

PRASSA Report
March 2010
Lauren Trana, Literature Rep
H&I Area 18

I receive many blessings in my sobriety. Attending PRASSA 2010 is one of those blessings. I am so grateful to have gotten the opportunity to go to L.A. to experience the conference. I have attended numerous conferences in my sobriety, however nothing of this magnitude. I was able to observe the A.A. service structure at a new level as topics were discussed among hundreds of alcoholics. These topics were the items which would be brought up at GSO level. I learned how things in AA are changed and the procedure in which it entails. I learned a lot about the history of different AA subjects, such as influential women to the program, the changes that have been made to bylaws, and the development of the Grapevine and La Vina.

I also got the opportunity to attend a literature roundtable. The discussion varied from suggestions on how to organize inventory to the proposed changes and additions to our current conference approved literature. I was able to contribute to this roundtable by offering a spreadsheet format that I created to keep H&I's literature organized. There were no other H&I literature reps present, however there were many literature reps from group and area level struggling to manage inventory. I later e-mailed my spreadsheet format to all who had attended the roundtable. I also received the minutes from this meeting.

PRAASA 2010
Minutes - Literature Roundtable
Friday, March 5, 2010

Meeting Opened

Chairperson, Stace C. (AZ), opened the meeting at 8pm with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

Introductions

Chairperson asked participants to introduce themselves, indicating which group, district and area the participant represented. Chairperson asked for a volunteer to act as secretary and a group member (UT) volunteered.

Selection of Discussion Topics

Chairperson referred to his instruction sheet for this roundtable discussion. It was suggested that the group decide on three or four topics to discuss in the allotted time of two hours.

Chairperson called on the first few participants who raised their hands. The following four topics were suggested and agreed upon by the group:

- 1) Physical inventory of literature (Todd C., CA) - Do group members have suggestions on how to physically keep track of literature inventory and how to know when additional literature needs to be ordered?
- 2) Adding an appendix to the Big Book (Erik N., CA) - It was suggested that an appendix regarding sponsorship be added to the book "Alcoholics Anonymous." This would not be in the first 164 pages, but would be an appendix.
- 3) Inconsistency in existing literature (Erik N., CA) - A participant noted that there is quite a bit of inconsistency in the current literature and asked for discussion and comments. When asked for an example, the different descriptions of open and closed meetings were cited.
- 4) Online ordering of literature (Leslie, AZ) - A participant asked for clarification regarding literature orders from GSO, more specifically wanting to know why online ordering was not available.

Reggie (WA) stated that online ordering was currently available. Reggie stated that Andrea Brennan at GSO would give the requestor an account number. Using the account number, the person ordering could place orders online and track those order and all order history online also.

Since the last topic was addressed and resolved, the group agreed to proceed with the first three topics listed above.

Topic #1 - The following suggestions were offered by group participants regarding how they physically kept track of literature inventory:

- a) price; Spread sheet, using columns with order number, name of item, list price and selling price;
- b) western WA also uses a spread sheet and tracks \$5,000 in inventory this way. At events, one or two of each AA literature item is displayed, along with Grapevine items, on 8- or 10-foot long tables;
- c) A district literature chairperson said she had gone through the physical inventory when she first received it. She keeps track of everything on paper in a notebook;
- d) Another area said they have \$11,000 in literature inventory. The available items are posted online on the area website;
- e) Another district rep. said they are a very "low tech" district. They have monthly business meetings and buy their literature from their Central Office. Everything is displayed on open bookshelves and more literature is ordered as needed;
- f) A participant asked whether the groups, districts and areas using spread sheets would be willing to share these spread sheet outlines with this group. Those using spread sheets said they would share those once e-mail addresses had been made available;
- g) One group literature rep. said groups in their district and area each handled their own groups' purchase and sale of literature;
- h) Another participant said their groups also handled all literature purchases and sales. No literature is sold at the area level in their area. The groups charged for books, but did offer a payment plan to individuals who couldn't pay upfront;
- i) A participant stated they had received "four years worth of totes" when they took the literature position. This person was still organizing their inventory;
- j) A suggestion was made that districts try to ask for at least \$250 for district literature budgets;
- k) A suggestion was made to keep an information card at the back of each stack of literature, with the item number, cost, etc., noted on the card. When more of the item was needed, all ordering information would be readily available;
- l) Reggie (WA) stated that there were Grapevine catalogs available on tables in the lobby area on the 2nd floor.

Topic #2 - Addition of an appendix to the Big Book:

- a) Group participants discussed the proper procedure for suggesting a new appendix to the Big Book. The individual with the suggestion would create a motion for the addition of an appendix and begin at their group level. If this motion passed at the group level, it would then advance to the district and area levels. It was suggested that the individual making the motion prepare a draft of how the appendix would actually look and read;
- b) The individual who initially suggested this discussion topic expressed frustration, stating that he "keeps getting kicked up a notch." Other group participants encouraged the individual to not give up and to follow the proper procedure for creating a motion. The individual stated he had a very difficult time writing things down. The suggestion was made that he enlist the help of a sponsee or another group member for assistance. The statement was made that everyone's voice should be heard.

Topic #3 - Inconsistency in literature, specifically regarding open vs. closed meetings:

- a) The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking;
- b) A person does not have to identify themselves as an alcoholic;
- c) Open meetings are for anyone interested; closed meetings are for alcoholics only. This distinction is for identification purposes only;
- d) Blue card is conference-approved and covers open vs. closed meetings;
- e) The "AA Group" pamphlet also clarifies open vs. closed meetings;
- f) Safety net in closed meetings;
- g) Sharing in open meetings is more general versus closed meetings are for deeper sharing;
- h) One member said they had heard of a person being physically removed from a meeting. The point was made that good sponsorship makes a difference. Meetings are not therapy - they are for sharing experience in a general way;
- i) Old-timers have a responsibility to help clarify. Bill W. said once that AA would destroy itself from within;
- j) The pamphlets "A Member's Eye View" and "Problems Other Than Alcohol" were suggested as items which may help to clarify this issue.

General Discussion

The group went off-topic at this point when a participant asked if the agenda item concerning new atheist and agnostic literature could be discussed. The chairperson and group members reiterated that there were lots of steps involved in changing anything in the AA literature.

A new person joining the group at this point asked why the conference agenda items were not being discussed. There was some discussion about this question. The chairperson stated that the group had elected to discuss the topics selected at the beginning of the roundtable. After more discussion, the group opted to finish the first hour of the roundtable discussing the items chosen earlier. The second hour of the discussion would be on the two conference agenda items the group was most interested in knowing more about.

Conference Agenda Items

The conference agenda items regarding literature were read by a group participant. The group made the decision to discuss the items regarding: 1) Should there be a new book about early pioneer women in AA; and 2) Is new literature regarding spirituality needed, which would include stories written by atheists and agnostics with successful long-term sobriety?

- 1) New literature regarding spirituality – Comments from group discussion:
 - a. Is this redundant? Doesn't the Big Book cover this already?
 - b. Is there condescension in the "Chapter to the Agnostic," implying "they" will eventually find a God?
 - c. Tradition 3 – The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Believing in God is not required.
 - d. One participant stated he initially did not think God wanted anything to do with him. He believed in AA, then in the group, and then in himself.
 - e. Does non-belief disqualify a person?
 - f. Do the rest of us make it uncomfortable for the non-believer?
 - g. Do we care about the alcoholic or what they believe or don't believe?
 - h. What about members from other countries who may have different belief systems? Aren't we awfully arrogant by trying to push God on anyone?
 - i. AA should always be inclusive, and never exclusive.
 - j. Should there be a 2nd edition of "Come to Believe" to include stories from atheists and agnostics?

- 2) New book with stories about early pioneer women in AA – Comments from group discussion:
 - a. Would this include Lois Wilson? She was instrumental in early AA, but not a member, so her story would most likely not be a part of this new book;
 - b. Nell Wing? Instrumental, but not a member;
 - c. Ann Smith? Instrumental, but not a member;
 - d. A female participant voiced a concern that women need to be cautious about being "terminally unique" and concentrate on similarities rather than differences;
 - e. Is this a need? Pamphlet for African-Americans came out of a need;
 - f. This book would most likely include Marty Mann's story, and other early women AA members;
 - g. Comment was made that many larger cities have collected histories of early AA women in those cities. Interested AAs could check with local Central Offices and intergroup offices.

Wrap-up

Reggie (WA) mentioned that there are several new literature and Grapevine items now available for purchase. Group members were referred to the literature and Grapevine catalogs and websites for more information.

Another participant mentioned that an abridged version of the Big Book is available on CD for \$25; the unabridged version costs \$55. This item is available in both English and Spanish languages.

Final comments included:

- Do the footwork;
- Carry the message;
- Be a coffee maker or greeter;
- ACTION SAVES LIVES!

The chairperson thanked everyone for attending and participating. The meeting was closed at 10pm.