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Trustee Line for January 2009

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From The Trustees

The subjects listed below are just a listing of themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them or start an entirely new subject

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Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.

Holiday/Year End Bonus for 2008

1/1/09 - 2:00 PM

At the most recent Board of Regents meeting, held 12/19/2008, the agenda item: Revisit Holiday/Year/End Bonuses was resolved. The chairman John C. ruled the agenda items which discussed the bonuses at the BOR meetings of 11/21/2008 and a special session, held on 12/12/2008, out of order. The motion that was made and passed on 11/21/2008, which reduced the budgeted bonuses from 4% to 1.6%, also became out of order. The BOR members unanimously agreed with the chairman, as there were no challenges. IES Karen H. was authorized to issue a 4% bonus as budgeted and approved by the previous BOR. In addition the employees will receive Friday December 26th as a paid holiday. The Board also thanked the employees for their work ethics and dedication to our program.

Steve K. - Past Trustee- Area 1
Vice Chairman Board of Regents

Kindness, Generosity, Honesty, Humility

1/1/09 - 2:05 PM

Best health, recovery, and unity wishes to all members of Gamblers Anonymous in the coming year,

Gamblers Anonymous literature describes the fellowship's spiritual principles as those characteristics of the human mind that represent the highest and finest qualities of the human mind such as, kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility. Those spiritual principles are presented to all members of our life-saving fellowship as guidance in solving Group problems, Intergroup problems., Board of Trustees problems, or Board of Regents problems. They apply also to issues that affect Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

The practice and consideration of those principles as we interact with each other are paramount to unity, civility, and purpose of all members

in recovery.

These spiritual principles are vitally important to the relationships between our Gamblers Anonymous service boards who have the responsibility of upholding those spiritual principles. The service boards of Gamblers Anonymous are entrusted by the membership as a whole to act as guardians of the Recovery, Unity, and service structure of our fellowship.

Jim W. the founder of our fellowship said the most important element in every Gamblers Anonymous recovery room was "love!". Love for our freedom from a deadly illness "one day at a time". Love for our fellow members by honoring the basic foundation of our Unity Program, "Principles before Personalities", and love and concern for the welfare of our brothers and sisters in recovery whom God has put in our way. Then, unselfish love as we carry the message of hope to those who still suffer.

Honoring the spiritual principle of generosity would have avoided the issue of lowering the bonuses of our ISO employees who are the backbone of our communication process. We can learn from this experience by increased understanding how our spiritual principles can solve our problems. Our Gamblers Anonymous literature states that in times of confusion, emotional distress, or mental blank spots that adherence to those spiritual principles seems to solve our problems.

So, as the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous enters the 52nd year of carrying the greatest message known to mankind, the message of hope, hope for those people who suffer from compulsive gambling,

I hope this message for the new year encourages all who seek recovery and unity to honor and practice to the best of their abilities, in all their affairs, the spiritual principles of kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility. Our Fellowship has the choice to use these principles on a daily basis in solving any problems that confront or confuse our primary purpose. This is not a game we are playing..This is about change and growth within our Fellowship, not about politics personal opinions, or egos.

Humbly submitted by George W. - Area 16, Watertown, NY
Past trustee from New Jersey 1969-1973

Kansas City Agenda

1/1/09 - 6:47 PM

To my fellow Trustees,

Football is coming to a close, and in an effort to be more punctual this year, I am taking a sooner-rather-than-later approach to the agenda coming up in Kansas City. The last time I peaked, there were 23 items; there are now 30.

I've also noticed that many of these items will resound within our general membership; and in a concerted effort to keep our San Diego membership informed, I am taking the current agenda to our first Intergroup meeting in January and plan to distribute copies to all secretaries to take back to their groups.

Hopefully, this will pique their interest in not only what their Trustees are doing, but will interest them in what is being proposed for their fellowship.

Wishing a very prosperous New Year to each of you,
Linda S - Area 3A, San Diego

1/27/09 - 4:27 PM

To my fellow Trustees:

I would like to address some concerns regarding changes to the "Combo Book" coming up for the Kansas City agenda, as well as future conferences and other agenda items. When a Trustee stands up in front of the microphone to present his/her agenda item - even if it is change to the "Combo Book" - that Trustee as well as the item they are presenting should be heard with as much respect and understanding as any other item on the agenda. If the item appears shortly before closing, that item is STILL very important to the author. Often I have heard sneers, derogatory comments and grumbling at the end of the meeting - which is usually when Combo Book changes are offered.

I am a fairly new Trustee - have not been around as long as many of my senior Trustees have been - and am still "learning the ropes." I'm not as knowledgeable as many others; not as "in tune" as many others, but I come to the Trustee meetings to learn more about the program, to grow within the program, and to represent , with David F and Willie F, the many members of my GA fellowship in San Diego. I feel it is my honor and responsibility to bring their concerns to the Trustee meetings as well

as my own.

In San Diego, we have Indian casinos within 15 minutes in any direction. We have hundreds of newcomers each year - in pain, trying to recover - not knowing where to turn. Perhaps, the only piece of literature they read and hold onto to save their lives is the Combo Book. We all know that as they grow in the GA fellowship, they will become familiar with more of our precious GA literature. But for today, the Combo Book is their only link to sanity. Therefore, when they ask me to bring a change to the agenda regarding the Combo Book, I am delighted to do so - because it means they really care, they feel strongly about that particular item, and they are trying to "get involved and be of service."

Some of us have been in the program a very long time and perhaps some of us forget from time to time what it is like to be a "newcomer." My request for my fellow Trustees is to hear each agenda item - regardless - with the respect and dignity it deserves. You may or may not like it, nor may you approve of it - and that is okay - but at least please listen to it. The person who authored the agenda item may have poured their heart and soul into that item -

Thank you for "listening" (reading)
With faith in the Fellowship
Linda S - Area 3A - Trustee San Diego

1/27/09 - 6:19 PM

Without question, the piece of approved literature that gets the most number of agenda items each Trustee meeting is the Combo Book. Linda is correct that this is the lifeblood and safety net for many of our brothers and sisters who come into this program. ISO does not sell as much of any other piece of literature as the Combo Book and although I don't know the statistics, it would certainly seem that sales of the Combo Book outstrip all the other literature we sell combined.

I believe the problem of apathy that Linda cites is also irritating to many others at the Trustee meetings. At some undetermined moment in time, the 'crowd' becomes somewhat intolerant of the agenda that still remains and grumbles and groans about any business that is heard in the final segment on Friday afternoon. It's no secret that many of the Trustees are worn out and want to get to the festivities of the hosting area. I can understand that, but I too want to remind everyone that our function is as Trustees and we must discharge our duties with the full attention and focus we can muster for EVERY item, irrespective of when it falls in the agenda.

The party is a secondary issue, at least to me. I would like to see an agenda of 100+ well thought out items that would truly take up the full 15 minutes of debate and however many extensions needed after that to have a completely thorough discussion and vote. We have sessions on Thursday and Friday with the last segment ending usually no later than 5 PM. I say, let's run into Friday night and take as much time as we need on Saturday. There should be no tabled items because of time constraints. Let's break for the opening ceremony and then get back to work, if needed.

We should not have the sneers, grumbling and derogatory comments within the crowd. What we should have is an abundance of what I mentioned above - well thought out items with substance and foundation to make changes anywhere in our Fellowship. It just so happens that the Combo Book is the melting pot for many items that fail. I know that there are some who will always vote against Combo Book changes, because they feel 'if it aint' broke, don't fix it'. But there are many Trustees who scoff at some of the changes calling them 'ridiculous' 'absurd' and a few other words that are less than cordial. I am not going to suggest that any of the items proposed are in any of those categories, but the percentage of Combo Book items that fail is staggering. Worse yet is the heavily weighted results of the votes. I am not talking about 49-51 types of votes, but more like 27-54, 2-80 and 13-86.

As a result of this observation, the Trustee website now has a new reference resource available to it. Under the Main Menu is the GA Reference Material link. There you will find every agenda item that has not passed going back to the Farmington '05 Trustee meeting. It's arranged by page for reference. My suggestion is that whomever it is that wants to submit an item for a change to the Combo Book, that they actually look at this part of the website and DO SOME HOMEWORK. If you are submitting something that is similar or even identical to that which has failed in the past, then unless you caucus with other Trustees on how to make it different, it is probably going to fail once again.

David M. - Area 12 - New Jersey

Various Comments from the Front Desk

1/9/09 - 4:29 PM

Greetings and Happy New Year from the "Northern Land of the Frozen GA Members".

We just had 20 inches of snow dumped on us and still, all is well.

I was very pleased with the outcome from the last BOR meeting concerning the "Christmas Bonuses". The way the past and present trustees pulled together to express our feelings on this topic was very inspirational and shows us that we have a "strong sense of fellowship" and a "tremendous desire to do the right thing."

We now move forward to Kansas City and are waiting for the agenda to fill up as it usually does.

Montreal is making progress with the planning for fall 2009 and we here are all looking forward to hosting the first fully bilingual GA conference. (Practice your French).

The literature committee is currently without a chairperson and we desperately need someone to step forward and chair this committee. There is some very important literature to be worked on and the committee needs a chairperson to help co-ordinate what has to be done. Please contact myself or Tom M the Chairman of the BOT if you are interested in helping at least until Kansas City.

See you all at the next conference in Kansas City and keep the trustee submissions coming.

Herb B. - 2nd. co-chair of the BOT
Trustee Area 5

If not now, when?

1/11/09 - 12:12 PM

It's a new year and time for all of us to start thinking about making this fellowship a better place for us all. Kansas City is coming up in a bit over 3 months from now, but the agenda submission deadline is fast approaching with its March 1 deadline.

I see the job of Trustee as a means to change and improve what may be the 'faulty parts' of this 51+ year-old institution. It's a forum to exercise what we believe is good for us all, and hopefully whatever it is will gain support with the BOT members to act decisively upon. I'm one who throws some Tabasco into the dinner to make as many people as I can stop a moment and say, 'That's something I never thought about before.'

For me, it is always about the process and H.O.W. As many of us have learned in our recoveries, the facts don't always get a chance to speak for themselves, so when I bring them up, it is my fervent wish that all those involved exercise H.O.W. We, as a Fellowship, should no longer turn away from those who would deny that problem situations and issues exist and/or are unwilling to look at them, or worse yet, tell us that some things can't be changed, forcing us to believe that to be true. Recovery is about growth and that is what makes me 'tick' as a Trustee.

My new focus is going to be very controversial, may irritate some, and is hopefully going to move the fellowship into a self-examination process. In the next week, I will be submitting an agenda item for Kansas City that will ask the Chairman of the BOT to form a committee to research and recommend a proposal to completely overhaul the Board of Regents.

Before you roll your eyes and say that I am looking to destroy Unity in the Fellowship or that I am going to undo all the hard work that was done in the last decade regarding the convergence of the BOR and BOT into harmonious relations, let me give you some things to think about.

The By-Laws and the Guidance Code of Gamblers Anonymous are not synchronized in the provisions of who, what, where, and especially HOW. The BOR was created by the BOT, initially for people to be designated as the officers of the Corporation. We elect the BOR each year, but the BOT is frequently told that it cannot instruct a Corporation as to what it must do. Certainly, there should be areas of jurisdiction that the BOR should be allowed to deal with on its own, but with the oversight of the BOT in the event there is something undertaken against the wishes of the BOT. This Fellowship, at least from the business perspective, should be structured like a true corporation. That means with directors and officers. This way, the officers could run the business and the directors would be the overseeing body to make sure the officers are running the corporation consistent with desires of the directors. If an officer is acting inconsistent with the wishes of the board of directors, then there should be a process for review, possible removal and replacement of that person; all with the emphasis of principals before personalities, and the Recovery and Unity Steps.

The problem is in the By-Laws. The Directors and the Officers are one in the same. Business 101 says....'You can't do that.' Article III, Section 1, says that the Directors are the Regents, yet in Article IV, Section 1, it says that the Officers are 4 of those Directors. What's wrong with this picture? Adding to that is Article II, Section 2, which states that the Fellowship is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees. If that is the case, then why are we led to believe that the BOT is powerless in relation to the actions of the BOR, other than electing them? Only the BOT is allowed to change approved literature, yet we are given an edict by the BOR that when they change something in the By-Laws it overrides the BOT approval process and the BOT has to approve it without question. Oh yeah? The By-Laws are approved literature. Guess what BOR; you don't get to tell the BOT what they MUST do. Who's on first? Where are Abbott and Costello when we need them?

Over the years, the BOR and BOT have moved in different directions. I know personally that in Portland, I tried to get a joint committee of members of the BOR and BOT together for the purpose of doing something not quite similar, but related to what I am writing here today. It was item 59, 'Form a joint committee between the BOT and BOR to review procedures, policies and the By-Law provisions in order to make recommendations for changes to bring the BOR in line with the group conscience of the Fellowship.' My request was ruled out of order. The Chair was challenged and a 35-34 vote ruled that the Chair was out of order. A roll call vote was taken because of the closeness, at which time the decision reversed in favor of the Chair by a vote of 41-40. As you can see, I'm not the only one who is interested in have a committee pursue this task.

As I reflected on the unsuccessful challenge to the Chair, I was reminded by some that the BOR is a corporation and nobody could instruct a corporation what to do. That's a huge problem right there. Additionally, I heard that the BOR was an outside entity and that we couldn't mix BOT and BOR issues together. Previously I was told that the BOR does not take unsolicited suggestions from the BOT. Do people make up this crap as they find it convenient? Since Portland and Houston, I have received more support from those who voted against forming such a committee. I believe the bonus situation may have brought more people to the point of examining exactly what goes on with the BOR. Kansas City is the perfect place and opportunity to bring this issue to the forefront, once again.

It's important to remember that the BOR is still operating on procedures and thinking that was prevalent when it was first organized. The representation on the BOR is disproportionately weighted with 77.8% of its members required to be within 200 miles of the ISO office. No disrespect to my California brothers and sisters, but you are not the center of the GA universe. GA members outside of that 200-mile zone have a different view of how things should get done. Making patronizing comments about how if we want something discussed or changed that we should put it on the agenda, is far more than irritating, it's insulting. Think about the last time you had an item on the agenda when you weren't there that was presented to the board. Most likely, it failed because the person presenting it was unable to argue against the negatives that were brought up at the meeting. We all know that without proper in-person geographical representation, the BOR issues brought up by people outside the inner 200-mile sanctum are most probably also doomed to defeat.

There is no longer a need to have only local people as BOR officers. Checks can be FedExed to the check signers and returned to ISO in 2 days. The representation of the board should be 12 members with the US being divided into 4 regions similar to the compass and 2 members from each region. 2 members should be from Canada and 2 from the rest of the world. The list of backup BOR members should not be kept a secret, and in a new geographic positioning, a backup member from the specific area should be ready to step into any BOR meeting if one of their 2 area members is unable to attend a BOR meeting. If the job of a Regent is that important, then let's make sure we have full attendance at every meeting. The meetings should be done with a conference call service and any GA member who is interested in listening in, via this system should be allowed to. A transcribed audio file should be available for downloading on a website.

Most important is that the BOR members must be elected on the basis of everyone's business experience, and not through a popularity vote the way it has been done, time in memoriam. 200 words about who a BOR candidate is, barely allows the person to introduce himself or herself. If you need to take up a full page of paper to let everyone know your true qualifications for the job, then do so. We are living in a digital age when websites don't know the limitation of space when writing something.

Of course this is just me scratching the surface about this matter of restructuring the BOR, but it is long overdue. The list of necessary

changes is long and quite detailed. Up until now, the BOR has been a safe haven for California members in the 200-mile radius of the ISO office to give back to the Fellowship. That time is about to expire. I ask that everyone consider what is wrong with the BOR and its current structure and throw their support behind this agenda item in Kansas City. I hope to have the good fortune to be able to chair this committee and will be looking for people who are intimately familiar with both the BOT Guidance Code and the BOR By-Laws.

Although my fellow Californians may fight me to the carpet that I am completely misrepresenting the BOR, I would like to point out to them that they are VERY much in the minority, as it relates to the rest of the Fellowship. If you want to argue the point with me, we have the best forum to do so, the Trustee Line.

The Boston Tea Party was about taxation without representation. The BOR is about administration without adequate representation. We have a new President about to take office who ran on the platform of 'The Change We Need.' This committee to propose the complete overhaul of the Board of Regents is not a political platform option. It is a moral imperative that we DESPERATELY need.

David M. - Area 12 - New Jersey

Gamblers Anonymous, Business, Organization, Institution or Fellowship?

1/15/09 - 6:39 PM

This message is to all current members of the Board of Trustees and particularly to the newly installed trustees who act as guardians of the Twelve Steps of Recovery and Unity.

It appears that there is widespread unawareness of some Board of Trustee members that the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code, Article IV, Declaration, clearly states that Gamblers Anonymous is dedicated to the proposition that a structurally sound Fellowship is based and granted in democratic and spiritual principles.

All GA members---including Board of Trustee and Board of Regent members.---are asked to honor---and be guided---in solving any and all problems within our fellowship by honoring the spiritual principles of kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility as they seek guidance to all decisions they make that affect individual group activities, inter group activities, and activities that include the healthy exchange of ideas within our two service boards who are responsible to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

Those spiritual principles in solving fellowship problems have been replaced in many cases by personal opinions, forceful egos, and confrontational criticism.

That attitude brings great danger to the unity within our fellowship that binds us together in common purpose. The depth of our common illness offers the ability to arrest the illness not the ability to cure the illness. We are all equally in recovery arrested compulsive gamblers.

In a recent submission to the trustee line a current member of the BOT claimed that the purpose of serving in a trustee position is to use it as a "means to change and improve" the "faulty parts" of a "51-year-old institution." There may be some "faulty people" within our fellowship (as no one is perfect) but there are no "faulty parts" within our life-saving programs of Recovery and Unity. I also take exception to calling G.A. an "institution." G.A. is a fellowship. If G.A. were to cease being a fellowship and become an institution or a business with self-appointed directors, that would be a sad, sad day.

It is made very clear in our Guidance Code that the current Board of Trustees has the vitally important task of being guardians of the Twelve Steps of Recovery and Twelve Step Unity Programs, and that they, the trustees "must be guided by these precepts in all their decisions." (Article 8, Section 8) This has been violated many times by Board of Trustee decisions that disregarded the words "must be guided."

Guardians are defined as defenders, protectors, or keepers. That is what I would suggest all trustees do—using the 12 Steps of Recovery and Unity, PLEASE defend, protect, and keep our program as it is. It's your job. It's your responsibility. It's your life—and mine—and that of all of the members of our program now and those yet to come that is at stake.

The same trustee who gave his own definition of what the trustee position is about also said that "recovery is about growth." He is absolutely right on this! But he has confused the issue. When we talk in the program about "recovery is about growth," it is personal growth we are talking about. That is what the trustees should focus on first and foremost—their individual recoveries— and the enabling of recovery in

others. We learn in Step One that we have no power over gambling or anyone other than ourselves. It is when we put personal recovery first—including ridding ourselves of shortcomings and working (not changing) the Steps--that we become most valuable to ourselves and to our fellowship.

I also find harmful all the “business” references. It cannot be stated strongly enough—we are NOT a business and straight A’s in Business 101 will not help us to recover. In fact, many of our members were straight A students in all kinds of areas. None of that helped any of us in fighting our illness. The only thing that did help us was The Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous and the loving support we got from other members as we fought against our addiction by working the Recovery and Unity Programs.

One only has to look in the dictionary to see the meaning of fellowship: the condition of being together or of sharing similar interests or experiences, companionship of individuals meeting on equal terms, a union of friends or equals sharing a similar interest or experience. Gamblers Anonymous IS NOT a business nor is it an organization, in business, there is a hierarchy of people in control. **NOT SO IN A FELLOWSHIP.**

All GA members in leadership positions are there as trusted servants—to serve all the members— not to dictate, hire and fire, judge, police, change, rule or improve.

Our Guidance Code clearly states in Article VI, Members, “that no one is more important than the individual member. He or she has no ruler or superior, but he or she may select a person or group of persons to represent him or her and his or her rights in this Fellowship.” It is unfortunate that this promise of responsibility by the Trustees to the members that elect them has been neglected for so long a period of time. The trustees now consider themselves a power separate from the Fellowship with little concern to communicate with the membership as a whole.

In Unity Step 9, we are advised that “Gamblers Anonymous is run by the spirit of service and not by force of vested authority.....” and that Gamblers Anonymous is not organized in a formal way.....The service boards that have been created have no formal veto power and are responsible to the will of the membership as a whole.” No—we are NOT a business. We ARE a fellowship. Any current trustee who does not accept that has the responsibility to resign and allow another member who believes in defending the principles the fellowship were founded upon.

In addition, BOT members are not “senators” they are “trusted servants.” Individual members should be aware that Unity Step Three tells us that “we shall be held responsible if we elect irresponsible Trusted Servants who cannot serve the group in the manner determined by the “Ultimate Authority,” which is the spiritual concept of “Group Conscience.”

This message is for all our trustees as they get ready to attend another conference with the hope and prayer that all will be guided by the spiritual principles of our Fellowship and not by individual personalities and egos run amok.

Whenever we forget one of our most important guiding principles of “Principles before personalities,” we almost assuredly will hurt—not help—our wonderful Fellowship flourish and grow. “Principles before personalities” would never allow the passage of strident and unprincipled proposed approved literature like the Abuse and Harassment paper which puts trusted servants in the roles of judge, juries,, and deciders of the fate of fellow members who are rightly or wrongly accused of offending another member. This paper if approved in the Kansas City BOT meeting will open a “pandoras box” of claims, counter claims, anger, disunity, and confusion to groups who for 51 + years have handled any such problems with honesty, openmindedness, and willingness to correct any wrongs.

As I said before, each of our lives and the lives of those who will come to GA for help depends upon the strengthening of our Fellowship—and for that to happen, we are humbly asked to adhere to the spiritual principles that our founding members—and the founding members of 12-Step programs before us—set forth.

I ask each trustee to seek his or her Higher Power to guide them as they deal with the issues that come before him or her. It is hoped that all will be guided by the spiritual principles of kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility. I would suggest the fellowship add to those spiritual principles, those of love, tolerance, and compassion.

If our trusted servants in conference at their next scheduled Trustee meeting believe the program’s spiritual principles have no meaning or

relevance to recovery, or the freedom of self-governing that is now guaranteed to all groups by Step Four of Unity is unnecessary, then they can propose an agenda item to remove those ideas and other freedoms guaranteed by the GA Guidance Code by voting them out of the Guidance Code. Then we can cease to be a fellowship and become a real business with directors and controllers with authority to punish those members who do not comply with such self-proclaimed authority. If we don't stand for something—we will fall for anything, even ideas that seem good—but are the enemy of what is best.

No matter who submits an idea to this valuable forum for consideration we all have the right to be wrong...but we can strive to be agreeable even if we disagree. What matters most to our Fellowship is the foundation we build for **RECOVERY, UNITY, AND SERVICE** that bind us together in unison through good times or times of controversy

I invite all who read this to enter into a dialogue expressing your feelings about these thoughts and the direction in which you see our fellowship growing stronger.

Yours in Recovery,
George W. - Area 16, Upstate NY (Past Trustee from NJ)

1/18/09 - 5:15 PM

It has been some time that I actually responded or submitted something to the trustee line. Two months is long for me to keep quiet ☺ I sincerely hope that everyone was able to have happy holidays and a wonderful start to a new year.

I was reading through the current issue of the trustee line and was really caught up on the issue of, "If not now, then when?" I agree with David, that there are some things that need to be changed. As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter if I agree or disagree. David laid out areas in our literature that are contradictory to other pieces of the literature. Some contradictions are right there in the same piece of literature. Also, he brings up the point that we elect the BOR and then have absolutely no say so over anything that these ELECTED officers do. I brought this point up after the last BOR election. Something is really wrong with that picture. I say it doesn't matter whether I agree or disagree because facts are facts. It may not be comfortable for us as a member digs up and finds some areas of our literature or fellowship that are not consistent or up to date, but when this happens it is the duty of the trustees to take an honest good look at the problem.

I was very interested in the response to what David wrote and I must comment not only on this response, but to the thought process that some seem to have. I came into the fellowship eight years ago at the age of 26. I was by far a minority being young and female. The connections with most members were just not there. It took me over a year to realize that I could learn something from the wisdom and experiences of the members with time and experiences that I had YET faced. I am now in my thirties (I'm sure most did not need me to do the calculations) and I am still one of the youngest members in my area. However, I believe as with many other areas we are beginning to see a younger crowd entering the fellowship.

I bring that up because it was mentioned that there are, "no faulty parts of our fellowship, just faulty people." I am not about to say that the entire program is faulty...that is not the case, but as times change, so does our fellowship need the change. I believe that our primary purpose is to help the compulsive gambler that still suffers. How do we do this is the fellowship does not get updated with the times? This fellowship has worked for the last 51+ years, but that is because over those 51+ years there have been some changes that have needed to be made. I believe that there is too much of the mentality that, "it has worked this long, why change it?" Some things need change because times have changed. Some things need change to make sure that from one piece of literature to the next or from one section to the next, we are consistent.

It is not ok for me to think that because it has worked thus far there is no need for improvement. If I take that same thought process with my own recovery, and then my personal growth stops. So, far I have done well, so why do I need to continue to change or try anything new? I can tell you...I need to continue trying to change things and trying new things, so that I can continue to grow in my life.

So, this brings me to the last item that I personally had an issue with. I would agree that recovery is about personal growth. However, I don't believe that I continue to grow or recover if the fellowship does not continue to grow and develop. As a trustee it is important for me to see that the fellowship continues to grow...I feel that there is no need to have trustees if there is no room for growth amongst the entire fellowship.

So, I can only speak for me...I look at my recovery first and foremost and I don't tell others what they NEED to do. I have learned in my recovery that it is good for me to share with others what worked for me, but because it worked for me doesn't mean it will work for others. I offer up my experiences of recovery and it is up to the individual to decide if they would like to try and see if it works for them too. In saying that if the fellowship as a whole does not continue with growth then in 20 years what new life experiences will I have to offer the newer members coming into the fellowship? To me recovery is about personal growth and that for me continues to happen as the fellowship continues to have growth.

Dina P. - Area 6 - West Coast of Florida

1/19/09 - 9:28 AM

I read with great interest the submission by George W. I think George did a wonderful job outlining many of the spiritual principles on which our fellowship is founded and by which it should be guided. I myself have often lamented some of the actions taken by our trusted servants and, what I believed was a total disregard for these principals. Often, while serving on the BOT, I spoke out against such violations and encouraged my fellow board members to look back to our roots and to pray for the knowledge of the will of our higher power.

That said, his underlying premise that the G.A. founded 51 years ago is perfect and cannot (or should not) be improved upon is difficult to understand. The "democratic and spiritual principles" he references require, by their very nature, an ever changing program. The experience, strength and hope shared with us by our founders are subject to change with each new brother and sister who joins in our struggle.

Each day that passes allows us, as a fellowship to grow. New literature, pressure relief, new forms of public relations, web sites, hotlines (to name a very few) are a result of our growth and were facilitated by the boards that serve us.

I must also take exception to the broad stroke used to describe the failings of the trustees. Some trustees may be guilty of the charges leveled by George but surely not all of them. I hope he did not mean to cast his net so widely. I believe that most trustees have the same respect, if not the same understanding, of the principles as George does.

Lastly, the issue that prompted George's submission in the first place. David M. has called for the chair to appoint a committee to study and perhaps propose changes to the structure and the workings of the BOR. Changes here are long overdue and I thank David for the suggestion and hope that our chair takes him up on it.

Brother Denis M. - Area 12 - New Jersey

1/19/09 - 4:30 PM

To all current trustees and past trustees,

If my submissions to the January Trustee Line offended any other GA member, I humbly sincerely apologize. That was not my intention. I want to make amends for suggesting that the entire Board of Trustees, past or present, at times downgraded the spiritual principles that guide the conduct of our fellowship as per the Guidance Code.

I also neglected to commend and applaud the unselfish efforts of Board of Trustee members in giving of themselves so unselfishly, wanting nothing in return other than to honor the primary purpose of our fellowship. That primary purpose is carrying the GA message of hope to those who still suffer. Some great accomplishments delivered by the Board of Trustees manifest themselves in the ourstanding new literature formulated over the past few years including "Towards 90 days", "Beyond 90 days", "The judges, lawyers, probation officer" pamphlets, and many other forms of information that help all compulsive gamblers identify and desire recovery. I was wrong not to honor the unselfish efforts by the Board of Trustee members who go unnoticed and not known to the membership as a whole.

I have no desire to cause confrontation, controversy, or stir the strong emotions all arrested compulsive gamblers possess. My desire is for my personal peace of mind and serenity, for continued recovery "one day at a time", to be willing to share my experience, strength, and hope with those who still suffer, to encourage harmony, personal growth, and continued recovery for all my bothers and sisters in recovery.

In conclusion, I thank the Board of Trustees and the chairman of this website committee, David M., for the opportunity to express views that at times may oppose or question the changes proposed by agendas presented to the Board of Trustees. In no way, however, do I apologize for expressing my views concerning the spiritual principles that guide our fellowship.

I believe that change, progress for our fellowship, and the spiritual principles our fellowship was founded upon can co-exist in harmony enhancing the Unity so vital to our mutual purpose and survival as a Fellowship.

With respect and best wishes for all current and past trustees.
George W. - Area 16 - Watertown, New York

1/19/09 - 6:23 PM

Something bad just happened here today, in my opinion. George's last submission appeared to me as if he got chased away from the Trustee Line because of some dissenting opinions to his views on the 'If not now, when?' category. I closed out my submission in that category with a sentence that read...' If you want to argue the point with me, we have the best forum to do so, the Trustee Line.'

I think there is no question that George and I have dramatic differences of opinion on this subject. Be that as it may, I still would defend his right to speak his mind on the Trustee Line. Unfortunately, it also means that doing so opens up the door for others to present a completely different point of view or approach to those issues.

George closed out his last posting with this sentence...'I invite all who read this to enter into a dialogue expressing your feelings about these thoughts and the direction in which you see our fellowship growing stronger.' As they say, be careful what you wish for.

I hope that everyone realizes that the Trustee Line is supposed to be about growth, for those who read it, and those who submit items. Knowledge is growth. Openmindedness is growth. Honesty is growth. This platform is the perfect vehicle to expand our understanding of the problems that exist and how we can change our thinking to encompass ideas, concepts and thinking that might be a bit more inclusive than what we have exercised up to that point. This is not about keeping score to see who wins, or squashing someone with a dissenting opinion into admitting defeat.

We put these posting up on the Trustee Line with what we generally feel is an iron-clad set of premises, statements and conclusions. Sometimes, it is very easy to get picked off by the smallest of opposing commentary. Our egos occasionally get bruised in the process, but if we learn something new about how others feel who don't necessarily agree with our positions, then we have the opportunity to grow. Stepping to the sideline and giving up is not a good tactic. Learning about others, teaches us about ourselves.

The Trustee Line is an immensely strong tool for growth for everyone who is involved with it in any capacity. If enough people climb onboard, then the growth extends to the Fellowship as a whole, based on the actions undertaken by the Board of Trustees. Let's take a moment to think twice and act once, rather than to throw in the towel and give up...on anything.

David M. - Area 12 - New Jersey

1/30/09 - 10:08 PM

My Fellow Trustees:

I have been known in some circles to be "opinionated" and not afraid to speak my mind. Call it a character defect, but it is obviously something I continue to work on - it's in my genes. My father taught me that if I felt strongly enough about an issue - not to back down, but to think it through, re-evaluate it and my feelings about it, but to stand firm in my beliefs if I then felt it was the right thing to do.

I read the Combo Book daily to remind me that my main objective in this wonderful Program is to attempt to stop gambling through the Gamblers Anonymous Program. On page 9, the Program reminds me that honesty, openmindedness and willingness are the KEY WORDS in our recovery. In fact, on the last agenda, a thoughtful member suggested we simply state these words are the KEYS to our recovery.

A funny thing happens on the way to a Trustees' meeting. I study the agenda, I discuss it with other members and Trustees, and register on my hard copy of the agenda how I intend to vote. But as I "listen" to the arguments - both for and against an item - I frequently change my mind AND my vote. When one hears the intent behind an issue, or hears more wisdom than they possess, pro or con, one can make a more informed decision. I respectfully suggest that this may be one of those items. I have a "?" around this item. That means I need to hear more - hear other opinions - and listen carefully to the wisdom of others. May I be bold enough to suggest that we all stay "openminded" on this item until we can (1) reflect, (2) consider and evaluate, and (3) listen to others' ideas. Perhaps a more informed choice will be or can be made.

