

Where History of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and Fun Times Mix – Our Trip to the General Service Office (G.S.O.) by Michele P.

On July 21st, the Washington Area General Service Assembly (WAGSA) Area 13 Archives Committee hosted a day trip to the General Service Office in New York City. With a busload of excited AA members from Area 13, some sleepy-eyed and others wide awake, following a roll-call and prayer at 4:00 a.m. Friday morning we began our journey. We embarked on an informative, fun, spirit-filled experience where principles of love, tolerance, and service carried the day.

On our way to G.S.O. headquarters, at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY, members were served refreshments.

We passed the time on the bus ride playing the infamous “raffle,” and watching the video “*Markings on the Journey.*” The video chronicles people, places and things in AA’s history. For those who love history, this DVD is a true treasure. You can purchase a copy from the AA approved-literature catalogue.

We arrived at G.S.O. at 10:15 a.m., ahead of schedule. The G.S.O. is housed in the Interchurch Building on the 11th floor. We were greeted by Rocio P, the GSO tours coordinator. It was great to finally meet her in person after months of communication via phone. Rocio’s and the rest of the welcoming committee made Area 13 members feel especially welcomed that day. Once we received visitor badges we were directed to the conference room, where Mary C. on the International desk assignment, provided an overview of the mission of G.S.O. See an excerpt below from the G.S.O. General Manager, Gregory Tobin’s, welcome letter - *The General Office exists for the sole purpose of supplying A.A. members, groups and others with A.A. Conference - approved literature, providing collected A.A. experience upon request, and responding to inquiries from the general public by providing information about Alcoholics Anonymous and guiding them to local A.A. resource, whenever possible.*

Mary C. told us about the various staff assignments and introduced John W. who is the senior editor of the Grapevine. John talked about the Grapevine and LaVina magazines. He asked us to submit articles and not to worry if we were not writers; that’s what he and other staff writers’ jobs are to oversee the publication, which includes editing,

Before the Open AA meeting started, Mary C. returned to the mic and asked everyone to introduce themselves, including where they’re from and their homegroups. People were in attendance from all over the US as well as Canada. The meeting began with me reading the Preamble and, afterwards past delegate Alecia R. from Area 56, shared her story. Alecia and Elaine G., past delegate from Area 13, attended the General Service Conference (GSC) together in 2009-10.

After the meeting concluded, we toured the GSO offices. We visited with staff members responsible for service assignments, such as the AA Website, Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) and Corrections assignments. We walked through the stock room, which housed AA literature, pamphlets and books; especially noteworthy were Big Books in several different languages and in braille. We were also given a welcome package of information to take back with us.

A highlight of my visit was meeting David D’avria who works in the AA Archives. I have sent him several questions about AA history during my term as Chair of the Archives Committee. Though I thanked him when I received his email responses, it was nice to be able to also do so in person. Perusing through the archive displays, which are dear to my heart, we got to see more pictures and artifacts on AA’s history – even Bill W’s couch.

Before the tour ended, a few members took advantage of ordering literature and Grapevines right on the spot. Finally, we were ready for lunch where some went to the on-site cafeteria while others visited New York eateries outside of the building. Everyone made it back to the bus on time for the ride home. Now, on the road again, we saw

how much folks learned or already knew about AA history. A twenty-question test paper with 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes for the winners were passed out. The winners were: first place -Drexel Y. received a Joe & Charley CD set; second place - Lynette D. AA Comes of Age; and third place - Norma F. a one-year Grapevine print subscription.

We had even more fun watching a Sinbad video and a serious flick, Lila and Evie. We're not a glum lot! For rest and relaxation, we concluded the bus ride with some smooth jazz piping through the speakers.

We all had a fantastic day! Our trip was full of education, inspiration, thanksgiving, unity, service and love.

Don't miss the next trip – get on the bus.

Our members share

"I experienced love and tolerance in action and it began with me."

Angela G. Mideast Grp

"The two things that caught my attention on the trip to AA headquarters in New York. Number one Northern hospitality. All heard of southern hospitality but the guys up there gave us the Royal Treatment. The second thing is diversity. I like the way during the meeting we were all asked to give a homegroup and where we're from. The results were astounding. There were people from all over the world with one common purpose." Milton B. Brooklyn Grp

"The tour was educational"

Liz B. Anacostia Grp

"Our coach driver was great, really drove that bus. Enjoyed the trip, inspirational"

Virginia W. Anacostia Grp

"I advise everybody, if they get a chance, to go see how GSO is organized. It's overwhelming."

Eugene I. As We Understood Him Grp

"What an incredible experience. I enjoyed the AA meeting and met other members from around the world, but what I really enjoyed was the opportunity to see copies of the Big Book that had been translated into so many other languages! The tours were helpful too."

Lynette D. As We Understood Him Grp

"This trip was my first time visiting the General Service Office (G.S.O.) in NY and it was truly a moving experience for me. Starting with the fellowship on the bus, the A.A. meeting then the tour. As a new member of the Archives Committee, I was especially inspired by the historical artifacts that were on display. A truly wonderful experience.

Tracie T. Cosmopolitan Grp.