. and Canada. In this role, trustees-at-large attend two World Service Meetings which are held every two years. The location alternates between New York City and a meeting outside U.S./Canada. The next World Service Meeting is scheduled for October 15-19, 2006, in Dublin, Ireland.

Trustees-at-Large also serve as delegates at the Zonal Meeting of the Americas, known as the Redela Meeting. Redela is short for the Reunion de Las Americas. The Zonal Meetings are held on the off years between the World Service Meetings. The last Redela Meeting was held on October 5-9, 2005, in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic.

Role of the A.A.W.S. Director

A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) originated in 1938 as Works Publishing, Inc., founded by Bill W. and a few early members to publish our Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The First Edition was printed in 1939, and slowly word spread that A.A. offered a solution for alcoholics seeking a way out.

Bill realized that there needed to be an office to handle requests for books and basic A.A. information. With the help of a few who believed in A.A., Bill opened our first office, which he named "A.A. Headquarters." Members began to hold

meetings, A.A. groups were formed, and gradually A.A.'s message spread across the U.S. and Canada, and even reached across oceans. Headquarters became a clearinghouse for A.A. information and shared experience, as well as the origin of books and pamphlets that described our program and the principles established by the Twelve Traditions.

In the same way that Works Publishing became A.A. World Services and the *Alcoholic Foundation* evolved into the General Service Board, Headquarters became your General

Service Office (G.S.O.). Each service arm continues to be responsible to the Fellowship, guided by the General Service Conference, "the actual voice and effective conscience for our whole society."

The A.A.W.S. Board has primary responsibility for G.S.O.'s services and for publishing A.A. books and pamphlets. The General Service Board elects nine directors to serve on the A.A.W.S. Board, selecting women and men capable of guiding G.S.O.'s services and activities, as well as assuring that A.A. literature is readily available and rea-

sonably priced. The A.A.W.S. Board holds copyrights on our literature, including those initiated by Bill W., and is responsible for protecting the integrity of our literature. Today, A.A. literature is available in over 70 languages, including 52 translations of the Big Book.

A.A.W.S. Directors and G.S.O. employees agree that our purpose, expressed through requested services and publication of A.A. literature, is to enable members and groups to enlarge their Twelfth Step work, sharing A.A.'s solution with the alcoholic who still suffers.

C.P.C. Presentation: "Let's Be Friendly With Our Friends" (Available from G.S.O.)

A.A. is considered by many professionals to be a valuable resource for alcoholics who want help. When there is a good working relationship between A.A. members and paid alcoholism workers, the sick alcoholic is the winner; he or she gets the

help needed from both.

We are not in competition with these non-A.A.s; we have our separate functions. *Alcoholics Anonymous* is not in the business of education, research, medicine, counseling,

treatment, prevention, or funding. We simply have a message to carry about a program of recovery for alcoholics -- a program that works for hundreds of thousands who want it.

The professional has helped the alcoholic

want it -- by education, counseling, and rehabilitative treatment -- and has also been of aid through making the community aware of and care about the millions still suffering from the progressive illness of alcoholism.

History of Regional Forums

The annual A.A. General Service Conference affords delegates from the U.S. and Canada a chance to meet for six days with the trustees, directors, and G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs in New York—and then carry that experience back to A.A.s at home. For the A.A.s at home, it was a secondhand experience at best. This was the situation that set Dr. John L. Norris (lovingly known as Dr. Jack), chairperson of the board from 1961 to 1978, to ask the question, in the early 1970's: "How could communication with the Fellowship be improved?"

By 1974, Dr. Jack had become very interested in the idea of holding weekend "Mini-conferences" periodically in different parts of the U.S. and Canada, at which members of the board and staffs would be present. After getting input from the people who would be involved,

he presented his idea at the 1975 Conference, which recommended "that the concept . . . be further explored and developed." The first experimental "Mini-Conference" was held in Atlanta, Georgia, in December 1975.

It's surprising the concept didn't die with that first gathering. People from one area in particular were full of mistrust of everything in New York, and were in a rebellious mood. The first two days were angry and acrimonious. But by Sunday morning, the beginnings of trust had been established and the tone had changed to one of love and gratitude.

In March 1976, a second experimental "Mini-conference" was held in the West Central Region, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It was well attended, positive in tone and judged successful.

Those experiences were brought to the 1976 Conference, where the concept was hotly debated. Some expressed the

fear that "New York" was intruding on their local service structure and that the new "Mini-conferences" would undermine the function of the General Service Conference. However, the Conference finally recommended: "That we go forward with Mini-Conferences and provide them as often as possible, that these be held [only] at the request of the region," and that their name be changed to "A.A. Regional Forums."

"As often as possible" was determined to be a maximum of four forums per year. Since there are eight regions in the U.S./Canada each region could schedule a Forum every two years *if it so desired*.

Subsequently, a delegate from Alaska pointed out that it was virtually impossible for their service people to attend a Forum in the "Lower 48" in any numbers and requested that the Board put on an additional "Mini-Forum" in connection with the Alaska State

Conference in 1979. This was done, with the reduced number of participants and a shortened agenda. Two years later, using the same rationale, Montana had a Mini-Forum for over 100 service people from remote parts of the Northern Rockies. Today, provisions have now been made for these additional Special Forums to be incorporated into the annual schedule where circumstances warrant. To date, 144 Regional Forums and Special Forums have been held.

The next Pacific Regional Forum will take place next month in Seattle, Washington, the weekend of June 23-25, 2006. In 2008, the Pacific Regional Forum will be held in Spokane, Washington.

G.S.O.—Staff Assignments

In the early days of A.A., when there were 100 A.A. members in a "fledgling society," a small office staffed by our co-founder Bill W. and a secretary was sufficient to keep contact with A.A. members. Today, with an estimated two million members, it requires a bit more space and a few more people to keep that precious contact between the Fellowship and the

General Service Office.

The Staff at G.S.O., each with a different focus, use a variety of technologies to relay to the Fellowship a wide range of shared experience contained at this office. This often helps A.A.s in the process of reaching an informed group conscience decision.

Each staff member is responsible for shar-

ing information on A.A. that is accurate and consistent. Information is sent to our friends in health care, corrections, treatment, radio, press and film, and of course, to A.A. members. Staff communicates with interested parties locally as well as internationally.

Using the Twelve Traditions and A.A. principles, the General Service Office staff honors

both the A.A. pioneers and the current members of the Fellowship by sharing collected A.A. experience, strength and hope to help other A.A.s carry our message.

The A.A. Grapevine

The first Grapevine "office" was a room in a small New York City apartment, where six A.A. members — four women and two men — got together to create a newsletter that would be "a unifying bond to alcoholics everywhere." That was in June 1944. The Fellowship was only nine years old and had about 300 registered groups brimming with enthusiasm and struggling with questions about meeting formats, the Steps, and how to stay sober. The Grapevine gave them an opportunity to share with A.A.s outside their own group.

The first issue, which was eight pages long and cost fifteen cents a copy, claimed 165 subscribers. The staff had also enlisted a senior editorial advisor, A.A.'s cofounder Bill W., who wrote 150 articles for the magazine before his death in 1971.

Today, the Grapevine still strives to be a unifying bond to alcoholics. A few things have changed, however. The magazine has been expanded to 64 pages, reaches more than 112,000 subscribers, and has been adopted as the international journal

of Alcoholics Anonymous. Incorporated as a service arm of the General Service Board, The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., now publishes a second magazine, the Spanish-language bi-monthly *La Viña*, as well as a website and several collections of Grapevine and *La Viña* articles in books, CDs, and other formats.

Unlike staff assignments at G.S.O., staff positions at the Grapevine and *La Viña* require a publishing background and do not rotate. The head of the corporation, the executive editor, oversees the

overall operation of the Grapevine, with the assistance of the office manager. The controller, aided by two bookkeepers, manages the financial operation, and customer service and individual orders are taken care of by a team of five.

Finally, as the Internet has grown, so has the Grapevine website, guided by the director of Internet operations. To reach more alcoholics online, the website has recently been redesigned and a Digital Archive has just been created to give the Fellowship access to almost every Grapevine story, joke, and cartoon published.

Role of the Grapevine Director

The General Service Board of A.A. has two operating entities, A.A. World Services and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Each is separate and operates with its own corporate board. The A.A. Grapevine Board of Directors has nine members: five Trustees (two General Service Trustees, two Regional Trustees, one Class A Trustee); three nontrustee directors (selected for

their personal expertise); and the executive editor of the magazine.

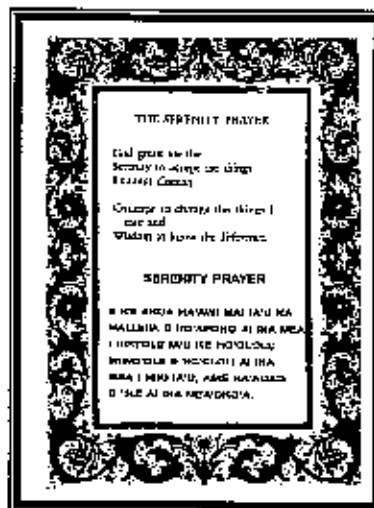
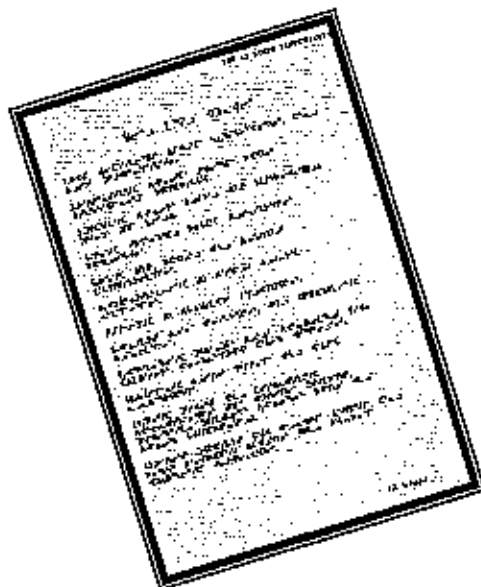
The A.A. Grapevine Board meets quarterly. The Board also meets another four times a year between quarterly meetings as a planning committee to develop long-term plans to guide the A.A. Grapevine. While the Board is not involved with the day-to-day operation of the office, it is respon-

sible for overseeing the Grapevine operation and safeguarding the best interest of the Fellowship.

The duties of the A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board include: overseeing the publishing operations of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.; providing sound financial management of the corporation; establishing corporate policies and setting corporate priorities; and engaging in strategic plan-

ning.

A.A. Grapevine does not accept group contributions for operating expenses. It is supported from income generated from the sales of the magazine and related materials so that it can continue to carry the message of A.A. to suffering alcoholics and reflect the wide range of thought in our Fellowship and the diversity of A.A.'s membership



INFORMATION ON REGIONAL/SPECIAL FORUMS

Pacific Region Seattle, WA	June 23-25, 2006	Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport
Pacific Region Spokane, WA	August 29-31, 2008	Doubletree Hotel Spokane City Center

