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Trustee Line for August 2011

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 8/31/11.

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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Prize Contests?

8/1/11 - 12:38 PM

A GA member approached me concerned with the fact the he had considered and almost entered a contest where the selected entry received a free cruise. He said that did not have to make wager or bet, just needed to fill out an online form. He (with his wife's help) stopped from making the entry. Members of the room that I spoke with certainly believe such contests are gambling, as do I. If anyone has any thoughts on if this type of contest "constitutes gambling", I would be interested to hear back.

This member also expressed that he believed that none of the forms of gambling listed with "this includes..." on page 14 speak to "contests". He suggested that "contests" should be added to page 14.

In speaking to this member, we discussed a proposed Combo book change. Adding the term "prize contests" after "raffle tickets", we thought covers a wide variety of acts of gambling which are not covered by the other terms listed on page 14. Adding this could help prevent someone not aware or "caught off guard" from making this mistake, having to restart their abstinence clock, or have this be 1st bet back down the path to worse.

I will also post the question on the trustee poll and appreciate those that will vote if they agree/disagree with this proposed change.

Wishing you well in recovery!
Paul C. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

8/2/11 - 5:50 PM
Hi Paul,

Thank you for bringing up the issue of contests. This has come up before in my area as well, and I have heard the same reasoning used by the member involved. It would seem to me that based on the definition of gambling for the compulsive gambler, as written in the combo book, is very clear on this. The line "...where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or skill constitutes gambling", in my opinion, speaks to this very issue. My understanding is that all the member had to do is fill out an online form, which you (or the member) described as an entry. This would be no different than entering a raffle, as the outcome is based on chance. Again, this is only my opinion. However, I believe that every member of GA has an understanding of what gambling is, and many of us try to skirt the definition by using the same logic this member uses. We know what gambling is, and we know when we have crossed that line. I hope this helps.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

8/4/11 - 11:48 AM

From time to time a similar conversation comes up in our rooms with respect to a yearly promotion that one of the national coffee chains in Canada runs, called roll-up-the-rim. Is it gambling or is it not. The answer I give when this question is asked is very standard - I don't know. I know that, for me, it's an unhealthy behavior. I purchase coffee from the company who runs this promotion because I like their coffee - I'll purchase it during the promotion and not during the promotion, in the same quantities. When the promotion is on, from the moment I purchased my coffee, I would be wondering what was under the rim, and I had a system for how I'd roll it up. Early on in GA, I made a decision that it wasn't a healthy thing for me to be doing, and I made a decision to stop.

Is entering a contest where my name could be drawn and I could win something I hadn't earned gambling? Again, I don't know. And I'm not sure if I care. I know that doing so creates anxiety for me - makes me think and dream about winning, and how I'm going to feel after winning. And I know that that's unhealthy for me, and not something I want to be doing. Would the wording of how gambling is defined in the combo book have impacted my decision? No, I don't believe it would have. We could write pages and pages of various things that might be considered gambling for some of us, and still never have a complete list. And what is unhealthy for one individual, might be manageable for another individual.

Do we even need to attempt to define gambling? How explicit does the definition need to be? Is it not something that I define for myself, perhaps with the aid of my sponsor? Yes, there are certain things that I believe, black-and-white, are gambling. And there are other behaviors, that I'm not certain we can categorically define as being gambling or as not being gambling.

And does it matter? Abstinence is by my own admission. It's based on my definition of gambling - not somebody else's. If I don't believe that stocks are gambling, and I invest in the stock market, does that mean I should change my date and resign as a Trustee, since the definition in the combo book includes that?

Richard F. - Area 4, Toronto, Canada

8/5/11 - 1:16 AM

Page 14 the definition of gambling is very clear. I can't believe that a member would think that entering a contest to WIN a free cruise isn't gambling. What does this member think the sentence Where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon CHANCE or skill constitutes gambling means. I never hear anyone from AA ask to have the definition of drinking spelled out for them. It is pretty self explanatory. I think that anyone who needs gambling defined to cover every conceivable angle needs to get themselves a good sponsor, and attend more meetings.

Mary R. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

8/15/11 - 5:30 PM

I want to thank those that responded to the Trustee Line and the related Poll question. I certainly agree with Mary and others that the definition of gambling is clear enough for me; also sponsors and other members have shown me how clearly these actions constitute gambling. However, unfortunately there are those that don't seem to have it so clearly self-evident. The trustee discussion on "auctions" proves to me there are opinions in GA that are clearly different than mine.

Since the Trustee Poll line (to date) shows somewhat of an even split for/against the Combo book change, I have decided (with the desire of the author) to add it to the agenda, where it is currently listed under item #40.

If additional votes skew this towards "against", I will consider withdrawing the item prior to the deadline.

David, thanks for facilitating this important tool, which is certainly under-utilized.

Look forward to seeing you all in LA.
Paul C. - Area 14, Long Island, New York

Group Conscience vs. Greater Good of GA
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8/4/11 - 11:50 AM

I've been reading through various trustee-line postings and trustee poll items, and can't help but to wonder if, as a Board, we're starting to go too far with respect to wanting to enforce our will onto the groups, rather than allowing group membership to determine how to function, and not spending enough time on things that will help people.

Certain topics in question, are the items around how to pass the can around, what to allow or not allow members to wear to meetings and what constitutes gambling.

I realize I myself submitted a Trustee Line posting in May agreeing with an agenda item to vote on Sports Clothing at conferences and BOT meetings and I still agree with that - at conferences and BOT meetings. I believe we have to allow meetings themselves to decide what works/doesn't work for them. What if that's all an individual wears? Does this mean they're no longer allowed in a GA room? The ONLY requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling - not adherence to a dress code.

When it comes to the passing of the can, I find it ironic as I read the Trustee Poll item, which seems to have a large percentage of support for it, that we, at our BOT meetings, don't take collections in this fashion. We have someone standing at the door, often pushing the box in front of each person's face as they leave the room.

The other issue I find difficult, is what appears to be a never-ending journey to define gambling. Why? So we can tell people they have to change their date or deny them a pinning? Because we know better than someone else, what gets them going?

Assuming these items make it onto the agenda, I look forward to the discussion on them in LA - in the meantime, I'm curious to hear the thoughts and opinions of my brothers and sisters - are we going too far? Are we trying to micromanage and over-govern the groups? Are the outcomes of these topics, truly going to help the compulsive gambler?

Richard F. - Area 4, Toronto, Canada

8/8/11 - 8:32 AM

Thanks Richard for your thoughts on this. There have been some very interesting discussions the last few months and I just want to put in my thoughts on some of this. As far as group conscience going against the guidance code...I feel that the guidance code must be followed by all the rooms. That being said, not every issue that comes up in group conscience is

covered in the guidance code. Do we as the BOT have a right to tell people how to take their collections in their rooms? I don't think so. If I am truly uncomfortable with the way a room runs its meeting, I have 2 choices, try to change it through group conscience or find another meeting. What works for one room does not always work for another.

Wearing sports apparel to a meeting or GA function, now that is an interesting subject. I never really thought about it before, however, after reading the posts on here, I have had some serious thoughts on it. I personally will not ever wear it to a GA function again for all the reasons I've read about. Will I call someone else out for wearing it? No, I won't. I work my recovery in the way that works for me. It is not for me to tell someone else how to run theirs. If a member brings it up in a room that it is bothersome for them, then it is up to the room to decide how to deal with it, not the BOT.

As for changing the combo book AGAIN to cover what MIGHT constitute gambling...where do we end? Someone explained it to me very simply way back in the beginning of my recovery. If you have to ask yourself, could this be gambling, then it probably is and you shouldn't do it. Is the outcome uncertain? Depending on chance or skill? Why do we feel that we must hold the hands of all our members and be so literal with our definitions? We are not stupid, we are compulsive gamblers. The members in our rooms have the ability to understand much more than I think some of our trustees give them credit for. I cringe every single time that I hear a trustee say, "They don't understand what we do here."

Thanks and now I am climbing down from my soapbox!

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

Cherry Hill Views From A Newer Trustee

8/8/11 - 8:09 AM

I have been debating about posting on the trustee line and have finally decided to voice my opinions of the Cherry Hill Trustee Meetings:

First of all, the length of time that it took us to complete the meetings. It seems to me that there is a lot of time wasted at the microphone with those who feel that they have to speak on every item on the agenda. At one point towards the end of a very late night on Friday, someone actually stood up and spoke for 3 minutes about not knowing which way to vote on a item. I know that seems trivial, however, when there are 97 items on the agenda, those wasted 3 minutes add up. There were several items that I wanted to speak on, however, if someone else had already made the same point that I was going to make, I didn't see the need. I felt that it was better to hear different opinions.

I have been reading about the agenda item not on the list as well. Although I don't know this trustee well, she seems like a nice enough person. That being said, I am in the minority group on this issue. Richard stated that perhaps all intergroups should have their by-laws state exactly what are reimbursable expenses and I agree with that. However, the by-laws for her intergroup DID have it spelled out. They could only be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred. I heard several trustees say that it was the treasurer's fault for not catching it sooner. Since when is it the treasurer's job to babysit the trustees? The treasurer did not expect to have a false receipt handed in by the trustee in question. We as trustees should always try to behave in a manner that is fitting to the position that those in our areas have entrusted to us. It doesn't matter what we have done for GA or how nice we are, it comes down to PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES. One of the first things that I learned in GA was H.O.W. Are any of us perfect? No, we are all a work in progress. There have to be consequences for our actions, whether good or bad.

Now, I would like to thank Cherry Hill for the conference. Every day I am amazed by the gifts that I receive in this program and for the life that it has given me. It is with great honor that I serve as a trustee for area 8A.

Your Sister in Recovery.

Unity Step 4

8/9/11 - 1:29 PM

I find it very disturbing that once again a former trustee from area 2 chooses to air his grievances with the current leadership of area 2 without first bringing his complaints to the present trustees or to the area 2 inter-group. Having got that off of my chest, let me now address these issues, both of which involve an annual fundraiser for area 2 trustees that enables them to attend Trustee meeting. The first issue involves a gift certificate that was given to a member, who then donated the certificate to the fundraiser as an item for auction. The way my sponsor, Dan B., explained this issue to me is that it has do to do with whether or not the original donor gains anything from the gift to the member, such as using our 301c tax number. In this case, the certificate was a free gift. There is nothing in Step 7, the guidance code, or in any rules or regulations of Gamblers Anonymous that addresses where or how any member acquires a donated item, the one restriction that I am aware of is that the donation is not to exceed the value of \$1000.00. Certainly, the member could have purchased the certificate, and then donated it. The second issue of whether or not it is appropriate for GAs to participate in a live auction has been debated in Area 2 many times. Our conclusion has been is that it is an individual choice. Personally, I choose not to, but I would never characterize anyone participating as having gambled. That stigma would then have to placed on my sponsor, and every trustee that has ever represented area 2.

Why I find this issue most disturbing is the fact that the very former trustee who is complaining, is the very individual who involved Gamblers Anonymous with this fundraiser in the first place. There were live auctions at this event when the former trustee presided over it. I recall more than one sports memorabilia that were auctioned at these events without issue. It is not a GA principle, but there is the old admonition of calling the kettle black. I believe that this is a local issue that in no way effects GA as a whole; I would never write something like this, if not provoked. Clearly, there has been a power struggle in area 2, since my sponsor passed away. This is right and natural; I pray that members in other area honor GA's principle of allowing local governance, except in matters that affect GA as a whole.

Paul N. - Area 2, Northern California

8/10/11 - 9:36 PM

This is a very interesting subject. Our intergroup just had a very lengthy conversation regarding these same issues. Unity Step 7 "Every Gamblers Anonymous group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." This one seems really simple, however, it can be taken in so many different ways. Was the gift certificate in question given to a member for that members use and they chose to donate it to help raise funds, or was it given to the individual just to help raise funds? That seems to be the only important question.

As far as using an auction for fundraising, it seems to me that this is one of those gray areas that we all love to play around with. We also discussed this at our intergroup. What we came up with was this, if it is possible that out of 200 people, one person could be put into action by this auction, then it is something we would not do. We had a member a couple of years ago that wanted to do a silent auction at our mini-conference to raise money for intergroup. She was told no, we couldn't do that, however, if she wanted to collect things from members and have a "mini garage sale", we could try to work that out. She said no, if she couldn't have a silent auction, she would do nothing because it just wouldn't be as exciting. Which was the very reason we felt it was a bad idea to start with. Again, this is just how our area views this. We have fundraisers also to raise money, this was one that we decided just wasn't worth the risk to our suffering brothers and sisters.

I am with Levi on this site. I look forward to hearing the feedback on this one. I too use this as a tool in my recovery. My opinion has been changed on other

issues due to the feedback of others. Look forward to seeing you all in LA!

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

8/10/11 - 10:30 PM

Discussions about Unity Step 4, generally come as a result of something done at a local level that is more about doing what an area wants with little regard for what is good for the members in the area.

I'm going to address the issues raised by Paul and his area, only due to the fact that he chose to voice his opinion, along with his history of how events happened in Area 2.

I have no problem with any current or past Trustee bringing complaints or problems that might crop up in an area without having brought it before the other Trustees or Trusted Servants of the area. The Trustee Line allows for airing of issues without the typical local bias and personalities that seem to come up at every corner. Levi and Karen have both voiced their opinions of how they have benefited from all the comments and postings on the Trustee Line. Doing so may possibly bring more experience to the question when discussed at the local level.

I imagine Paul was talking about the 501-c tax exempt status that has been granted to the Corporation of Gamblers Anonymous. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no restriction on how much a member can contribute. It may rest with the tax code and how much might be deductible for the member, but I can assure everyone that Karen will be all smiles if anyone wants to make a donation to ISO of \$1,000 or more.

As to the issue of live auctions, I am shocked to think that ANY area would sponsor such a situation. Compulsive gamblers are stimulation addicts. I can't believe that any room or Intergroup would give implied approval for members to dive right into the 'action pool' and hold such activities as being acceptable for compulsive gamblers. It should not be a decision of the individual, because that by definition implies that there is recognition of an activity that is questionable. As Karen said, 'if just one person could be put into action by the auction, then it is something we would not do.' What is so important about a live auction that would cause an area to ignore the potential risks to some of its members? Yes, I know there are risks everywhere, but they don't have to exist in a Gamblers Anonymous venue.

Intergroups should be providing situations that don't have any semblance of gambling interpretation. This ties into my first paragraph. It is not good for the members in the area and having a situation that is potentially dangerous DOES affect GA as a whole. Unity Step 4 is not something that applies if an activity is localized to a specific meeting or Intergroup. It is detrimental to GA as a whole – without equivocation.

Maybe Intergroups might be better off not being so narrow-minded and making decisions of a questionable nature and taking the easy way out by saying it is 'an individual choice'. Maybe, in the process, a Trustee should use the Trustee Poll, or at the very least, post the issue in question to the Trustee Line. 2 heads are better than 1, 5 are better than 2, etc.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

8/11/11 - 8:30 PM

David, I am glad to report that I finally agree with you about something, it in fact GA's 502C status that I was referring to. I am not surprised that you are in favor of ex-trustees emitting their opinions without paying any attention to their own area's concern, one could suggest that you do that all of the time. As we both know, the rouge ex-trustee I refer to is a friend of yours; you might remember that the first time he referred my area to the GA police was when you and I met. As I recall, you said that Area 2 needed to be spanked like a child because we chose to no longer follow his edicts. If the term GA police seems vague to you, be clear, that I think of you (lovingly, of course) as the GA Chief of Police. I seek guidance from the elders in my own area such as Dan B.,

Al G., and Tom M.- all of whom have not only served Area 2 as trustee, but have also served as chairmen of the BOT. I don't so much seek the guidance of members who are afraid that a Yankee's team logo might start them gambling. As to your hyperbole, would you introduce me to this hypothetical member who might gamble if he sees an UCLA bumper sticker or if an inter-group 3000 miles away doesn't check with David M before conducting its business. Perhaps you will refer this member to me; I would love to sponsor this member through the steps so that he, as I have, can experience the spiritual awakening that the steps promise that will free him from his fear. If you wish to introduce a motion to expel Area 2 from GA, I will respond, otherwise, I am through with this. I cannot change your mind, and by now, you should know the same about me.

Paul N. - Area 2 Trustee, Northern California

8/12/11 - 1:40 PM

Let me first make a formal apology to a Trustee whom I have come to respect from Area 2, even though we have differing views on GA matters from time to time.

Levi,

I took to heart what you wrote previously on the Trustee Line about sticking to the issues and not leveling some often less than kind words in the vicinity of some who write to the Trustee Line. I'm compelled to respond to what one of your area's Trustees wrote regarding his opinions of me. Ordinarily, I would ignore such dribble, but he crossed the line in numerous places and therefore I must clear the stench in the air.

Paul,

You clearly have a special talent for diversion and obfuscation, especially when you are presented with issues you don't want to deal with. The name-calling is really somewhat childish and just adds empirical evidence to the argument. It's really akin to bringing a knife to a gunfight.

Irrespective of your attempts to trivialize my opinions with references to what you think I do in my area, the fact remains that I am not interested in your constant attempts to interject your AA beliefs into the world of GA. I hope you realize that AA and GA are separate Fellowships. What you speak of many times in your submissions makes that issue somewhat muddled. You seem to believe that such notions grant you editorial rights to promote your own agenda about how different things should be in our Fellowship. You are not alone with this thinking, but you and your band of AA/GA Libertarians are in the very apparent minority. While the majority of the Trustees try to sew up and plug all the holes in our literature and Guidance Code, you continue to espouse events that contravene all the prior work of the Board of Trustees.

I have written previously in the Trustee Line about how people who are confronted with issues that individuals, Trustees, Intergroups or areas do without any consideration for our literature or the Guidance Code are always the first ones who bring up the term 'GA Police'. It's nothing more than a crutch to not take responsibility for the actions that are in violation of all such material. Evidently that allows those same people to rationalize their actions rather than comply with the group conscience and certain GA documents like the Guidance Code.

You have a propensity for starting troubling situations in your area and then making those who try to uphold the decisions of the Board of Trustees and the Guidance Code seem like the bad guys. You also have a predilection for misquoting others, in this case with me regarding your reference to a matter in area 2 that involved you that was aired in Kansas City, how surprising.

Your protestations that began this thread in the Trustee Line this month just naturally begs the question of why you would be so outraged that a past or current Trustee would raise an issue from their area on the Trustee Line, as if to accuse anyone with the audacity to do so, of washing their area's dirty laundry in public. If you and your area are doing every thing as per GA guidelines and the Guidance Code, then you should feel comfortable with your position and actions. The facts point to something else – controversy, the very

thing GA tries to avoid. Why is that, Paul? Group conscience can't overrule the Guidance Code and the decisions of the Board of Trustees. Your area can't just vote on something and then when challenged, do the GA 'Duck and Cover' routine by hiding behind Unity Step 4. Maybe such behavior is acceptable in AA. If so, then it is their problem, not ours. One thing is certain, 'That dog don't hunt' in GA.

I'm not at all charmed by your loving reference to me as the GA Chief of Police. Maybe it just irritates you that I don't drink your brand of AA/GA Kool-Aid and that I choose to stand up to your written tirades about all the injustices committed by the Board of Trustees and those GA members in your area. You must be very skillful at intimidation in your area to the point where others cower in your presence.

Your citation of the Who's Who of GA sages from Area 2 means nothing in this subject theme. Stop leaning on others and 'man up' with more of your AA opinions, they aid in your attempt to misdirect everyone from the real issues, as I said earlier. You don't have to blame your GA gurus for anything. Recovery is about choices, and it is clear what your choices have been.

Your reference to my opinions regarding sports clothing and how that might increase a member's likelihood to gamble is incredibly myopic. It is painfully obvious that you only read what was convenient for your presentation. My reference regarding the sports clothing was for conditions in a GA meeting. Is your statement about a UCLA bumper sticker really the best you can do to try and discredit me? Where is the attending reference to billboard ads that promote state lotteries, or any other outside gambling stimuli? We are talking about conditions in the room. Do you really feel what happens outside the room has even a modicum of relativity in that discussion?

Why do you have a problem with anyone talking to me or any other member in the Fellowship regarding controversial issues that you promulgate in your area? Am I that big a threat to your ego that you think others cannot bounce ideas or problems off other GA members? What are you afraid of?

As for my referring to you those members who might be tempted to go back to the bet so you can sponsor them, because some GA members think more about themselves by insisting on wearing sports clothing to a GA meeting, than those who might be struggling through their daily lives...I can tell you that it will be a cold day in hell before that happens.

Lastly, where do you get these lame ideas that I am going to introduce a motion to expel Area 2 from GA? Why not take a moment and have one of your esteemed GA elders that you cited in your response, read what you write to the Trustee Line before you submit it. It really is amazing for me to think that you actually put some of what you write into print. It makes for such a fertile environment to use your own words against you.

Oh by the way, if you respond, you can have the last word, irrespective of how far off the reservation you go with your rebuttal. Please don't forget your other reference to me as a 'well-trained attack machine'. I think I got that quote correct. You may remember it from when I responded to some of your previous inane statements in the Trustee Line regarding thoughts that I posted, similar to what you have written in this month's issue. Yes, the pattern continues for both of us; however I choose enlightenment mixed with a hard dose of reality that some find indigestible.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

8/15/11 – 5:23 PM

Concerning the recent posts about auctions and donations:

It's my understanding that the Trustee Line is a tool for current and past Trustees to "take the temperature" of the fellowship on issues/concerns in their Areas. Until Paul accused another past Trustee of attacking him through this venue, I had no idea that the issue posted on the poll had anything to do with a potential personal conflict.

I have often used this site as a springboard for discussion with the Area 8A

Intergroup, which has led us to examine our own Area policies (official and unofficial). I think the issues around a) an auction (live or silent) as a GA fundraiser and b) how seeking donations for such an event could relate to a Unity Step are very worthy for discussion among any GA membership. As Karen has related, we brought these issues to our Intergroup last week. The ensuing discussion was lively and invigorating. It caused us to examine our own fundraising methods and to take a look at how our choices impact our Fellowship, especially those who are newer in the program.

Sometimes things or methods that have been accepted in the past need to be scrutinized— especially if someone in the program brings up a new perspective or opinion. I have found the Trustee Line invaluable in helping to frame these issues and in getting feedback.

I have never viewed the Trustee Line, the Poll or any of the other features on this website as a “Star Chamber” to render judgment on any of our brothers and sisters. Instead, it is a place to get feedback and opinions from trusted members of our fellowship. It’s certainly true that there are occasions when the discussions become heated and, sadly, times when the “line” gets crossed. But at its best, this is an extremely useful tool in furthering our program.

Your Sister in Recovery,
Jeannie B. – Trustee Area 8A, Minnesota

Passion, Wisdom and Honesty

8/10/11 - 3:44 PM

To all by GA Brothers & Sisters,

I am constantly amazed by the passion, wisdom and honesty that comes forth in this forum. While I don’t always agree with the individual’s ideas, it is so refreshing to see the different sides of the same issue brought up. My one wish would be that more trustee’s would express their thoughts and opinions. Just as I do at the GA meetings I attend, I draw strength from the various information brought forth by the writers. The Trustee Line has been such an eye opener for me, reading what members around the world think about certain issues, sometimes things I have never even thought of in my 16 years in GA. It proves to me that the more I learn about the 12 steps and GA, the less I really know about them. So, a heartfelt thank you to all of the writers who take advantage of this wonderful tool. Not just a tool for expressing our opinions, but for me, another tool to use in my recovery. I look forward to seeing all of you in L.A., as I’m sure it will be a great BOT meeting and a great conference.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

Clearing the Air

8/15/11 – 1:12 PM

I am the Trustee from Area 2 whom Paul N. referred to in his article of 8/9/11.

I will have a word or two to say in a moment about Paul’s tone, but first, to the issues at hand: Regarding Trustee Poll Item #14, Unity Step 7 states, “Every Gamblers Anonymous Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” At the recent Area 2 weekly meeting I attended -- and which Paul did not attend -- one of the Area 2 Trustees stated unambiguously that Bob, the restaurant co-owner, had donated a dinner gift certificate for the upcoming GA fundraiser.

Later, the Trustee rationalized this by saying that the money raised during an auction at the fundraiser would come from a member of GA. Nonetheless, common sense compels us to recognize that the gift certificate itself is a contribution of monetary value from an entity or individual who is not a member of Gamblers Anonymous, and that such a gift compromises our self-supporting principle.

I not only discussed my concern about this at the time with the Trustee who had made the announcement, but also with a second Area 2 Trustee who confirmed a week later that he read Trustee Poll Item #14. Therefore, Paul's charge that I was "airing my grievances . . . without first bringing my complaints to the present trustees" is baseless and false. As I noted above, Paul was not even present at the meeting I described. I might also point out that Paul's choice of words -- i.e., "complaints," "grievances" -- is inflammatory and demeaning, and unnecessarily implies an adversarial posture.

As for Trustee Poll Item #15, I believe the argument is clear and has been amply echoed by others. In a flurry of e-mails among members in Area 2, as well as in letters to the Trustee Line, a clear majority of members expressed firm opposition to auctions. In fact, it was the Area 2 e-mails that prompted me to use the Trustee Poll in the first place. Simply put, the type of stimulation and invitation to impulsive behavior that an auction represents can endanger a member's recovery, and this -- in my view and in the view of most members who have expressed an opinion -- should prohibit auctions from being included in GA fundraisers.

Paul did not actually address this point, but instead attempted to discredit it by attacking me personally, asserting (falsely) that I myself had "presided" in the past over fundraisers that included auctions. While it is true that I served as an Area 2 Trustee during a number of years when the annual fundraising dinner included auctions, I opposed the auctions then as I do now. On the event planning committee, I always voted against auctions, and indeed, during the events themselves, when the live auctions took place, I made a point of leaving the building. I never "presided over" or chaired the annual dinner event, and other members were well aware of my opposition to auctions at these events. (In fact, it was members of Gam-Anon, not GA, who originated and continue to strongly advocate for auctions at the fundraising dinner.) Paul himself was scarcely even in the area during the years I was a Trustee, so here again he has made a personal charge against me based on inference and, apparently, ill will. It is unfortunate that I should have to defend myself against such a spurious charge.

As to the appropriateness of my airing my views in a public forum, and Paul's unpleasant characterization of me as a "rogue ex-Trustee" in his article of 8/11/11, I have two comments. First, there is no convention, much less a rule, which would forbid a past Trustee from seeking opinions via the Trustee Poll. I want to know what other Trustees nationally and internationally think about these matters, so I cast a wide net to gain a variety of perspectives. This is obviously in accordance with the spirit of open-mindedness in our Program. Secondly, and more importantly, even as a former Trustee, when I perceive a potential violation of the Guidance Code, it is my responsibility to take action to uphold the Guidance Code (not fulfilling this affects GA as a whole). This was precisely the intent of my contributions to the Trustee Poll.

As for Paul's reference to the "principle of allowing local governance," I find this a peculiar construction because, as Unity Step 2 states, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." To my mind, in this discussion, there should be no question of anyone "governing" or having power over other members.

Finally, I want to say that while disagreements among our membership are inevitable, we can disagree respectfully and civilly, rather than resorting to personal attacks and attempting to delegitimize the messenger rather than to address the message. If Paul has a different view than mine regarding the appropriateness of auctions or the donation of a gift certificate, that's fine; and he has every right to express his views and offer his perspectives. However, to suggest (as he does) that my words are deceitful and ill-intended, and to dispute my very right even to present my point of view, serves no productive purpose and only debases the forum we share.

For our common dignity, and indeed in support of our common welfare and personal recovery, let's focus the content of our disagreements on issues and facts, rather than on baseless inferences and hostile assumptions about others' motives. This is a standard I will certainly uphold for myself.

Ed E. - Area 2 Past Trustee, Northern California

8/18/11 - 2:35 PM

I see that the GA police have added “tone” to the list of GA crimes that they can investigate. Yes, unity step four requires that until the BOT actually prohibits the wearing of logos, then it is up to the area to decide the dictates of their own group conscious. This principle holds true for all of these matters, no matter how wrong it seems to the self appointed powers. As to the donated item; it was never put to auction. I was raising my objection to our business being put in the street in order to defend my area; I will continue to defend as long as I served – I believe that is my job. The fact that live auctions are controversial is clear, as I stated in my first posting this issue has been debated for years in Area 2. When I chaired the committee that makes these decisions, I asked the committee to suspend the live auction, suggesting that we may get more support for the fundraiser from the members who opposed the auction. In 2010, the committee suspended the auction, but it was also observed that none of the chief complainants attended the event anyway. It was impossible to convince the committee to continue to suspend the auction this year. As to the mentioned flurry of E-mails, which ran about 50-50 in their opinions; they stopped as soon as I suggested that anyone who wanted could join the committee next year, and influence the committee’s decisions.

If the BOT decides to declare live auctions to be gambling; we will comply with the guidance code change as we always do. Until then, it is all just opinion. I am sure the following truth holds in every GA area; the opinions of those that are involved and give service are usually given more credence than those who are not. I listed the people who have given legendary service to Area 2 and GA as a whole; and yes their opinions are more important to me than the opinions of the GA police. I have been quite interested in the opinions offered by others, outside of the cadre, I will take those comments to our next discussion of this issue. The former trustee, of course, is invited to re-join inter-group; I have this item on the agenda to be discussed, under old business, next month. My whole point is this, area business, just like national business, moves slowly and deliberately; it is my belief that when members go off the reservation to push their own agendas, they should kindly be referred back to their own area to work out their issues.

Paul N - Area 2, Trustee, Northern California

Trustee Line Objectives

8/15/11 – 5:18 PM

Once again, the August Trustee Line has kicked up a notch, as far as edginess in content and tone. Such is the nature of the Trustee Line – some times.

I’d like to take a moment to explain what NONE of you see that goes on in the background before some of the more questionable submissions get posted. First and foremost, the Trustees who submit items set the tone of what is discussed and how it is presented. Many of you who read this part of the website might wonder why it is not ‘warm and fuzzy’, but more confrontational. The Trustee Line is not to be confused with the ISO Bulletin. In that publication, Karen at ISO controls the content of what is printed. She has been granted authority to be the Editor for the Bulletin. The overall tone is more about recovery and the benefits of our Fellowship.

Yes, there is a time and place for virtually everything. The Board of Trustees tackles numerous serious issues, and in all fairness, some not so serious issues. These are generally topics that have become a problem at a local area, or more important, problems with the Fellowship. I am not a Pollyanna to think that recovery is what you make of it and everything in our recovery is perfect. There are many ripples in the waters on which we travel and many individuals, both Trustees and non-Trustees, look to move the Fellowship, rooms and members in certain directions that might be inconsistent with how others think.

Many members don’t like what is going on in specific situations and choose to mobilize the conscience of the Trustees in what might seem like an attack on those who don’t share that opinion. Tempers some times flare, but all is fair until someone makes derogatory statements about another member. Stating the reasons of others’ chosen position of situations and their understanding of an

nature of others characterization of situations and their understanding or misunderstanding is not making derogatory statements.

For submissions that run close to the edge, they are submitted to others not involved in the issues. Specific focus is placed on whether or not the author has indeed crossed that line. As Trustee Website Administrator, I too am subject to such review. Running close to the edge may seem confrontational, but the intent is to open a dialog between those who submit items to the Trustee Line.

You may notice that the opinions of opposing parties may be firm and appear to be unyielding; however, the airing of such opinions might actually bring the issues into focus for others. Many times, false statements are made in a manner that inflames the situation and a series of defensive statements are made as a perceived remedy. Again, the Trustees set the tone of the Trustee Line.

Hopefully, both parties will come to some sort of recognition that their blood pressure readings are too high and then ratchet down the intensity, tone and demeanor of the subsequent submission. In any event, the Trustee Website Committee stands ready to take the necessary steps to prevent further escalation that encroaches the level of inappropriateness.

Keep in mind that each submission is read prior to posting for appropriateness. The course of last resort is to tell someone that their submission is in appropriate. We are all adults and passion and conviction may some times get confused for rage.

David M. – Trustee Website Admin Area 12, New Jersey
