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**Trustee Line for September 2015**

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 9/30/15.

**Questions and Answers Involving Individual BOT Committees**

Any GA member can contact the Chairs of the Committees listed below with any questions or concerns they might have. The Chairs will answer the emails and the resulting issues will be posted under each committee involved in the email. This will serve as help for other members, Intergroups or areas, who may be going through the same situations. The emails will not breach anonymity and will be redacted to make sure names and areas are not included in this section. You are also invited to click the individual committee links on the left margin, for more information.

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**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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## Unity Step 7

9/1/15 - 12:01 AM

The original intent of Unity Step 7 is the “spiritual axiom” of being self-supporting (as expressed in Gamblers Anonymous as “no bail outs”). A New Beginning page 57 narrative about this Step talks about Gamblers Anonymous not Gamblers Anonymous Group. The ISO is not a group but it is an integral part of Gamblers Anonymous so is not excluded from the principle of Unity Step 7. Self supporting is the very foundation our fellowship is built on. It is the bricks and mortar which stop us from ruining this thing.

The intent is clearly defined by those who, through trial and error, applied this Step long before it was adopted by Gamblers Anonymous. They deemed the word “Fellowship” as meaning all groups or offices or committees. Tradition Step 7 as it is expressed in Alcoholics Anonymous and later adopted by Gamblers Anonymous was for each country to develop its own administration arm where practical or rely on the General Service Office, the central administration arm of that fellowship.

The first principle of any business is for income to outweigh expenditure. When it doesn't you must grow the business. Gamblers Anonymous is not able to match growth to keep up with inflation and rising costs. It is clear that member contributions to the ISO do not match outgoings. In saying this we need the ISO to continue to exist. Its roles and responsibilities are valuable if not critical. One solution is to look at those regions that can stand on their own two feet like California, New York State, Canada, Australia or others. With some drive and enthusiasm these regions would establish their own regional administration arm to service their region rather than rely solely on the ISO. In doing so the monthly overrun of costs at the ISO would at least be reduced.

In Step 5 of recovery we are asked to find the exact nature of the wrong. Not so much the wrong-doing but the source of the wrong doing. If we apply the same principle here revenue is not the main problem but rather the increasing cost of supporting a worldwide administration arm. To dismantle one of our founding principles would be such a disappointing legacy to leave those people yet to make it to our rooms. It's awfully difficult to explain to a newcomer that no one took the time to analyze the problem and at least consider solutions that didn't involve increasing member contributions and accepting money from outside the fellowship.

Decisions on changes like the ones applied to the Steps needs to be a worldwide fellowship decision. Trusted servants are supposed to listen to the voice of the fellowship and implement the fellowship's wishes not apply what would appear a “knee jerk” decision to a financial problem. Once this happens we set a dangerous precedent. In future members will apply their own interpretation to matters that concern them as a means to affect change to our program. Why wouldn't they if something as spectacularly destructive as this item is passed?

If the second vote to accept contributions from family and friends in memory of members who have passed away is passed at Cancun it will shine a light on our ignorance and distinct lack of understanding of Unity Step 7. It will leave a legacy we will be rightly ashamed of in years to come.

Other fellowships are not immune to financial crisis but they look at all the mitigating circumstances and contributing factors not just ways to increase revenue and accept outside help.

Gennaro S. - Area 18, Australia  
 Mark H. - Area 18, Australia  
 Russell K. - Area 18, Australia  
 Yvonne R. - Area 18A, Australia  
 Brian F. - Area 18B, Australia  
 Trevor S. - Area 18B, Australia

9/15/15 - 3:47 PM

It's been 2 weeks since Australia broke the seal and their Trustees unanimously spoke in opposition of what is now item #11 on the Cancun Trustee Agenda. For as long as the Trustee Line has been digitally published, there has never been another posting in which the entire area agreed with a

point of view and that all the Trustees in that area, 6 in this case, signed off on the posting.

This is consistent with Australia wanting to have their voice heard, after being part of our Fellowship for so many decades. It was also one of the driving reasons why the International Area section of the Trustee website was created. And how do we as Trustees respond, with deafening silence. Much that I would love to see every Trustee get involved with this website, the fact remains that most of the activity is on the part of the viewers who don't respond or start new topics.

What is happening, as of this posting, is that we are probably going to see a rash of absentee ballots, as we move closer to the Cancun Trustee meeting. To that end, it becomes imperative that we take the time to really look over each item on the agenda and come up with a well-thought out decision. We owe this to the Fellowship at large. With 7 ballots already received in less than 24 hours, and looking at the names of those who have sent in their ballots, it's easy to come to the conclusion that this Cancun Trustee meeting will not be well-attended by our 130 International Trustees.

The absentee ballots will play a crucial role in Cancun, especially dealing with item #11 regarding allowing the ISO to take money from non-GA members. Read the submission just above from the Australian Trustees. Think about the clarity of everything in that posting. Think about the statement from Bob W. last month about how this idea came from the BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee. Look again at the mission statement from that committee: Joint Committee of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents to review revenues and suggest methods to increase the revenue of the I.S.O. Coming from the committee was about raising money. Having it submitted and endorsed by the BOR is about something very different.

This entire motion was not brought about by a humanitarian concern for being civil regarding memorialized our past members. I believe that was a justification after the fact by members of the committee. Another justification is that ISO is not a group, therefore Unity Step 7 does not apply to them. There is no reason to believe that the BOR has even discussed this item, as it was made clear by the BOR Chair, Steve F, that it would be discussed before Cancun.

Well maybe the BOR can remember to read the Red Book about Unity Step 7, for clarity. **"In order to maintain the independence of the Fellowship as a whole as well as individual groups, Gamblers Anonymous does not accept outside contributions."** Yet, the 1st vote passed to the amazement of many. This ties back to the absentee ballots, in order for everyone completing one to carefully consider their vote on item #11. There will be a call for a roll call vote, because it should be memorialized who is voting in favor of violation of Unity Step 7.

Looking at the structure of agenda item #11, it starts out with an implied statement that there is a problem with this kind of thinking. This further exemplifies that the BOR is trying every trick in the book to get past the objections and get this provision passed. Yes, I specifically say the BOR, because they submitted this item, not the BOR/BOT Revenue Review Committee.

Do we, as the Board of Trustees, want to be passing items that have to be qualified as appearing wrong, but are being told that it's really ok, because of a perversion of our Unity Steps? Passing #11, means that we open the door for anyone to use any provision in the By-Laws or anywhere else to argue about why something really doesn't mean what it says it means.

Now maybe some of you can understand my previous comments in an earlier edition about how I felt I was listening to active compulsive gamblers when the justifications and rationalizations came out in Cherry Hill for why this item needed to be passed.

In closing, I will cite what the Australian Trustees wrote on this subject:

**"If the second vote to accept contributions from family and friends in memory of members who have passed away is passed at Cancun it will shine a light on our ignorance and distinct lack of understanding of Unity Step 7. It will leave a legacy we will be rightly ashamed of in years to come.**

**Other fellowships are not immune to financial crisis but they look at all the mitigating circumstances and contributing factors not just ways to increase revenue and accept outside help."**

If #11 passes, it will be used as justification for other actions in the future. I can hear it now... "We did it before with contributions from outside people, why wouldn't we do it for this other situation, because it is an equally noble cause."

So many people pivot off of AA asking why don't we do this or that, like AA. Guess what... AA does not do what the Board of Regents is trying to do with item #11. The Chair of the BOR needs to stand up in Cancun and say that the item was ill-conceived and should not be passed with this 2nd vote. I know I am in GA because I can't handicap anything, but I don't think we will hear such a statement, because of false-pride.

Passing this item will make Gamblers Anonymous the laughing stock of the self-help world. We will show how money really is our problem. Thank you to Australia for standing as a unified group to shout out our responsibilities as Trustees to the Fellowship. If there really is a message of hope, then I hope the BOR regains its collective clarity of what destruction item #11 represents.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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9/15/15 - 11:06 PM

I have been following and commenting regarding current agenda number 11, up for a second vote.

I am a past Trustee from New Jersey and previously (4 times?) a Regent. Presently I am serving on the current Board of Regents.

I am 100% AGAINST accepting contributions from non-members (see my ideas about members directing funds to Gamblers Anonymous in previous posts).

If passed, this opening of a closed door will haunt Gamblers Anonymous forever.

I will do my best to hopefully convince the other 8 Regents that a perceived possible short term solution is a ticking time-bomb for the future of Gamblers Anonymous.

Bill B. - PT NJ, Area 6 Southern Florida

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### **Guests Share At Birthdays**

9/1/15 - 12:01 AM

I would like to know if your area allows guests to share at birthdays, or at open meetings in general. I think it could be detrimental to GA as a whole. It could be harmful because a guest's share may take time away from members who did not get a chance to share, also who knows what the guests will say, he or she might say something damaging about the program of the person celebrating, therefore it affects GA as a whole and a violation of unity step 4. It is not mentioned anywhere in our guidance code about guests sharing, so it turns to unity step 4. It is mentioned in the group handbook under definitions of open and closed meetings that guests are allowed but only members can participate. I understand the group handbook is a suggestion only piece of literature.

So, please share me your experience and let me know if you allow it and under what circumstance, and if you do not, how do you explain the decision to the membership. Any help would greatly be appreciated.

Thanks,  
Ara H. - Area 1 trustee, Los Angeles

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9/2/15 - 11:13 AM

Hi Ara,

I'd like to share briefly some of my experience on this matter.

In my local area of groups we USED TO allow guests to speak at Birthday meetings. Today not so.

People can stay for a coffee and a chat after the meeting and what happens then is that each person can choose whether to speak or listen in individual conversations, but non member guests speaking to a captive audience under the GA banner? Not today.

Worth noting, we did not at that time even have to consider whether it was

detrimental to G A as a whole, the damage to " Other groups " in our local area was sufficient.

Quite simply and without shame, this was as a result of our ignorance or non- acceptance of the suggestions available through the experience of the worldwide fellowship, it was often as a result of total lack of guidance, as we did not even possess a copy of the group handbook, we were so busy meeting to meeting just trying to find our way that the issue fell by the wayside, only re – appearing after another bout of damage, so Birthday meetings seemed to be a problem.

What damage ? All sorts of subtle and insidious deterioration, including... Guests who were subjected to outside influences or not and unaware of the GA way, as we partly were ourselves, shared with the best of intentions, but soon the competitions in who could come up with the worst story about their misery and how bad their significant other was, began. Members became uncomfortable, some even rejecting their own birthday meetings. Often, birthday meetings became advertising and recruitment sessions by members for outside agencies, on those own members misguided volition, some of them easing their own pain after just a month and three meetings in a facility. we knew there was something amiss but we thought it would be better next time, of course we did.

On top of those events, the actual purpose of the birthday meeting was waylaid and the G A message was not only unclear but often damaged or forgotten.

Many occasions, unbeknownst to us at the time, members who felt the discomfort chose not to come back, sometimes even being promised greener shores at other outside interests, all usually with disastrous results.

Little positive came of it and as I said, the matter was usually subsumed while we buried our heads in the sand, overwhelmed by the need to keep going with what we had. Nothing changed save for things getting insidiously worse.

Around the time we begun to identify the full magnitude of the problem, we found real contact with the fellowship, through the ISO and IRC. and Trusteeline.

The moment we read the " Suggestions " many of our problems seemed clear.

While honorable and noble, our intention and desire to be decent skins and allow the guests to have their say, was in fact just genuine misguided ignorance, with subtle negative implications for existing members and not a part of any program we wish to pass on.

We learned the very hard way, so today we pay very close attention to the " Suggestions " available. It tends to save us a lot of unnecessary pain. Suffering in this regard is now optional. We prefer the suggestions today. Our only saving graces? Willingness, open mindedness, humility and hope. Honestly.

Great topic among other great topics, looking forward to this months Trusteeline.

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

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**Don't Be Distracted By The Background Noise**

9/1/15 - 12:01 AM

I read with great interest some of the postings from last month and once again, I have to shake my head in disbelief. How is it than opponents of the Trustee Line are consistently unable and unwilling (yes, 1st item on page 10 of the Combo Book) to distinguish between issues that need attention, versus firing back with criticism about those who raise the issues?. Should those who raise these issues become the targets of criticism for having raised them? It's easy to avoid such 'creative forms of expression' by just never expressing your opinion and blending into the background. In other words, letting others do the heavy lifting. We see this avoidance tactic of letting others being the ones to take the heat, when the Trustees in our semi-annual meetings, just sit there, vote and don't get up to the microphone, to hopefully voice something that will make a difference in how people vote.

How the Trustee Line was started is a moot point. When I started driving, gas was 25 cents a gallon. So what? Time and technology changes everything, and the 'what things used to be', plays right into the 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' mentality. We can't be Timex watches in a digital age. One reason we

don't have retention with our members is because we are not relevant to the new universe of prospective members of this Fellowship. If you want nothing but positives, unicorns and rainbows.... write to the Bulletin. As Richard C. said in last month's response to the Washline thread, this is the communication tool that allows for instant answers, supporting comments and dissenting opinions. What used to be is irrelevant. The sniping and acrimony to other members is history, since the Board of Trustees reflected their opinion about the tone and demeanor of the Trustee Line almost 2 years ago. Can someone be pissed off about things done by others in the Fellowship that have a perceived negative effect on the Fellowship or more locally? Of course. Will many continue to stick their heads in the sand to not make waves? Of course. But, when all else fails there is always the old standby of us concentrating our efforts solely on Unity Step 5, as if nothing else matters. The Trustee Line is about Trustee issues, so with all due respect to Unity Step 5, I also pay attention to the Guidance Code, Article VIII, Section 7: 'The Board of Trustees primary function shall be to insure the most effective exchange of thoughts and ideas between all Gamblers Anonymous groups and to act for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, except in matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or International Executive Secretary.'

I think the points of particular humor for me, are those who squawk from the trees about the positives and how to improve unity, who actually present themselves as empty suits. Where is Clara Peller when we need her, as she asked: 'Where's the beef?' In looking at the history of the online version of the Trustee Line, I am pressed to find any of these people actually presenting issues on a regular basis to accomplish such noble goals. I remember an acronym from many years ago - N.A.T.O - 'No action, talk only.' To whomever it might be that the saying fits, so be it. That statement is not meant to single anyone out and degrade this posting to the point of me going after people. It is a challenge to those same people do what they say at Cape Kennedy - 'Shoot or get off the pad.' Make it happen, step into the batter's box and take a swing at an issue - or all issues. How else does change happen without such dialogue? For anyone who is a current Trustee that is just against any form of change, maybe it's time to step down as Trustee. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own set of facts. When the attacks on the authors begin, all the arrows shot, get a Post Office stamp of: Return To Sender.

No doubt there are those who don't like my style, but I have done nothing over the years of my postings other than to bring up problems that exist in many different areas that need to be exposed and addressed, not for the purpose of embarrassing anyone, but to fix, change, modify or delete the issue, all with the goal of improving the Fellowship. If your name gets added to the item(s) in question, then it is because it was printed in a document. Where these issues happen, is not the point, but what is happening and what's wrong with it, is what's important. And yes, there is nothing wrong with bringing up the same point over successive months, because they really need to be in the general discussion of the Board of Trustees. Many of those ideas, have exposed problems that others may not have known about, and they have turned into agenda items that the Board of Trustees and even the Board of Regents have changed. The Board of Regents would seem to be a favorite target of mine with new topics, but that's for a different time and a different posting.

The point of this posting is for everyone to understand that criticism of decisions and actions of others in the Fellowship, or the observations of a problem that should not be taking place, is about H.O.W. If this Fellowship is not growing, then we are dying. What has been in place for 58 years wasn't meant to be carved in stone. The 'old guard' is generally resistant to change. The Trustee average age is declining with every election. The old way of thinking is fast becoming a minority opinion. This Fellowship has gaping holes in its structure, which in and of itself, is the very source of controversy, which as we say on page 2 of the Combo Book, is something in which we don't engage.

I am truly amazed at how those who write to the Trustee Line on a regular basis are criticized for speaking on many, not all, as some would lead you to believe, of the topics. Trustees have an opinion every time they vote. The entire universe of Trustees should be chiming in on every issue that is posted to the Trustee Line. The fear tactics that mention retaliatory postings if Trustees don't agree with the author of a thread, are fabrications. People who complain about issues, already expect dissenting opinions. That's how we learn.

In closing, let me end with a quote from the movie, The American President. The last 2 sentence resonate with me. Hopefully, they will for you also. It is

about the essence of the Trustee Line, a communication and educational tool of awareness in this Fellowship. "The American People want leadership. And in the absence of genuine leadership, they will listen to anyone who steps up to the microphone. They're so thirsty for it, they'll crawl through the desert toward a mirage, and when they discover there's no water, they'll drink the sand. We've had Presidents who were beloved, who couldn't find a coherent sentence with two hands and a flashlight. **People don't drink the sand, because they're thirsty. They drink it because they don't know the difference.**"

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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**Trustee Poll Question re: "Sports Clothes"**

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9/3/15 - 11:05 AM

It is surprising to me that more current trustees who have voted in the "Trustee Poll" are against barring sports clothes at GA meetings and functions. It is a relatively small sampling, but worth reviewing here.

For many of us in the fellowship, betting on sporting events was a major issue in our lives. Is it necessary to wear something into a meeting that may trigger action on the part of a person in the meeting? I think not. There are shirts sold with logos of casinos and racetracks, too. Should a person wear such items into a GA meeting or function when doing so may be harmful to a recovering person in the room who lost one's life savings at one of these venues?

Consideration of others is an important component when changing negative behavior into kind, positive actions in a 12-Step program. When choosing a shirt, jacket, or hat to wear to a meeting, be mindful that others who observe your appearance may be influenced by your attire.

Try to set a good example by dressing neatly and displaying respect for others who are trying to recover from gambling that may have been related to betting on your favorite team. When in doubt about such a decision, always take the high road in order to be considerate of your brothers and sisters in the fellowship.

Respectfully,  
Vinny B. - Past Trustee, Area 12, New Jersey

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**How Clinging To AA Ways Is Detrimental To GA As A Whole**

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9/3/15 - 12:35 PM

I had the occasion to go to a different state last month, in an attempt to help the area understand our approved literature, which included the complete lack of use of anything pertaining to the Guidance Code, the Group Handbook and the Abuse and Harassment Booklet, just to name a few items from our literature library. In attending 3 of the meetings in this general area, the one thing that was common to each room was that they were running AA meetings, only substituting GA in its place.

The rest of this posting will no doubt irritate those GA members who are also AA members. I'm not at all interested in the statistics of AA meetings and how many members they have versus GA. I will only toss out there, that meetings that are run off the AA platform are doing a huge disservice to our GA brothers and sisters. We are only offering our members 10% of what is available to them under these meeting formats.

From all the people that I have met in GA over the years, there have been many discussions about how AA does things. I was so bothered after seeing these meetings run this way, that I came home and went to an open AA discussion meeting, to experience it for myself. There were virtually no differences in how AA runs their discussion meetings and how the meetings in this area were conducted.

What really set me off was how a new member is handled, or better yet, mishandled. But let me tell you how my homeroom handles new members. We have a 2-hour meeting. If a new member is there and identified before the meeting gets started, we read the entire Combo Book, but save the 20 questions for later. When we get to pages 8-14, we have the new member ask the question for each segment, and an existing member of the room will read the answer on a rotating basis. It very clearly gives that impression that the individual members are speaking directly to the new member. This makes

the meeting about the new member.

Halfway into the meeting, the Chair reads the 20 questions to the member for just a yes or no answer, then we allow the new member to tell us what brought him/her to the room. After that is completed, the member is given a maximum of 5 comments, in order to share our experience, strength and hope, which is only about the room embracing that member. A new member packet is given to this person at the end of the meeting with literature that is meant to help a new member. Existing members will speak with this person and try to impress upon him/her about the importance of getting to as many meetings as possible. The member's phone number is distributed to the entire room and the member receives a phone list of the members in the room.

What I witnessed on my trip was appalling. I attended 3 meetings in 2 nights and each one had a new member. What was obvious was the singular focus by the Trused Servants of the rooms to give this person a GA Welcome Keychain. That's right, I personally don't believe in them, but this is what was important. If that happened to me in my first meeting, my thoughts would have turned to being insulted. I answered yes to question 20, and the room responds by giving me a Welcome keychain? How often do we say that time is not important? Counting days is a misdirection of thought and efforts. Yes, the comments no doubt are going to fall from the sky about this being a day at a time program and the key chains are a way of marking another day. I know people swear by them, but do not subscribe to their use. Nevertheless, I will leave that to another discussion. Let me get back to how the new members were handled in these meetings.

In 2 of the 3 meetings, the new member just sat there.  
The member did not get asked the 20 questions on a one-on-one basis.  
The member did not get asked for a contact number  
Nobody in the room had any information to contact the person  
The member was not asked to give any therapy  
The material given to each new member was lacking in the pieces of approved literature that deals with the new members

In my displeasure over many other things in the meeting, I heard from other members after the meeting that nobody was allowed to speak to the new member, except one person. That person tells the new member who to talk to and who to steer clear of. That person also tells the new member which meetings to go to.

This is just the tip of the iceberg that constitutes problems, which this particular area faces. But they are not alone. This is happening through out the US and probably many other countries. My knowledge on this topic is only from the US-based meetings, based on other members informing me of these situations.

The root of the problem lies with the structure within which we operate and the new rooms that get started without any guidance from GA itself. Sending literature with a new meeting starter pack is not going to change this. The new rooms need guidance for how different established rooms run their meetings. These rooms are supposed to be GA meetings, not AA look alike meetings. They are GA meetings, where the full potential of what we have built as a Fellowship, and is there for the new members and existing members alike.

I have an agenda item on for Cancun to form a committee to accomplish this, using platforms that use the technology available to us via the Internet. We have a problem relating to today's new members. Mink coats and yachts, etc. is from a different life and generation. Those who cling to keeping that type of wording in our literature, are directly facing a situation of taking back their will because they resist change, instead of what could possibly make the new members today, better able to identify with GA as a means of dealing with their gambling problem. What is going to help ensure retention is utilizing the new media to not only carry the message, but become relevant to a segment of the population that is faced with gambling temptations far more oppressive than what the rest of us endured. Done under the guidelines of the Unity Program, we can help to bring healthier meetings into the fold. That can only improve the environment for all members and that naturally makes us all become stronger.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

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9/4/15 - 11:00 AM

Dear fellow GA members and trustees:

I have been a member of this program for more than 20 years I am also a



former trustee. I care about the people in the program and also about GA as a whole so I can't keep quiet after reading the last post. GA is very very sick right now. The only way out as far as I can see is to return to spiritual principles as embodied in the original AA program. That's it. In my opinion, the board of trustees should be disbanded, the guidance code eliminated and this website including this "trustee line" taken down. The membership itself needs to take back the program from its "trusted servants". I will pray for GA and its members.

Mary S. - Former Trustee, Area 12, New Jersey

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9/5/15 - 1:29 AM

Hi Mary,

Thank you for your post. David thank you for yours as well. David I wouldn't be too concerned with AA having a huge influence on GA. Any spiritual solution offered in GA if ever seems to have been successfully deviated from a long time ago. If there was a spiritual solution it would dominate GA rooms across the world and on this trustee line. Of course we all know that isn't the case. Majority of GA old timers only have war stories to offer. Certainly not a whole lot about THE RECOVERY PROGRAM. Hell I can't even get old timers on here to share their experience with GA's guide to 4th step inventory and that's approved GA literature! David I don't mean any disrespect but I didn't agree with a word you shared on this post.

I would like to take this opportunity to share that we are having a campout on Mt. Diablo on September 12th to celebrate the 58th birthday of GA. We will be reading our founder ( Jim W's ) story out of the blue book. I don't think Jim W. Gets his props in GA. He was also an AA member and a very spiritual man from the research I've gathered. Don't worry David everyone in GA isn't going to read the Big Book and start working the 12 steps as a result of this.

Mary your post might be censored/deleted by the time this gets posted. I just want to let you know it didn't fall on deaf ears. In fact I'm glad I made a copy of it before it potentially gets censored. It took a lot of courage to write what you wrote and I appreciate it. Unfortunately I highly doubt your prayers will be answered on this one. I will add that maybe the solution isn't to wait around for GA to adopt a more spiritual solution.

Joe T. - Area 2, former trustee, Norther California

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9/7/15 - 9:56 AM

Dear Andy and David:

I would like to explain a little more about why I wrote what I wrote. I disagreed with David's post because I don't understand how one member from another area could criticize how rooms in a different area are running their meetings. I can't imagine how the people in those rooms felt when reading David's post. It must have hurt someone's feelings to ridicule them for just wanting to give a new member a key chain. There are better ways to express an opinion. As a former trustee, I apologize to the members in those rooms and also the members of GA who are also members of AA for the disparaging remarks about the AA program.

I also disagree on a more philosophical level. I don't think that the new member should be the focus of the meeting. I have arrived at this viewpoint after many long years in the program and also seeing how things work in other 12 step programs. A warm welcome, a few pieces of literature and a spot at the table is sufficient. If the new person really wants recovery, they will find it - if the room itself is healthy. So the health of the room itself should always come first, never putting any member (new or not) above the room. It really is about attraction rather than promotion, even at the room level. I wouldn't worry too much about it. All that advice giving is just noise to the new member. They need to know that they are not the only one and that there are other people with the same addiction. That is the seed that leads to recovery.

Mary S - Former trustee, Area 12 , New Jersey

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<b>Trustee Line of Soap Opera</b>
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9/6/15 - 4:51 PM

I use to call the Trustee line the "Wash Line" but now really believe that it is a "Soap Opera". I cannot believe what is written on here. The editor claims that it is for the betterment of our fellowship and is completely transparent

and has full accountability.

The editor is allowed to write his editorial called "How Clinging To AA Ways Is Detrimental To GA As A Whole". In it is a Soap Opera episode of his personal principals statements and not in any way about the principals over personality. How in any way is the beginning evolution of all 12-step programs is detrimental to our fellowship? I am not even going to write another episode to his editorial. I think Joe T and Mary S. made the point.

However, I am sure there is some crazy reality producer that could create a TV reality show, if he read he this article on our Soap Opera line. Perhaps a title of "Believe it or Not of a 12 step program" fits?

However, lets get to the real reason that why I changed it to the Soap Opera Line.

The editor is permitted to do his article. Yet when Mary S writes her reply a day later it is pulled and this statement mysterious appears in its place.

"9/4/15 - 11:00 AM

The posting that appeared here earlier today is under additional review for appropriateness. A decision should be available shortly regarding its potential posting. If there any questions, please contact the Website Admin."

I have been through this myself and have know several others that have gotten rejected by the editor and supposedly through the process of the website committee. There is no transparency or any accountability at all! Just a simple statement that it has gone through the due process that is outlined in its self- governing platform.

I am asking and would like to humbly request that each committee member write on the Trust line about these questions.

- 1.) Why was it pulled and who had asked it why it was inappropriate? I anticipate that it will be claimed that they cannot reveal the person that complained. I ask why not? If that person has the right to complain about any article they should be accountable as well. This should not be a witch-hunt or a Spanish inquisition. As well as complete transparency.
- 2.) When were they contacted?
- 3.) What was their reason(s) to find it not inappropriate?

The editor and others on this Soap Line always repeatedly demand a complete transparency and accountability from the BOR and/or any committee that is formed by the BOT. Yet – they do not practice what they preach. We have allowed this kind of egotism to grow and control our free speech.

I also ask that when an article is rejected for whatever reason that each committee member has the common courtesy to reply to their fellow GA member. . For not to do so affects GA as a whole, cause it breaks down unity and creates a platform of personal principals and egotism.

Hopefully, we will get answers to my questions. But like Joe T said – I am not holding my breath.

Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

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9/6/15 - 7:11 PM

Hello everyone,

For some time now there have been "issues" on the Trustee Line. There are several rules that have been put into place over the years because of things that have been brought up.

Every post that gets submitted to the Trustee Line gets an initial approval from the Trustee website chair. If the chair believes that it may be construed as inappropriate, it then goes to the rest of the website committee for review.

This is true for every posting with one exception. If the chair wants to post something, it automatically goes to the entire committee for review.

Gary, there are no secrets and there is no need for a witch hunt. It was I who questioned the post.

There are many different reasons why I found the posting of Mary's inappropriate. I'm not going to go into those reasons any further than to say that her post was defamatory in nature to the entire Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous.

As Chairman of the BOT, I wanted to be certain that the decision to post Mary's submission was made by the entire committee and not just the chair.

The committee unanimously agreed that the posting was within the guidelines and should remain on the Trustee Line.

My opinion no longer matters, the committee made a decision and I stand behind it.

In closing, there are many Trustees who view the Trustee Line as a means of communication with other Trustees to discuss issues they have locally or something that may affect us all in the hope of finding solutions.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Cancun for what is sure to be a successful exchange of hope and ideas.

Andy R. - Chair, BOT  
Area 13B

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9/7/15 - 12:02 AM

Andy,

Thank you for being the first chairman to stand up and be accountable. I honestly mean that. I always did respect you and once again you have proven yourself. My efforts were not about a witch-hunt but the rightful respect from a member that has been in GA for over 20 dedicated years and is well respected.

Many believe that the Trustee line falls under the editor's own personal whims. I still believe that it is just courtesy to reply to their fellow GA member.

Next month I will do a history of how many people actually use the trustee line. I know for a fact, it gets less participation than the Trustee Poll. That sparks the question on why very few of our members are willing to contribute to it. Your statement "there are many Trustees who view the Trustee Line as a means of communication with other Trustees to discuss issues they have locally or something that may affect us all in the hope of finding solutions", "That many" is less than a baker's dozen per month

We should look and strive for a more positive environment that brings out the best in our members to inspire unity and not break it down.

Andy, Let me humbly and kindly ask you to change how the trustee line is handle. You are our BOT Chairman and the person who the BOT body elected to guide our fellowship.

Perhaps for the next year, you can publish a single monthly thought statement, a question, or a provocative direction that would inspire from more members. Call it something like " THE CHAIRMAN FIRESIDE CHAT" OR ANDY'S CORNER OR "THE CHAIRMAN'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

Instead of getting the current editor editorials that inflame people like Mary S and many others have to counter balance the scale to show the insane thinking and the egotism that has been built up over the years.

I trust that you have many ideas and visions where you would like to see/how the BOT could improve. Over the years I have seen zero good ideas that have come from the Soap line. Years ago the Chairman published his own printed thoughts. It should had never had changed and should be returned to the rightful place.

I believe that you have GA's heart and totally understand the both sets of steps.in right place. It would be a welcome and refreshing beginning, which just may turn the ship. To get back on the spiritual side of our fellowship and give the rooms back their group conscience that this editor tries to squash.

PLEASE THINK ABOUT IT AND I AM SO WILLING TO DISCUSS THIS WITH YOU AT ANYTIME. I'll even come down and buy you dinner.

Till that time, I hope that the Editor and staff will follow your example of accountability and transparency. But there again I am not holding my breath – he has too much power.

Respectfully, your northern part of the state friend.  
Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

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9/7/15 - 12:37 PM

It is so sad that a person who espouses unity and the importance of principles

in our fellowship, places himself at the very center of virtually all the problems in GA and strikes out personally at dedicated members in a forum designed for healthy communication. One's ego is dangerous when positive growth is supposed to be a hallmark of the program. Personal attacks on those who have served as a chairman of the Board of Trustees and those who step up to help maintain our website add nothing good or worthwhile to the fellowship. Let us all be grateful to those who provide valuable service to GA.

Heard a great speaker at an open 12-Step Meeting once say, "It is terrible when we hear a member say, 'I used to be an SOB compulsive gambler, I found GA and now I'm only an SOB' ". That display of a lack of growth is not really funny. Openmindedness is vital to one's growth and recovery. Tolerance and acceptance of other people's points of view is significant, too.

Respectfully,  
Vinny B. - Former Trustee, Area 12, New Jersey

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9/8/15 - 1:41 PM

Gamblers Anonymous saved my life - from many directions. Unlike some of my fellow members of the GA Fellowship, this is the only addiction I suffer from; I am not dual-addicted. My Higher Power evolved from childhood concept to adult commitment, so I do not feel that my spirituality comes from a Fellowship but from inner sources. Others are not as fortunate, but I cannot and will not sit in judgment of either. It is my understanding that many Trustees read the Trustee Line, but only a few choose to make comments for their own personal reasons. Similarly, at the BOT meetings I've attended, many Trustees listen to others' opinions, but only a few choose to speak at the microphone. In my opinion, that doesn't justify disposing of either. Are we, as a Fellowship, to deny any member the option of reading or listening to others if they choose to do so? How many times at a GA meeting have I heard, 'We agree to disagree?' My opinion may often disagree with another's - after all, I haven't walked in their shoes. What Unity tells me is - that is okay, but not to assassinate the character of the person. 'Principles before personalities' has different meanings for different folks and is often interpreted as one wants, when it benefits their opinion. I have the option to accept or reject their opinion - but I do not have the option to smear or chastise another GA member for their opinion. This is how I grow and why my recovery becomes so important

Linda S. - Area 7C, Oklahoma

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9/8/15 - 6:35 PM

Gary,

As chair of the Trustee website committee, let me take this opportunity to clear the air about what you wrote in your posting.

Andy has already explained what happened, regarding Mary's post, it's temporary suspension and subsequent reinstatement. He has also explained what happens when I personally wish to have something posted to the Trustee Line, which is always my personal opinion, unless otherwise indicated. Requesting approval from the committee members for my tentative postings, is my choice. This is not a prerequisite to posting that is written or mandated anywhere. I do this to go the extra step in order to deal with those who believe I run unchecked with my postings. Also, I don't look for a majority opinion from the members, I go even further and insist on a unanimous decision. Where I might be deemed to causing a problem, the individual committee members have no hesitation at directing me to the problem segments that need to be changed or deleted. It is my choice to comply with their directives or not post the item(s). I have never invoked the appeal process.

By the way, I prepared this response shortly after your posting, but I did not post it until today, when I received unanimous support from a review by the committee members. Some of the members were unable to review it until today.

Let me be very clear that the Trustee website committee members don't get their 'jollies' from rejecting submissions. There is focused, sincere, objective and extensive reviewing with each item that is initially deemed to be questionably inappropriate. Mary's posting initially was cleared, because the committee tries to stay away from any actions that might be perceived to be censorship. Some may find Mary's response objectionable, but objectivity remains a key point for the committee's review of any submission. It was the first time an item was cleared by the committee and was then drawn into additional review by the BOT Chair.

You bring up the fact that you have been through this process yourself. That is because you have crossed the line many times by going after people in a manner inconsistent with appropriateness. Each time you were notified about this. Some decisions of the committee you have accepted and others you have put to appeal. What you now request is a member-by-member reasoning for an issue that was not yours to question.

The Trustee website committee functions as a committee, not 5 members, so there will not be any individual summaries from the members posted to the Trustee Line. If a posting is deemed inappropriate, the author is advised. If an appeal is desired, then the Executive Board's answer is final. You have written an entire post about something that did not happen. Is this what sensible people do?

Also, let me clarify something else. I am not the 'editor' of the Trustee Line. I only represent the initial point of contact for submissions. My job only becomes an issue when I suspect a submission for being inappropriate. I do not have 'the power' to stop any item, but the committee does. You paint me to be the problem of the committee. That is patently false, although it remains a staple from which to 'build your cases'. If you don't like my personal postings and opinions, that is an entirely separate issue, for a different thread.

In closing, I think you have long since worn out your statements of 'Unity being broken down' because you disagree with many of the postings on the Trustee Line. You can also add all the other accusations in your last paragraph. Between what Andy has written and my posting here, directly in response to your requests, you have the answers to your questions. If you need additional help with any of this, be sure to reach out to me or the committee members.

Why not do yourself and everyone who reads that Trustee Line a favor. Attack the issues with what your opinion is, and leave the venom you direct at individuals behind. Give us all your heartfelt opinion on the issues, and I, along with many others, will be your best supporter for your right to express your opinion.

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

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<b>Observations</b>
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9/7/15 - 10:05 PM

I just reviewed the new "Local Area Questions & Answers". 5 items were credited to one member and 41 items were credited to a second member. In reading the "questions", I realized (again) as to how control, EGO & disrespect for others continues to hurt our fellowship and its members.

Do I have all the answers to the issues & problems in Gamblers Anonymous today or in the 45 years plus in program? Hardly.

How did the program get to where it is today? As the members in charge of the "Trustee Line" will not print a passage from the "Foreword to the Second Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous", bottom of page xviii to the top of page xix, I cannot quote and discuss as I believe this passage will explain today's issues for Gamblers Anonymous.

Gamblers Anonymous is at a turning point at the present time. Right now I would set aside the petty problems and concentrate on the major issues:

- Lack of income at the International Service Office to off-set expenses
- Ongoing infighting to the detriment of members abstinence & recovery
- Focus on Unity #7 - "Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers"
- Accept that we, at Gamblers Anonymous do not have all the answers and engage outside resources to aid us and help us as outlined in Unity #9
- Return the voting for our Board of Regents (Directors) to the members who are the "owners" of Gamblers Anonymous (a California Corporation)
- Surrender the control & EGO for the good of our membership

UNIFY OR PREPARE FOR THE DEMISE OF GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS.

Bill B. - PT NJ, Southern Florida, Area 6

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<b>Fantasy Sports Leagues</b>
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9/20/15 - 1:07 PM

To all my fellow gamblers anonymous members,

We have all seen and heard the commercials for the last few weeks, they were 27 million dollars worth of advertising blanketed on every type of media ever invented. Draft Kings & Fan Duel, etc, are Fantasy Sports Leagues. Over 40 million Americans play in FSL, the world wide numbers haven't been accumulated yet, and they know soccer FSL are on a massive trajectory in growth. People of ALL AGES are allowed to play in FSL. Most people from the ages of 10-35 KNOW what a FSL is.

On the top of page 14 in our yellow combo book, in bold it says "world series pool", I have a combo book agenda item to change it to "Fantasy Sports League". I think as a program we should be proactive with our wording, so as the days and weeks move forward, any new people who come through our doors, can relate to us, because we know EXACTLY the pain they feel from compulsively gambling in FANTASY SPORTS LEAGUES .

I have experienced in the last few years, people under 30 who say a lot of the old words in the yellow book they can't relate to. I believe this a significant step forward as a program in that very critical area for new people. It is agenda item #22 under "new business" for the upcoming Cancun conference. Please let me know how you feel.

Thanks,

Kent D. - Area 15, New York

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<b>Liability Insurance For Group Meetings</b>
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9/20/15 - 5:06 PM

Los Angeles Intergroup recently formed a committee to provide information on this topic. I believe there are other Intergroups that have already discussed Group liability insurance and may already have answers to some of the following questions:

- 1) If there is a liability award against an uninsured Group, who pays for this (ie the Group, Intergroup, Individuals or ISO)?
- 2) Will the insurance policies maintained by ISO protect Groups and Intergroups?
- 3) Should each Intergroup purchase their own insurance policy that would protect all Groups?
- 4) Since GA Groups are 'autonomous', shouldn't they decide on whether to provide the insurance funding or move to another location?
- 5) Should the BOT form a committee that would provide consistent guidelines on this topic?

Any information related to this topic will be appreciated.

Doug E. - Past Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

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