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Trustee Line for February 2014

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 2/28/14.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are 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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Recipe For Freedom, Attraction Versus Promotion, Money, Some Personal Thoughts

21/14 - 8:00 PM

In a recent January 2014 posting to the trusteeline a writer stated that the Step Four Unity Principle of "Each group is self-governing" is a recipe for anarchy. The writer of course is entitled to his opinions. But, we understand that opinions are not facts. In my opinion that opinion of the 4th Unity Step being a recipe for anarchy is not factual but totally false. My opinion is that the principle of Unity Step four is freedom, not anarchy. Anarchy is when a person or group of persons attempt to attack or dismantle a government by force. Gamblers Anonymous is not a government. Gamblers Anonymous is a Spiritual Fellowship. Above all, The Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code states the Fellowship is based on democratic and spiritual principles. Nothing can diminish that statement. That statement is a fact.

This principle of freedom in Unity Step Four (except in matters that affect another Gamblers Anonymous Group or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole) is to protect individual Gamblers Anonymous members and Gamblers Anonymous Groups from government, bosses, edicts, mandates, absolutes, or commands. In fact, indisputable evidence of this freedom is found in the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code which states: "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 His or Her rights within the Fellowship." The people we elect to protect our rights within the Fellowship are the Board of Trustees.

The major issues and opinions presented in the January issue of the trusteeline focus on "attraction versus promotion", and money or the "big donation". The idea of billboards as attraction is not a new idea. New Jersey Intergroup some years ago (possibly the late 80s or early 90s) placed billboards on the Garden State Parkway around exit 145. I do not know how long they were there or if it created a influx of new members. They also placed stickers at toll booths on the GSP stating "If you have a gambling problem etc. etc. and the GA hotline phone number. They did try, but I have no idea of the results but I believe if one suffering compulsive gambler sought help it was worth the effort. I agree with David M. that billboards or other forms of outreach that inform the public in a manner consistent with the principles of the program are not promotion

but are intended to bring awareness to the public about the problem of compulsive gambling and most importantly that there is help available if one seeks help.

Our public relation efforts at our Watertown, New York GA Group have concentrated on local newspapers, speaking engagements to groups interested in learning about Gamblers Anonymous and compulsive gambling, using the GA "There is help" flyers where we are allowed to present them and we have found that churches, supermarkets, and post office bulletin boards are accessible locations.

The Watertown Daily Times Newspaper for the last two years has everyday placed the basic GA message "If you have a gambling problem etc.etc.-- our hotline phone number is also listed" underneath the daily lottery numbers. (can't be missed) In the two years this message has appeared on a daily basis we have received one phone call. What does that tell us—it doesn't matter what it tells us—it is the outreach that matters. To me it is a reality that active compulsive gamblers do not give up their addictive gambling insanity easily and will suffer devastating pain, misery, suffering, and debt before that seek any type of help. The most important reality is that we will be there waiting for them when they arrive at the GA door. Gamblers Anonymous is also listed in all local telephone directories. We try.

If every GA group large or small contacted their local newspapers or local agencies to inform them of our Fellowship, our meeting places, our meeting times, and our meeting locations is a way of carrying our message that we exist. There are many ways to carry the message and many GA members over the years have spoken at Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Schools, and other outlets who requested information about compulsive gambling. At all times GA members honor the principle of anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and internet. We are servants, not stars.

Final thoughts about money: The addiction to compulsive gambling is an illness. Money won, lost, or misused is the tip of the iceberg. Our literature states that compulsive gambling is not a financial problem but that compulsive gambling is an emotional problem. Most compulsive gamblers treat money like toilet paper-used to wipe away their growing unmanageable debt problems. Compulsive gamblers have little respect for money or have a sense of values where money is concerned. Money is for gambling! Compulsive gamblers lie, cheat, steal, possibly commit criminal acts to obtain gambling money. The higher purpose of repaying our debts to those we owe is not about money per se. It is about the principle of restitution and restoring/rebuilding broken lives. In recovery there are no short cuts to arresting our gambling, to peace of mind, to serenity, to meaning, to purpose, and good citizenship. To have a pressure group will be of great aid to make a new way of living and thinking a reality.

Those pilgrims who come to our GA meeting room doors for the most part are severely damaged. They are damaged Mentally, Emotionally, Physically, Spiritually, and Financially. They need help, care, guidance, a program of recovery to follow, understanding, sponsorship, and meetings, meetings, and more meetings. They need us! We need them! We need each other! This is where the battle for recovery begins. A BATTLE NO COMPULSIVE GAMBLER CAN AFFORD TO LOSE!

We, who have been blessed with recovery, and a new way of living life need to be patient and value those who do enter our GA doorways while never stopping our efforts to carry the message of hope to those who still suffer. That is our mission and our mutual responsibility to our selves- --to others.

These opinions are presented in the spirit of sharing experience, strength, and hope.

George W. - Area 16, Upstate New York

2/2/14 - 8:32 AM George. W.

I'm afraid your opening paragraph is a complete misrepresentation of what was said in the January trusteeline. I fail to understand why you choose to isolate part of a comment, twist it out of context and then portray that fabricated opinion as the opinion of someone else. I am satisfied that anyone reading the post in context will see that the point made was that, reading the first part of any step and ignoring the rest is dangerous.

If you had stated that the opinion expressed in the January trusteeline was that taking the words " Each group should be self governing. Period. " is a recipe for anarchy, your statement would have been true, it is and that is what was said in the January trusteeline, by me.

By your own standards what you chose to say instead was false. If you had chosen to acknowledge the last line "I prefer to read the full sentence "you would have understood and acknowledged the connection between the issues and you could have avoided the need for you to attempt to import the flawed approach and reasoning you utilized on this occasion onto another member,

Let me quote just a few lines around the comment you referred to so that just a little bit of the context is restored.

" We don't have a problem with the ammunition for our smoking gun and our attitude to the ammunition, Really ?

Or maybe, just maybe, the word "Just" in " Not just a financial problem "is in there for a reason.

That's just me looking at the principles of the issue, as opposed to the personality driven side that comes up with things like " Each group should be self governing. Period " which is just a recipe for anarchy and nothing to do with Unity step four.

I prefer to read the full sentence. "

The facts are as they are, George, I didn't write unity step four, I just read it fully and hope to be one little link in the barrier against the anarchy loved so much by those who use half steps and two steps to waltz their way to Pollyanna's utopia, where this fellowship is excoriated by factoids and misrepresentation and those who seek to misrepresent by factoidation.

As a matter of interest and regarding the principles, what are the opinions of anyone in the fellowship on the real opinion I expressed in the January trusteeline sic: Using the first half of unity step four without taking it in its full context is likely to and has led to the ultimate twostep of anarchy?

Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland South -East

Anarchy and Self-Will Run Riot, or the Freedom With Responsibility of Unity Step 4

2/3/14 - I:II PM

As a former resident of a Treatment center, some 20 or so years ago, I have been blessed to be assisted, by members of this fellowship, to leave it outside the door of every G.A. Meeting I have been to bar the first three, and pick it up again on my way out. That's in the region of 3,000 meetings or so.

I am about to quote directly from an outside source, I dislike incidents where this is done without acknowledgement that that is what it is and identifying the source. I am not aware of a similar reference in our literature and in any case I would still see it as appropriate to use this quote from this source, in the prevailing context.

The following is a quote from one Bill.W. referring to Tradition 4. Source, Editorial by Bill. W. A.A. Grapevine 1948

"An A.A. group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members. Their own experience, plus A.A. opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience.

Yet please note one important qualification. It will be seen that such extreme liberty of thought and action applies only to the group's own affairs. Rightly enough, this Tradition goes on to say, "But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, these groups ought to be consulted." Obviously, if any individual, group or regional committee could take an action which might seriously affect the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, or seriously disturb surrounding groups, that would not be liberty at all. It would be sheer license; it would be anarchy, not democracy. "

One problem we have in our fellowship, in my opinion, is the partial reference to outside sources, out of context, used not to assist anything other than the character defect of self will run riot.

It's clear to me that the wisdom of this fellowship and indeed all the sources of that wisdom, is sufficient to cope with this threat.

If there is anyone reading this that thinks they are superior due to their

exposure to outside influences, rather than assisting this delusion that that exposure somehow elects you to represent the opinion of these outside entities, please put your superior wisdom and knowledge on the agenda and give the members of this fellowship the right to decide.

At the very least, please acknowledge that you have not been elected to represent the views of any of these outside entities, nor would they ask.

My sadness is that those in the most vulnerable positions are the ones most easily influenced by this well intentioned but very misguided practice of covering up character defects by mis- representation of the facts and intent behind the principles of Recovery, Unity and Guidance.

We are, it seems, elected to protect the rights of our fellow members, as already suggested in the first post of February.

If anybody thinks the Freedom of Unity step 4, without the associated responsibility, is anything other than a recipe for Anarchy, I'd be interested to hear your rationale.

In the spirit of Recovery, Unity and receiving Guidance,

Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland South - East

Central Location

2/11/14 - 9:09 PM

I would like to hear from my fellow trustees on how they feel about the selection of Tampa, Florida as the meeting place for the fall BOT meeting this year. I have a hard time understanding how that is even close to being centrally located.

Steve R. - Area 2B Trustee, Sacramento, California

2/12/14 - 8:40 PM Steve.

I also was very surprised to see that "CENTRAL" meant Central Florida and not central USA. For the last several years ALWAYS the conversation of location was suppose to be Chicago or Kanas City. For whatever reason the committee and Chairman approved for Florida without the approval or zero input from the BOT body.

The GA GRAPEVINE or the majority of GA members are in an uproar that trustees voted themselves a resort vacation for the Mexico retreat and now this. A quote a member told me was "SURE WHY WOULD THE TRUSTEES VOTE TO GO TO A COLD PLACE WHEN THEY CAN PLAY GOLF AND GO TO SOME PLACE WARM". Honestly, not to off on their viewpoint. This was suppose to be fly in and fly out meeting - all business and no play. This is not the best location, even if the intentions were meaningful and honest.

The Chairman and the rest of the BOT should really take a hard look on the image and message they are sending out to the GA membership who they are suppose to be representing and pay for this. My recommendation would be that the trustees send a strong NO GO on this location and kick it back to the committee to stick to the original idea of Central USA vs Central Florida.

Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

2/13/14 - 8:56 AM

I admit sometimes it is difficult to understand why there confusion as to what is to be done. Take for instance the fact that the Fall 2014 BOT meeting location was up to the Executive Board, and not the Board of Trustees. I take offense that the BOT is being "called out" about Tampa being selected by the Executive Board. As the BOT recently approved, it is the responsibility of the Executive Board to pick the location of a BOT meeting when there is no bid for a conference at two (2) consecutive BOT meetings. The Trustees had no vote on where this meeting was to be held, so the quote Gary uses in his post has no bearing on the entire body. However, to read it, one would think that the entire body decided to choose Tampa over Chicago or Minnesota. This is an unfair attack on the BOT. To throw the entire BOT under the bus is just a miscarriage of justice and our members need to be reminded that this was an Executive Board decision, not a BOT decision. To attack, or to allow an attack on the BOT that is not placed in facts, is providing a disservice to our Fellowship, which is exactly what has happened in Gary's post.

Now, to the facts. It was my understanding as well that the Executive Board would attempt to have the Fall BOT meeting centrally located. Obviously Tampa is not such a place. However, before we throw the Executive Board under the bus, as the entire BOT has already been, maybe we need to hear why Tampa was selected. Perhaps the rates we got in Tampa were better than those of the other areas. Perhaps those other areas couldn't accommodate the BOT. The truth is I don't why Tampa was selected. To throw out conjecture as to why is not the way we should be operating. We elected the Executive Board to serve our needs. I feel confidant that they have. I understand the frustration of those coming from the West Coast. I would like to think that my attitude would be that of understanding if the Executive Board decide on Seattle as the site of this BOT meeting. Because not knowing all of the facts, we can't slam these three individuals. I have no doubt they did their diligence and found the best possible location for this meeting.

As for Cancun being selected and the thought that the Trustees voted themselves a resort vacation is also misplaced. I'm not sure how members in other areas feel, but the membership in South Jersey I represent had no negative feedback on this. How Gary came up with a majority of GA members being in an uproar, well, let me just say I'd like to know how many people he actually asked. I voted for Cancun. My reasoning was simple. The price for New Orleans and Cancun were virtually the same. To me it came down to an area that hasn't hosted a conference before. Mexico is a relatively new area and to be able to host a conference at this stage of their existence is beyond monumental. I felt that they deserved this bid. I can't speak as to why others voted the way they did, but my vote would have been the same had the location been Mexico City.

It's just a shame, and it pains me to see, that there are people out there, some of whom are past Trustees, that take pleasure in attacking the BOT every possible chance, even when they don't know all the facts. Or worse yet, attack the BOT because they don't know the changes that were made to our literature.

Pete K. - 13B, South Jersey

2/13/14 - 5:24 PM Steve.

On your request for feelings of trustees on the location of the Fall Trustee meeting, happy to impart mine.

Based on known information, my interpretation of the situation is that the Executive board were charged with arranging the location and they have done so. There was clearly, at several stages, consideration, perhaps even expectation, that a central area would be the venue.

On reading the email communication that we all received, it seems clear that some members offered to assist the Executive board in finding a location outside the Area of any of the members of the executive board, this was clearly implied in the email.

Any member could have offered and it is testament to the goodness in the fellowship that several, at least, did.

Particular, but not exclusive, thanks was offered to a few members, who seem to be closer to the final area chosen and the difficulty in finding a location outside the areas of any of the executive board was highlighted.

The use of the words Central Location as the name for this topic implies that Central was a requirement rather than a strong consideration, that is what I feel Central was, a consideration and I respect the decision reached, presumably,that it was not the over-riding consideration.

Keeping it simple, it seems as simple as that to me. Rather than just expecting the Executive Board to travel the country looking at venues, it seemed sensible that they would use, shall I dare say, the REAL G. A. Grapevine, responsible fellow members who presumably volunteered their service.

My feeling is that this was done and, to the best of their ability, under difficult circumstances, the combined efforts of the Executive Board and anyone who volunteered to assist them, came up with Florida.

Given that those who took the time and trouble to make it happen presumably have given time they could have used for themselves or others I do not feel the need to request an explanation or blow by blow account of their considerable efforts, but I respect the right of anyone who does.

I did not volunteer to assist in any way and my overall feeling is of gratitude to

all who did.

It would be sad if the situation was used as a political football, pyrrhic victories or indeed losses ill serve this fellowship.

Odie B. - Trustee, Area 36, Ireland South - East

2/13/14 - 5:45 PM

This is in response to both the Tampa BOT meeting and the Cancun Conference.

First to address the BOT in October. I was one of the trustees involved in trying to find a location to have the BOT meeting. I had actually found 2 hotels in Minneapolis that would be able to accommodate this meeting. The room rates were good, rental for the meeting room was cheap and we didn't have to buy a food and beverage package to get these rates. The long and the short of this is that Tampa came in even lower with more places within walking distance of the hotel for food.

As most of you know, Area 8a has been pushing to drop down to only one conference a year and one BOT meeting per year. One reason for this is the fiscal responsibility that we owe this fellowship. I believe that the Executive board made the right decision in choosing Tampa for this meeting by showing that fiscal responsibility. And that is exactly what drove this decision to be made. Airfare for most area was also cheaper to Tampa than Minneapolis. Some will pay more but that is just the way it is. Personally, I find it sad that we feel we are so important that we need 2 BOT meetings a year. Hopefully someday we will realize that one a year is more than enough but that is a topic for another time.

As far as the International being held in Cancun, I want to congratulate Martha and everyone there who is working so hard to make this conference a success! To those who want to shake their heads and say that we voted for that for the 'vacation' we will have, shame on you! How many times have these same people addressed the BOT crying that we don't offer enough support to our International brothers and sisters? Instead of helping to grow the fellowship, some want to point fingers at the BOT, again, for making what they feel is a poor decision. I am glad that we chose Cancun. I am telling my area to start saving now and go to this conference and offer our support to Mexico. They were not sure if they were ready for this so to prepare, they have had 2 conferences to make sure they are ready. We should all be excited that we have the opportunity to truly support our International brothers and sisters, not trying to shame the BOT for choosing to do so! As far as it being a 'vacation' for the BOT itself, some vacation! Sitting in a room for 2 or more days, doing the business of GA.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Houston!

Your Grateful Sister in Recovery, Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

2/17/14 - 6:42 PM

Like to make at least one thing real clear. By no means was the Conference to be held in Cancun Mexico any part of what I was questioning. It's my personal opinion that Mexico and their trustees have worked as hard as anyone in this fellowship the past few years and they are starting meetings at a incredible rate. I'm very proud of Martha G. and her team and they deserve the right to host a conference without all this side BS about a resort.

When I placed this question in I was thinking of Airline cost not hotel savings for two nights. It seems to me that the airline cost is more significant. The other thing on my mind was how nice it would have been to hold this meeting somewhere where there has never been a conference. Local members could still come and observe what goes on in a BOT Meeting.

Just my random thoughts, not an attack on anything.

Steve R. - Area 2B Trustee, Sacramento

Telephone Meeting

2/13/14 - 6:53 PM

I was on the first call last night for the new telephone meeting and what an awesome experience that was! David and Pete, thank you both SO much for all of the work that you put into this! I am honored to be a part of this committee and a part of the telephone meeting. I was amazed at how smoothly it all went!

I want to speak briefly on an item on the agenda to rescind the Rules and Procedures for the Telephone meeting. I am slightly confused as to why someone would feel the need to rescind these, however; I am confident that the current BOT has the intelligence to realize just how important it is going to be to have these Rules and Procedures in place for this to work. If you have not tried this meeting yet, I urge everyone to do so. It was a great meeting last night and they are only going to get better!

Your Sister in Recovery, Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

2/18/14 - 12:39 PM

Nice to know that a telephone conference call meeting is working well and doing so within the guidelines.

I also find it hard to understand, from a recovery perspective, why anyone would want to rescind the Guidelines for Telephone conference calls as passed by the B. O. T. in Orlando.

The genesis and source for this attempt to rescind the guidelines appear to be connected to a different type of Telephone Conference call gathering which appears, in any case, to already have ignored the decision of the B. O. T. and operates outside the guidelines.

I say gathering as I find it hard to refer to that particular telephone conference as a G.A. meeting, given that, in order to participate, one has to fulfil requirements of a very dubious nature.

Therefore, if the purpose of the attempted rescission of the guidelines is an effort to bypass the requirements (it seems it is) then that should be made known to the entire B.O. T. in advance of any decision.

This other conference call appears to require a sometimes unsuspecting member to risk anonymity breaches at an unprecedented level, not just their own anonymity but that also of anyone on their mailing or contact list. In fact it's more a certainty than a risk and once the unsuspecting member complies with these requirements, nobody has the power to undo the damage.

This other conference call appears to offer a worldwide message on behalf of this fellowship, despite refusing to follow guidelines, not being supported by its own area intergroup and refusing access on dubious grounds.

Who in their right mind is going to support that willingly?

Furthermore, in direct contravention of Guidance code Article VII Section IA, this other conference call refuses participation rights to a member of this fellowship based on their not meeting certain requirements laid down by this "" Group ""?

There is, I believe, much more that is amiss with this other conference call setup and administration. I have no reason to believe that other than one person has made or heavily influenced all these decisions.

the point is this, if this "Other conference call " is the driving force behind the agenda item to rescind the Telephone Conference Call guidelines, surely the real message the B. O. T. will take from this is "Keep the Guidelines"

Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland, South - East

2/20/14 - 4:32 PM

Hi, Joe B. here from North Carolina. I attended again the new Telephone meeting last night, 2/19/14, (first meeting 2/12/14). Again what a great meeting. I'm typing this to the Trustee Line, but I really wish more people from the fellowship could read this. Hopefully at Houston we can rescind the motion which is blocking this post going to all the members so more people could read about the Telephone meetings. Using as much adjectives as I can, I feel it was just awesome. Hopefully that should cover all? I was again at a meeting as if it was a face to face meeting. I will be attending a face to face meeting, my homeroom, tonight (2/20/14) and have made 25 copies of the instructions on how you can join this meeting next Wed. or any Wed you would like too. Again thanks to David M & Pete K & all the commmitte members for all their work. You guys did something that now allows just about anybody to attend a MEETING. What more can I say? Like last week there was 6" of snow down here in the South, and icy as all hell on the roads. I would not had a meeting last Wed if not for the Telephone Meeting. Again my thanks for all the work you guys did, as the slongan says "It Works If You Work It". I can now go to a meeting on Wed night without having to drive 3 hours each way.

2/26/13 - 9:23 AM

I must say it was a pleasure reading the above post, a real factual heartfelt account of how beneficial the Telephone meeting is and can be, for existing members as well as those that may still seek their first meeting.

I have only had the pleasure of participating in the second (I think) trial run for the Telephone conference call meeting prior to the last B. O. T. meeting. I certainly found it beneficial and supported it from the word go. Again, grateful thanks to David, Pete all the committee members and all those from East to west, North to South and even internationally who made this happen by participating.

There are two separate agenda items referred to in this topic and I think they should not be confused.

One agenda item, rescind item # 78 from the Orlando agenda is calling to rescind the Telephone conference call guidelines and it seems clear from all accounts that the guidelines as adopted are necessary and beneficial, therefore they should be retained, this item should NOT be rescinded. The other agenda item, Rescind item # 9 from the Orlando agenda, is calling for the Rescission of the restriction on access to the Trusteeline.

It seems clear that this item SHOULD BE rescinded, there are no known benefits to restricting the access to the Trusteeline and implementing the restriction is doubtless time consuming and a waste of scarce, voluntary resources, with the added implication of passing this difficulty on to future members.

The item # 9 from the Orlando agenda should be rescinded to remove restriction on access to the trusteeline.

Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland South - East