

**DELEGATE REPORT****Date: May 20, 2011****(Full Report)**

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My name is Scott and I am alcoholic. It is my privilege to serve as the Panel 61 Delegate for Area 79 BC Yukon. It is also my very great privilege to be able to be here today to provide a report with respect to the General Service Conference that took place May 1 through May 7, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in New York, NY.

The A.A. Service Manual suggests that I am to report to you on what I saw and heard and felt – really my experience, strength and hope. That is what I intend to try to do today. This is going to involve telling you a little bit about the mechanics of the Conference, a little of the business of the Conference and some of the interaction among the Conference participants and others in and around the Conference.

As a beginning, I would like to take a moment or two to give a little bit of the history of the Conference and try to describe to you what is its purpose and how it functions. As many of you know, early in A.A.'s history an organization was established called The Alcoholic Foundation. This body was originally comprised of friends of Alcoholics Anonymous, who were not alcoholic, and a few alcoholics. Its purpose was to try to manage the services of Alcoholics Anonymous, managing its finances, public relations and lending some credibility to the new movement. Over the early history of Alcoholics Anonymous, this body had responsibility for operating the “business side” of A.A., while Bill W and Dr. Bob continued to be advisors to the Alcoholic Foundation and provide advice, really direction, to the Alcoholic Foundation on matters of policy. Since that time, the Alcoholic Foundation has become known as the General Service Board.

As Bill and Bob grew older, they recognized that they would not always be available to make policy decisions and ensure the spiritual direction of Alcoholics Anonymous. What they proposed was that a conference could be formed that would be a mechanism for policy matters in Alcoholics Anonymous to be determined by the Groups and their members.

The first Conference was held in 1951 at Cleveland. Sixty years later, we held our 61<sup>st</sup> Conference. For those of you interested in this aspect of the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, I would commend the book "A.A. Comes of Age".

Effectively what the Conference does is serve as the mechanism for ensuring the accountability of the Trustees, who operate A.A. on a day to day basis, to the Groups, who are the final authority in A.A., having the ultimate responsibility for A.A.

How this works on a practical basis is that the informed Group Conscience of each Group is taken, through that Group's General Service Representative (I will use the abbreviation GSR from time to time to refer to the General Service Representative) and/or the District Committee Member (I will likewise refer to this service member as a DCM) to an Assembly where your Delegate hears that Conscience expressed and carries the collective Group Conscience for his or her Area to the General Service Conference, where our Area's Group Conscience is brought together with the Group Conscience of all of the other Delegate Areas in our structure. It is this way that decisions on matters that may be of concern to A.A. as a whole can be discussed and solutions, decisions or directions arrived at that reflect the conscience of A.A. members in the whole of the Canada/US structure. You will hear some examples shortly that illustrate the kinds of matters that are discussed at the Conference. You will see how those matters are the one that we discuss at our local Assemblies, but also notice that at our Area Assemblies we also discuss matters of local concern that would not need to be discussed at the Conference.

At our most recently held Area Assembly, our April Pre-Conference Assembly, we discussed the Agenda items that would be discussed at the Conference in order to determine the perspective of the Groups in our Area. It is this group conscience that I took to the General Service Conference.

So, who makes up the Conference? The Conference will normally consist of 135 members. This would include 93 Delegates, one from each Area in the Canada/US structure, 21 Trustees (being 14 Class B, alcoholic Trustees, 7 Class A, non-alcoholic Trustees) 6 A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Board Directors and 15 others who are either General Service Office staff or Grapevine members.

Approximately half of the Delegates were serving at their first Conference, the other half serving at their second Conference. This provides some continuity of experience to the General Service Conference. This year there were only 134 Conference members as one Trustee passed away shortly before the beginning of the Conference. Each of the Conference members has an equal voice and equal vote. Just as you so often hear in A.A., no member is above or below any other. Each member has the same two minute time limit when at the microphone to ask a question or make a comment.

Some of you may be asking why we even need a Conference. As so often is the case, the answer is found in our literature. On page S20 of our Service Manual is the following: “The late Bernard B. Smith, non-alcoholic, then Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at 1954 meeting: “We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that got us back to life.

“We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of a human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

“We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.””

To some, that may sound theoretical. What about in a practical sense? What does the Conference do that has an impact on our day to day A.A. life? How does it impact your home group?

Well, here are several examples. It was at the 1955 Conference that our Twelve Traditions were approved and adopted. It is at our Conference that the fourth edition of the Big Book was approved. It is where our Public Service Announcements and pamphlets are approved. It is where our trustees are elected.

As for the Conference this year, it was a busy week. The days were long and there was much discussion on many matters, but we still managed to finish the business portion of the week by not long after 9:00 p.m. on the Friday night. This was the earliest finish in several years.

As assured by previous delegates, it was a very emotional, tiring, but spiritual experience. As also assured by previous delegates, I found that I was among the most prepared and informed delegates at the Conference. This is simply a function of the work that our groups, districts and committees do to prepare our delegates in Area 79. Thank-you for that.

I am also thankful for the advice and encouragement of past delegates with respect to some of the emotional and the practical aspects of the Conference. Some of this also came from my experience at the Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly. Some of these seemed like such small matters, but they turned out to be a very important part of the experience. Things like “take a bag of some kind to carry all of the material you have to drag around” and “get outside and walk every day”. This last bit was advice I especially took to heart and it was a significant part of my experience.

I arrived in New York on Wednesday night, April 27. I had only a few adventures getting there. One was that I had some trouble finding my passport the night before I left. Nothing more than a small heart attack at 11:30 at night. The second was a fairly thorough questioning at the border as I drove to Seattle. He wanted to know “what was in the cooler?” Many of you might have known the answer to that – diet Dr. Pepper. He wanted to look after I told him that. Then he wanted to know what was in the back of my truck. When I said “my suitcases”. He wanted to know why I had two suitcases. You don’t have to know me long before you understand why I

might have two suitcases, but I guess it would be longer than he had known me. So, he wanted to look inside both of them. I did manage to get to Seattle in time to watch the overtime of Game 7 of the Canucks/Blackhawks series in the hotel bar.

I spent Thursday adjusting to the time zone change and being a bit of a tourist. I also had the opportunity to spend a little time with friends from the Pacific Region who had also arrived early. We all got out to the Carnegie Deli for some pastrami (a sandwich nearly as tall as me) and good NY cheesecake. I was again glad to have had the experience of P.R.A.A.S.A. (nice to see some friendly faces).

Our, now rotated, Trustee at large, Canada, Joanne L. guided a number of us, including Martin, the observer from the UK over to GSO on Friday morning for the weekly A.A. meeting. It was a very full meeting, led by Gaye, a man whose story is in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Big Book. It was a great meeting and a time to begin to meet a number of other delegates.

After the meeting Alex P and I took the bus back to Times Square to have lunch together at the Stardust and listen to the waiters and waitresses sing - all trying to make it big on Broadway. Later in the afternoon we went to a couple of meetings in Gramercy and to an open house at the home of a friend of Alex. Our host, Cookie, is a former delegate for the Manhattan Area and the wife of a, now deceased, member of the Grateful Dead. She had lots of pictures and other memorabilia in her apartment, which was what led to this discussion.

There is that line on p.152 of the Big Book where the question is asked "But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see?" This is a question that occurred to me when I was fairly newly sober though I had not read that portion of the Big Book. Actually, I was less concerned with how stupid, boring and glum I may be than I was concerned about how stupid, boring and glum all of you might be. While Cookie may certainly be an example of one kind of recovered alcoholic who is not stupid, boring or glum, what I have found out after some time in Alcoholics Anonymous is that the only people I find to be stupid, boring and glum are those self-centered, self-concerned people that I used to know, sitting on a bar stool. The people who are bright, interesting and happy are those whose primary purpose is to help others, to make a difference - people who are giving and selfless. These are the people I meet in Alcoholics Anonymous. These are the people that I find in

General Service in Alcoholics Anonymous. These are the people that I found at the General Service Conference in New York. These are the people I find in this room today.

On Saturday morning, our Western Canada Regional Trustee, Vic P, had organized a trip for our Western Canada Region delegates (and about 26 others) on the Circle Line, which is a boat tour that circles the island that is Manhattan. It was again a great opportunity to spend time with the other delegates from our Region and to get to know delegates from other Areas.

On Saturday afternoon was held the Remote Communities meeting, which happens outside the Conference itself. There were only about 60 people in attendance, but the sharing was informative as to some of the challenges and solutions found in other Areas. One of the more interesting reminders was to not forget the value of ensuring that court and probation personnel working in remote communities have good information about A.A. In the open sharing session, I was able to speak about our remote communities work including the video conference meeting held in the fourteen Yukon communities.

The Conference officially began Sunday morning with registration, an orientation session and roll call. Simply entering the Conference room for the first time set my heart beating faster. Roll call was a far more emotional experience than I expected. That Area 79 had trusted me with the responsibility of carrying the conscience of its groups to the Conference was overwhelming in that moment. I was glad that Joanne L was in the room so that I was not the only one crying.

The Report and Charter Committee, to which I am assigned, began its committee work that afternoon while most other committees met with their corresponding trustee's committees. We were slow moving through the first few agenda items as we all began the process of finding our voice and coming together as one committee. By the end of the committee sessions it often seemed as though one of us was just able to finish or flesh out the thoughts and ideas of another. It really is, though, just an evolution of what we do here in Area 79. As those of you who have participated in the committee process will have found, it is one where I can begin with an idea of the answer to a particular question, but as I hear the sharing of others, hear what they have to say, I begin to see the question from a new perspective. I can begin to see new "answers" that had never occurred to me. It is no wonder that our Traditions speak of the only authority in A.A. being a loving God as expressed through our Group conscience – an informed Group conscience.

We see this through all of our legacies – the sharing from other alcoholics carries a wisdom we have never had access to on our own.

Tuesday saw the presentation of our Area's highlights. The presentations of highlights really were some of the best parts of the Conference. I had an opportunity again to hear both those things that are similar and some new ideas.

Tuesday also was the day for the tour of the GSO and Grapevine office. Our Report and Charter Committee work ran late so we were not able to tour the Grapevine Office. However, we were able to tour the Archives and that was a significant experience to see so much of the history of A.A., to see the typewriter on which the original manuscript of the Big Book was typed – it is so small. To sit on Bill W's couch.

Wednesday was the day on which new trustees were elected. Trustees were elected for the North-East Region, the South-West Region and Trustee-At-Large/Canada. As one of the fourteen Canadian Delegates, I was able to participate in the election for the Trustee-At-Large/Canada. Our nominee for Trustee-At-Large/Canada, Connie M was one of the candidates for election. As the delegate for Area 79, it was my privilege to present Connie's qualifications to the Conference.

Ultimately, Barbara K, from Oakville, Ontario, was elected as our new Trustee-At-Large/Canada. From viewing her resume and hearing the presentation of her qualifications as a trustee candidate, I know that she will be a fine service worker in Alcoholics Anonymous.

On Wednesday also began the Committee Reports and discussions. Some of the Advisory Actions passed by the Conference, by Committee, include::

1. Agenda

- (a) It was recommended that the theme for the 2012 Conference be "Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age"
- (b) The workshop topic for next year will be "Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare". Many of you will appreciate that this is a topic that has been the subject of much interest and discussion in our Area. One of things we can all

take about this appearing as a workshop topic is that the challenges we face in A.A. in our Area are the same kinds of challenges that others are facing in other Areas.

2. Corrections

It was recommended adding references to the Big Book in the pamphlet “AA in Correctional Facilities”.

3. Finance

It was recommended that the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where money and Spirituality Mix” be revised to show a blank pie chart first with blank percentages for district, area, intergroup, GSO and other A.A. Service Entities. There will also be mention of contributions online. The hope is that this change will re-inforce the principle of group autonomy in determining how a group distributes its surplus funds.

4. Grapevine

(a) It was recommended that A.A. Grapevine Inc. be permitted to sell the magazine and other products through digital channels with a report to be provided to the Conference Committee in 2012.

The process for the availability of Grapevine digitally will be a little different than ebooks from A.A.W.S., but not materially so for the user. What all of this means is that Grapevine will be working toward making our “meeting in print” and some of its other products (which ones is yet to be determined) available on smart phones, tablets and ereaders. As most of you know, the monthly magazine is already available for download to your desktop or laptop computer. There was much discussion of this item, as there was with the information provided as part of the A.A. World Service Inc. presentation about the availability of the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as ebooks. Some of the discussion was about understanding the technological process, but much more was about ensuring that our Traditions were honoured.

- (b) It was also recommended that the Grapevine Board, in consultation with the A.A. World Services Board continue to investigate what efficiencies and objectives can be accomplished by combining services and sharing resources, including a review of Concept XI, while ensuring editorial and corporate independence.

One thing that was clear from the discussion was that the topic of the future of A.A. Grapevine and how it fits with the future of A.A. will continue to be a topic of interest for A.A. members for at least the near future. We have found this to be true at our Assemblies and at W.R.A.A.S.A.

#### 5. Literature

It was recommended that the revised pamphlet “The AA Member-Medications and Other Drugs” be approved. The Conference also recommended that the trustees Literature Committee continue to develop the spirituality pamphlet. Surprisingly the discussion of this lasted only about an hour and a half

The Conference took no action on our Area’s suggestion regarding development of a Green Card type literature announcement.

#### 6. Policy and Admissions

- (a) It was recommended that the dates for the 2014 General Service Conference be April 27 – May 3, 2014.
- (b) It was recommended that the General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself in accordance with the comprehensive plan formulated by the Conference Inventory Planning Committee. This inventory process will begin at the 2013 General Service Conference.
- (c) It was recommended that a procedure, as set out by the committee be established for the submission of Concept V - Minority Appeals to the General Service Conference be established. The actual procedure is available in the copies of the Conference Advisory Action that I have brought with me

today. This appeal process will generally be one which only those falling below the General Service Conference in our upside down triangle would need to make use of, it will generally be only members of trustees committee, corporate boards and GSO staff that would need to avail themselves over this process.

7. Public Information

(a) It was recommended that the full face video policy be approved. In future videos using actors to portray alcoholics or potential alcoholics will not show the actor's full face unless:

(i) the General Service Board, by substantial unanimity, agrees that the proposed video is consistent with the A.A. tradition of attraction rather than promotion, and that such use of an actor or actor's does not in fact or in appearance place personalities before principles, and

(ii) the General Service Conference authorizes, by substantial unanimity, the production and distribution of such video.

(b) It was recommended that the revised "Understanding Anonymity" pamphlet be approved.

(c) The revised "The A.A. Fact File" was also approved.

8. Report & Charter

(a) A number of changes to the A.A. Service Manual were recommended to update the manual to reflect current practice.

(b) New sections were added to the portions of the A.A. Service Manual dealing with General Service Representatives and District Committee Members to make it clear that each group of district will establish its own procedures for dealing with inactive service workers.

9. Treatment

The Conference approved both the change of the name of the Treatment Committee and the new Special Needs pamphlet.

10. Trustees

The Trustees Committee recommendations also generated a great deal of discussion with lots of feeling. As some of you may know the Trustees Committee on Nominating put forward a slate of 7 directors for A.A. Grapevine rather than the 9 directors that has been common for many years. Ultimately, the slate was accepted. A motion to reconsider was narrowly defeated 62 in favour, 63 opposed.

11. Floor Actions

Only one floor action was passed by the Conference. This was a floor action that I introduced. It was recommended that the 61<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference express its appreciation and gratitude for the French-language magazine “LaVigne”, and the value it has for the French speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the respect LaVigne has shown for the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

There were a couple of occasions during the Conference where some mention of LaVigne was made. In fact, the Quebec Delegates brought a gift of the LaVigne magazine for each of the Conference participants. The question arose as to whether this was “Conference approved literature”. It generated some feeling of discomfort for our Quebec and other French speaking delegates. After discussing this matter with our Trustee at Large Canada, Joanne L, it seemed as though a floor action like this would accomplish several purposes. First, it would provide some comfort in this Conference and, perhaps, for some future conferences regarding the mention of the magazine LaVigne. Second, it would do much for unity among the delegate areas of Canada. Finally, it would allow the French speaking delegates of Canadian areas to leave the Conference with a feeling of being appreciated and respected for the hard work they do to produce LaVigne as a twelfth step tool and the substantial financial contribution it makes to Alcoholics Anonymous. As many of you know, LaVigne is

published by a volunteer board that consists of the four Quebec Delegates and the Eastern Canada Region trustee.

When I introduced this motion, I imagined that there would be two or three minutes of “feel good” comments and then we would proceed to a vote. I did not imagine that there would be an hour’s worth of enthusiastic support for LaVigne, and suggestions that it represents a model from which the Grapevine could learn. About the only negative commentary, quite legitimately, pointed out that this is probably not a matter that ought to be considered by the Conference as it really was not a matter of overall policy. There were also a couple of suggestions that a motion of this sort amounted to affiliation. However, there was overwhelming support for LaVigne.

In addition to the Advisory Actions, which are essentially directions to the trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous to act in certain ways, there were also additional committee considerations which were made. These are, essentially, suggestions for courses of action or topics on which further work needs to be done. These are often matters which show up on the following year’s Conference Agenda. Some of the more interesting of these include:

- (i) The Corrections Committee suggested that in revising the pamphlet “It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell” include content that would appeal to the young incarcerated alcoholic. And encourage the Publications Department to consider a more standard pamphlet sized format, if feasible, while still preserving the elements of the existing easy to read format.
- (ii) While the Finance Committee discussed a request regarding the development of a Finance Workbook and felt a workbook not to be necessary at this time, the Committee did suggest that the Trustees Finance Committee convert the self-support packet F-19 to a comprehensive self-support kit.
- (iii) The Conference Finance Committee also requested that the Trustees Finance Committee prepare a simple document of self-support/financial talking points

to be used by the fellowship and that this be made available on the website in the GSR and DCM packets and in the self-support kit.

Through the course of the week there were a number of presentations. These included presentations on various presentation topics that many of you heard about who attended the recent Western Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly in Aldergrove. Other presentations were made with respect to board reports of both A.A. World Services Inc. and A.A. Gravevine Inc. as well as a financial presentation given by our Treasurer, Class A Trustee, Terry Bedient. However, the first presentations of the Conference were really some of the best. Corliss Burke from Whitehorse, Yukon, who I always think of as “our” Class A Trustee was the moderator for the panel. She was absolutely terrific and, as part of her introduction, spoke in French to introduce one of the Panel 60 Quebec delegates who had been invited to make a presentation on the topic “The Language Of The Heart Is Spoken Here”. That effort was a wonderful demonstration of both the language of the heart we speak in A.A. and the attitude of inclusiveness that we have for all alcoholics, no matter what language they speak, where they come from, what their past is, what their race, religion or creed is. Even with my Grade 9 French I could understand the message.

On the Monday, our Chair of the General Service Board, Class A Trustee, Ward Ewing, gave his report as the Chair. In his report he reminded us of the caring that A.A. members have shown for fellow members in Japan, New Zealand and the Middle East who have dealt with extraordinary disasters and turbulent, societal upheavals. We were reminded of the expressions of support that have been shown both by A.A. members in Canada and the US and by our General Service Office in keeping touch with A.A. members and other General Service Offices, respectively, in those countries. He spoke of the Big Book having now been translated into sixty-one languages, including new translations into Tibetan; Emharic, the predominant language spoke in Ethiopia and Saami, the language of Laplanders. He also let us know that other translations are pending. This is all in aid of helping the still suffering alcoholic. These were strong reminders of the hand of Alcoholics Anonymous reaching out to help the still suffering alcoholic. He remarked on one of the highlights during the past year, being the celebration of A.A.’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the 2010 International Convention in San Antonio, Texas. He told a story about looking into a bar during the Convention and seeing the bartender asleep on the bar, while the line-ups at ice cream shops and coffee shops were so often a half hour or an hour long.

He spoke of the General Service Board doing what we so often do in our home groups, in our districts and in our Areas and that is conducting an inventory of itself. A reminder that at all levels of Alcoholics Anonymous we can always be considering ways that we can better carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic, that we can find ways to ensure that our direction is always determined by an informed group conscience.

George M, Class B General Service Trustee and Chair of A.A. World Services Inc. gave the Board Report for A.A.W.S. He reported that a net total of 1,896 new A.A. groups were listed at GSO last year. Each of these groups General Service Representative or contact received A.A. literature and basic information to encourage the new group to link with their local structure and support twelfth step activities. He reported that contributions online came on line in June of 2010 and that by the end of 2010 more than \$82,000.00 of contributions had been received electronically.

He reported that the number of Big Books sold in 2010 were at their lowest point since 2005.

He reported that in 2010 our General Service Office welcomed 2,114 visitors.

As part of this report, a report was given by our Etech Committee Liaison on the ebook project.

As many of you know, A.A. World Services Inc. is pursuing the development of applications that will make the Big Book and the "Twelve Steps Twelve Traditions" available digitally for purchase and download to digital devices, including phones, tablets and ereaders. Applications are being developed for both Apple and android platforms. The current expectation is that as early as October, it may be possible to purchase these books, the Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, from A.A. World Services Inc. for download to your device. The application itself will be free and will allow the opportunity to purchase these books from the A.A.W.S. store. It should also be noted that it would be available from, in the case of Apple, the iTunes store, but such a purchase would result in Apple receiving a 30% commission (better to make the extra "click" to the A.A.W.S. store). More information will come available as the Fall approaches and I will report on it as it does, but want to take this opportunity to give you a

“heads up” that A.A.W.S. will receive all the income from items purchased from the A.A.W.S. store.

As part of the A.A.W.S. report, a financial report was also given. I have copies of the power point slides that formed this presentation. See me after this talk and I can give you a copy of the financial report slides or the advisory actions if you want them.

The financial highlights from 2010 are as follows:

- (a) Group contributions were up both over last year and over budget;
- (b) Revenues from literature sales were down over last year and budget;
- (c) A.A. Grapevine Inc. lost approximately \$399,000.00 last year;
- (d) The International Convention in San Antonio generated a profit of \$844,545.00.

The “profit” from the International Convention roughly balanced the shortfalls in literature sales to result in overall income being approximately as budgeted for 2010.

As you know the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous is one of corporate poverty. The plan is always to have “just enough” money.

As I indicated, for those who are interested, there are copies of the reports available. However, you may find that those large numbers and statistics are not particularly useful information to you or for your group. More useful numbers are as follows:

- 1. The cost of services per member per year in 2010 was \$6.29;
- 2. The cost of services per group per year was \$137.45;
- 3. The number of members was approximately 1,373,681;
- 4. The number of groups was 62,873;
- 5. The percentage of groups contributing was 44.9%;
- 6. The average contribution per member for the year was \$4.54; and
- 7. The average contribution per group was \$99.24.

The presentation of the Grapevine report generated some excitement, mostly because it strayed into a matter which was an Agenda item before one of the Conference committees and because it strayed away from the usual format of board reports by expressing an opinion about certain matters. This report prompted my first trip to the microphone during the Conference. I expressed my concern that the report contained matters of opinion, rather than being a report of the facts and also that the manner in which certain of the facts were presented may give an inaccurate picture of the brightness of the future of the Grapevine magazine.

In total, I was to the microphone about 20 times. About 5 of these were at the request of the Chair of the Report and Charter Committee to try to add some clarity to the discussion around the Report and Charter recommendations. Once was to express the conscience of our Area about the suggestion to add the Preamble to the front of the Big Book. I spoke to the floor action I introduced, with the balance to try to bring some clarity to the matters on the floor.

Saturday saw the closing sessions with farewell talks given by the rotating trustees. In large part these were emotional farewells from all four rotating trustees, including Joanne L, our Trustee-At-Large/Canada.

As much as a great deal of my report has been about the “business” that was conducted at the General Service Conference, we all know that the real work of Alcoholics Anonymous is a spiritual business. We know that spiritual business is about carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic and it is about relationships between people. We experience this in our recovery. It is what the steps do. They allow us to set right the damaged and unhealthy relationships we have with others and we can become ready to be of real help to others. So it is with the Conference. As much as it may seem to you, and as much as it may have seemed to me before I went, it might appear that going to the Conference is about changing Alcoholics Anonymous in some way. It turns out that the process is really about changing individual alcoholics. This is what is truly accomplished at the Conference. It is accomplished one alcoholic at a time through the relationships developed among the Conference members. It happens by the message that Conference attendees take back to alcoholics in the groups in their Area. That is what this Delegate Report is really about. It is about confirming and reminding each of us that no matter whether we are alcoholics in Area 02 Alaska, Area 10 Colorado or Area 79 British Columbia/Yukon, alcoholics are the same. Alcoholics Anonymous is the same. It is

about confirming and reminding us that it is important that Alcoholics Anonymous thrive outside of our home group and that it is important to consider how the message can be carried not just inside our home group, but also to the still suffering alcoholic who wanders more than a few blocks from this room.

The Conference is about unity. It is a reminder that our primary purpose is the same whether we are in Florida, Puerto Rico, Newfoundland or British Columbia. It is about understanding that there is no “us and them” in A.A. There is no difference between the home group member, the delegates, the trustees of A.A., the staff of GSO or any other Conference participant. It is a reminder that we all want to do the very same thing: help another alcoholic. That to do this requires all of us, not just some of us, and that together we can do things that we cannot do alone.

Mother Teresa once said something like this: “We may not all have the opportunity to do great things, but we all have the opportunity to do small things with great love”.

All of the things that happened at the Conference really happened because A.A. members from all over Canada and the U.S. participate in their home groups – it is because in all of our home groups we want to ensure that A.A is still here for the still suffering – maybe one who has not even had their first drink.

Years from now I know I will not remember much of the business that was discussed at the Conference, but I will remember going out for ice cream (ok cheesecake) with all of the Canadians. I will remember walking over the Brooklyn Bridge with my friends Darryl, Jo-Anne, Maureen and Jim. I will remember my walks through Central Park with Darryl, Jo-Anne and Cate. I will remember sitting with someone different at every meal and in every session. I will remember my friend Darryl’s words in the Stardust when out for cheesecake with Gerry from Ontario and Ino from Puerto Rico “Barkeep! Water for my horses and Tiramisu for my men”. I will remember swearing off cheesecake forever, with and without a solemn oath. I will remember the expressions of gratitude I heard in those rooms. I will remember the actions of my fellows that reflected the gratitude.

I have a bunch of thank-yous to say. I often hear people talk about the sacrifice of time that people in service make. I think anyone who is involved in service will tell you that as much time

as this sometimes takes, the rewards far outweigh the cost. They will tell you what I will say – that is our families, our co-workers, our spouses and our sponsees that truly give of our time. So thank you.

I also thank all of you. I was the kind of alcoholic whose sisters did not want to let their kids come over to my house, who could not get a mother's day card to my mother on time. Yet you have trusted me with the responsibility of carrying your conscience to the Conference and trying to carry the experience back to share with you. I struggle with trying to express a spiritual experience in words – words seem so inadequate. Maybe all I need say is that I experienced love – love for Alcoholics Anonymous and all of its members. Love for the work we have done and for the work we have left to do to help those who do stumble still in the darkness one short block from here. In turn, this opens me and all of us more to love in all of my life and all of our lives, the ability to love and be loved.

I thank you for the very great privilege of serving you and Alcoholics Anonymous. What I know, as always, is I am more in debt to you and A.A. today, than I was yesterday.

Yours in love and service,

Scott H.