

August 1994

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## "Spirit of Sacrifice" Is Theme of 44th General Service Conference

New York, New York, April 17-23, 1994 — Every year since 1951, the General Service Conference, AA's annual "business meeting," has come together to consider items of major importance to the Fellowship as a whole. From a three-day meeting in that first experimental year, the Conference has burgeoned to a jam-packed seven days, and the 62 Conference members who came to New York in 1951 would no doubt be surprised, and encouraged, to meet the 133 voting members who participated in the 44th meeting.

The largest single group of Conference members is the 91 area delegates, who bring the perspective of the groups in their areas of the U.S. or Canada. The 21 members of the Board of Trustees — 14 Class B (alcoholic), and 7 Class A (nonalcoholic) — along with directors and staff of AA World Services and the AA Grapevine

complete the roster. In a sense, the theme for 1994, "Spirit of Sacrifice," is the theme of every Conference, as Conference members seek to place the common welfare first in all their actions and deliberations. Here is where the shared experience of AA members throughout the U.S. and Canada comes together, through their elected or appointed representatives, and special interests take a back seat to the good of the whole. Every Conference member, whatever his or her service position, deliberates and votes in light of what is best for the entire Fellowship. Area delegates may come with instructions from their areas; corporate directors, staff, or trustees may have particular interests or convictions, but often, individuals are convinced that another course is best, and may even vote in opposition to their personal feelings or interests.

The Conference opened Sunday morn-

ing, with a keynote address and reports from the General Service Board and its two operating corporations, AA World Services and the AA Grapevine, Inc. Later that day, delegate members of the eleven Conference committees met with the corresponding trustees' committees to share information related to various agenda items.

The job of chairing the Conference was shared among Jim Estelle (nonalcoholic chairman of the General Service Board), George D. (GSO's general manager), John Hartley Smith, MD (class A trustee), and Diane W., delegate chairperson.

Following the opening dinner Sunday evening, there was an AA meeting with five speakers: two delegates, a trustee, a corporate director, and a staff member from GSO. There was also an open AA meeting every morning at 7:30.

The Conference agenda is always jam-packed, but the heart of the matter is the work of the eleven Conference committees, which met Monday and Tuesday mornings. Each committee is composed of eight or nine delegates, half from the second-year panel and half from new delegates, all of whom receive extensive background information before the Conference on each agenda item. In the com-

mittee sessions, delegates discuss an agenda compiled from topics submitted by area assemblies, trustees' committees, districts or groups, and at times individual AA members. Each committee then comes up with recommendations, which are taken to the entire Conference for discussion and vote.

(In some cases, a committee may choose not to make a recommendation on a given agenda item, or may suggest that it be brought back to the next year's Conference.)

Presentations continued throughout the week addressing the Conference theme, "Spirit of Sacrifice," as reflected in AA's Twelve Traditions and the co-founders' last messages. There

were also reports on finance, the Upcoming 1995 International Convention, and the ad hoc committee on copyright and trademark protection. Area service highlights were given by Panel 44 delegates. There were also several "What's On Your Mind?" sharing sessions and a workshop based on the Conference theme.

A new item on the agenda this year was a Wednesday morning open sharing session, in which Conference members put aside the week's business agenda and talked about why they were there, and what they were doing. Wednesday afternoon featured



New Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee  
Peter Roach of Peterborough, Ontario

regional trustee elections. Julian R., of Boulder City, Nevada, will become the new Pacific regional trustee, replacing Greg M., and William B., of Corner Brook, Newfoundland, will replace Marc P. as Eastern Canada regional trustee. Peter B. of Arlington, Virginia, will become the new AAWS general service trustee, replacing Jean S. The Conference also approved Peter Roach of Peterborough, Ontario, to serve as Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee.

And the last piece of "business" on Wednesday afternoon came when the lights in the main meeting room were dimmed, and a birthday cake with 50 candles was presented to the AA Grapevine, in celebration of the magazine's 50th anniversary of publication in June. (Attention was also focused on the Grapevine at the closing breakfast, when the June issue, featuring an updated design, was introduced and distributed to Conference members.)

Thursday and Friday were devoted to discussion and voting on Conference committee recommendations (see digest at right), and Conference business was wrapped up Friday afternoon with the Serenity Prayer in three languages: English, French, and Spanish.

Saturday morning is always an emotional time, with a closing breakfast where rotating trustees give their farewell talks and those who have worked with them for four years join in saying thanks. Then Conference members head for home, to begin putting the week's decisions into practice.

## Digest of Advisory Actions

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees (or motions discussed during general sessions) that are approved by the Conference body as a whole. Some significant Advisory Actions appear below in condensed form:

**Agenda**—that the theme for the 1995 General Service Conference be "Pass It On—Our Three Legacies"

**Cooperation With the Professional Community**—that suggested changes be made in the pamphlet "How AA Members Cooperate With Other Community Efforts to Help Alcoholics," and that the title be changed to "How AA Members Cooperate With Professionals"; that the format of the CPC Workbook be changed to a soft-cover booklet.

**Correctional Facilities**—that the suggested changes be made in the pamphlets "AA in Correctional Facilities" and "A Message to Correctional Facilities Administrators"; that guidelines for AA presentations to corrections professionals and to inmates by correctional committees be added to the Correctional Facilities Workbook.

**Finance**—that the trustees' Finance Committee work with Publications to develop several layouts for a new Self-Support pamphlet, including the long form of the Seventh Tradition and definition of

Prudent Reserve, keeping in mind that all service entities are equally important.

**Grapevine**—that all AA members be strongly urged to work toward the goal that the Grapevine magazine be self-supporting through the sale of magazine subscriptions.

An additional recommendation regarding discontinuance of the Wall Calendar and Pocket Planner did not receive the two-thirds vote necessary for an Advisory Action. Customarily, the impact of a simple majority vote is to create a "strong suggestion," but only a two-thirds vote is binding. The matter is now in the hands of the Grapevine Corporate Board, which will come to a decision over the next few months.

The Conference Committee also endorsed the idea of the Grapevine's producing, in 1996, a generic, undated magazine (not to be included in a magazine subscription, but treated as a separate resource). It would contain articles about AA's basic principles and practices.

**International Convention**—that an anonymity protected photograph of the flag ceremony be taken at the 1995 International Convention.

**Literature**—that suggested changes be made to the pamphlets "The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated," "GSR," "Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?" and "Questions and Answers on

Sponsorship"; that the circle and triangle logo be discontinued on all Conference-approved literature and that the words "this is AA General Service Conference-approved Literature" be printed on the front cover of all Conference-approved literature wherever possible.

**Policy/Admissions**—that no moratorium be placed on topics to be considered by the General Service Conference; that requests for new Conference areas, from Washington State (72) and Southern California (05), be denied.

**Public Information**—that the Public Information Workbook be produced in a soft-cover format.

**Report and Charter**—that various suggested changes and additions be made in the *AA Service Manual*; that no monetary contributions be reflected in any AA Directory, as the purpose of the Directory is to help traveling AAs find meetings and for Twelfth Step purposes.

**Treatment Facilities**—that proposed changes be made to the pamphlets "AA in Treatment Facilities" and "Bridging the Gap."

**Trustees**—that the proposed by-law amendment pertaining to limiting the terms of Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees to two consecutive three-year terms be reworded to clarify that this action does not apply to trustees who were serving during the 1993 General Service Conference.