My name is Rod, I am a grateful alcoholic. It is my honor and privilege to serve as the Pacific Regional Trustee on the General Service Board. I have been sober 27 years and been involved in General Service work for about 23 of those years. I am Dineh, a full blooded Navajo, born on the Navajo Reservation, Tuba City, which is in Arizona and is the largest reservation in size and population in the nation, parts of it are in Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. I was raised in northern Utah. I have been asked to share on “Carrying the Message to Native Americans.”

I think that it would be fair to say that this is a topic we know that 10 minutes is simply not enough time for, so I hope that this sharing can begin some thoughtful reflection that could lead to more understanding and hopefully leading to sobriety for Native People and for all people. First some demographics from “Working with American Indian/Alaskan Native Clients: Perspectives for Practitioners to start with”: There are 555 Federal and State recognized tribes, 208 not recognized; Alcoholism rates 579% greater, Suicide 212% greater, homicide 41% greater than national rates; About 2/3 of native people live off the reservation; The life expectancy is 59 years old; Poverty rate is 3 times the national average; 1/3 of all outpatient visits to Indian Public Health Services were related to substance abuse; and in the top ten leading causes of death, four are directly connected to alcoholism: accidents, cirrhosis, homicides and suicides.

I believe that in fulfilling this responsibility of “carrying the message to Native Americans” it is helpful to understand as much as possible about the culture, tradition, and history of Native people. This can be a very challenging undertaking, especially when you consider that there are over 500 tribes on the North American continent. This could mean over 500 different languages, 500 different philosophies and 500 different belief systems, trying to understand all of that can be overwhelming. Perhaps it would be easier to start with beliefs that are common to all Tribes such as their belief in the connection with Mother Earth and that each tribe manifests those beliefs in ceremony and tradition. I have 3 writings that exemplify some of these beliefs in the Mother Earth connection:

First: We should understand well that all things are the works of the Great Spirit. We should know that He is within all things: the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains and all the four legged animals, and the winged peoples; and even more important, we should understand that He is also above all these things and peoples. When we do understand all this deeply in our hearts, then we will fear, and love and know the Great Spirit, and then we will be and act and live as He intends.

Second: All Things are interrelated and an equal part of the whole, that we are like drops of rain which will one day return to the ocean, that we are like candles lit by the fire of the sun, forever part of it. - Steve Wall & Harvey Arden 1990 (Wisdom Keepers)

And Third: ...everything on the earth has a purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence. -Mourning Dove, Salish, 1888-1936

Another important commonality is the literal translation of the names for many tribes. That is, the name of the tribe usually translates to the Human Beings, Us or the People. For instance Dineh means the People and the original name for the Cherokee (tsis tis tses) means the Human Beings. This leads to another factor of understanding that may help in carrying the message to Natives: how some cultural beliefs are similar to the principles of AA, such as the way tribes believe in taking care of the safety and welfare of the People, of each tribal member; this is similar to the AA principle and I paraphrase* a fellowship of men and women, who help other men and women to recover from alcoholism.” Many tribal leaders are asked to consider this question when making a decision for their people’s future, “how will this affect the tribe for the next seven generations?” This is similar to the question asked at the GSC, “how will this affect the newcomer? How will this affect the future of AA?”

I want to remind you about what happened at the board weekend last year during the introductions. I introduced myself in this way “I would like to introduce myself the same way when attending a sweat lodge. My name is Rod, I am of the Dineh tribe, I am a full blooded Navajo, My mother is of the Towering Rock clan and my father is of the Edgewater clan. Then I said, “this is probably the first time words like this have been spoken in this setting.” I chose this way to introduce myself as a way of bringing these two circles together, because I believe both circles are about healing and joy. I want to share with you a reading by Black Elk, a medicine man for the Teton Dakota. He was born in the moon of the Popping Trees (December) 1863.

He was related to the great chief, Crazy Horse, he knew Sitting Bull and was at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. This writing comes from his dictated autobiography in 1931, it is about the importance of the circle and how fundamental it is in Native philosophy. I hope it may help in understanding how profound I believe it is to join these two circles:
You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because, the Power of the World always works in a circle, and everything tries to be round. Everything the Power of the World does is in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard that the Earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The Wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nest in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The Sun comes forth and goes down in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tipis were round like the nests of birds and these were always set in a circle, the nation’s hoop, a nest of many nests where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.

Another factor to be mindful about are the barriers in Carrying the Message to Native Americans. One of the biggest is the way many Indian people have suffered from discrimination, bias and racism, on an individual basis, from other groups, from the government and from society. Some members of AA may believe that this is an outside issue and yet I believe whatever may get in the way of any newcomer’s sobriety is relevant to our twelfth step work that respect and honor translate and transcend any language or culture.

In 1999, there was a special Forum in Window Rock, AZ on the Navajo Reservation. I remember there was a Native gentleman who told of his struggles to stay sober and for many years he was unable to. The medicine man told him that alcoholism is a white man’s disease and requires a white man’s cure. Years later he came to believe that the medicine man was talking about AA.

I was born on the Navajo Reservation but raised in the Salt Lake City area away from my culture, language and tradition. When I started drinking and during the whole time I drank, I didn’t care about any of that. It wasn’t until I started getting sober that I began to think about those things and saw how important they are for me. Many natives have their culture first then AA. I had AA first then my culture and I am still learning. I began to see how devastating alcoholism has been to Indian people and to me personally, this understanding of my culture and tradition has enhanced my sobriety and Alcoholics Anonymous has enhanced my culture and tradition.

I want to end with two readings that show the similar miracle of sobriety for two different people, one a man and one a woman, one Caucasian and one native, one recently and one over 70 years ago.

First: “My life is filled with honesty today...I am in love and proud to be a Native American. At an AA meeting on an Indian Reservation, I heard the words ‘Sobriety is traditional.’ I stand at the top of the Sacred Mountain and I listen to the wind. I have a conscious daily contact with my Creator today, and He loves me.”

From the story “Listening to the Wind” Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 458

Second: “I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.” Bill W. Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 14

My name is Rod and I am an alcoholic, Thank you.
In early sobriety I would sit in meetings with the same home group member sharing the same, or at least very similar, stories of recovery night after night and week after week. Occasionally, I would look around our local club house, the Triangle House situated in downtown Moab, Utah, and my mind would wander. Gazing on the west wall, I would read the raised-relief serenity prayer and think about the autographed portraits of Bill W. and Dr. Bob. Were these photos simply mailed to our Moab group or was there a connection between our Founders and our little group? During my first reading of Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, I was amused by the throwaway line on page 26: “…the Utah alkies who dried up in A.A. and struck uranium in the process…” My schooling as an anthropologist specializing in archaeology, along with working in southern Utah, suggested the Utah alkies were most likely either from Kanab or Moab. Wow, what was the chance my home group would be mentioned in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age?

Well, years later, after being elected as the Panel 61 Delegate for Area 69 Utah and reading Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age again, the Utah alkies line jumped out at me. I am probably not the first newly elected Delegate to become very emotional during a reading of this beautiful history book. Simply put, I cried my way through our amazing past. After nearly two decades of carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics, I felt a connection to all the pioneers and truly identified with the early struggles to form and follow our principles.

Back to the Utah alkies. My sponsor’s sponsor gave me a series of correspondence between Clyde G. a Panel 1 Delegate from Area 69 Utah and Bill W. Bill W. wrote to Clyde after some very warm personal inquiries about Clyde’s family. Bill needed information on the Utah alkies. The following is from Bill’s letter dated April 13, 1954:

As I remember it, this was the essence of the yarn. That a drunk in the Utah desert wrote the Foundation for an A.A. book. Getting sober, he thought of the town drunk, his friend at Moab. He proceeded there and the town drunk sobered up. So did some others. The public-spirited town drunk went out and took some pictures of canyon walls, and scenery in general, around Moab in order to impress one of the railroads, which contemplated building a spur through that country with the desirability of passing through Moab on account of its scenery. Some of the film, on being developed, showed white flecks and marking. The drunk sent for a Geiger Counter. The result was a uranium strike in which the drunk cashed in and which revived the defunct mining town. Now rich and influential, the alcoholics took the place over, one becoming Mayor, another Chief of Police, etc. Such was the yarn that I had picked up somewhere. Bill W.

April 13, 1954

Clyde replied with a letter dated April 29, 1954, which seemed to satisfy Bill’s primary goal of fact finding about the story. Again, after some very pleasant personal

“Inclusiveness is challenging,
Especially when working with those looking for an excuse not to be here.”

Ward Ewing,
Chairman of the General Service Board of A.A.W.S.
inquires about both Bill and Lois, Clyde wrote:

…These facts I do know are true. One or two of the ex-drunks, or AAs, did play a major role in the finding of uranium at Moab. The first drunk to get well through the AA program has been a major of the town for the past six years, and is still major. Another owns the newspaper, two or three own uranium mines — in fact, the positions held in that community by AAs are such that it would appear if you wanted to be of high position in the community you must first qualify and then become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. No doubt, too, you have noted from newspaper accounts that the largest and richest uranium strike made in the world as yet, is that recently made at Moab.

These letters predated the publishing of the Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age in 1957 and show a real and very direct connection between my home group and our history. I am still trying to determine if Bill W. ever visited Moab, but I know Clyde G. was a regular at the Spring Rally held numerous times through the 1960s in Moab, since both Clyde and his wife signed the Moab Group diary many times. On a personal note, I served on the City of Moab Board of Adjustments for 10 years after getting sober in the Moab A.A. Group. Apparently, I am following my Moab Home Group tradition of public service. However, I have no plans to run for mayor.

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**DELEGATE LIST UTAH AREA 69**

1951-2011

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<td>Panel 7 Leo Q. 1958 Salt Lake City</td>
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Local Forums

In October 2006, the concept of Local Forums was approved by the General Service Board. The purpose of Local Forums is to bring Forum information to A.A. members in remote, sparsely populated areas, urban neighborhoods or underserved A.A. communities. Any A.A. community or service entity may request a one-and-a-half or two day Local Forum. Unlike Regional Forums, the responsibility for Forum expenses such as meeting room rental and miscellaneous expenses are assumed by the Local Forum Committee. The General Service Board will send two participants, one from the Board and one from the General Service Office or Grapevine office and display literature at Board expense. Like Regional and Additional Forums, Board participation in Local Forums requires the approval of the trustees’ Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums. The Regional Forums Coordinator works closely with the Local Forum organizing committee to create an agenda that is responsive to local needs.

As all Forums are intended to be sharing sessions, no formal actions result. Sharing at Forums is captured in Forum Final Reports which are distributed to all attendees. Regional Forums Final Reports are available on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site. Forums provide unique opportunities to share and exchange valuable experience, ask questions and spark new ideas. Regional Forums and Local Forums carry A.A.'s message of love and service by improving communication at all levels of our Fellowship.

September 9-10, 2011 in Richland, Washington a Local Forum was held in a gymnasium on the campus of the Cathedral of Joy church. There were 5 panels, two speakers and lots of sharing from the floor.

This Local Forum began at 6pm on Friday evening with the Spirituality Panel. It was mentioned that A.A. is not a religion but members do practice the principles of the A.A. program religiously. Following a question and answer session, Eva S., GSO staff member shared her story with us.

Saturday morning began with a Native American Panel. We learned the importance of CPC workers understanding how important respect and honor of different cultures is when working with Native communities or tribal governments.

The next panel focused on Hard of Hearing and solutions to help members who are hard of hearing. Some members have stopped coming to meetings because of their hearing. It was suggested we turn off extra fans etc. Stand up when speaking and perhaps a group inventory on ways to help would be useful.

After lunch, the Hispanic Women’s Panel, discussed ways to overcome cultural barriers Hispanic women face when trying to start women’s meetings and participating in A.A. The idea of a workshop focusing on ways to bring Hispanic women into A.A.; reaching out to the female Hispanic alcoholic was discussed.

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Panel on Saturday afternoon wrapped up the panel presentations. Members shared challenges facing their efforts to get and stay sober saying that sometimes they are ostracized, shunned and victimized by other A.A. members. We were reminded that lack of understanding can be overcome through dialogue. Our Pacific Regional Trustee, Rod B., was the last speaker of the evening sharing his experience, strength and hope.

I want to thank our delegate Keith M., for encouraging Shelleice and I to go to this Local Forum in Richland, Washington. It was the 5th Local Forum ever held. Washington Area 92 is a beautiful place to visit and the A.A.’s there appreciated the outside support.

Thank you for my life and sobriety,

Monte S.
THE CHANGING CULTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Forum Presentation by Jami S. Panel 60 Area 92

Aldous Huxley said: "Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him."

In order to briefly look at the changing culture of AA, I had to understand the meaning of culture and of change.

Interestingly, culture has many meanings, but the ones that struck me are: 1) the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent; 2) the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social group; 3) the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.

Change: to make the form, nature, content, or future course different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone; to transform; to pass from one phase to another.

If we define AA's culture as that quality that arises from our concern for excellence, what it is that is excellent in AA: certainly our program of recovery. It has been copied and used in hundreds of other programs that treat human illness and disease. As George Vaillant, a Class A trustee said in 2002: "... mental health workers admire the success and geographic availability of Alcoholics Anonymous, they understandably wish to broaden its membership to include other substance abusers." (Newsletter for Professionals, AAWS, Fall/Winter 2002). The cultural change that affects the excellence that is our program of recovery is the precisely that pressure to weaken our Fifth Tradition and let anyone with any ailment share their stories at our meetings. The stories that heal us and bind us to each other's recovery can only be those of one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic. That is what makes us excellent.

The experience of the Washingtonians and the Oxford Group continues to show us the danger of giving in to outside influence. For us, the continued adherence of our Fifth Tradition is a matter of life over death. We must never forget that alcohol is one of the leading causes of death in North America and the world: 100,000 deaths each year in the United States and over 2.5 million deaths worldwide. Drug abuse claims about 280,000 deaths in the world each year. This cultural change is one that we dare not allow.

If our culture is defined as: the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social group, what are those behaviors and beliefs, certainly our belief in a spiritual life, service to others, taking responsibility for the injury we have caused others, love and tolerance in our relationships with our fellow sufferers and the rest of the world. Is this a culture that is changing? Somewhat.

We have begun an important journey to become more accepting of all of the spiritual paths that our members walk. The General Service Conference has now twice approved literature to help reach out to the alcoholic who is Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu, Muslim, atheist or agnostic: literature that will give those who consider us a religious organization a truer picture of what our tradition of a spiritual life means.

We continue to expand our service to those places and people who need Alcoholics Anonymous by the translation of our materials into many more languages. We have also taken steps to reach those who want to connect with us in the digital world. The Conference's approval of the Grapevine's request to develop a digital application and use more digital channels for distributing the Grapevine and the books published by the Grapevine will hopefully widen our ability to reach the alcoholic who uses their computer or smart phone to interact with the world. All of which allows us to be of service in ways not envisioned in 1935, to maintain our characteristic behaviors and beliefs with a different face.

If our AA culture is the sum total of ways of living built up by us and transmitted from one generation to another, what is it that is changing?

Our shared experience that we give from one generation to another encompasses our whole society: our program of recovery, our traditions and the way we interact with each other, even the way we are "not organized".

When a new person comes to AA, we offer them our most precious gift: our story, our experience, strength and hope. If the new person stays, it is because he or she is able to identify with our suffering and imperfection. It is our ability to show the newcomer that one can be healed by that shared suffering and shared hope that has made us so attractive to all who wish to be healed not just the alcoholic.

However, if we don't pass on the shared experience of service in AA, our culture will surely die. I frequently hear people say that they don't want to be involved in service because it just politics and it saddens me that we will lose what that person has to offer AA. Maybe they had a bad experience at a home group or district meeting, or maybe they have never been to either. Whatever the cause of the comment, our society, our culture needs the next generation committed to service in AA. This I believe is the most dangerous cultural change that I see. Too few people do most of the work. Old timers refuse to rotate for fear the young person will bring in new ideas. Without a new generation to whom we can pass on our way of life, the existence of AA will only be seen in the shadows of other societies that use our recovery program and traditions.

In 1977, Robert Hitchins, past G.S.O. general manager warned us that if this Fellowship ever falters, it won't be because outside issues or members with 'other' problems. "It will be because we can't control our own egos, nor get along well enough with each other...to hold AA together."

Lao Tzu said: "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom."

If our society is to survive the forces from outside and within for cultural change, we must know ourselves well. We must be able to adapt to the good changes in our culture yet have faith in and be faithful to our primary purpose while we find new ways to reach the still suffering alcoholic.
Grapevine Standing Chair Update

News from AA Grapevine, Inc.: We are working to have the GrapeNet forum up and running in August. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Grapevine is printing a new catalog (available in August). I hope to have these available at the Fall Assembly.

**New prices effective July 1, 2011:**
- Grapevine Online $34.97
- Grapevine Story (Digital) Archive $26.97
- Audio Grapevine Magazine $21.97
- Grapevine Print Magazine $28.97
- Grapevine Digital Magazine $21.97
- LaVina Print Magazine $12.00

Also, eCheck has been added for your convenience as a payment option. Soon, you will be able to use PayPal as well.

**Two new books will be coming September 2011:**
- “Step By Step” and “Emotional Sobriety II”.

Grapevine relies on the Fellowship’s financial support through subscriptions and item purchases. Please encourage each home group to purchase a minimum of two annual subscriptions per a 61st General Conference additional consideration. Grapevine has made several changes in the last 5 years in an attempt to accommodate the Fellowship’s wishes. This process has a price tag and they are working vigorously to solve issues that need resolution. The fellowship says our meeting in print is important. It is up to each one of us to demonstrate that support. Two issues that have caused financial hardship are: 1) the sales are the only income because unlike other magazines, we do not sale ads to pay for our magazine and 2) monies are only used for subscriptions they have that month. When you purchase a subscription, your money is set aside and they only use the portion that it costs you for that month.

**Question:** Shall we continue to refer to Grapevine as our “meeting in print” now that we have aagrapevine.org? The roundtable on August 13 was unanimous that it should remain our “meeting in print” whether in the form of a printed magazine or an online magazine. Please share this question with your groups/districts and we will discuss it more at the Fall Assembly.
What can you do to make sure it’s there for all that want or need it? A speaker on August 14, shared about writing stories for the Grapevine. It was suggested that any topic you would share on in a meeting would be a great topic for a submission. Your sharing should be about 5 minutes long and just write like you would share at a meeting. You do not have to title your article but you can if you choose to. You can send your submission by mail or email. If you choose email, please send in Word format. It is our meeting in print and they need are articles to print. As a grapevine reader, you know that your sobriety is enhanced by the stories found in its pages. Grapevine is a tremendous help to others as well. The benefits drawn from your subscription are not confined to you or whomever you might share it with – but also it helps provide the resources to carry the message to others who don’t have access or don’t know that it exits.

Next Issues: **Grapevine:**
- September 2011 – Dealing with Loss
- October 2011 – Relapse

**LaVina:**
- September/October – Relationships in Sobriety
- November/December – Realizing Dreams in Sobriety

Hundreds of AAs have not yet seen or heard of the Grapevine. Others query, who is it? What is it? What are its ideals? Bill W., 1946

Thank you for your willingness to carry the message.

Treesa J
Area 69 Grapevine Standing Chair

“Editing stories from prisoners has been the biggest event in my life.”
Ami B., A.A. Grapevine Inc., Executive Editor Publisher
Cliff D.

Pacific “Additional” Regional Forum
August 19-21, 2011
Amazing!!

With a week’s notice I planned a trip to Woodland Hills California and walked into the Orientation for first time attendees 5 minutes late
Amazing!

This was my first Forum. There were 723 attendees and 373 of those were first timers
The first Forum was in 1975. They were called “Mini Conferences” with the purpose of improving communication within the fellowship, bringing the Conference experience to AA members through out the US and Canada. There are 8 regions in the US and Canada, each region could schedule a Forum every two years. In 2008 the “Additional” Forum was added to each region every eight years. At the same time “Local” Forums were added, up to 3 per year for cultural, accessibility and population needs.

The beginning of the Forum Friday there were introductions and presentations by Ward Ewing class A Trustee (non alcoholic), Rod B. class B Trustee (alcoholic) and Adrienne B. GSO staff.

During that first day I was just amazed at the selfless service and passion for AA service our Trustees’ and the GSO staff have. The love and passion I felt, I thought of the countless hours of service work to insure the survival of AA and its principles. The service to groups and members to continue to carry the message of recovery from alcoholism.

I understand why alcoholics serve AA, but I am amazed and grateful at the service and passion of class A Trustees (non alcoholics).

There was a video "Markings on The Journey" that was a condensed history of AA. Amazing.

Saturday there was presentations from the Grape Vine Board Director Nancy Haynes, Grape Vine Executive Editor Ami Brophy and the La Vina Editor Irene Donoso. They stated that the Grape Vine will continue to be in print format and not replaced with the currently available digital format (A Rumor). The Grape Vine has gone through deep staff reductions. There are 16 books, CDs and calendars available from the Grape Vine. The web site has had many new added features I was unaware of and I am a subscriber. New stories daily on home page and search by topic. There is an " I-Say" section were you can start conversations and make comments. The Grape Vine does not accept donations but does have a fund for subscriptions for those in need. Do our Corrections, CPC, Treatment committees have subscriptions for their service work?

E-Book should be out now and all books in the future to be in this format.


There were presentations from AAWS Board Director Andrea Bathwell and GSO Manager Phyllis Halliday on finances.

There were facts and figures on what it cost GSO to provide services to each group. An annual contribution in 2010 of $6.29 per member or $137.10 per group would have allowed GSO to be fully self supporting. If we all practiced the Birthday plan would that would make us self supporting as well. Our primary purpose, to carry the AA message, contributions are simply a means to accomplish this.

I was made aware of the fact that AA lost the copy rights to the first and second addition of the Big Book. Copy rights are monitored very closely now. GSO no longer opposes the use of the AA Circle/Triangle Symbol.

There was a Forum Workshop on Inventory. Generating Enthusiasm for a Group Inventory, Inventory-Beyond the Individual and Group, After Inventory.

There were workshops. Group
Area 69 Communications—Kurt J.

This was a year of firsts for me – first year elected as an Area 69 chair, first PRAASA, and first Pacific Regional Forum. What an incredible experience so far. Before being elected at the Area, I was reluctant to travel for AA events. Now I am hooked on Area and Pacific Regional service events. I hope I can find a way to next year’s Forum. I already have a flight and a room for next year’s PRAASA. :)

The Additional Pacific Regional Forum was a fabulous event. Until the Forum, GSO, the General Service Board, Grapevine, and staff were just concepts to me, imaginary people, helpful agents in New York. I can now confirm that yes, they really do exist… It was a privilege to meet and hear the manager of our General Service Office, one of our dedicated GSO staff members, the chair of the General Service Board, the Grapevine Board Director, the Executive Editor Publisher of the Grapevine, and the La Vina Editor. I listened to all of the presentations followed by questions and answers. The presentations were detailed and rich. The questions were insightful and the answers were direct.

There was an open AA meeting each day at 7:00 am. The attendance was small so that almost everyone could share. I really enjoyed the intimacy of the AA meeting. Of the 750 at the forum, 15 had a meeting each morning.

On Saturday, I attended the Group Inventory workshop. Like many groups, my home group struggles with attendance at and participation in a group inventory. We all shared ideas and suggestions for stimulating participation and finding discussion topics. It is good to know we are not alone. Later on Saturday, I attended the Anonymity in the Digital Age workshop. There is a lot of confusion and many issues to discuss about anonymity online. The room was packed. The discussion was lively and diverse.

As with intergroup, district, and area, at Pacific Regional service events I am grateful and humbled to be part of such an open, honest, and caring group of people. We are blessed in sobriety and in service. Thank you for letting me be of service.

Kurt J
Area 69 Communications

“For not being in the AA program for very long, I was so excited to hear all the wonderful things I heard from the people. it made me want to come home and do what ever I can do to spread the word About how important it is to help this world know that there is help. I want to do what ever I can. Thank you “

Carrie B.
Anonymity in the Digital Age—Topic presented at Forum by Jim C.

Traditions, Customs, Laws

The other day we had a young man who was visiting our group from a rural section of the mid-west, and in his sharing he remarked about how much he appreciated our meeting compared to meetings at home, which he described as being run with a heavy hand by the old timers. That started me thinking about the Traditions, and how the fellowship functions with some order without a well-defined, enforceable set of “Laws”.

From the time I came into program, I have been fascinated by the Traditions. I was a typical newcomer, and I didn’t know the difference between the Traditions with a big “T”, and local customs or what you might describe as custom or tradition with a little “t”. All I remember is that I was afraid that if I broke or violated a Tradition, I might get drunk, and/or be kicked out of the program. Little by little, I discovered that the 12 Traditions were not laws, and in fact there were many interpretations for each one. I also found out that even if I could say for sure that a Tradition had been violated, there was still no way to enforce them. I don’t know if I was more relieved, or shocked. I really wanted them to be simple and straightforward, and to be able to call the AA police on someone if they dared to violate one of them.

And that was just the beginning. My home group started a Step/Tradition study, and as I gained some understanding, I started to realize that some of the practices that I thought were Traditions, were nothing more than customs.

When I was about two years sober, I volunteered to be GSR for my home group and nobody objected. That was when the Traditions took on a new, more practical meaning. One of the Traditions that has helped me the most is the last half of the 2nd Tradition –“Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.” In the beginning I thought that the way to become a trusted servant was to try to be a dynamic leader with lots of great ideas, be able to convince people I was right, be a convincing speaker, and not make mistakes. Instead I learned that a trusted servant needs to be open to ideas other than his own, provide an environment where all sides can be heard, be transparent, and trust the process.

A couple of other Traditions that have helped me relate to the 62nd Conference theme: “Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age.”

Both the 11th and 12th Traditions are still very relevant in the digital age. I believe the internet expands the opportunities to reveal membership in AA at the public level. This is complicated in part by a misunderstanding of the public component of social networking sites along with ignorance of the Tradition. It also complicated by the belief of some that the 11th Tradition is outdated. Just to scratch the surface of how public this access is: As of July 2011, Facebook has 750 million active users. An active user is defined as a person who has logged into the site in the last 30 days. However 50%, or 375 million of those active users log onto Facebook in any given day, with 250 million of them using mobile devices. And this is just one of the many social networks, so I think it is fair to say that the internet is a public forum even though not everything is available to everyone.

Just to give a little perspective about the expansion of AA in the digital world: In 1995, as a newly appointed member of the trustee’s literature committee, I was present at the general sharing session during the July board
Anonymity in the Digital Age—Topic presented at Forum by Jim C. cont’d

weekend. At that sharing session we were given a demonstration of the then, relatively new phenomenon, called the World Wide Web, including in that demonstration was a look at what type of information was already available concerning Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve step programs. The official AA website was launched a couple of months later, and the digital presence for AA began.

Since that time I have often wondered if the easier availability of information about AA has attracted more people to AA and to general service? It seems like it should, but our membership doesn’t seem to be growing very much, and there still seems to be the same small percentage of members who are attracted to general service. So the 11th Tradition as it pertains to the digital age has become more complicated, but to my mind it is still as relevant as ever. Bill W. refused to have his picture on the cover of Time Magazine, would he make the same decision about Facebook?

This brings us to the spiritual responsibility component of the theme, which I relate to the 12th Tradition. When I think of Anonymity and Spirituality, I am led to humility, which I believe is the essence of both anonymity and spirituality. I certainly believe in attraction, but where does that line get drawn. Recently I ran across an interesting take on humility as it relates to the 12th Tradition. I know of at least two 12 step fellowships that, according to their guidelines and policies, do not list the names (even first name and initial) of the speakers or workshop leaders at their conventions. They feel that people should choose to attend a workshop because of the topic being discussed and not to hear a certain person. Is this a meaningful extension of principles before personalities, or is it carrying things too far? At AA’s International Convention, the speakers at the Big Meetings are not announced ahead of time. I remember some years ago, at an Orange County Convention, the Convention committee made the decision not to list the names of convention committee chairpersons. Do you feel that your participation is enough reward for the service you give?

How about speaker recordings? Most of the companies that record speakers observe anonymity at the public level, but not all. We all know that dynamic and charismatic speakers attract new members, whether it is to AA or their mega church. So are anonymity, spirituality, and humility still relevant in the digital age? I am sure this coming year will bring many interesting discussions.

“There is a sobriety calculator on the A.A. Grapevine website.”
Amy B., Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor Publisher
Forum Experience—Walter C., Area 69 Alternate Delegate

I was one of the proud members of the Van Pool from Utah. I thought maybe it would be long and boring. But it was anything but. For me it was like two big AA meetings, one meeting on the way there and another meeting on the way back.

When we arrive at the hotel, the Utah Area 69 Past Delegate Monte S. was there to meet us. What a wonderful thing to arrive and be greeted by a familiar face.

That night we ate dinner at a nearby restaurant with AA members from Utah and Alaska. Not only did I know who they were; they knew who I was. I am enjoying learning more about how AA works and I am enjoying getting to AA members from the pacific region.

Walter Curry

“There is a 90% increase in LaVina story submissions, 59 compared to 8 for the same period last year.”

Irene D., AA Grapevine, Inc., LaVina Editor
A Forum Experience:
Recovery, Unity, and Service
Renae H.

It’s often funny how we hang onto certain things while in recovery that we’re not really aware of or think may still be a character defect until the time when it shows up in unexpected situations. In all of the various A.A. service events I’ve had the opportunity to attend, I’ve been fiercely independent in making my own travel and lodging arrangements—I want control over all of my circumstances and my comfort zone. This way, I don’t have to feel dependant upon anything or anyone; I can have solitude and privacy precisely when I choose it. No worries—no risks—no vulnerability to circumstance and peers...isolation. Sounds a lot like my active alcoholic behaviors before I came into A.A.!

When an opportunity arose to attend the 2011 Additional Forum in Woodland Hills, CA joining our Area Delegate and 6 additional A.A. members on a 900+mile road trip with a willingness to share space and quarters with another person(s), my fears and anxieties rose up quickly and screamed loudly “No, you can’t possibly do that...it’s not in your nature...you will have no control!” While a meeker voice said “But you really do want to go and maybe, just maybe, you might grow a little bit and enlarge your spiritual condition—not to mention the learning experiences you know you will gain from attending the Forum and will be able to share with others.” This “meeker voice” tends to be the one of reason, often the reasoning of my Higher Power. I stepped into recovery and chose the “broad highway,” “happy destiny” bus headed for California.

What a blessing! The laughter and the joy that I got to experience with my A.A. friends, the sharing of stories and experiences of recovery, the comradery of unity and purpose, and the finishing “cherry-on-top of the cake”...having the honor and privilege to meet a new a.a. friend with six months of sobriety...full of willingness to step outside of a comfort zone that made my earlier reservations pale in comparison! A service Twelve-step call I wouldn’t have wanted to miss. What a gift our new friend gave to all of us “roadies”! And all of this occurred before we even arrived at our final destination.

Once at the Hotel, the buzz of excitement and anticipation was almost tangible. So many people smiling and laughing all at the same time, knowing that each of us shared a common bond of recovery, unity, and love for Alcoholics Anonymous that brought us all together in Service to our Fellowship through participation at this Forum. There is no way anyone could possibly feel isolation, loneliness, or not being a part of, after hearing the humble and inspiring opening remarks given by Ward Ewing, Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee and Chairman of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

If you have not attended a General Service Board Forum, I enthusiastically encourage everyone to try to do so. The countless hours of time and energy given by our Staff, Directors and Trustees at GSO / A.A. World Services Inc., and the Grapevine Inc., to present such a clear historic and comprehensive picture of the overall services provided, financial records and budgeting objectives and goals—is downright mindboggling to me. I can’t help but think where A.A. would be today with out the acts/efforts of such commitment and dedication? Where would I be today if it weren’t for A.A. being around for me when I needed it, and more importantly, for those generations yet to stumble into our rooms? A Forum shows me how it works, why it works, and most importantly, that it is paramount that each of us have the responsibility to, and must, preserve this gift of sobriety in order to keep giving it away.

Friday evening and all day Saturday were full of panel presentations and workshops sharing information and points of interest in specific matters of importance in the Fellowship and the continued function and welfare of our General Service Structure. Presentations included topics such as: “The Grapevine Director” presented by Nancy Haynes, A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Grapevine Board Director; “The A.A. Grapevine” by Ami Broiphy, A.A. Grapevine Inc., Executive Editor Publisher; “La Vin-a”, Irene Donoso, A.A. Grapevine Inc., La Vin-a Editor; “The A.A.W.S. Director”—Andrea Barthwal, A.A.W.S. Inc., Board Director; “A.A. Finances” presented by Phyllis Halliday, General Service Office, General Manager; “Full Forum Workshop on Inventory”—Rod Betonny, Pacific Regional Trustee; “Right of Decision & Appeal—Concepts Three and Five”; “Generating Enthusiasm for a Group Inventory”; “Inventory—Beyond the Individual and Group”; “After Inventory”; “Why Not Be Self Supporting Through Voluntary Contributions”; “A.A. History—Boring or an Incredible Spiritual Journey”; “Special Needs—Identifying Current Challenges”; “Varieties of Spiritual Experience”; and “The Changing Culture of A.A.”

Workshop Topics included: “Group Inventory—Where’s Our Focus?”; “District Inventory—How, When and Why?”; “Home Group—Maintaining a Welcoming and Safe Place”; “Rotating Leadership”; “The Twelve Concepts”; “A.A. Grapevine—Today”; “Area Inventory—How, When and What Happens After?”; “Twelve Traditions—Applying Principles to Local Matters”; “Anonymity in a Digital Age—Impossible or Not?”; “Carrying the Message to the Elder Community”; “Newsletters/Bulletins in A.A.”, and “All About La Vin-a”. If anyone is looking for things to talk about in our local Assemblies, Workshops, and even Home Group meetings or business meetings, the forgoing is an absolute buffet for all!

All throughout the sessions, opportunities to share and ask questions at the microphone were given, and “Ask-It Basket”
A Forum Experience: Recovery, Unity, and Service  - Renae H. cont’d

questions were answered. The Sunday morning session is definitely my favorite part of Forums and PRAASAs, in which we glean so much experience and knowledge from the “Sharing from Past Trustees” panel. Wow, what spiritual giants in my opinion. Each gives such a personal and knowledgeable touch straight from the heart of the messages they are delivering. I find it incredibly inspiring and reaffirming to the recovery I so desire for myself and others.

We boarded the “Happy Bus” around noon on Sunday and began our trip home, again, sharing our newly gained and past experiences in an environment that could only be created through a willingness to be a part of something bigger—by stretching my self-imposed limitations and fears, in order to have such a wonderful and fulfilling experience.

District 11—Kristen E., DCM

I had the privilege of attending the “Pacific (additional) Regional Forum in Woodland Hills, Ca. When getting there I was overwhelmed and felt like a fish out of water. When I looked down the hall and saw Monte. It was at this point I was able to relax. There were people from all over. The cool thing is we all had something in common, Service to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Friday night started out with a small meeting to welcome the people that were there for the first time. The room we were in had a bunch of tables with different A.A. material on them. Things like the big book in Braille, pamphlets on anything that you can think of. What caught my eye was the table with the Big Book translated in many different languages. It was so real. This thing is so much bigger than this little state I live in.

I was able to put names to faces and understand the difference between a class A trustee and a class B trustee. When the Class A trustee got up and shared his passion in Alcoholics Anonymous and that he was a retired reverend my ears opened up to his story. He made the remark that sent chills down my back. He said “The 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are one of the best spiritual tools he has ever experienced” This is one of those moments that I will carry with me in my heart.

In Service

Kristen E.
District 11
Bridging the Gap National Workshop
Report

My name is Pete and I am an alcoholic. I had the privilege of attending the National Bridging the Gap Workshop held in Sacramento, Ca. on September 9th thru 11th. Area 7 Northern California Interior was host for this event. This was the 21st Annual Bridging the Gap Workshop.

The District 10 BTG Coordinator, Andy B. was also able to attend this event in order to bring more information back for Area 69. There were many alcoholics representing California – either Area 7, 6, 5, 9 and 8 (which is a straight); Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Chicago, Minnesota, New York, Missouri, Hawaii, Canada, Nevada and Utah. Overall, there were over 90 registered attendees including GSO Treatment Staff Member Mary D. and Area 7 Delegate Melodie T., and Nancy H. – General Service Trustee.

Friday Evening Sessions consisted of introductions and agenda overview, a speaker from the Placerville area, a review of the BTG kit handed out at the Workshop, a discussion of the possibility of a Grapevine Issue being published with a Bridging the Gap theme and a review of the Guideline Revisions being presented for ratification.

It was a long day.

The Saturday Morning Session highlighted the array of services offered from our GSO in New York. This information was presented by GSO Staff Member assigned to the Treatment Facilities desk – Mary D. Included in this presentation was copies of the contact sign up sheet that are just being printed. I grabbed copies of this and made black and white copies that are available here. I would like to offer the color drafts that I have to Standing Chairs and Bridging the Gap Coordinators if you want to take these and get color copies. The pamphlets will be available from GSO in about 4 weeks.

The second portion of the morning session consisted of a Treatment Panel featuring three Treatment Professionals from California. In addition to these professionals, BTG servants from Missouri and Texas shared their experience, strength and hope to complete this panel.

The third portion of this morning session involved a Corrections featuring the Director of the Adult Institutions (Ca.), the Deputy Commissioner of the Board of Parole Hearings and two BTG servants (Ca. and Illinois) sharing on their experiences with Corrections and Bridging the Gap.

I heartily recommend listening to the CD of the Deputy Commissioner for Adult Parole Hearings. It dramatically exemplifies the growing opportunities that will come about as Corrections looses the battle of the budgets. She states that 80% of the potential parolees have a drug or alcohol problem but either won’t admit it or simply don’t know about options. There was emphasis on providing professional-looking presentations to officials which simply spell out what we can do. Never over-emphasize our intentions or capabilities.

The Director of Adult Institutions echoed this approach to getting contacts within facilities. Most importantly, when a facility will not let you in for a scheduled meeting, be gracious and simply say a prayer for them. Never cause a fuss or threaten to go over their heads; it is their facility and they follow their rules.

It was a full morning.

The Afternoon Session consisted of presentations on the Contact Program from Area 36 (Minnesota), BTG in Canada, BTG and Treatment in Arizona, Starting BTG in your Area or District from a California Gapper, and a BTG Grapevine Discussion conducted by Trustee Nancy H. who has had an assignment to the Grapevine in the recent past.

A note on some of the topics of this session include the ongoing discussion and desire to publish a Grapevine issue focusing on BTG. If we want it, they will do it but we must give them articles and stories to publish. This session included information regarding Bridging in Canada and the effect legislation can have on our efforts. Recent laws passed in Canada have dramatically changed the options we have for Bridges in Canada. I thought it was interesting that this Canadian Area (83) had 3 Districts in the U.S. A new term I heard during this presentation was ‘Voluntold’.

Sponsorship in Treatment Facilities, How to Volunteer for Corrections Service and various examples of successful implementation of BTG opportunities were shared. I feel the primary theme for the afternoon session was that there was no ‘cookie-cutter’ solution that fits every situation. Autonomy was stresses again and again, especially for the Districts – which I feel is echoed strongly in Area 69.

The Saturday night speaker was Mary D. – GSO Treatment
A presentation on AA’s structure was given by Melodie T. – Panel 60 Delegate representing Area 7. It was very well done, emphasizing the upside-down triangle and the fact that the groups are the governing body in AA. In light of the audience, the question was broached as to whether or not we can have a Conference Committee on BTG. The question was asked ‘Do the groups need a Committee on BTG’. The two final points consisted of A) The Trustees do not govern. B) The Conference does not direct nor do they operate the groups.

Sunday morning consisted of gathering additional information on the BTG website. The BTG website has a new face and it is very professional looking. Cheri – the webmaster – reiterated the fact that the web site will always be a work-in-progress. All information contained in the digital library is in unprotected PDF format so that it can be copied to your word processor or spreadsheet for modification.

Note: The Digital Library will be deactivated for a time until an anonymity issue can be resolved. Stay tuned for further details.

The existing library of all the documents available for our use were placed on a CD for each attendee. Please contact me for copies of anything that your District may be interested in.

Special Note: Some of the information on the Digital Archive is already translated to Spanish. Area 69 is currently in the process of translating our BTG workbook to Spanish and this CD will be made available to this committee in the hopes it can be useful.

Host Site Selection: Schaumburg, Illinois

will be the host for the 2013 BTG Workshop.

An inquiry was made to have the 2014 event in St. Louis. It was quickly decided that this body had no power to choose the host site for 2014.

2012 BTG Workshop will be held in Bloomington, Minn. This is the same hotel that hosted the 2010 event. Area 36 is the host Area for 2012.

Finances: A preliminary financial report was given for this years BTG Workshop. Over 90 registrations for this event. There were 22 volunteers for the local Districts. Registrations plus the 7th Tradition came to $3100. Expenses included web domain fee, postage, airfare for web master and coordinator with the total cost of $2803.

I purchased the CD set for the entire event which will be taken from the Treatment budget. Copies of this are available for anyone who desires a set. You will need 9 CD’s.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Area for the chance to attend my second BTG National Workshop and for the defrayment provided for this event. I whole-hearted support any District willing to defray their BTG coordinator to go to this event.

Pete G.

Area 69 Panel 61 Standing Chair for Treatment Facilities/Accessibility/Special Needs

“I AM NOT AN A.A. MEMBER. I HAVEN’T PAID THE DUES ALL Y’ALL HAVE.”
WARD EWING
CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF A.A.W.S
Ask It Basket Question:
What does the loss of copyright on AA literature mean to A.A.?

Answer:
The impact is minimal due to the profound loyalty of our membership!

Editor’s Note:
In Area 69, GV subscriptions slipped from 571 in 2009 to 545 in 2010. The 93,000 GV and 8,000 La Vina subscriptions are read by an average of 2.5 people per month resulting in a monthly audience of 250,000 people.
Upcoming Events

November 5-6, 2011        Fall Workshop
                          District 12

December 3, 2011         Area Committee Meeting
                          District 3

February 25, 2012       Area Committee Meeting
                          District 9, Moab

March 2-4, 2012          PRAASA
                          Bellevue, WA

Message From Monte

How do you give back what was freely given to you?
How do you spread the message of hope, recovery and
unity to those beyond your home group? Are you ready
to be of service on an area level? Contributing to the
Area 69 News and Notes publication is a rewarding
way to be of service and to share with fellow members
around the state. Simply contact your newsletter editor,
with your article or photo by emailing: area69immedi-
atepastdelegate@utahaa.org

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cation of any article imply endorsement or affiliation by
A.A.W.S. or Area 69.

Contributions from A.A. members are welcome and will
be printed as space allows. Submissions must be
emailed and include the writers’ contact information.
Submissions may be signed with first name and last
initial. Anonymous submissions will be published but
the author’s contact information must be included. The
editors reserve the right to edit contents for length, clar-
ity and their relation to the Twelve Traditions of Alcohol-
ics Anonymous. An effort will be made to contact the
author regarding content changes. This email/
Newsletter including any attachments are confiden-
tial. Please respect the anonymity of others when shar-
ing this publication.

Thanks to those that contributed to the writing, editing,
and production of this edition.

Monte S.