

World Service Business Conference 2007
Living the Twelfth Step
April 30 – May 5, 2007
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

The brightest early morning stars were still visible as we made our way along the relatively car-free highway to the Manchester Airport. We made it through the terrorist screening, although I lost my sunscreen (it was six ounces instead of the legal three) to find Jon at gate 7 for our flight. We marched down the steps to our plane and took our seats. Some time passed and the recalcitrant pilot's voice announced, "We will deliver you to your destination as soon as we can repair a technical problem holding us up." Back in the terminal, rapidly talking agents rerouted travelers and assured us of arrival at our destination sometime today. Jon fussed that he had not packed his cribbage board and disappeared down the terminal hallway, returning with a grin on his face and deck of cards in hand. Beth scouted the Starbucks concession for an extra table and we were soon in a game with good orderly direction on the rules of cribbage from Jon. Five hours later, at 11:30, we were ushered back onto the plane to continue our game. The passenger list had thinned and we took advantage of extra seat room. The pilot's voice reassured us of our plane's condition saying, "My son once asked me who was the most important person I ever flew. My response was that I am, and I will not fly unless I am absolutely certain of my safety". This was our first joint lesson in "letting go and letting God".

The green-dotted lands gave way to ocean and then the mountains of Virginia and due west past the long strips of mountains and valleys etched by glacial creep eons ago. Atlanta, Georgia, hosted our lunch break and after a foot and leg massage at the Brookstone demo store, we flew to the high desert of Albuquerque, New Mexico. An OA meeting and renewal of old acquaintances at 9:15 pm followed a quick abstinent meal. We fell into the embrace of the worldwide fellowship of OA.

On Wednesday, our 8 am program led us to embracing diversity in OA, by "Living the Twelfth Step", the theme of this year's conference. We are encouraged to "practice these principles in all our affairs, with an emphasis on how we at WSBC, representing the global group conscience of OA as a whole, live the program and carry the message of love for others, joy in the journey, and freedom from struggle." First, this program invited us to look at our cultural differences exploring national origin, race, class, language and religion. Second, we were asked to note diversity in sex and sexual orientation, how we appear, how we identify, how we think about ourselves and others. And lastly, we were asked to also examine the diversity in the cultures of OA, in the many varieties of approaches there are to working the program and conducting OA meetings. It should be clear that in OA we do not accept intolerance and we are inclusive in our literature and by-laws. We are a support group and there is no room for judgments here.

Committees were chosen and meetings occurred late Wednesday morning and all afternoon. These Committees consisted of By-laws, Conference Literature, Finance, Professional Outreach, Public Information, Twelfth-Step-Within, and Unity with Diversity (a new committee this year). This last Committee will study and make recommendations as to how we can ensure the hand and heart of OA is available to all who share our disease, and how we can encompass all kinds of diversity with unity in OA.

Jon and Eileen attended the Profession Outreach Committee meetings and report as follows.

Eileen: I was privileged to work with the Professional Outreach committee at this year's Conference. The Committee functions as a conduit between World Service and professionals requesting information about OA. The Region delegate is contacted by the Chair to reach out and follow up with contact request in their region. As a group we outlined the following goals:

- Motivate service bodies to do Professional Outreach
- Obtain articles for the "Courier"
- Increase distribution of packets to institutions.

We presented a statement of request to the Board of Trustees for Overeaters Anonymous to contact the directors of the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization and inform them that our program has a solution to the problems of obesity and other eating disorders.

We discussed goals for the coming year and hope OA members will support those goals on the local, Intergroup and Region levels. One of the goals is to increase the distribution of the "Courier" newsletter for professionals. Another goal is to request members of OA on a group level to contact their professional community members to inform professionals about OA. One more goal is to request submission of articles to the "Courier" from health care practitioners who have referred persons to OA and include their experience of the outcomes. Submissions need to be sent to the Editor of "Courier", Kathleen Bouger at KBouger@OA.org and may include letters from health-care, military and social work professionals who recommend OA to their patients and clients. The deadline for articles for this year's publication is August 1, 2007. The "Courier" is a catalog item. I encourage everyone to download the "Courier" from the OA website (www.oa.org) and bring it with you to your next health care practitioner's visit. The "Courier" can be used at professional exhibits, in professional's offices, at local health fairs and in media packets. The guidelines for sending the letters are outlined on the OA website. Please include the current issue of the "Courier" in any mailing to health care professionals with letters of introduction about OA. Also, please send Kathleen Bouger the mailing address of any new professional who wishes to receive the "Courier". This list is revised every two years and will be reassessed for deletions and additions.

A professional exhibit is available through the World Service Office. Any Intergroup's Public Information Chair may contact the Region delegate to submit a request for the kit.

Jon: The Committee I chose to work on was the Professional Outreach. It dealt with the necessity to reach professionals in the field; e.g. doctors, nurses, dietitians, clergy, etc. OA is working to reach them in order that they may direct others to OA as a solution to their eating disorders. From my Committee, I will be writing six articles to be send from World Service Outreach to Regions and Intergroups around the world on how best to reach these professionals.

Beth attended the Finance Committee meetings and reports as follows.

Beth: Amazingly, the Finance Committee meeting was attended by 18 delegates, representing all Regions except Regions 9 and 10. Leave it to me to start out with the numbers! Because our Delegate Co-chair had moved into a different Region last year and was no longer a delegate, our Vice Chair stepped in and ran the Committee meeting. There are currently three sub-committees in the Finance Committee.

- Budget Guidelines – developing guidelines to assist intergroups in creating a budget
- Budget Template – designing a template to pass along to intergroups to help with budgeting
- Revising the "Through our own contributions . . ." pamphlet
 - 1) Suggestions to groups about dividing contributions between service bodies, e.g. WSO, Region, Intergroup

- 2) Developing a campaign to increase contributions – the last campaign of “It Takes Two” was developed in 1992. Prices have gone up a lot since then. Contributions are only 22% of OA’s total income

A lot of productive work was done on all three sub-committees. After last year’s WSBC, a budget guideline document was presented to the Board of Trustees in August and was defeated. It was sent back to the Finance Committee to be simplified. Work will continue on it throughout this year and hopefully, will be ready for the Board meeting in November 2007. After this is passed, work will begin in earnest on the template. A suggested pamphlet was presented to the full Committee and passed as written. Work on the campaign to increase contributions is continuing, with a possibility of tent cards being available soon.

At our follow-up meeting on Saturday afternoon, we met our new Treasurer and Trustee Co-chair, Bob Fisher from Region 6. The Committee also keeps in touch throughout the year by e-mail.

Other Committee Reports will be available in September when the Final Report of WSBC 2007 is available.

The following is an overview of the actual business done during Business Meetings I – V, Thursday through Saturday.

Proposal A-A: A motion was made to grant the Conference Seal of Approval to the manuscript, *Black OA Members Share their Experience, Strength and Hope*. This was adopted.

Proposal A-B: A motion was made to grant the Conference Seal of Approval to the manuscript, *A Guide for Sponsors*. This was adopted.

Both of these new pieces of literature will be in the fall catalog.

The reports from Officers in our binder were then reviewed and the Chair’s report highlighted several actions the Board of Trustees accomplished since the last Conference including:

- new procedures for translation of OA literature
- a plan to establish a Youth in OA and Family page on the OA website. Region 8 is working on a website for young people
- a consensus process and use of separate, non-voting meetings to discuss motions put before the Board
- a new step-study meeting format, which would be a new piece of literature
- alternative meetings including phone and internet meetings
- incorporation in New Mexico from our former home of California.
- a new spirituality book entitled “Seeking the Spiritual Path: A Collection from Lifeline”
- the Strategic Plan

We then heard from the four candidates for Region Trustee and three candidates for General Trustee open positions.

Proposal A: Motion to conduct a Public Awareness Campaign by using the services of an outside agency. This was defeated as written. It eventually wound up with three amendments, which resulted in its being referred to the Reference Sub-Committee. At the end of Conference, it was brought back to the floor with amended language and was adopted.

Proposal Item 1: This dealt with one intergroup’s request to change its Region affiliation. This was adopted by 2/3 vote.

Proposal Items 7 & 8: These dealt with changing OA's incorporation from California to New Mexico. Although California is where OA began, the World Service Office is in New Mexico and that is where the business of OA takes place. These were both adopted by 2/3 vote.

Proposals 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6: These all dealt with virtual meetings (internet meetings & phone meetings) gaining representation at WSBC by establishing Intergroups & Regions. They also dealt with defining virtual meetings. All of these proposals were to be voted on together, but they were discussed separately. But in the end there was a motion to refer these items to a sub-committee appointed by the Board of Trustees Chair. That motion was adopted.

Proposal 9: This dealt with amending OA, Inc. Bylaws Subpart B, Article I – The Twelve Steps, Steps 3, 7, and 11 by striking the words “Him” and “His” and replacing them with “God”. There was a great deal of discussion on this proposal. Mostly they addressed the many members (and former members) in OA who have a problem of a Higher Power that is male. OA needs to be all-inclusive and we are not practicing this if one member leaves the rooms just because of the reference to God as male. Also, there was discussion about translating this into other languages where God is a male or female word. Jon & Eileen attempted to propose an amendment to the language but that was determined to be out of order. In the end, the proposal was defeated. But Jon & Eileen continue to work with the Santa Cruz Intergroup to bring this proposal to the 2008 WSBC.

The Seventh Tradition was taken at three of the Business Meetings for a total of \$2914.81. There was a special collection targeted to starting a fund for the Public Awareness Campaign which yielded \$1175.00.

We were offered invitations to participate in the Strategic Plan for OA, developed by the Board of Trustees in order to carry out the primary purpose of Overeaters Anonymous, to carry the message. This was defined as:

Abstinent Members who exhibit spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery by working all Twelve Steps

Strong Meetings are filled with abstinent member and all service positions are filled. There is active rotation of service and the meeting is growing. Newcomers stay and become abstinent. There are a sufficient number of sponsors. They operate in the spirit of all 12 Traditions.

Committed Service Bodies have all the service positions filled. There is active rotation of service. They operate within the spirit of the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts and are involved in carrying the message locally, regionally and internationally.

Public/Professional Awareness means that all members, groups and service bodies are working at carrying the message so that the possibility of recovery is offered to the still-suffering compulsive eater.

Financial Health means that there are sufficient contributions to do outreach to the public and professionals. All levels of the service structure are fully self-supporting. There are sufficient contributions to decrease the reliance on literature sales for income.

Since Jon was a “green dot” (a WSBC first-timer), we wanted to include his impressions here.

Jon: It was a very eye-opening experience for me. Beth and Eileen were very helpful all week long in giving me insights to the meetings and workshops. I was proud to be a delegate from NHI and want to thank all of you for allowing me the privilege of representing you at the Conference.

My green dot mentor (an experienced WSBC delegate) was very useful to me in showing me the ins and outs of the week. He guided me through the various phases of the Conference. I

was most impressed with the professionalism the staff showed and how organized everyone was. Everyone was most helpful whenever there was question to be answered.

There is no question that my concept of the World Service has radically changed since going to the Conference. Before that, I had the idea that a group of people just met in a room and issued rules and regulations and really had no thought of the Regions or Intergroups; just people running things from an office in New Mexico . . . How wrong I was!

I found out that the men and women Trustees and staff are very much concerned with how our donations are spent, and are really dedicated to the OA ideals and cause. They are really on top of keeping their eyes open as to the By-laws and Procedures. Robert's Rules are in force and rightly so. It was necessary to bring order and professionalism to the Conference sessions. Representation and productivity were exercised efficiently throughout the Conference because of the rules. Specifically, our own Pat Sangillo chaired the center microphone, allowing only the proper and meaningful concerns and questions of the delegates to be heard and addressed. I even attempted to make an amendment to one of the proposals. Because of a notification requirement in the By-laws, it was out of order to make an amendment at that time. But I can bring my amended motion back to WSBC next year. I had an idea and it was heard by all 201 delegates! That's what the Conference was all about: delegates from all over the world expressing their ideas freely and openly, all being equally heard. Delegates from Norway, Belgium, Canada, Australia, England, and Europe; it was simply great to see the world vision of OA.

We worked hard each day from early morning to evening and then had opportunities to go to workshops or OA meetings in the evenings. On Friday afternoon, we had some free time and went shopping in Old Town. We saw the Old church nearby and the highlight of the afternoon was hearing a mariachi band serenade the tourists with "La Bamba" and other Spanish songs.

A lot of work was accomplished over the course of the week. To see the zeal and dedication of the members was very inspiring. Oh, I almost forgot. There was a movie star staying at the hotel. It was nice to have a chat with Mel Gibson and I talked with him about his film "Passion of Christ". Now it is our turn to take the message home and carry it to all who wish to hear it. Thanks again.

And we want to hear from Eileen and Beth on their experience, this being their second year at WSBC.

Eileen: This year's conference provided an opportunity to see the Parliamentary procedure work in a variety of ways. At various times during the conference, encouragement and support from the Parliamentarian and Trustees to use the procedure was provided to ensure our voice and power at the conference. For example, "Point of Order" is a way for delegates to ensure their power and to have control over the meeting.

I picked up a few interesting quotes from some of the OA meetings I attended while in Albuquerque:

- Remember to pause when traveling the route to love and let the love in.
- When I worry, I am on a hamster wheel.

I extend a heart felt thank you to all of you from New Hampshire Intergroup for sending Beth, Jon and I to this enlightening wonderful experience at OA's World Service Business Conference.

Beth: I was a green dot mentor this year and was excited to meet my green dot, who was from California. When I first talked to her and the members who had accompanied her, I thought "They sure don't know how to work Program in California!" Then I remembered that that's where OA started. So maybe I was the one who needed to listen. It was a good experience and I would probably do it again.

Also, being “experienced” and being able to help Jon was a wonderful feeling. Seeing my friend from England again and speaking with the Region 9 Trustee from France again gave me a real sense of “OA Without Borders” (last year’s theme). And having lunch with my English friend and Eileen while Mel Gibson sat at the table next to ours, well . . . that left me speechless! Anyone who knows me knows that I’m never speechless.

The work on the Finance Committee has me excited about the health of OA. Seeing a LOT of green dots encourages me to keep doing more service and more service . . . to keep reaching out that helping hand to whomever I can. Working on getting literature to Namibia with the Region 9 Trustee and a member from California and her intergroup are so exciting and rewarding. I don’t have words to describe the feelings.

And on Saturday night, after a week of OA work, we had fun . . . an abstinent banquet (an oxymoron?), a talent show (as only OAers can do) and then a dance. Eileen even coaxed Jon onto the dance floor, till his sciatica objected!

The week seemed to fly this year. Before I knew it we were back on a plane to Atlanta. The layover in Atlanta on the way back was tight, and the plane almost left without Jon and me. But we got to our seats and Jon and Eileen resumed their cribbage game. I don’t remember who won . . . I think I was dozing.

We invite all meetings in the States of New Hampshire and Vermont who wish to hear more about ongoing service related to this Conference to call any one of us and we will be happy to arrange a time to come to your meeting and share our experience. Our phone numbers and email addresses appear below.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

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