

DELEGATES REPORT FROM THE
61st GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE
May 1-7 2011

Glen P., Delegate

Conference week started out well with an on-time departure for the flight from Columbus to LaGuardia that arrived about 35 minutes early. The cab ride to the hotel was enjoyable. The cab went past Rockefeller Center where the streets were lined on both sides with remote telecast trucks and I discovered that the NFL draft was going on at the time. I arrived in time for delegates only meeting Saturday night. The sharing session of that meeting provided a whole lot of information about what was to happen in the next week. Most significant for me, I think, was that someone said, "Just remember you are supposed to be here" I can tell you that I had my doubts. Emotions ran high but not nearly as high as they were on Sunday when we had role call. I knew I was supposed to be there when I heard Phyllis H., GSO Manager, say "Glen P. Area 53 Central and Southeastern Ohio " and I stood up and said "here." Tears were to flow many more times in the week ahead.

I serve on the Treatment Facility/ Special Needs- Accessibilities committee and we met for the first time Sunday afternoon in a joint session with the trustees committees on Cooperation with the Professional Community /Treatment facilities/Special Needs-Accessibilities. The trustees presented their report on the conference agenda items that were pertinent to us. We listened, asked questions and accepted their report with appreciation.

At dinner Sunday night I met Neil F. a Panel 61 delegate from Area 52 North Dakota and we had dinner with Areas 52, 53, 54 and 55 sitting around the same table. Dinner was followed by five speakers: two delegates, one GSO staff member, one trustee and an AAWS director.

Monday started with Serenity group (the early bird meeting) an AA meeting in a small conference room that was packed to overflowing with delegates and guests. Then it was off to committee meeting where I quickly found out that I was not as well-prepared as I thought so I ended up listening to more informed delegates for most of the two days in committee. Our committee had the privilege of having one of our guests in attendance, Martin B. from GSO. Great Britain. We finished our work within the six-hour time frame allotted for committee work.

Ward Ewing opened the after noon session with the General Service Board report followed by George M., AAWS Chair, who gave the AAWS Board report. Then the East Central Regional Panel 61 delegate's got to give their 2 minute area highlights, I was sixth on the list. What I had been concerned about turned out to be a very comfortable thing to do thanks to all the practice I had had leading up to this one. There are eight delegates on Panel 61 and each gave a very good talk. We were followed by the West Central Regional Delegates.

The afternoon continued with the Grapevine Board report presented by Ken B. followed by questions and sharing on the report. Terry B., a Class A Trustee and chairman of the finance committee gave the report on finance and answered many questions. The afternoon ended with area highlights by the Southwest regional delegates and the Pacific regional delegates.

Early indications were that this was going to be a series of supreme eatin' meetin's. The hotel food had been delicious the first two days and I couldn't find a reason why it should change and it didn't. Then more area highlights from the NERDS (Northeast Regional Delegates) and the Eastern Canada Regional Delegates. Don M., our US Trustee at large, moderated a presentation on "An informed Group Conscience: The Voice of AA". Mike R. from Kansas spoke on "Self Support – Where do Money and Spirituality Mix." Frank Z. from Delaware spoke on "Humility – Accepting the Group Conscience" and "An Informed Group Conscience – Using the Three Legacies" was presented by Angela H. from Idaho.

Monday concluded with Pam R. and the delegates from the East Central region taking me out for ice cream to celebrate my 70th birthday.

Tuesday was dress down day and it was interesting to see how people interpreted dressing down. Some had just taken off their ties and others were wearing jeans. Today was the day that we were to go to GSO for our visit. Before that could happen however there was business to be taken care and the morning was filled with committee meetings. After lunch, the session was opened by Rogelio F., a Class A Trustee from California. Then it was area highlights from the delegates from western Canada region and the Southeast region.

The afternoon presentation topic was "Sponsorship" moderated by Pam R., our East Central regional trustee and AAWS chair-to-be. The topics were "Importance of a Home Group" by Tom K of Mississippi, "Leading By Example Attraction not Promotion" from Mel L. Western Michigan followed by "Recovery, Unity, Service" presented by Cate W. of Manitoba followed by a sharing session. At 3:15 we broke up and those cared to got a pass to take the subway to GSO and the Grapevine offices. The tour of the GSO office was very informative and fun. The Grapevine office was nearly empty when I got there so I didn't get to see much except the new release of the digital Grapevine. When we have a speaker from GSO give a GSO report I have noticed that they seem to have the office in their minds eye then they go from office to office telling what goes on in each one. I now see the office layout and that confirms my suspicions. Then it was time for more food!

Wednesday morning started with a workshop on "How to increase participation in AA - Striving for Self Support in All our Affairs." The workshop was followed by a short sharing session and lunch. After lunch the trustees from the Northeast region and Southwest region and Canada at large were elected using the third legacy procedure. At 3:30 Wednesday afternoon Cooperation with the Professional Community committee presented their committee report. The committee reports are made a separate part of this report.

After dinner Thursday evening, Andrea B., AAWS Director, moderated a presentation on "Alcoholics Anonymous in the Digital Age". "Practicing Our Traditions in a Digital Age" was presented by Joel C. from San Diego," Carrying AA's Message Online" by Alicia R., of Cincinnati, and "Grapevine AA's Meeting in Print and more" by Elaine M. from Southern New Jersey.

Committee reports continued until 6:00 PM Friday followed by floor actions until 6:58 PM. Ward E. closed the conference after the '60s had said their Farewells and final prayer was spoken in French Spanish and English by Jules R., Ino F., and Deb D. then in unison but everybody. Saturday morning was highlighted by a breakfast and four trustees who were rotating out (Conley B., Dorothy H. John K. and JoAnne L.) said their farewells. The week ended like it started with an on-time flight that arrived at the destination early.

For me this was a very, very moving experience. I've been on a cloud since returning from New York and I suspect I will be there for quite a while to come. People said it would be a life changing experience and I believe they are right. If you have an opportunity please accept it. If you are interested in being in Area 53 General Service, the opportunity could be yours sometime in the future. Thanks for listening and I know that after having participated in this conference, the future of AA is in good hands.

Love you all.

In Service,

Glen P.