

# Central California Area Assembly

Of Alcoholics Anonymous—AREA 93

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***Delegate's Report Back.  
67<sup>th</sup>. General Service Conference.  
Rye Brook, New York.***

Good afternoon my name is Melvin and I am an alcoholic. It's an honor and privilege to serve Area 93 as your Panel 67 Delegate. Before anything, I'd like to express my gratitude to each one of you and to your groups for allowing me to continue to serve you and for trusting me to be the voice of area 93s Group Conscience at the 2017 General Service Conference. Before I begin I'd like to thank Jeff, our Alternate Delegate, the Area Officers and the Committee and Sub-Committee Chairs, the DCMs and GSRs, the DCMCs and Past Delegates for all the help and support that you gave me at our Pre-Conference Workshop. You can't imagine how productive everything that was discussed there was for me, in order to gather the opinion and the voice of the Collective Group Conscience of Area 93. Thank you, Jeff for giving my report at the ACM. I imagine that it was difficult for you due to my grammar, but it was more difficult for me last panel remember I had to change my voice.

The experience of being elected Area Delegate and to have been able to participate in the General Service Conference has been unlike no other.

I can recall my first PRAASA. Believe me when I say I never imagined that one day I would be standing at the podium in front of so many people representing Area 93. I had the opportunity to participate three times. The meeting with the other delegates of the Pacific Region was of great help. The Panel 66 delegates made us Panel 67s feel secure by reassuring us that everything was going to be alright and that they would do everything in their power and in their reach to help us. That is exactly what they did.

The registration process of the Conference is a little complicated. Well, for me it was. The fact that I had to comply with cut off dates, search for the best flight through various Airlines, not just for the cheapest price of the ticket. On top of that let's not forget that the Conference was in Rye Brook. So, I had to search for the airport closest to the hotel.

After having gone through all of those experiences, the days began to go by faster. Well, that's how it felt for me. My flight was scheduled to take off at 12:35am on Thursday. I arrived at the airport at 10:30 pm on Wednesday. I was nervous. I had to fly with United. Yes I flew with United. The airline staff at the airport treated me very well. Maybe it's because of what happened on one of their flights we boarded fast. There were no setbacks. On the airplane I had the opportunity to read some of the surveys that I had received in the mail that day. Plus I had additional ones that I had collected the night before so I had plenty to read. The airport closest to the hotel is very small, so I had to go to Chicago and catch another plane. I arrived at 10:30 in the morning and called the hotel to ask if they had transportation. And to my surprise they did. I had already

acquired information about a taxi that charged \$20.00 from the airport to the hotel, so I was glad that I didn't have to incur that expense. When I arrived at the hotel there wasn't anyone there from GSO or any sign of registration tables, at least that's what I thought. I drew a blank. Who would give me information on registration? I thought of sending a text message to our Regional Trustee. He answered but he told me that he wouldn't get there until Saturday. So my alcoholic thinking took over and I began to panic. I started to think what could I do? Maybe I should call a past delegate! I asked what do I need to do and they answered go register at the hotel and get your room and pray and pray and pray some more. When I went to the front desk to register I was asked for my name. When they found my name they said that they had something for me. One of the ladies handed me a fruit basket. That was the first sign that it was getting real. There were many of those "getting real" moments. Area 93 has a "tradition" of sending the delegate a basket the first year of the Panel. I almost cried right at the front desk. Thank you Area 93! I got my key, went to my room and began to unpack. During the week of the Conference, outside of the main room, they put four tables in the hallway. On the tables the delegates place a book or two (I put 3), so it can be signed by the Conference participants to bring them back as souvenirs. Everyone puts their area number on them. During the seven days of the Conference we took a few minutes to sign the books. At first there were only a few books on the tables, but as the days went by, more and more books began to appear, almost as if they were magically multiplying.

Thursday afternoon some delegates began to arrive. I began to notice familiar faces. In the lobby I found the delegate from Utah. We've known each other since we went to PRAASA as Area chairs. Later on more known faces began to arrive and a lot of the staff from GSO. One of them was Julio E. whom I met for the first time at a Pacific Regional Forum I believe. On that occasion he was in charge of the translation and several of us from our Area volunteered for that event to help with translation. Later I saw him at a Hispanic National Convention that took place in the same hotel in 2004. On that occasion GSO opened their doors so the Spanish Speaking membership could meet the people behind the scenes.

Later I met more delegates from other Areas. We all began to greet and introduce ourselves to one another. It's kind of funny because I could tell who was a Panel 66 and who was a Panel 67. The Panel 67 delegates looked like deers at night looking at the headlights of cars, with their eyes wide open and not knowing where to go. A lot of the Panel 66 delegates would approach us and welcomed us. That day I met two of them, Ian from Canada and Ben from Oklahoma. This is that magical part that only happens in A.A. You meet someone for the first time and begin to talk a complete stranger, someone you've never talked to before and "click" after a few minutes it's as if you've known them for years and they become a part of your life that you'll never forget. I met Ian, Delegate from Manitoba, Canada, while I was outside of the hotel. He was talking with another person and I heard the other person ask him what the reason was for him being at the hotel. He loudly told him that he was there for an A.A. Conference. I thought this guy must be a Panel 67 breaking his anonymity, and I went inside. When he entered I took the opportunity to ask him for some information. I had to take advantage of not being the only one not knowing what to do. Well it turned out that he was a Panel 66. He began to inform me on what was to come in the next few days. While we were talking an older man entered and greeted us. They already knew each other and Ian introduced me to him. He was Ben the delegate from Oklahoma. Ben was a Panel 67 and I found out that he was assigned to the same committee as me. We decided to make dinner plans. I went up to my room and began to iron my clothes. When I packed back home. I just folded clothes and made them fit in my luggage. I spent almost two hours ironing and putting away my clothes. I also decided to rest for a while, since your biological clock becomes confused with the three hour time difference.

In the afternoon, I went down to the hotel restaurant and saw that more delegates had arrived. The restaurant was full. A few of the delegates from the Pacific Region had reserved a table. After dinner everyone started making plans. On the schedule delegates were going to the 1728 meeting at GSO. The only problem was to get to GSO from the hotel. It took about an hour and some minutes by train and subway and the majority of us

didn't know how to get to the building. So we decided to make groups and we agreed to meet in front of the hotel the following day.

On Friday morning we headed out to Manhattan to 475 Riverside Drive. Several of the delegates left early. Others agreed to leave at 8:30 am. Six of us went out together and our guide was the General Trustee from Canada. That was the day when it hit me. I felt something different. It was another "it's getting real" moment. In a few days I was going to participate in a meeting for A.A. as a whole to do the business of A.A. We had to register at the front desk. After that we were informed that the A.A. meeting was moved to the Riverside Church, which is on the next block. It is an open meeting. At this meeting they welcomed us, two speakers participated, and then a few of the delegates were able to share for a few minutes each at the end of the meeting. We went back to the GSO building and they gave us a tour. They took us to the different committee desks. The rooms assigned to the different committees are very modest. Several of the committee coordinators were at their desk and explained their responsibilities and the service they provide to the fellowship. Then we went to the new offices of the Grapevine. Now they are on the same floor as GSO, the 11<sup>th</sup>. Floor. Before they used to be on a different floor. I got to know Daniel. He is the Grapevine Controller. I will take this opportunity to tell you the story of the pins that we made as gifts/souvenirs for our area to hand out. Our pin has the logo of both magazines, Grapevine and La Viña. The idea came to me at PRAASA. I had the idea that on our pin we could use the "blue people" that's on website aa.org. But after consulting I was told I could not use it since it was just made into a trademark and it was suggested not to use it. So I went to plan "B" which was the icon of our magazines. Grapevine and La Viña. I presented the idea to Joel and Jeff and they told me that I probably couldn't use that either, but to send a sample of what it was going to be to Ami. So I did. The response took a little bit so I started to work on plan "C". Two days later the response came from the controller informing me that I could use the logo from the magazines, but I had to make sure that both logos were the same size. The original had the Grapevine a little bit smaller. When I met him at the offices of the Grapevine I gave him one. He just looked at me and shook my hand. Then they took us to Archives, another lovely experience. I was able to see many articles I had never seen before and I got to sit on Bills couch. Then I remembered I had to buy the books so they could sign them. So I bought them freshly made.

We finished the tour and we went to eat at the cafeteria of the building. After lunch everyone would go out on their own. Some went back to the hotel, others went shopping, two other delegates and I decided to go to "Ground Zero". We went and that was an adventure. After we finished our visit to this Memorial we went to buy several things. We decided to go back to the hotel at six in the evening. The delegate from Oklahoma and I thought that the one from Canada knew how to get back but it turned out he didn't know, **so, yes, we were lost**. 3 delegates, with about 75 years of sobriety between the 3 of us. We had "smart phones" and we forgot to ask Siri. The only thing that came to our heads was to get an Uber. Going back to the hotel that was very funny. We didn't know how to get back. Finally we figured out how to get to Union Station and by asking around, we were able to get on the train and get back to the hotel.

That evening we went out to buy water and snacks to have in the room of the hotel. The nearest market was about 5 minutes away by car, if you had access to one, or almost 20 minutes away walking one way. I was lucky because the delegate from Canada had rented a car and took me.

Saturday morning I woke up a little late. 10 in the morning, which for me it really was 7. I got ready to walk around the hotel to figure out where the rooms were for the committee meetings for the Conference. That day was going to be the first meeting just for the delegates. Also that same day there would be an A.A. meeting to help Class A Trustees get a better understanding of the A.A. principles. The topics shared were the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition and Concept 7 then there was open sharing. Then came the remote communities meeting. There were three presenters from three areas that have problems getting the message to remote communities. Then we had roundtables. These meetings were not part of the Conference but they were great.

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After the meeting with the Trustees we had an opportunity to meet and talk with several of the 66's. That evening was the delegate only meeting. The day went by so quickly. The meeting began at 7:30 pm. The format was like a district meeting. We opened with the serenity Prayer followed by the A.A. Preamble and the 12 Concepts short form.

Then we were asked to present ourselves by name, Panel, Area and Committee we were assigned to. The 66's knew exactly what to do. The 67's on the other hand kept getting stuck. Bob M. Area 63 Delegate from South Dakota, Panel 66 welcomed us. Ian R. Area 80 Manitoba Canada, gave us a brief introduction of what the Conference week would be like. Then came orientation. Three delegates from Panel 66 participated with three topics;

"Why are we here" Area 41. "The Committee Process" Area 56. "The Complete Conference Process" Area 02. Then came around the Seventh Tradition Hat, this meeting was not part of the Conference that is why we passed the hat (to pay for rent of the room). Then two delegates from each Region were picked from the hat. Then questions and answers, and closed around 9:45.

**Sunday**, the Conference officially started with registration from 9:00-10:00. Then we entered the meeting room. The first thing that came to my mind was to find a delegate from my region so we could sit together. All of a sudden there in my head came my service sponsors words "sit elsewhere not with your buddies from your Region. Sit with someone you don't know" and that's what I did. I sat at one of the tables that was by the door. It was empty and then it began to get full. Irene from La Viña. Ami from Grapevine and Eva S. sat at the same table with me. I had talked to Eva at other events, but on this occasion, I was on her turf and it was very special for me to be sitting next to this woman who has dedicated so much of her life to serve A.A.

Terry B., Chairman of the General Service Board welcomed us. Dereck T., Area 74 delegate opened the meeting. Then came roll call conducted by Greg T., General Manager of GSO. It's at that moment when you actually realize that you are at the Conference, that you are part of it. Before he began, he explained the process of roll call. You didn't have to say much, all you had to say when they called your name and area was "here" or "present". At that moment, I couldn't decide what word I would use. I said "present". It may sound dumb but at break, the Pacific Region got together and all of the Panel 67s talked about having the same experience. There was a total of 133 names called.

Then Bob M., Delegate Chair, introduced himself and welcomed us again. Bill N., Class "B" Trustee, gave the keynote address. This Trustee was very important for me during the Conference. Later on I'll talk more about that. I had heard him before, on other occasions and I had mixed feelings about him. I got the impression that he was too controversial. Sometimes he even came off as a "bully". After Billy, Greg talked about the Conference mechanics. Rick W. the Conference coordinator, explained the Agendas and the Conference Manual and then they gave us time for questions and answers.

Sunday was the busiest day of all. We had lunch with the Pacific Region delegates. We also discussed where the PRAASA archives would go and decided they would go to Area 7. Then we had more orientation. At this point all I had was the theory of what the Conference process would be.

**Monday** we began with the Committee work at 9:00am. I was assigned to the Grapevine Conference Committee. Before we began, the Committee Manual was handed to each of the delegates. It contains all the agenda items and background material. We had a total of 11 agenda items. The committee is composed of 9 Area delegates, five Panel 66 and four Panel 67. There were two Hispanics on this committee, the delegate from Area 86, Western Canada, and me. A Panel 66 is the Committee Chair. The chair and the alternate are elected the second day of the committee meeting. The Committee Chair attends the Board Weekend Meeting in January where the final Conference Agenda is discussed. When the meeting starts, all the agenda items are discussed and voted on. The secretary, a non-voting member, writes them down and creates a report for us and that is the report that the Committee chair gives to the Conference. We worked on a few items that day. Item A was about

the Spiritual Value of the Magazines in carrying the AA Message. Then Item B; the 2010 Advisory Action. Spiritual Parity of La Viña. We spent a lot of time discussing this item. After a few minutes of discussion we couldn't get a recommendation. We decided to table it for the next day. We requested more background material and asked Ami to attend our meeting on Tuesday for clarification. We moved to the next item, C; the 2004 Advisory Action. Outside Sales, we didn't take any action. We requested that the Trustees Committee on the Grapevine do some more exploration on sales of Grapevine and La Viña subscriptions outside the Fellowship including Amazon. Kindle. Etc., and to bring back a report for review to the 2018 Conference Committee. Items **D, E, and F** it was suggested the Trustees Grapevine Committee continue exploration on Instagram and Facebook accounts and Google for nonprofits and to bring back a report to the 2018 Grapevine Conference Committee for review. Time ran out on us and we agreed to come back on Tuesday at 8:30 am. Each committee has two days to work on agenda items and if they don't finish on those two days, extra time has to be made before Friday. We finished at 12:00pm.

Right after lunch we went back to the Conference room. More Area Highlights from Panel 67s. One of the delegates is from Quebec, Canada. He doesn't speak English only French. When it was his turn, he gave his report in English. You could tell the extra effort that he made when he did that. Also a very touching moment. Then my turn came. I was a little nervous. Almost at the end of my highlights, I lost it. The timer is on the podium and I turned to see how many minutes I had. I skipped a couple of lines and got lost. Then I caught up but I think the last part made no sense to the Conference. The rest of the day was for more reports and presentations, General Service Board, A.A. World Services, Grapevine and the last one was the financial report. It was a long presentation, one hour and 45 minutes. After that some sharing and Q&A. We ended at 9:45pm.

**Tuesday** we started Committee work earlier at 8:30am. We had to finish our agenda that day. We went back to Item B. After getting the additional information on the 2010 Advisory Action, and getting answers from Ami, Grapevine Executive Editor, we agreed in taking No Action on this Agenda Item. That means that the 2010 Advisory Action will stay as it is. In each committee meeting room there is always a member of that Committee, (Staff or Director) who is there in case we need additional information on any agenda item for clarification. They have no vote on the committee decisions. We moved to Item **G**. "How to keep groups informed about Grapevine and La Viña when the group has no representative". It was recommended that: **"ALL delegates consider it a part of their responsibility to inform the Fellowship about Grapevine and La Viña as tools of sobriety, either through their own efforts or by asking for volunteers through email and area websites"**.

Then we moved to Item **H** and we agreed to forward to the A.A. Grapevine Board the suggestion that Grapevine, Inc. produce in the year 2018 or later, 3 new Spanish publications:

**1) - *Stories of Recovery from Hispanic Women in AA.*** **2) - *Writing Together: Stories from LV Workshops*** (Hispanic A.A. members share their experience. strength and hope in stories extracted from LV magazine.). **3) - *Carrying the Message to the Alcoholic Who Still Suffers*** (A collection of LV stories about carrying the message into institutions) all these stories have been published in La Viña.

Then we moved to **Item I**, the Audio Project. We were informed that there are around 400 audio stories, we asked them why nothing has been done with them, like a digital recording or a CD, etc. they informed us that the previous committees haven't taken any action about this item. That's when they reminded us that "it only takes 7 years to make instant coffee in AA". We agreed to give them the green light and requested that a report should be brought back to the 2018 Grapevine Conference Committee with an update including draft samples, financing, possible results and a more defined plan for the future. **Item J**. We took no action on this item and it was brought back as a Floor Action on Friday. We moved to Item **K**, the review of the Grapevine Workbook. Two corrections were made. One was the websites and the other was the current Grapevine address. It had the old address when they were located on the 12th Floor. Now they are located on the 11th Floor. We finished

with the agenda items and elected the 2018 Chair and Alternate. The committee expressed how smooth our meetings were with harmony and that there was no aggressive discussion or drama. When it came to voting it was always by substantial majority. The 66s said their good byes and expressed their gratitude to the 67s for a wonderful experience.

We went to lunch and after that back to the Conference room for more presentations. After that we had a break and then we went to the Round Tables. They were divided in 10 sections. Each section had around 14 members. All the Conference members participate here. We finished at 5:30pm. After that we had Delegates only dinner. Here we elected the Delegate Chair for 2018. Each Region elects a delegate and then all the elected delegate's names are put in a bowl. We didn't have a hat. The Delegate from Area 57, my friend Ben, came out of the bowl for the Chair position and Area 6 will be his Alternate. We finished at 10:30pm.

**Wednesday** morning more Area Highlights per Region from Panel 67s. It ended at 9:45am and we moved on to the first reports by the committee chairs. Chairs from the Committee come to the podium as they are called and give the committee's reports on the agenda items. After the reports, members of the conference ask questions, if there are any. The reports have recommendations, additional recommendations for the Trustees committees or no action. If an item took no action, there is little or no discussion on these items. It takes a lot of time for this process. At 12:00pm we had lunch by region. There we elected our candidate for the Trustee at Large vacancy. The candidate from Utah was elected as the nominee for the Pacific Region. Each region brings a candidate and then goes to the Conference for voting. Then we voted for the hosting Area for the 2020 Regional Forum. Nevada will be the hosting Area. After lunch we went back to the Conference room. First were the Trustee elections. There were a total of 3, two Regional Trustees and Trustee at Large. The hat decided for Trustee at large. Newton P. was elected. After that we had dinner and back to the Conference. 3 presentations on contributions, more committee reports and ended at 10:00pm.

**Thursday** we started at 9:00am with committee reports and discussion until 4:00pm. Here we voted to increase the contribution per Area Delegate to cover the Conference expenses from \$1,600 to \$1,800, incrementing the maximum individual contribution from \$3,000 to \$5,000 didn't pass. It was suggested that we should put more in our group's basket. There were more committee recommendations from Finance, then Agenda, then Trustees, and then CPC, agenda item A. retired the 3 Talks pamphlet. Here I went to the mic. After that more discussion, we voted and only 10 Areas voted against the Item. We didn't want the pamphlet to be retired. Then PI, Item C create a Google/You Tube account for non-profits we voted and it passed. Another item that caused a lot of discussion was the one regarding the Fellowship Survey. It was sent back to the committee. After dinner was the World Service Meeting, very interesting. Then open sharing and "what's on your mind" ending at 9:30pm. During the Conference week, 8 Floor Actions were presented. These Actions can be presented at any time during the Conference session by any Conference member in writing.

**Friday** morning we started at 9:00am and continued until 12:00pm with more committee reports. When it came to Report and Charter, there was a lot of discussion about the Final Conference Report and the Service Manual. Then International/Regional Forums and Corrections. We finished with committee reports at noon. After lunch was Archives Committee, in that report an audio sample was played. It was Bill W's talk at a Conference. It will be included in an Archive's audio project. It was very touching. Then there was a Grapevine presentation by Josh E. Grapevine Director. Here I broke. While I was listening to Josh, tears started to come out. For some reason his sharing sent me back in time. It came to my mind when I was elected alternate GSR for my group. I looked around me and to the 2 big screens and I couldn't stop crying. The Conference was about to end and I was there because my Home Group trusted me to take their voice to our District. In a sharing by Bill N. he said

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“Thanks to my Home Group I’m here” and those words came to my head right there. The passion that Josh has for the Grapevine and La Viña also played a big part of it.

After that. Floor Actions. There were a total of 8 presented. Of the 8, only 3 were accepted for consideration (accepted, declined, or recommitted. 3 options). There was a lot of discussion, questions and more discussion. Then we went to dinner. Then back to work on the Floor Actions.

**1) - Translation of the background material in French and Spanish passed (Advisory Action).**

**2) - Review and update the pamphlet Too Young? (Advisory Action) and**

**3) - That the Grapevine create a Google/You Tube for Non-Profits also became Advisory Action.**

We finished at 7:45pm. The work of the Conference ended! Farewells were shared from Panel 66 Delegates and we closed with the Serenity Prayer in English. French and Spanish at 9:00pm!

**Saturday** Morning was the farewell of 5 Trustees that are rotating out. It was very emotional and spiritual hearing these AA members express their gratitude to the Conference. It is incredible all the work that they do for being grateful to the A.A. Program. “We have to trust the Process, we have to Trust our Trusted Servants” was said again and again. Transparency. Leadership. Sponsorship. Keywords of the Conference. Before I’ve heard many members say that the Conference is “them” against “Us”. It is not that at all. It is a “WE” program. Each one of the 133 Conference members went there to discuss and vote to Safeguard the Future of A.A. so it can be there for the alcoholic that is still suffering and hasn’t found us yet. Just in case that the children of my children need it, the doors will be open for them and they too find The Solution. This is a unique experience. One word to describe it - Emotional. I want to thank you for the trust that you have given me and I encourage you to make yourselves available when the moment comes. There are no barriers in A.A. The purpose of sharing my personal experience at our May Assembly was because I wanted you all to have an idea of “what I saw and what I heard and what I felt” as described in our Service Manual and because I know that in that room we have our future delegates listening to this report. The rest of my report is more detailed and perfect to give at districts. I want to encourage you to keep doing what you are doing at this point in your Service commitment. You are the future of A.A. Area 93 is blessed to have members like you. Just keep the Spirits of Rotation and Continuity flowing. Make yourselves available when it is time for you to rotate up. By my own experience. I assure you that you won’t be alone on this journey.

Thank you for letting me be of Service!

Melvin M.

Delegate Area 93. Panel 67.