

***Gazette Expanded Interview:***

## An Interview with Conley B. Our Southwest Regional Trustee

The Gazette recently had the pleasure of chatting on the phone with Conley B. His four year tenure began one year ago—after the 57<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference (GSC). Conley resides in Arkansas; he has served as Arkansas Delegate to the GSC. On the General Service Board he participates in three committees: the Trustees' Archives Committee, the Trustees' International Convention/Regional Forum Committee, the Trustees' CPC (Cooperation with the Professional Community)/Treatment Committee. In addition, he recently started service on the Grapevine Board where he will be serving on the Nominating Committee, the Finance Committee and the Risk Management Committee. This gives a total of six committees. Much time is devoted to travel: to New York for quarterly General Service Board meetings lasting several days each and the annual week-long General Service Conference, attendance at Forums, Regional Assemblies, visiting the 11 Areas in the Southwest Region, committee work. We have the opportunity to meet Conley at our September Area Assembly and at SWRAASA in October.

**GG:** *Our General Service Board Trustees devote an extraordinary amount of time to their service. What prompted your desire to take on such an involved commitment?*

**CB:** I want to repay the folks who gave me my life. Service is one way I do this. I am very grateful to AA.

**GG:** *How do you find the life of a Trustee?*

**CB:** Active and very interesting!

**GG:** *With your busy schedule, do you have much personal time?*

**CB:** I make sure that I attend meetings regularly! I'm very involved and travel a lot. Most week-ends I'm tied up doing something: travelling around within the Region, going back and forth to New York, and so forth. During the past two months I was home for one week-end.

**GG:** *You recently attended a General Service Board Week-end in New York (starting August 1)—the first Board Week-end since the General Service Conference (GSC). How has the recent GSC impacted the Board?*

**CB:** This Conference was historic due to the length of time (the GSC usually ends at 5 PM Friday; this lasted until 12:30 AM Saturday). The General Service Board is responding to the Conference's feedback on our way of doing business. We are paying attention to better communication. The Trustees respond to the direction of the Conference. Whatever the Conference comes up with—Advisory Actions and other considerations—we work on answers and resolutions for today and in preparation for the next GSC.

**GG:** *What major items do you see coming up for the 59<sup>th</sup> (2009) GSC ?*

**CB:** We have a number of things going on. The next Conference will usher in a lot of changes. We'll be selecting our next General Manager of the General Service Office (GSO) and our next Chair of the General Service Board. Seven Trustee positions will be filled by new faces—including the Chair of the Board and Trustees-at-Large. I've been to three General Service Conferences: two as Delegate, one as Trustee. Each GSC presents unique challenges and issues, yet all are similar. It's still basically how to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic, extending the word—how we can help make this possible: communicating with the professionals, the media, etc.

**GG:** *What are your thoughts on the upcoming Conference examination of fully funding GSO's services and expenses with Group contributions?*

**CB:** The challenge before us is to increase Group contributions to achieve the power of the purse. Group giving is gradually increasing. This is happening because the Groups that have already been contributing are now giving more; generally speaking, additional Groups have not been contributing. The important principle here is that it is not so much the amount of the contribution; it is the AA principle of participation—being a part of. It is about involvement and responsibility. In active alcoholism, we were apart from; now, we're a part of our Fellowship. In sobriety we learn to accept responsibility. The more responsible I am, the stronger I become; and the better I feel about myself, the better person I become.

**GG:** *What future trends do you see for AA?*

**CB:** As the economic times are getting tougher, the rooms of AA are filling up more. Already, I'm seeing this happen locally—more new people coming in than one year ago. Historically, the old-timers of AA were born out of the Depression era—as the economy crashed, more people fell off the edge. We are looking at upcoming cataclysmic events in our economy; we can, therefore, expect a tremendous influx of AA newcomers over a short period of time.

**GG:** *Are we prepared for all of these newcomers?*

**CB:** The hospitals and treatment centers have reached their status quo. We'll be quickly thrust into more 12<sup>th</sup> Step work. Our literature is in place to meet the need. There will be a steep learning curve—we're up to the challenge. These are exciting times.

**GG:** *What other items in AA do we need to work on?*

**CB:** There will always be things to deal with. And when we get off track, we are self-correcting if we follow the Steps, the Traditions and the Concepts. We will suffer if we violate these principles.

**GG:** *Information from our Delegates and from the Conference reports indicate that our Southwest Region functions well. Do you agree?*

**CB:** Across the board, we are a strong Region. We have a good basic approach to the Concepts, the principles and our interactions. Bill W. came to our Region several times, and, as we all know, our historic Coming of Age happened in St. Louis in 1955.

**GG:** *What in AA do you feel strongly about?*

**CB:** The Concepts, the Traditions, the Steps—the entire process and the principles that give light for the journey. With our freedom comes responsibility. I believe that the Conference is the sum total of our Group Conscience in action. We experience a loving God in our midst.

**GG:** *We thank you for your service to the Southwest Region.*

**CB:** I look forward to being at your Assembly this month and attending SWRAASA in October—it is a great family reunion! It is a pleasure to serve.

*September, 2008*