

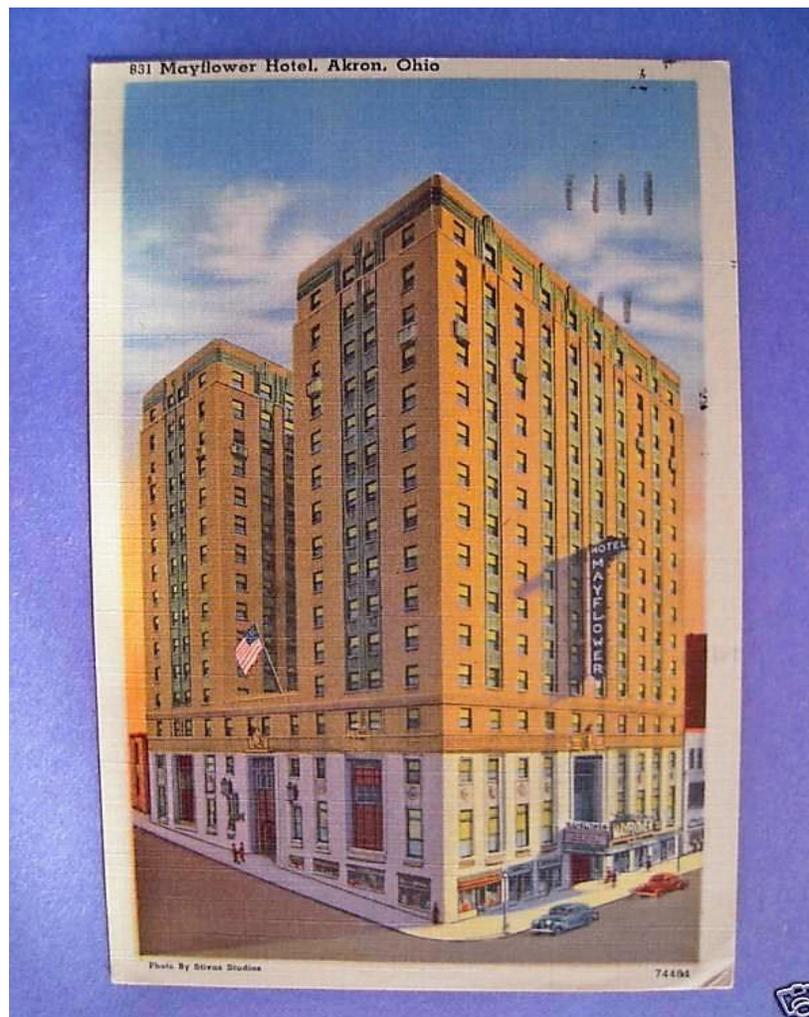
WAGON WHEEL

"We are not a glum lot"

MAY 2015

Idaho Area 18 Newsletter

Editor, Kathy H.



Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends--this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Garren's Seven day Trip to the 65th General Service Conference, New York City 2015

Hello All!

I made it to New York yesterday afternoon, safe and sound. I flew into JFK and met up with the delegate from Western Washington, Darren, and our Pacific Regional Trustee, Joel. We shared a *long* cab ride into Manhattan together and then went to dinner afterwards. (I truly believe that these friendships we get to make through service are some of the biggest gifts we receive.)

This morning some of us are taking a historic tour of some of the AA sites in the city. I am stoked to get to do this! We should be done by noon or so. This afternoon things begin to happen, first with our informal meet and greet, followed by the Remote Communities meeting. This was a great learning experience last year and I have no doubts that it will be the same this year. That gets followed by the 1728 Meeting (12x12x12=1728). Tonight we have a Delegate's Only Meeting. That gets followed by the Conference Committee Chairs meeting up at 9:30 tonight. The days are full around here :) . I'll keep you guys up to date and I will definitely have some pictures. I better go so I don't miss the bus...

Love you all,

Garren

Day 1

Good morning!

Well, here we go... The Conference starts today. I'm already exhausted due to too much coffee last night and too many sirens and horns during the night. It's true, this city never sleeps and neither do its guests. I did get to sleep in a bit; the observer from the Czech Republic cancelled his trip at the last moment so we didn't need to approve his attendance here.

I'll be heading downstairs in a minute to get registered and to get my Conference binder and lanyard. I'm really excited about the day; it's when things become real. We will have roll call and a presentation this morning, followed by our regional luncheon. Later this afternoon most of the committees will meet for an hour with their corresponding trustee committee. Since Policy/Admissions doesn't have one (neither does Report & Charter) we get to start our work early. We will get in 3 hours of committee work in today. Tonight is the opening dinner and AA meeting. Everything should wrap up around 9, I hope.

By the way, yesterday was awesome. The tour took us all over Manhattan and a short way into Brooklyn. It was a beautiful day and we all had a blast. I'll try to get some pictures uploaded to share with you.

I better get moving, I don't want to be late to the party. I'll chat with you again in the morning. Thanks for all you do!

In Grateful Service,

Garren

Day 2

Hello my friends,

I am alive and well after Day 1! After the sleepless night I had, I wondered if I would make it all the way through, but it wasn't a problem at all. Yesterday we heard several great talks from delegates and trustees. I want you all to try and remember this, please read the Keynote Speaker's talk when the Conference Final Report comes out later this year. The Northeast Regional Trustee, Gary L., gave it

and it was awesome. He definitely brought many points into view of where we are going in Alcoholics Anonymous. I hope that you all have a chance to read it. We also heard from delegates giving talks about Diversity, Safety, Technology, and Inventory. Great job by all of them in getting us thinking about how we carry the message.

My committee met and went over some of our work yesterday. I am so blessed to be in the company of these folks. Their love and understanding of our Fellowship is second to none. While I can't tell you anything about what we did, I can say that we work well together and could possibly finish early...maybe. I feel so fortunate to be the chair for this committee and am cherishing each and every minute of the time I get to do it. It will be done before I know it.

This morning came early. I was up at 5:20 to go have breakfast with a couple of other delegates. Our committee work begins again this morning until lunch. After lunch we get to all come back together to hear reports from the General Service Board, AAWS, and the Grapevine. We will also get a report from David Morris on finances. Those of you who went to the Forum might remember his PowerPoint that he did there. I'm sure we will get the same kind of simple but thorough presentation again. He really does a great job for us. Tonight we will hear Area Highlights from First-Year Delegates. They each get 2 minutes to talk about their areas. It's a great way to get your knees shaking and heart pounding if you are doing it. I don't miss that at all!

I miss all of your faces, but your hearts are here with me. Bill says in his story in the Big Book that of himself he was nothing, that without Him he was lost. I believe that, but I also believe that without my fellow travelers I am lost. You are those travelers. Thank you for keeping me grounded and giving me direction and purpose. You add so much to my life!

In Grateful Service,

Garren

Day 3

Hey Everyone!

Guess what day it is? It's casual Tuesday! Phyllis told the delegates at PRAASA that means we could take our ties off :) That's what I've done....look Mom, no tie!

Yesterday was another full day with committee work and board reports. Today starts off with the final day of committee work and more area highlights, followed by a trip to our GSO. Tonight is the Delegates Only Dinner where we will find out who our next Delegate Chair will be. It's as simple as pulling a name out of the hat. The second name out will be the Alternate Chair. It's a great opportunity to meet even more of our peers and develop friendships.

This morning we will choose the next chair for our respective committees. That system works on simple plurality, whoever gets the most votes wins. I have an idea who will get it, but I'll keep that to myself. Every single Panel 65 Delegate is more than qualified to chair, that much I do know.

I found out yesterday that a friend of mine here at the Conference is fighting Stage 4 cancer. He has been a huge help to me during my time as delegate, and I have no doubt that he has helped out many other delegates during his time in AA service. It breaks my heart to see him in the pain that he is in. God has put him in the room that adjoins mine, and I helped him out as much as I could yesterday. If you get a second and wouldn't mind, could you please say a prayer for my friend Ed and his family, please? Thank you very much.

I had better get moving, I don't want to be late to my last Policy/Admissions Committee meeting. I love you all and thank you for my life and my sobriety.

In Grateful Service,

Garren

Day 4
Good Morning!

I can't believe it's already Wednesday. This week is rushing by quickly...

We finished our committee work yesterday and now get to give our reports back to the full body. We start giving those reports this afternoon. My committee was such a pleasure to work with and it was an absolute honor to be the chair.

This morning starts a half hour earlier with the conclusion of the 3 year Conference Inventory. This process has been very thorough and we are all anxious to see what results come from it. The inventory report will be available to us later in the year.

Today is also the second Regional Luncheon, we had our first one on Sunday. We will decide during lunch where the 2018 Pacific Regional Forum will be held. I hope it's close.

We stepped out for ice cream after the delegates only dinner last night and then a few of us walked around the city for a while. I still can't believe that I'm here. I was talking with another delegate about that and she said something that I want to share with you all. Our journey starts with being available for service, and our journey continues by being available for service. Every step brings us to another spot on the path that we couldn't imagine before. Thank you for continuing to be available and for being a bright spot on the path for me!

Love you,
Garren

Day 5
Hello Area 18!

The time seems to be flying by at this point in the week. Yesterday was long....really long. We started at 8:30 and finished up at 9:45. That's AM and PM. I didn't get outside once during the day. Today will be more of the same. The good news is I have already been outside today. I walked to breakfast this morning at 6:30 with my friend Bruce, the delegate from Alaska. He and I have been buddies since we both started the rotation. I think it's because our areas are similar in many ways, that and we are both smart asses :) . By the way, breakfast at the Times Square Deli is awesome~!~

We will be hearing committee reports all day today. This is the part of the Conference that brings out the passion in the members. It is so cool to hear different views and concerns coming from these people. It is also amazing to hear how we are similar in our concerns and thoughts, even though we are separated by great distances and borders. The process is truly remarkable.

I know I have promised some pictures, I haven't uploaded any yet to my computer. I will try and get something done about that today.

Love you all and appreciate all of the support that you show me. Hopefully I will be able to give it back to you in the same measure.

In Grateful Service,
Garren

Day 6
Good morning from a blustery New York City!

Well, here it is, Friday, This is the last day of the 65th General Service Conference's general sessions. Yesterday was grueling, tedious, and just plain long. I loved every minute of it! It's the most incredible thing to watch a group conscience grow from loving discussion. I can't elaborate on what we did, but I

can say that how we did it was through love and trust. What a wonderful program we have been given. Today is scheduled to start at 8:30 and is supposed to finish up at 5:30. We still have much to do and my hope is that we will get it done in time. At the end of the session the Panel 64 Delegates will give a short farewell. I am not sure if a delegate really ever leaves the Conference. I can feel those who have come before me in my heart and in my head. We have been blessed to have these men and women represent us so well. Tell them thanks next time you see them.

I had better get moving, I don't want to be late.

Love you guys!

Garren

Day 7

Good morning,

Last day, where did it go?

What a great ride this has been. I can promise you that I did two things while I was here. I did what I felt was best for Alcoholics Anonymous first. I don't know if that was always the way it seemed to others, but that was how it felt in my heart.

I also tried to do my best at being an example, just like the delegates that have come before me have been to me. We are so diverse it's hard to connect with everyone, but sometimes a smile or a kind word is more than sufficient. It always is that way for me.

This morning we will hear the Farewells from our rotating trustees, Class A and Class B. I will never be able to thank these individuals for their service. I'm just glad that I got to know them a little.

Perhaps a small amount of their love and passion for AA has rubbed off on me.

I had better get moving. My friend Ed and I will be going downstairs for the farewells together.

Afterwards he will be officially voted in by the General Service Board as a new trustee. It's been such a joy for me to help him this week at the Conference. Just paying a little bit back. Please keep him in your prayers that he will recover from his cancer.

Thank you all for allowing me this incredible gift. I hope that my time here has been reflective of our fellowship in Area 18.

In Grateful Service,

Garren T.

Delegate

Panel 64/ Area 18 Idaho

March 6, 2015

Leadership in AA

Good afternoon everyone! My name is Garren and I am an alcoholic. I am also humbled to serve as the Panel 64 Delegate for Idaho Area 18.

I don't often think of myself as a leader in AA. That may sound strange coming from a delegate to the General Service Conference, but I think I can explain my perception to you today and maybe it will even make sense?!

Tradition Two reminds me that as a leader in AA I'm really just a servant to the fellowship. With each

rotation for me I have had the responsibility of being of service to more members, groups and committees. As a GSR I felt mostly responsible to my group and district. As delegate I feel responsible to AA as a whole. That responsibility is reinforced by Concept II. I serve all of you sitting here today.

It might just be me, but the mental image of leadership in AA somehow conjures up a picture of a hierarchy, which I know cannot exist in our fellowship. The highest on the rung any of us can get is member. A delegate is not over a GSR, a trustee is not over a DCM, and God knows no one is over the coffee maker! All of these positions are equal in importance, as are all of the individuals that fill these positions. Alcoholics Anonymous and it's principles of democracy and equality found in our Steps, Traditions and Concepts make it abundantly clear that we are all the same.

So, if we are all equal in importance and there aren't any positions that are above other positions, how then can we even make reference to leaders in AA? The 12x12 simply says that we lead by example. I have tried in AA service to do my best in every position that I have had the honor of filling. Some of that may be tied to my perfectionism and overachieving behavior, but it also has a lot to do with my love and gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous. I have tried to do my best because I have been given the best. I also take service very seriously. My responsibilities to our members, groups and committees are a big deal to me. Maybe that's because you are a big deal to me. I have tried through the years to treat everyone with respect and courtesy, which is a far stretch from how I treated people when I was drunk. One of the best things service has given me is the necessity to incorporate Recovery and Unity into Service. The Steps have helped me immensely in being a leader by example.

Before I run out of time I want to stop talking about me and start talking about us. If we are all equal in AA as I have suggested, then we all must be leaders. From trustee to coffee maker and ultimately to member of Alcoholics Anonymous, we are all leaders, leaders by example. We are the example to those we serve with. We are the example to those members who are looking at General Service from the outside and are wondering why we keep smiling. We are the example to the men and women we sponsor. And most importantly of all, we are the example to the newcomer walking into the rooms of our fellowship. That is the reason we are here today and the only reason our Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous continues to exist.

Now the responsibility rests on your shoulders, on our shoulders. We are the leaders in AA. Let's be the example God intended us to be!

Thanks for all of your work in making PRAASA the special event that it is.

In Grateful Service,
Garren T
Area 18/Panel 64 Delegate

Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix

“Self-support begins with me, because I am part of us – the group. We pay our rent and utility bills, buy coffee, snacks and A.A. literature. We support our central office, our area committee, and our General Service Office. If it were not for those entities, many new people would never discover the miracles of A.A.”

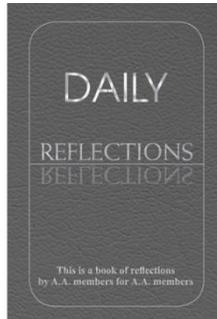
I discovered the miracles of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) a little over twelve years ago. I was beat up beyond repair. I was helpless and hopeless. My life was over (or so I thought) the day I checked into a treatment center. After a fairly rough detox, I was introduced to A.A. by attending my first meeting that was brought into the facility by a couple of people ‘from the outside’. I was so scared to introduce myself. I didn’t even know that I was an alcoholic yet. So, when I heard people introducing themselves as alcoholic, I thought, surely this can’t be me. I was given a hard cover copy of the book ***Alcoholics Anonymous***, commonly known as the ***Big Book***. While I was in treatment, I started to read that ***Big Book*** and though it took a while, I eventually started to identify with some of the writings. Now, along with my Higher Power, great sponsorship, the fellowship, service work and that ***Big Book***, I have stayed sober one day at a time. Throughout the many years of use, my poor ***Big Book*** has begun to fall apart. But, I heard an old-timer share in a meeting one day “Typically, if your ***Big Book*** is falling apart then your life is coming together.” I am sharing this because those people ‘from the outside’ who introduced me to my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous were more than likely from TSNAC (Treatment, Special Needs, Accessibilities and Corrections - Formerly H&I –Hospitals & Institutions). They brought with them the ***Big Book*** (and other literature) that I cherish. The CPC/PI (Cooperation with the Professional Community/Public Information) committee more than likely paved the way for TSNAC to come to the treatment center to share their experience, strength and hope with the patients. If it wasn’t for these entities of A.A. carrying the message to me that day, I know I wouldn’t be sober today or worse, I might not be alive.

What does all this have to do with money and spirituality? Everything! The money that I put in the basket at every meeting, workshop, alkathon, convention, etc. goes to help the still suffering alcoholic such as I was over twelve years ago. The people of Alcoholics Anonymous gave me help and hope when I had none. So, now, when I put that money in the basket, I know I’m not only helping to pay the rent for the meeting place or buying coffee or great snacks, I’m contributing to my own sobriety. I’m assuring that this precious gift will be available to me and countless others in the future. I’m assuring that the entities of A.A. will have enough money to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. I’m assuring that I won’t be sitting in a meeting alone...EVER!

So, I have the ability to help someone just by putting money in the basket? What does that mean? What entities of A.A. are supported? It really depends on the group and your group conscience as to where and how your money is distributed; per Tradition 4, each group is autonomous. But, there are great examples of group contributions to A.A. service entities in the pamphlet, ***Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix***. There are also two other publications available from the General Service Office (GSO) that can help your group make an informed group conscience. They are ***A.A. Guidelines on Finance*** and the pamphlet ***The A.A. Group Treasurer***.

Today, by putting money in the basket, I trust that I am participating in a higher purpose, to help another alcoholic. Before I stepped into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had no purpose. I had nothing. It is only because of the miracles of A.A. that I have a purpose. And that purpose for me today is to stay sober and carry the message. So, as it is written in ***The Twelve and Twelve***, Tradition 7, ‘Now boys (and girls ☺), please go heavier on the hat tonight, will you?’

Shannon C. Area 18 Treasurer



THE FALSE COMFORT OF SELF-PITY

Self-pity is one of the most unhappy and consuming defects that we know. It is a bar to all spiritual progress and can cut off all effective communication with our fellows because of its inordinate demands for attention and sympathy. It is a maudlin form of martyrdom, which we can ill afford.

— AS BILL SEES IT, p. 238

The false comfort of self-pity screens me from reality only momentarily and then demands, like a drug, that I take an ever bigger dose. If I succumb to this it could lead to a relapse into drinking. What can I do? One certain antidote is to turn my attention, however slightly at first, toward others who are genuinely less fortunate than I, preferably other alcoholics. In the same degree that I actively demonstrate my empathy with them, I will lessen my own exaggerated suffering.

To submit articles to the Wagon Wheel Newsletter:

<http://www.idahoarea18aa.org/main/wagonwheel.htm>

Or, submit directly by email to:

<mailto:newsletter1@idahoarea18aa.org>