



The Mid Southern California Area 9 Newsletter

The Monthly General Service Newsletter for Area 9 of the General Service Conference
P.O.Box 51446, Irvine, CA 92619-1446 www.msca09aa.org

June 2009

MSCA Area 9 includes all AA groups in the counties of Los Angeles (South of Rosecrans Ave.), San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange.

A Vision and Thought

By District 20 DCMC

HELLO! Greetings to all, I hope you are all doing well and, realistically speaking, something tells me that you couldn't be better.

So, for me, being an alcoholic is a privilege. I love this way of life. I never imagined that after living a life that was full of misfortunes I could reach such a degree of happiness and joy.

As I already know that we all have had similar experiences, I'd like to share something: I've been in AA for several years practicing the principles of the program and to my surprise one of the highlights of my recovery has been serving outside my home group.

When my home group asked for a volunteer to serve as the General Service Representative, the only thing left for me to do was to raise my hand and just like that I was the new GSR.

When I first arrived at the district, I saw one or two familiar faces that I already knew and that gave me some comfort. I knew that they were no longer new to the district and without a doubt they would help guide me and I was right. Together we have attended many Area events, PRAASAS, Regional Forums, and local Forums. In short, it's been very helpful for me to consistently attend all these events.

But attending the Spanish-speaking meeting is where I got the vision; it was there that this thought was born.

The Spanish district's meeting (intra-district meeting) seems to have come of age. The meeting goes on for two and a half hours and it doesn't seem to be enough time. Someone actually suggested that we should have committee meetings here as well; and it was then that my vision and my thought were born: WHAT ABOUT A SPANISH SPEAKING AREA IN MID-SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA?

But, No! No Way! That can't be possible... I kept repeating that to myself many times, but then, from deep within me I hear a small voice that says—"And why not?" They [the intra-districts] meet once a month

... continued on p. 2, col. 1

Delegate's Corner

Hello Everyone

Well I have returned from the conference and feeling so grateful for the experience and the opportunity to be a part of something that is so much larger than myself.

Putting it in perspective, comparatively, each one of the one hundred twenty eight or so souls that make up the group conscience of over two million alcoholics, is roughly one voice at the conference for every sixteen thousand butts in a chair someplace in an AA group somewhere. Pretty awesome if you think about it, that when an Area Delegate arrives at the General Service Conference, he or she is an equal part of the process, and it doesn't matter if your Area is the largest with over fifty eight thousand members or that you represent an Area where there are only seventy eight groups, your voice and your vote is equal and just as important.

It truly is a thing of constant amazement to me that we are not divided by race, language, religion, professional or educational status; that it does not matter how much money we have or don't have. Our Areas are sectioned off geographically. At the General Service Conference we are there to do what is best for AA as a whole. And all of this begins with you. Tell me what you think.

During the ten days that I was in New York City I learned more about AA and myself, once again.

I learned;

That no matter how much you love AA in your heart, that your mouth sometimes will betray your heart.

That the simple art of listening is much more valuable than the gift of gab.

That there are no bad ideas or stupid questions.

That the gift of knowledge can come from the most unusual place, people or things.

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Delegate's Corner ...continued from p.1, col.1

That two people can read the same paragraph from the service manual and derive two totally different meanings from it and neither of them is wrong.

That no matter how much or how many times I read the background material, nothing can prepare me for the conference better than prayer.

I could go on and on about everything I have learned. I won't, but I *will* tell you the most valuable thing I learned and that helped me more than anything else I can think of is...

Remember rule 62! And not take myself so damn seriously!

I love all of you, each and every one... and there's not a damn thing you can do about it.

Thank you for this beautiful opportunity to serve.

Joe B.

Tradition 6 (long form)

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. – and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

A Vision and Thought ... continued from p.1, col. 1

and we've had minimum of 60 people attend and a maximum of 80 people out of 6 districts and 131 Spanish Speaking groups. All the district committee chairs give a report, the DCM's give their report and members with lots of AA experience also attend.

We are trusted servants not senators and I truly believe that a diversity of ideas is essential in AA. Simply stated, I believe I heard the 'language of the heart' and I savored the moment with this beautiful thought.

(Could it be Possible?) District-20: DCMC

General Service

By Steve S

My first experience with the General Service was not a happy one. I was appalled by the interminable arguments which could have been resolved in minutes. However, I honored my commitments and went from GSR to DCM to DCMC. I spent several years as a member of various committees and several years on the finance committee. I confessed to the then Delegate that I could not balance my own checkbook. So they made me the Chair of the Finance Committee. The Delegate explained to me that the principle of rotation gives each of us the chance to become competent in areas of ignorance. He further explained to me that every Delegate he knew felt inadequate and unprepared for the responsibility that was given to them. At the General Service conference, 128 people who love Alcoholics Anonymous cannot make a mistake and if they do, it can be easily corrected.

General Service was put into place by our founders to ensure that the message would continue to be carried to the alcoholic who still suffers. It was set up in such a way that no one could govern and that it would take a substantial unanimity of the group conscience to change anything. The principles of anonymity and humility would be the primary governing factor in any significant change. The 12 concepts ensure that the opinions of everyone be given equal weight and have the opportunity to be expressed. It suddenly occurred to me that the purpose of the assemblies and group consciences as well as the general service conference were intended primarily for us to be informed and to tolerate differences of opinion and that the purpose was not so much to change the rules or the literature but to be tolerant and accepting of the group conscience. The rule of substantial unanimity ensures that nothing is changed without considerable discussion on a topic and agreement that what is changed will improve the way in which the message is carried. As we move down the inverted triangle, the only real difference is increased work, increased knowledge and increased responsibility.

I am no longer bored or irritated at the endless discussions. I have come to value greatly the difference of opinion and am often amazed by it. I now realize that the difference of opinion and group conscience not only ensure our humility and the continued practice of the principles expressed in the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts, but are responsible for the feelings of spirituality which I continue to glean from General Service.

Excerpt from AA Senior Adviser Bob P's talk to the 1986 General Service Conference

...Let me conclude by offering my own thoughts about A.A.'s future.

I have no truck with those bleeding deacons who decry every change and view the state of the Fellowship with pessimism and alarm. On the contrary, from my nearly quarter century's perspective, I see Alcoholics Anonymous as larger, healthier, more dynamic, faster growing, more global, more service minded, more back-to-basics, and more spiritual--by far--than when I came through the doors of my first meeting in Greenwich, Connecticut, just one year after the famous Long Beach Convention.

A.A. has flourished beyond the wildest dreams of founding members--though perhaps not of Bill himself, for he was truly visionary.

I echo those who feel that if this Fellowship ever falters or fails, it will not be because of any outside cause. No, it will not be because of treatment centers or professionals in the field or non-Conference-approved literature, or young people or the dually addicted or even the druggies trying to come to our closed meetings. If we stick close to our Traditions and our Concepts and our Warranties--and if we keep an open mind and an open heart--we can deal with these and any other problems that we have or ever will have.

Excerpt from Bob P's talk...continued

If we ever falter and fail, it will be simply because of us. It will be because we can't control our own egos, nor get along well enough with each other.

It will be because we have too much fear and rigidity and not enough trust and common sense. I mentioned rigidity. If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing Alcoholics Anonymous today, I would have to answer: the growing rigidity that is so apparent to me and many others. The increasing demand for absolute answers to nit-picking questions. Pressure for G.S.O. to "enforce" our Traditions. Screening alcoholics at closed meetings. Prohibiting non-Conference-approved literature, i. e., "banning books." Laying more and more rules on groups and members.

The decline of the church at the end of the Middle Ages was symbolized by their neglect of human suffering and the souls of sinners to argue in their conclaves over "how many angels can stand on the head of a pin." My friends, at our conclave this week, I heard some arguments over "how many angels can stand on the head of a pin." And in this trend toward rigidity, we are drifting farther and farther away from our co-founders. Bill, in particular, must be spinning in his grave, for I remind you that he was perhaps the most permissive person I ever met. One of his favorite sayings was "Every group has the right to be wrong;" he was maddeningly tolerant of his critics; and he had absolute faith that faults in A.A. were self-correcting. ...

Concept VI

The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

Now, wait a minute, you say! All along you have been telling us that the Groups are the boss. This concept says, flat out, that the General Service Board has "*chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters*". That sounds an awful lot like a definition of "boss".

The 12 Concepts For World Service, when taken as a whole, define legal authority as opposed to practical authority. Because the General Service Board, through its charter, is a legal entity, it must be governed by legal language. This language gives the General Service Board the chief initiative and active responsibility listed in this Concept.

Concept VI ...continued

Bill W. basically set up the A.A. Service Structure along the lines of a corporation. In Bill's essays on the 12 Concepts, found in the A.A. Service Manual, he outlines his reasons for choosing that structure, as opposed to an institutional or government-like structure (the what!? That's right, we actually have An A.A. Service Manual – check it out at the Central Office, or online at aa.org under SERVICES FOR MEMBERS). However, and this is vital to the working relationship between the General Service Conference and the General Service Board, the Board has always realized that the practical authority held by the Conference grants the power of a *final decision* to the Conference. The Board has NEVER vetoed or over-ruled the Conference. And we'll see why next month in the report on Concept VII.

An Anonymous Member of AA in Orange County

Love and Tolerance or Acceptance

By Bruce H

I am really grateful that I have been given the opportunity to write this article because I have doubted whether the newsletter is the proper channel to voice my opinion on a distasteful trend at the Area level. For years it seems that a climate has grown and lately has heated up that redefines the principle of love and tolerance of others is our code. This new code seems to be that we will tolerate you only if you agree with certain persons or proposals presented by these individuals, and if you have even a slightly different point of view you will be sent to Exile Island with no chance of finding the immunity idol. If you are allowed to return to the Area you will be shunned and if you are an Area Officer you might be given a anonymous letter from a mysterious sharing session and be given a choice to shape up or be voted off at the next Tribal Council. I hope that my attempt at humor is taken in good taste, and my point has been conveyed. Our program does not say we respect others only if we agree on a particular issue, it says we all should be given the right to participate and I will fight to my last day on this earth to defend that right whether you are a AA member or a Area Officer. I always have to remember the highest we get in AA is sober!! I am writing all of these observations because of the article published in the May 2009 Area Newsletter by a member of AA. In my viewpoint this piece came out as an attack piece on some of the Area Officers, and I still believe this was the improper use of the Newsletter. It would in my opinion be more suited for the Online Forum however they have guidelines against things like this being published. I report and you decide on whether this is a form of hypocrisy. I am just trying to be fair and balanced.

This member presented 4 proposals to the Area and only 1 was passed on to the Assembly. Whether of not these proposals had merit is an argument for another day, the bottom line they were given more than enough time to be discussed and voted on. The questions asked were well thought out and were really relevant to the issue, and if for what ever reason they were not forwarded to the Assembly maybe that had more to do with the content and timing of these proposals. To place unwarranted blame on some of the Area Officers is totally inappropriate in this case. Yes like all of us they have there faults and defects but to single them out just sounds like a bad case or sour grapes. Acceptance of the Group Conscience might be in order, and if the timing of these proposals was off present them again at a later date with slight adjustments or revisions. This

Love and Tolerance or Acceptance ...cont

process happens all the time at the General Service Conference. Since I mentioned the Area Officers

I believe we have been lacking in our support of this Panel, in some cases it has been great and then for whatever reason some of our older members like Past Delegates , Committee Chairs and others they find it necessary to undermine the efforts of these duly elected Trusted Servants. As a whole the GSRs and the members of the Districts have not participated in this course of action. A good question for some of our longer attending members should be maybe I have too many years in General Service and not enough days? I will leave that question up to them to answer. Some examples but limited to these has been when a certain Past Delegate seemed it necessary to get to the mic and questioned a member of the Area Officers like they were in a court of law. I think this sort of activity speaks volume to the underlining atmosphere that has gone on for too many years at Area Meetings. I personally have been accused by a certain Committee Chair of doctoring the books when I was Area Treasurer; this member later tempered his tone when I confronted him on his accusations. I also have witnessed uncalled for outbursts on the floor of the Area, in fact I had my own slip at the last ASC with a mini-rant however I had to take a 10th Step and admit I was wrong for my actions and I hope I will be forgiven for these actions. I also have seen it necessary to make amends for my part in the so called letter given to the Area Officers last September. I should have listened to the good side of Bruce's brain not the little nasty part of my brain. My actions were harmful to all these Officers and for that I still have a little regret. I also have witnessed some members taking actions contrary to the Group Conscience of the Assembly. However in general I still have not lost hope that the Area will improve and grow in their efforts to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. I have tried not to impune anyone with my words, and if I have done that I offer my most sincere apology. In closing I hope that our newer GSRs continue to carry out the purpose of the Area , and step up to Pass It On when it is there time to Rotate. I hope also they can depend on me to be helpful in their journey in General Service.

Love thru Service Bruce H. Past Delegate Panel 56 2006/2007

Benign Anarchy

By Mike M, Alt Delegate, Panel 58

Benign Anarchy is a good description of how we as alcoholics run AA.

From the Feb/March 1989 issue of **Box 459**:

“Co-founder Bill W. liked to call A.A. a “benign anarchy,” and for good reason. A.A. is a spiritual movement, and as Tradition Two clearly states, our sole authority “is a loving God as He may express Himself in the group conscience.” But what exactly is the group conscience? How does it differ from a group opinion or a majority vote? And what is the best way to get there?

“It is generally agreed that the group conscience strives for unanimity through enlightenment, spirituality and adherence to our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly - discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the group is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a “yes” or “no” count - precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience.

“The late Dean K., who served a term as delegate, California/Northern Interior, and then managed the Seattle Central Office for a time, said that there are two ways to arrive at a group conscience: “The competitive way permits the person with the loudest voice to push his idea across, take a vote and come up with a majority decision. This is not informed group conscience. In the cooperative way, group members come together in mutual trust to arrive at a group decision, not one individual’s personal triumph.”

Is this how we do things? In our Area I believe yes and no. In my experience I have been awed by the care we take to make some decisions and disappointed by how we rush others. Many feel there is not enough “order” to our proceedings and try to bring order through more rules. Some feel certain people need to be “controlled”.

The painful lessons I have learned as one who has been under the delusion that rules could control alcoholics, remind me to apply Rule 62. Control is folly for an alcoholic as Einstein said: *“The road to perdition has ever been accompanied by lip service to an ideal.”* Many espouse ideals rather than exercise our 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and our 12 Concepts. Is not Love and Tolerance an ideal we should strive for as we work toward our common purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers?

I was saddened to read an article in our newsletter where personal accusations were published. Is this the group conscience striving for unanimity through enlightenment, spirituality and adherence to our Steps, Traditions and Concepts?

Benign Anarchy ...continued

Perhaps you have met a few people that Bill describes on page 40 of the Service Manual: **“Then there are those whom we like to call our “destructive” critics. They power-drive, they are “politickers,” they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttle-butt to gain their ends — all for the good of A.A., of course! But in A.A. we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending very much on how we relate ourselves to them. To begin with, we ought to listen carefully to what they say. Sometimes they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half truth, or no truth at all can prove equally unpleasant to us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they have got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we had better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong. If it is nonsense, we can ignore it. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen, and we can try to forget the whole business. There are few better means of self-survey and of developing genuine patience, than the work-outs these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members afford us. This is always a large order and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.”**

I can identify with the unpleasant part for it is not attractive or helpful for newcomers to see hypocrisy as personalities insist they are the ultimate authority rather than a loving God expressed through the group conscience. The idea that certain persons are above being questioned and should be trusted regardless of their actions is ludicrous. This is placing personalities before principles.

Centuries of human history are filled with man’s attempts to legislate morality and the utter failure of such attempts. As an alcoholic you have given me freedom from the bondage of self, if I’m willing to try and practice these spiritual principals. With the freedom to be myself comes the responsibility of self-control. We come in all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, races and beliefs to do what none of us can do alone. The miracle of so many with different opinions working together for the common good is like nothing else.

What I want as an individual becomes secondary to what the group wants and what the fellowship needs. All because “I” am willing to do what someone else did for me. We can work together to better AA, united in our common purpose: to stay sober and extend the hand of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers or try to control that which is better left in God’s hands.

May my actions and my words express the Love and Tolerance AA has shown me.

Mike M. Alt. Delegate, Panel 58

Upcoming Events

Date: Event Type:

June 14 (Sun) ASC (Proposals will be presented but not voted on), La Habra Veterans Hall, 209 N. Orange, La Habra CA, 90631 (Dist 24), see www.MSCA09AA.org for map and directions

July 12 (Sun) FORO de MSCA, Dist 23 & 11

Aug. 9 (Sun) ASC (*vote which proposals to put onto Assembly Agenda*), Dist 14

Sept. 13 (Sun) ASSEMBLY, Dist 2

Special Two Day Event:

Oct. 10 (Sat) MSC AREA 9 50TH ANNIVERSARY, Area 9

Oct. 11 (Sun) ELECTION ASSEMBLY, District12

Nov. 8 (Sun) ASC (Proposals will be presented but not voted on), District 17

Nov. 14 (Sun) SERVATHON, District 9

Dec. 13 (Sun) ASC (*vote which proposals to put onto Assembly Agenda*), District 30

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Give your districts and committees the widest distribution of your needs, activities and events. Have them published here in your Area 09 Newsletter.

Panel 58 Area Officers

Delegate: Joe B, 714-423-3808,
delegate2008@msca09aa.org
 Alternate Delegate: Mike M

Chair: Jason S Treasurer: Linda H
 Secretary: Sharon K Registrar: Cesar F

Schedule for most MSCA Assemblies/ASCs

9:00 am...GSR/DCM/DCMC Schools, Delegate's Rpt
 10 am..... Committee Mtgs
 11:30 am... Lunch
 12 noon ... ASC or Assembly mtg

The MSCA Assembly includes permanent committees responsible for conducting much of the AA business activity in the Area. We have Standing and Coordinate Committees. Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Standing committees are listed below.

Panel 58 Area Standing Committee Chairs, Co-Chairs, et al.

<p>Archives Chair...Joseph H CEC Chair...Rick H</p> <p>Communications Committee Chair...Linda C Newsletter Subcommittee Chair...Steve S Electronic Media Sub-Committee Chair...Henry B Web Coordinator...Becky B Equipment Subcommittee Chair...tdb Translation Subcommittee Chair...Jorge</p> <p>Convention Liaison...Mike Convention Liaison, Spn...Jose A Corrections Chair...Alex O CPC Chir...Michael M CPC Co-Chair, Span...Santiago S DCM School...Scott R DCM School Spanishtdb</p>	<p>Finance Committee Chair...Joseph M Grapevine Chair...Kimberli A La Vifa Chair...Angela R GSR School...John H GSR School, Spanish... Paco G Literature Chair... Ernesto M Literature Co-Chair, Spanish ...tdb Public Information Chair...tdb Public Info., Sp...Francisco D Registration...David T Special Needs Chair...tdb Special Needs Co-Chair, Spanish....tdb Treatment Facilities Chair...Al F</p> <p>Sound Dude... Raul C Coffee person...Mauricio T</p>
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Please send articles or information for the Area Newsletter to newsletter2008@msca09aa.org