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Trustee Line for November 2013

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 11/30/13.

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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Is This Really How We Want To Treat Committees?

11/1/13 - 12:01 AM

Although I thought we were very productive in Orlando, I think the situation regarding new literature coming out of a committee is about as broken a process as we can get. This has nothing to do with my particular slant on any of the committees that submitted items for approval for the first vote. Our process is highly flawed and I hope to put some procedures into the Houston agenda to help fix this.

I want to start with Alan J's committee for Retention that went into this conference expecting a merit vote for the work that the committee had done. The literature procedure is clear about merit votes only being valid for unsolicited material. Proposed literature from a committee goes right to the first approval vote. The item failed, and that is where the problem really lies. I did not like the piece, but again, that is completely unimportant.

Committees need to be able to gauge the sentiment of the BOT before a binding vote. Whatever amount of work went into it should not be cast away because the first draft is not to the Trustees liking. A no vote shuts down the committee's work and throws it under the 2-year rule. We need to change this process and invoke something that will allow the committee to get a hand vote of confidence in the direction of where the committee's work is going, without risking a no vote on a merit or the first vote.

It's important to distinguish our right to be against a cleaned up new piece of literature that has been given a chance to be cleaned up, once or several times, versus a piece of literature that we don't believe is a good fit for GA, for whatever reason. I'm only trying to encourage more participation in committees instead of people getting disgusted because their first presentation gets shut down. If the committee members want to do the work, they should get a clear indication from the BOT exactly what they feel – up front.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

Conduct Unbecoming

11/1/13 - 12:01 AM

The Orlando Trustee meeting uncovered a few problems I found with the Trustee meetings that are not so subtle and made me uncomfortable. I only assume that others felt the same. I'm not one who has thin skin, but as the title suggests, it is conduct unbecoming. The first situation covers how we as Trustees handle ourselves in the Trustee meetings, regarding people who get up to the microphone and voice their feelings on the agenda items, as they are presented. Additionally, the manner in which the items are voted on, reveals a not so pleasant side of the Trustees.

I had the unpleasant situation of sitting near someone on Orlando who felt that negative commentary about the people at the microphone, the items being discussed, the content of the agenda and the actions of the BOT, was necessary and done in a manner that was heard by many others. There is no place for such behavior, yet the people sitting near me had to endure 2 days of this behavior.

My belief is that we can disagree with what people say in defense of their position on individual items, either for or against, but get up to the microphone and say it. Don't disparage people from your chair and paint them in an unkind light. If you don't like the item, get up to the microphone and say it. If you don't like the position being voiced on the floor about any item, get up to the microphone and say it. If you don't like how the Trustees are voting or responding to an item, get up to the microphone and say it.

There is nothing wrong with being against an item and discussing it with people near you for ways in which to present opposing opinions. I only ask that you don't broadcast it loud enough at your seat where 2-3 rows of people in front of you hear the obnoxious manner that some of us witnessed in Orlando. I'm only talking about my area of where I sat. I don't know if it was happening throughout the room. We shouldn't have to feel that any item is an 'us versus them' situation. Discuss the merits or your support or opposition on a principle, not a personality basis. I seem to remember we have something in our Unity Steps like that.

The other divisive act is people applauding after a vote of an agenda item. There were a few such situations that resulted in applause on either the defeat or acceptance of some agenda items. Denis said something about the inappropriateness of such an action. I want to make it clear that applause of that nature immediately makes me feel like I'm in the middle of a hard fought battle between the Democrats and Republicans. It is one of the really ugly sides of the BOT meetings.

We should all be looking to help to improve this Fellowship through our actions at the BOT meetings. Many items don't pass from the first vote. Some items pass the first vote and fail the second. This is all group conscience related. If you author an item that fails move on. If you author or are part of an item that fails the second vote, suck it up and move on. In either case, whether the item was flawed and exposed for such flaws, or the Trustees were not along for the ride. You've got 2 years to make it better, so view it as a dose of reality and not a point from which to pivot into playing the victim.

Those who are on the opposite side of the applause don't need people to further exemplify the defeat. I ask all the Trustees to keep both of these situations in mind when we get to Houston and for all the Trustee meetings moving forward. We should all live by item 2 of the Responsibilities For International Trustees – "Be a living example of the precepts of Gamblers Anonymous and personally work the Steps of Recovery and Unity." Remember, we will have a new crop of Trustees next Fall. Let's not teach them the bad habits of those who conduct themselves in the manners I have mentioned in this posting.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

Acting In Haste

11/1/13 - 12:01 AM

Another conference here and gone and with that, so is yet another BOT meeting. Thanks to those in Florida who put the conference on. Well done!

I am posting about my disappointment in the BOT decision to password protect the Trustee Line. This seems to me to just be another way to set the Trustees apart from the 'Regular Members'. I became a Trustee so that I could be a VOICE for my area. I have never wanted to set myself apart from the fellowship or make myself feel more important than the newcomer just coming in the door. What exactly are we trying to hide? There is nothing that makes any of us so special or so important that we have to hide the things that we say or do behind a password protected forum. Perhaps if we are saying something that we don't want others in the fellowship to know about, maybe that should be our first clue that we shouldn't say it! If your area has done something that may appear inappropriate and it shows up here, then post a response and clear up the misunderstanding! My area reads the Trustee Line often! I can't imagine any of them telling myself or my co-trustee not to read it. They would be telling us how they feel we should respond!

I was surprised by the reaction that happened on the floor with regards to the Trustee Line to begin with. Calling to shut it down because from time to time there is something negative posted. The last time I checked, life was not all sunshine and roses. Neither is recovery. We still have problems and yes, from time to time we have conflicts with other people. Has everything that has been posted here been positive? No it hasn't and it shouldn't be. I read the Trustee Line often and the people who were complaining the loudest about the Trustee Line are also ones who never bother to post. If you don't like the way the Trustee Line is going or feel the tone is too negative, then do something about it! Post things that can get a positive conversation going! And if you aren't willing to be a part of the solution, then you have no right to be a part of the problem!

I personally have felt honored that my area allowed me to have the duty of being a Trustee. I am also honored to be passing that experience on next year when this term is up. I don't feel special or better than others in our rooms. I am simply a Trusted Servant for this program that saved my life. I truly hope that we fix this horrific blunder at the next BOT meeting and become transparent once again for the fellowship that has entrusted us with this awesome privilege! It's time that we as a Board remember what it's like to be just "A Regular Member".

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

11/1/13 - 10:11 AM

What are we hiding? That's the question being asked by our Fellowship right now in response to closing down the Trustee Line to non-current and former Trustees. While the arguments for this action by the BOT may have been compelling, it was the wrong decision as is proven by the outcry by the GA membership. However, some of the arguments in closing the Trustee Line down were just flat out ridiculous. I admit I was originally in favor of this compromise, of restricting the viewing by non-Trustees, until I realized that we need to have transparency. That's why I decided to vote against this item. We need to have that transparency.

The perception, whether right or wrong, is that the BOT is a group of elitist GA members. And let's face it; perception is everything for the simple fact that we get funded by the members of our Fellowship. It is our duty to serve the entire Fellowship, not just our own personal interests. Unfortunately, that is exactly what this decision has done; served our own personal interests, at least in the eyes of the average GA member.

Yes, at times the content on the Trustee Line has turned into personal attacks. But it's also been a great tool for communication and a way to get things done. I remember back a few years ago when the BOR decided it was better not to give the employees of the ISO their annual bonuses. There was such an outcry by members on the Trustee Line (74 to be exact) at this hasty decision that it was rescinded. Many of these posts, by today's standards, could be seen as negative in nature. But, the end result, is the right thing was done. We need to revisit this decision of password protecting the Trustee Line, and opening it back up again. We, the BOT, can't be hiding anything from our members. They are the ones that elected us, and they are the ones who decide our funding. It's been made clear that our decision in Orlando was the wrong one. It's time we stepped up and did the right thing.

Pete K. - Trustee, Area 13B

11/1/13 - 12:28 PM

I agree with both Karen E. and Pete K. We need to go back to the Trustee Line being open to all who wish to view it. Remember the song "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden"? We need to rescind the agenda item which closed the Trustee Line.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

11/1/13 - 2:20 PM

To all past, current and future Trustees,

I have always felt good about my service to GA. This includes the various tasks at my home group, intergroup and the BOT. I have tried to serve with as much humility as I could muster. That good feeling has been replaced by an overwhelming feeling of shame. My four years as a Trustee was misspent by not emphasizing the need for our trusted servants to represent our areas and not our own personal agendas.

We in Area 8A have been fortunate in having representatives who "get it". When our Trustees attend International Conferences they carry with them the collective conscience of all Area 8A meetings. Our trustees are not told how to vote, but they do know how this area feels about items on the agenda.

I owe an amend to my meeting and my intergroup for remaining silent on the Trustee Line while watching the BOT become more and more controlling in nature. The recent decision to hide the Trustee Line from those you are responsible to (Unity Step 9) is disgraceful. I will not remain silent, GA is too important to have it slowly disintegrate under the weight of a hierarchy built on personalities and not principles.

Your humble servant,
Roger S. - Past Trustee Area 8A, Minnesota

11/2/13 - 12:10 AM

Dear fellow Trustees,

I was in Orlando, but not present for the discussion and voting of making the Trustee Line password protected. I knew that there was an agenda item, to discuss removing the Trustee Line entirely, but I'm definitely not happy with the outcome.

Each time I go on the site, I feel like I am different from my fellows, yet, our Unity Program says that our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. What are we telling our fellowship when we say only certain people can enter and view the Trustee Line or Trustee Poll? Are we a members only club? I certainly hope not. I remember a few years ago, when I was on the BOT, that there people who thought that the BOR was a members only secret group. I don't think this is the message we want to send to our fellowship. We strive so much for more participation from our groups at home, but how can we ask them to get involved, when we shut them out?

I'm sure the intent on this decision was done in good faith, but the reality is, I don't think it was a good decision. I am only a trusted servant of GA. It bothers me that I can't tell others to visit the Trustee Website, because they can't access certain areas, because they are not in a certain group. What's wrong with this picture. I agree with what others have shared, what are we hiding? And if we're hiding something, is it that bad that we can't have it out in the open. I am very grateful to be a recovering compulsive gambler, but I don't like having "special" privileges to get into a private area. This teaches me something that I don't want to learn.

It is my hope that the BOT will rescind this decision, and put things back to the way they used to be.

Best always,
Steve F. - Past Trustee, Area I, Los Angeles

11/2/13 - 9:41 AM

Greetings fellow Trustees, past trustees, officers of the Board of Trustees, International Executive Secretary and Chairman of the Board of Regents.

" In Haste " What a wonderful heading and one that I can see being revisited perhaps monthly between now and Houston, we'll see, as they say.

I am delighted that the Trustee Line is still in action, quite ironic that it serves as a vehicle to discuss and reconsider and one of the first emotive topics is in fact who can legitimately access the T/L itself. I voted against the item and was surprised to hear that, after the resounding defeat of the effort to close down the Trustee Line altogether, this item was not withdrawn. Even more surprised to hear that this item passed.

That said, I have easily accepted that it passed and I not only support the fact but also I now oppose the rescinding of this item, on many fronts.

First, On the issue of the movement and resulting agenda item to delete or close down the Trustee Line altogether, it seemed clear to me that that was personality driven rather than principle driven and I am very happy that it met the fate that all personality driven agendas should meet, abject failure and rejection by a democratic and deliberative body that seeks to behave in a manner far removed from the " Act now, think later or don't think at all " mindset that, perhaps, some of us employed when in action. I speak for myself, obviously.

On the main issue of this topic" In Haste ", rescinding the decision on to whom the Trustee Line is accessible, I don't believe it is just a question of revisiting the item and effectively re-voting on it, which is effectively what rescinding it would do, that would truly be in haste.

To approach it like that would be to skip the process and to suggest that the process and the people in the process are seriously flawed, I don't go along with that attitude at all.

The item was passed, so in examining the new situation we may need to take account of the consequences and ramifications of rescinding that decision.

In San Diego, we rescinded the decision from Boston to allow a new area, as I understand it that was based on the irrefutable evidence of a member of the B.O.T that the body had been seriously misled and so the right and proper course of action was taken, the decision was rescinded.

The Body was not misled in this instance regarding the Trustee Line, there was nothing wrong with the process, there is no evidence that members who apparently have now changed their mind and have now come out en masse to ask us to rescind this decision ever posted their opinion or had their current or past trustees post their opinions on the Trustee Line or vote against the item in Orlando.

So on what basis do we rescind the decision, because some of us don't like it? I would need more than that to support a rescision. given that a rescision suggests there was something wrong with the decision and / or the process.

If there was a flaw in the process it was that members chose not to give it proper attention or Trustees did not ask or consider their members wishes, I don't see that as a given and therefore see no reason to rescind, but I am open to suggested reasons and looking forward to hearing and considering them.

The overall emotive argument about a secret society or us somehow hiding by restricting access to the Trustee Line seems to me to be just that, emotive without any real input from thought process.

Are we not guided by Robert's rules as best we can, do we not have minutes of intergroup meetings which DO NOT and should not contain the complete deliberations of the bodies in question. Do we not operate a secret ballot in elections for very good reason. Do we not have a full day in our day at a time book about reckless honesty, are we not human and prone to errors of judgement as we seek, as members of this body, to tap into each others experience, strength and hope. Is that not what we are really elected to do, to bring our areas thoughts and wishes to the table, not to slam them down and insist they are accepted but to offer our input and seek each others guidance.

The substantial issue of whether it would be completely alien to the principles of this fellowship, the principles of Recovery, Unity and guidance, to effectively open to the general public our deliberations, where those expert in dis-unity and factoids could, without fear or favor portray them in a light to suit their own purposes, must be addressed.

I don't see how we can bestow upon ourselves the right to suggest, to the public, by way of opening up the access to the Trustee Line, that this is the way

to do things. I believe it would also restrict input from new Trustees and indeed recent Trustees, as well as others. That has nothing to do with secrecy, just common sense. I know from personal experience that common sense is not so common after all.

Its clear the fellowship wants the Trustee Line, speaking of old songs, is it A parking lot in Paradise that says..You don't know what you've got till its gone...fortunately we didn't go there this time and categorically refused to terminate the Trustee Line.

If those we serve truly want the Trustee Line open to all, including the public, they can have it by rescinding the decision, I just think, now that the decision has been made, we need to ensure that due diligence is carefully executed, without an emotive, knee jerk reaction.

I prefer to try and operate contrary to how I operated when in action, I prefer to try and let intellect guide my decisions rather than surrender to the sometimes knee-jerk emotional tendencies that invariably and inevitably bring about hasty decisions with long term consequences.

I often don't succeed so I am happy to have access to the thoughts (and feelings) of those who access and use this Trustee Line

The body voted democratically and in due process, to restrict access, it was against my wishes but I support the decision and I oppose the rescission of that decision unless and until I see something significant that changes my mind.

Remember, it is a new set of circumstances we are looking at here, not a revisit to the same question, there are new consequences and ramifications which did not exist, so just sticking to the original thoughts and decisions without considering the new situation would be akin to pretending we are not where we are, we wouldn't want to do that, I hope.

Very much looking forward to the Trustee Line editions,
Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland S /East Trustee

11/4/13 - 7:29 PM

Just a short viewpoint, I was not present for this agenda. However;

The agenda item was to shut down the Trustee Line. I am not sure how it got to the point of a LOGIN just for the trustees and the reasoning that lead up to it. To me whoever was the chair at that time made a major procedural critical error. Clearly, these are two different directions and the amended change should have been called out of order that it did not fit the original meaning to item.

Therefore, it should be an easy item to resend. So one would think!!!

Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

11/5/13 - 5:14 AM

Hi Gary,

I wasn't at Orlando either, however, I think on examining the facts you might find that there were two separate agenda items, that the Body was correct and that the chairs were impeccable, as usual. I don't know who chaired the item(s) but I have absolute faith that the body would have noticed if there was a problem. The facts and the probability combined leave me in no doubt the process is intact and followed in due course and this misunderstanding lends credence to the belief that none of us are perfect and the Trustee Line helps us examine the truth and dispel misunderstandings. All the more reason to encourage trustees to use the Trustee Line, without fear or favor, so thanks for that. I see no valid reason at this time to rescind a perfectly valid decision.

Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland S / East Trustee

11/6/13 - 10:00 AM

To the Board of Trustees, individual current Trustees, former Trustees and members of Gamblers Anonymous:

Gamblers Anonymous has saved my life and it has altered my life. When forced to leave San Diego and move to Oklahoma, it was something I could not control - only the final destination was the change I could control. That meant I

had to painfully give up being a trustee for San Diego; but it never altered my trust, faith, love and belief in the Fellowship.

There have been many decisions made by the Board of Trustees that I did not agree with, but once voted on by the greatest group conscious in the world, I accepted those changes. And so it was for the decision to remove my immediate access to the Trustee Line. The Trustee Line was one of my survival lines to keep informed. David M, Webmaster, made the new log in process so very simple and was incredibly patient with my lack of computer prowess.

Recently, we seem to have made a habit to rescind what we, in hindsight, tend to dislike after the fact. In my opinion which smacks of not having been prepared for the BOT meeting; not having researched what some might find very important in their lives; and not asking the right questions to get answers from the right people, I remind current Trustees to consider that this agenda item, although apparently amended, was not defeated; therefore, it can be brought up again. I would dare to suggest that a new agenda item be considered allowing all current Gamblers Anonymous members to have access to information - vital to them and their recovery - on the trustee website.

We talk a great deal about retention. Like Steve F - as a former Trustee - I returned to my new group and attempted to encourage ALL members to visit the trustee website, become familiar with it, use it, and learn more about the Fellowship. Our new Oklahoma Trustee also encourages members to learn to utilize the trustee website. Are we now to throw them under the bus? Are we telling members they are not equal to Trustees? My soap box this year is: "Don't put anyone on a pedestal." I also believe that "past" as in 'past Trustee' is a four-letter word. Many 'former' Trustees care just as much about the Fellowship as do 'current' Trustees. We tell newcomers - 'don't live in the past.' Why then should a 'former' Trustee be considered 'past'?

I don't mind the log in process - no big deal. But please do not take away the ability from all members to be able to access information on the Trustee Website. We all need it.

With love, faith, hope and trust in the Fellowship,
Linda S. - former Trustee Area 3A, San Diego
Current member, Area 7C, Oklahoma

11/10/13 - 9:21 AM I am one who voted for "login access" to view the TL. I can truly appreciate the postings here that speak to the need for transparency and rights of every member to this information. These postings did have me questioning my vote based on those principles.

My reason for supporting this restricted internet access to the TL was based on concerns related to the content of the TL, but not simply the "negativity". What I saw was personal attacks and disparaging statements. The TL became, in part, a platform for launching attacks, to discredit members, trustees, former trustees and groups. (please allow me to be clear, I said "in part" as I firmly continue to believe there is great value in the TL and see no issue with the vast majority of postings)

My reasoning for supporting log-in access was based on concerns for accessibility by the general public and by non-members. I see that as the issue. There have been enough postings on the TL that would make our fellowship seem in some ways to the outsider as dysfunctional, resentful, foolish, and where personalities run rampant. Not qualities that represent us well or help us in providing good "attraction". That is simply why I believe it should not be available in the public forum.

I did not intend to prohibit our members from obtaining and reading the TL postings. I do not believe the majority who voted for this "login access" had the intention of hiding or prohibiting access to the information by the members.

I hope that our present Trustees are assuring the members that they continue to have a right to see this TL material. It can and should be printed out and made available to members. This can be done by email distribution and/or copies distributed at the local Intergroup. I do acknowledge there are downsides to the lack of "real-time" info that access to the website would normally provide.

I also hope that the Trustees work to ensure our members understand that this vote was not intended to prohibit their ability to read the TL postings and that

copies of the postings can be made available to all members.

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

We Need A New Plan

11/3/13 - 6:13 AM

I wanted to get a conversation started about the ballooning number of agenda items. Although there are a significant number of items that are needed to refine our by-laws and business related documents, the number of items that make small changes to our combo book or recovery literature is out of control. I have only been a trustee for two terms and some of these items are coming up for the second time in three and a half years.

There were 34 items on the Orlando agenda to make small changes to our combo book. We spent 5 hours and 15 minutes out of the 20 hours or 26% of our time to make minor changes to one piece of literature. And of those 34 items, only three passed the first vote. We need a better plan. Every individual member in GA has ideas on how to make our program better from their perspective, but the BOT needs to think of the needs of GA as a whole.

David M. attempted to use the Trustee Poll as a tool to eliminate items the clearly did not have support to pass at the BOT meeting. For it to be effective, at least 50% of current Trustees would have to participate; for Orlando none of the items on the Poll had 50% of the Trustees responding. And how are the responses being used? Two items on the poll clearly indicated a lack of support (one item was 24% "For" and 76% "Against", another was 12% "For" and 84% "Against") and yet these items were on the agenda for Orlando. Neither item passed.

So, unless we agree that 20+ hours is acceptable to get through issues like these, we need a new plan. I am not sure what the answer is, but we need to start talking about it or our BOT meeting will expand to take the whole weekend as well. What are your thoughts? Do we make the Trustee Poll a formal part of the agenda process? Or do you have another solution? Do we need a screening committee?

My suggestion would be to have a standing committee that would screen agenda items that affect previously approved literature and the committee would evaluate the merit of the change. Two criteria could be: 1) Is there a deficiency in our approved literature that absolutely needs to be corrected, 2) Does the proposed change clearly make the literature more effective. This committee could meet via phone conference after the agenda is closed and determine which items have merit. For those items that don't get accepted, the author could appeal to the BOT Chairperson and Co-Chairs for a final decision.

We need some sort of reasonable screening process, the Trustee Poll or the screening committee are two ideas. What are your thoughts?

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

11/5/13 - 6:30 AM

Paul,

Thanks for highlighting a substantial issue, the facts and figures and the situation you highlight speak for themselves.

I have been trying to come up with a suggestion to add to your two ideas, but I have so far drawn a blank. I think, fundamentally, the decision of whether to submit an agenda item has to remain ultimately with the member, so I don't favor, at this time, the idea of a screening committee, other than the input of the entire voting body, by way of suggestion, indicating the likelihood of success or failure of the item. I think to pass the responsibility of deciding to the Executive committee may cause problems, in fact there is no guarantee the executive committee would get or even want that responsibility.

I think the criteria you suggest would be very helpful for any of us to consider when Authoring an item, is there a way to bring these to the forefront, would making the trustee poll part of the process do this? I agree it probably would, if utilized. I also see a related Demo feature on the site at the moment, that looks

very exciting and may encourage participation by us trustees, without which I don't think anything will help.

Perhaps the next time I submit an agenda item I will use the CTL to ask all trustees to indicate their preference on the Trustee Poll or a new feature as per demo, would that be an acceptable use of the CTL ? I presume so. I'll certainly take your suggestion on literature items if not all items.

I'm with you on this one Paul and I look forward to seeing suggestions and discussion here.

Odie. B. - Area 36, Ireland S / East

Retreats – Who, What, Where and Why?

11/10/13 - 12:27 PM

Many years ago, when I was the 2nd Co-Chair of the BOT, I was assigned the oversight of the 2004 Montreal Conference. Part of the responsibilities back then was to review conference booklet material for suitability. Although nothing was etched in stone regarding that, I ran across a submission that was centered on a retreat that many of the GA members would readily know by name. This retreat was not a GA function. I objected to its inclusion and that started a very unpleasant series of exchanges with the parties concerned. I'm not looking to revisit that situation, but I am prompted to think about that relative to an email that recently circulated regarding a so called 'GA Retreat'.

We may live a somewhat sheltered GA life in the Northeast, but with my time in the program, I have yet to see anywhere in our literature that we do retreats. I should soften that statement by saying that I have seen dozens of flyers circulating both in and outside the rooms that promoted retreats that were done by outside entities. When I have seen them in a room, I reminded the trusted servants that such flyers could not be used, displayed or distributed in the room, as per the Guidance Code. I clearly understand that an area may have a GA only retreat for its members, but even that has a ring to me of a problem. Does that mean that the area is gathering all GA members to go to an outside retreat? Or is it being handled only by GA people, which would be okay for me, I suppose.

The essence of this topic is that I think we need to make it clear, somewhere in our literature, exactly what constitutes a retreat that would be endorsed by GA, if that is even possible. Certainly the topic should be outlined, but doing that creates other sets of problems.

If this is an outside entity, then it can't be promoted at all. That much is certain.

If it is an area gathering GA members to go to an outside entity, thereby being labeled as a GA retreat, that can't be promoted.

If it is an area gathering GA members to go to another facility, but the retreat venue will be entirely handled by GA members, then that should be ok – or maybe not.

In all our literature, we stress meetings. There is the occasional mention of picnics and other items surrounding unity, but where does a GA-sponsored retreat fall? These are not GA meetings, yet the emphasis is on items supposedly integral to the GA Fellowship. They are not workshops, nor are they speakers meetings. So we have this 'function' we call a GA retreat, that hasn't been defined.

Now I am certain that you will always find people who attend these functions saying that they are tremendous in their effect on them, but the same could be said of other non-GA events, which would be a direct contradiction to the precepts of our Fellowship.

For the purpose of this discussion, I'm not interested in hearing testimonials from people who think any kind of retreat is beneficial, that is not what I'm trying to establish. My point is to elicit a discussion on how we, as a Fellowship and Trustees entrusted with protection of the Recovery and Unity Step, deal with this in our program. It's time we stop saying that 'it feels good, so it must be good', and put more of an effort into what is right for us to do to keep our Fellowship intact and not violate our Steps.

Let's talk it out here and maybe someone will be inspired to start the process of outlining how best to deal with this subject in our literature, etc. through an agenda item for a committee or something else.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

Liability Insurance

11/15/13 - 1:46 PM

I need some help from my fellow trustees.

My 'home' room in Philadelphia has been informed by the church where we meet that by January 1, 2014, our group will have to have liability insurance. I wish I could say this came as a surprise, but living in a litigious world, I'm sure it's just a matter of time before someone slips on the walkway leading into the church or other location where a meeting is being held, and then calls a lawyer before even calling an ambulance. (It's already happened at one of our meetings.) Hence, no doubt more and more of our groups are going to be receiving notifications similar to mine.

Although Norm B and his committee did a great job exploring insurance options on the national level, I doubt if any major decisions will be made, much less implemented by January 1st. Assuming (hoping) that a GA-wide policy is eventually offered at a reasonable price, my problem is what to do for our meeting in the meantime.

I know that some groups already have liability insurance for their particular meetings. So, my questions are: what do you pay as a group? Who is the insurance company? Please be specific.

Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13