

2008 Pacific Region Forum Report
8/29/08-8/30/08
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Just before the forum began, I was hit with a flood of gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous and the opportunity that has been given to me to be of service. I believe that this has been a spiritual experience for me and has definitely been a life altering experience. I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of District 03-301 for allowing me the opportunity to attend.

I will be receiving a final Forum report from GSO in 4-6 weeks once it is completed. It will be a compilation of all the questions and answers that occurred during the sharing sessions and will have full accountings of all the reports given by the delegates, presenters, trustees, and the workshops. Once that report is received, I will make copies for everyone and will have it posted to the website. My report here is going to be more of a general summary of the experience.

There were approx. 15 Arizona folks at the forum including 2 area coordinators, the delegate and alternate delegate, an intergroup liaison, 2 DCMC 's and 1 Alt. DCMC, and 1 Alt. DCM and myself as the only DCM and then a couple of guests. While there were many more from California there, we had a great turn out for Arizona. I was also very surprised and pleased to see a very large Spanish speaking population in attendance at the Forum. There was also an ASL interpreter at the front of the room for the entire forum. AA truly reaches out to everyone they can to ensure inclusion. The next forum in 2010 will be in Torrance California and then there will be a special forum in 2011, also in California, with a focus on inventories.

The forum was opened by Madeline P., Current Pacific Region Class B Trustee, with the Serenity Prayer. Many of you will remember her from the election assembly in November. She was the facilitator of the elections. She announced that the entire proceedings were being translated in real time into Spanish and at the front of the room was an American Sign Language Interpreter. She read the Anonymity Statement and then proceeded to introduce the attending staff from the General Service Office (GSO), the General Service Board (GSB), past and present trustees, and other staff. She then asked in groups for all current delegates, past delegates, DCM's, DCMC's, Area officers and coordinators and then just about everyone else.

She shared that the Regional Forums are a time of sharing between GSO, GSB, Grapevine and La Vina Boards and the fellowship. It is a time of information sharing, questions and answers, and shared experiences. No actions are taken on anything discussed (usually). The sole purpose is to carry the message of love and service throughout the fellowship and strengthen the connection between the fellowship and our GSO. She then introduced Leonard Blumenthal, Class A Trustee and Chair of the GSB. He gave a brief talk about the weekend's purpose as well. He stressed that the General Service Office is here solely to be of service to the fellowship of AA. There are 4

forums this year, 2 were held in Canada already, this weekend's and the next is in Tennessee in November. He also invited everyone to a special forum in Moosefactory Ontario in February. He let us all know that when you fly in, you will be about 60 miles from the location and then will have to drive the ice road to get there. Talk about remote community!! He encouraged any and all questions from the floor and let everyone know that our trusted servants were here for us for the whole weekend.

At this point, the presentations started. Madelyn P. gave a short talk on "What is the role of the Class B Trustee". First it was important to understand the difference between the Class A and Class B Trustee. The Class A Trustee is the Non-Alcoholic Trustee (Amateur) and the Class B Trustee is the Alcoholic (Boozer). On our GSB, there usually are 7 Class A Trustees and 14 Class B Trustees. At this time, there are only 13 Class B Trustees as one from Canada passed away shortly after being elected and that area chose not to replace him until the next rotation. These trustees are broken down into 4 General Service, 2 Trustee's At Large (1 US and 1 Canada), 8 Regional (2 Canada and 6 US). Each trustee serves for a 4 year term. The Trustees responsibility is to carry out the conference actions. There are 11 Trustees committees and these committees take what we in the fellowship vote on and put those decisions into action. The trustees serve on both the General Service Board as well as the Grapevine Board. They attend quarterly board weekends (Weds-Sun), serve 2 years on the corporate boards, attend assemblies, special and regional forums, the general service conference and other events as requested. They communicate with the delegates and others when requested. When an opening becomes available, the call for resumes goes out to the fellowship, so if anyone is interested in serving in this manor, there will be opportunities to do so.

Rogelio R., Class A Trustee shared on his experience. He is a judge in Southern California and was nominated to serve. He shared his experience on the bench and how it has helped foster his love for AA, even though he is not alcoholic. His sense of humor was very much appreciated by the attendees at the forum and I found him to be a very caring human being. One thing he kept saying over and over again was that every opinion is important when it comes to AA.

Doug R., GSO Staff at Staff Assignments: Doug is a Paid staff at GSO. The office is at the 11th floor of an office building (36,000 sq ft) on the bank of the Hudson River. There are 78 FT and 5 PT workers, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. Of course, all workers must be sober. Every 2 years assignments rotate. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:45am to 4:45pm. There is an open AA meeting on Fridays at 11am at the office as well. Everyone is invited and welcome to come tour and meet everyone at the office. One thing that Doug said that was very powerful with regards to the General Service Office was that we are not the AA police, we just facilitate 12th step work. This comment was in reference to letters that GSO gets with requests to "fix" groups or people who have differing ideas.

Following the presentations, we had a question and answer period. Interesting points were:

1. Regarding court cards, doesn't this constitute anonymity breaks when AA members sign them? If you use initials, then it is not an anonymity break. Cards are kept confidential in the court files and are not just thrown out.
2. Are Trustees and directors paid positions? No. All trustees and directors are voluntary positions.
3. Who submits items for the conference for consideration? Anyone can submit an item for consideration at the conference.

Following a coffee break, we watched the video "Markings on the Journey". I had not seen it last year when we had our joint workshop with intergroup and was deeply moved by watching it. I encourage everyone to take the half hour to watch it. It is very moving.

After the video, we had the first of about 5 sharing sessions where people could get up to the mike and ask questions of anyone from GSO. Again, more details of the questions and answers are going to come out in the final report, but these are the questions I found most intriguing.

1. Where does GSO need the most help? Financial support is vital to continuing the vital services to the fellowship. Also sharing from the fellowship for ideas and ways to improve are always welcomed.
2. Greg, the GSO General Manager is resigning at the end of the year. What is being done to find his replacement? There is a search underway and interviews are being held. The short list of interviews will be in September, and then the General Service Board will interview the final candidates in October. The hope is to have someone in the position by December when Greg leaves.
3. Who does translations? There is a committee composed of translators who work with the Executive Editor of La Vina and others who supervise all translations and choose the stores that go into La Vina.
4. Are we doing everything to reach out to the professional c community? It depends on what you feel is everything. The general consensus is no. We can do better. Some are intimidated by professionals but it is so important to remember that this is an extension of 12th step work.
5. How do we reach out to those who don't trust us or feel we are not organized enough? We need those who will help to reach out and demonstrate the AA principles. We can only attract and not promote, so we are all responsible for this.
6. At open functions and non alcoholics in attendance, is the purchasing or raffle tickets etc, considered contribution and therefore against the traditions? AA does not do raffles. If the group doesn't have the money for something, then don't do it rather than try to solicit outside funds.

Saturday August 30th

I need to qualify the rest of my report here in that I gave up on taking notes through the entire thing. I took so many notes yesterday that I feel like I missed some stuff so I am going to go on memory for the rest of my report and will share with final report when I get it. Sorry folks...but I really wanted to experience the rest of the forum rather than just take notes.

The morning started out with presentations from the AA Grapevine Board Director, Jim B., who talked about what the Grapevine board is and does. He talked about the upcoming changes that will be seen in the Grapevine and how the Grapevine is solely funded by subscriptions. Robin B., Executive Editor for The Grapevine, also presented on the magazine and talked about how it came about and the circulation. Arizona's Paz P. is on the La Vina Advisory Board and she presented on La Vina. There was time for questions at the end of the presentations and some of the themes of the questions revolved around the binding of the magazine (which is with staples, except for the July issues which are perfect bound for corrections facilities). The answers regarding this were more about cost. It does cost more to publish the magazine without staples (about \$5000 more per month) so to stay prudent with the spending of AA's money, they do the staples. There was talk too of having "sewing" parties where folks take their grapevines and take out the staples and sew them to take into facilities.

After a break, there was a Delegates panel. I have a copy of the Forum newsletter that details out the delegates presentations for your viewing and I also brought back a Spanish language one for our Grupo Serenidad friends. I was most struck by the presentation on "How Well Are We Fulfilling Our Primary Purpose?" by Gail H. from Western Washington. She talked about some of the same things we see here in Arizona such as focusing more on the process rather than the purpose and quibbling over procedures and not just getting in there and doing. There was another question and answer period for the delegates which were just as informative. There was a tremendous amount of agreement from the attendees with Gail's presentation and several folks commented on Dennis's Power Point as a Service Tool as being entertaining.

After lunch, we had a presentation by George Martin, an AAWS director. He talked about AAWS (AA World Services) and the role that AAWS plays globally in helping to carry the message into other nations. We also had a presentation by Greg M., who presented on Self-Support: A Spiritual Journey. I have a copy of his presentation. It was amazing to see where our 7th tradition contributions go and how it is divided up to carry the message. GSO is truly very prudent with our AA funds! We had another sharing session following his presentation and there were many questions about the money that goes to GSO and how there is a spiritual value to every dollar that goes in the basket.

Following a short break, for me, the highlight of the afternoon was when Dorothy W., Trustee-At-Large-US shared. She has gone around the world carrying the message of AA to other nations. She has helped to start up AA and support AA in numerous countries. Her presentation included pictures from Asia, Africa, Russia, Czech Republic, and Europe. Her story was truly inspiring. She travels approximately 350 nights per year for AA. That is going to any lengths in my book! There was time for questions and answers after her presentation and I do believe that she inspired not only me, but many others in the audience.

After dinner, we had several workshops that we could choose to attend. The workshops were divided into 2 sessions, each lasting an hour and 15 minutes. The first one that I attended was titled "Singleness of Purpose" which was facilitated by the Delegate from Northern Coastal California. This workshop focused on 2 questions: What is the difference between Singleness of Purpose and Primary Purpose? And "How do we reach out to professionals while honoring our singleness of purpose?" I chose to listen during the discussion of both questions and was just blown away by the experiences in the room. The consensus of the group was that the singleness of purpose was for the group, to carry the message and the primary purpose was for the individual in that in order to carry the message in the group, we have to be sober ourselves. The reaching out to professionals was a lively discussion in that there were many different outlooks to this question. One man summed his experience up by saying that the professionals that he deals with knew him in his drinking days and his sobriety has been the biggest tool he has used to carry the message to them that AA works. No one could really argue with that one.

The second workshop that I attended was titled "How to protect ourselves from becoming apathetic" facilitated by the Delegate from Idaho. We originally started to find the questions that we were going to talk about and then as the discussion evolved, we just focused on the primary topic as stated in the title. It was funny in that I sat there, thinking about experiences that I have had in AA and thinking that I was unique in my thoughts about some things, and come to find out, the first 5 people that shared mirrored my experience! I guess I am not that unique after all. The discussion was really a very positive one in finding a solution rather than living in the apathy that we sometimes find. It reminded me that not everyone is interested in general service and that those who are need to remember to find balance and not become "service nazi's". It was a fabulous workshop and well worth the time spent.

Sunday August 31

The final morning session was devoted to open sharing and questions and then a Past Trustee presentations. The past trustees presentations were very interesting. There was a past Class A trustee who is a doctor who talked about how his experience as a trustee helped him in his practice. Another trustee talked about her dislike of chanting in meetings (which many folks clapped to), but how she is finding the inclusion of younger folks in AA to be inspiring.

The open sharing was most moving for me. I have to say that while I cried the first time I got up to the mike on Friday (not a surprise to anyone here I am sure), I managed to hold it together the rest of the weekend until I got up to the mike on Sunday morning. I was not the only one that shed a tear at the spiritual movement that weekend. I got a new insight into AA as a Whole that I had never gotten before. I was so grateful that I was able to first of all experience this, but to also experience this with my sponsor.

Just prior to closing, there was a final Thank You to Greg, our outgoing General Service Office Manager. His service to the fellowship is felt strongly and will always be remembered fondly by many folks. He was also openly invited to future forums, just as an AA member...which drew loud applause and a humble thanks by Greg. Leonard Blumenthal closed the gathering at about 12:15pm on Sunday. We ended the session with the Responsibility Pledge.

Again, I thank you, the members of District 03-301 for allowing me the opportunity to attend the Regional Forum. What I learned and gained from this experience was truly life altering for me. I returned a humbler servant to AA, who is reaching more for balance in life and in service, and who hopes to demonstrate that through my actions.

Submitted with gratitude
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