

**Third International
Al-Anon General Services
Meeting (Trial)**

*Theme: Our Common Goal—
World Unity*

**September 21–24, 1984
Stamford, Connecticut**

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INTRODUCTION

"The purpose of the International General Services Meeting," as expressed in the Statement of Purpose, said Chairman Cay C., "is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through their Delegates. It attempts to encourage the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It also represents an expression of worldwide group conscience. Ultimately, this leads to the primary purpose of Al-Anon as a whole—to seek the best way to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery to families and friends of alcoholics."

The 1984 International General Services Meeting was held from September 21 through 24 at the Stamford Marriott Hotel in Connecticut. The Delegates, representing 17 national service structures, began arriving on Friday afternoon (September 21) and met as a group for the first time at an Al-Anon meeting held that evening. The Al-Anon meeting provided all with an opportunity to see that beyond their language and cultural differences, there was a common thread linking them all together: the Al-Anon program and the serenity it can lead to.

The theme of the 1984 IGSM, "Our Common Goal—World Unity," was borne out in the harmonious atmosphere that prevailed throughout the proceedings. It was made even more tangible as Delegates heard the Serenity Prayer delivered in each of the languages spoken by the nations represented; despite the foreign words, the meaning of

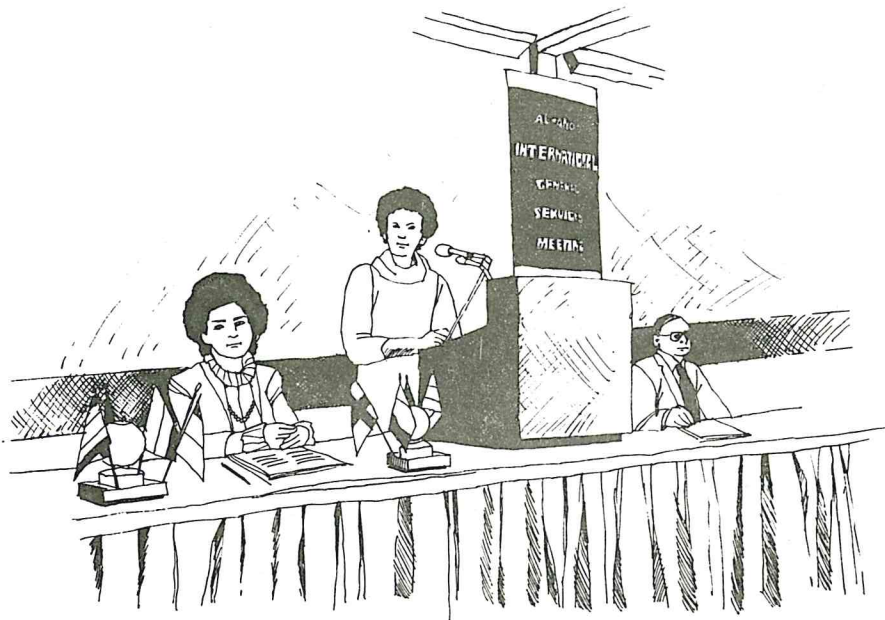
the Prayer was crystal clear to each and every member of the group.

As Chairman of the IGSM, Cay C. introduced speakers, delivered announcements, and made sure the proceedings ran smoothly. She opened the first session by reading the Declaration of Unity, which was approved by the 1984 World Service Conference.

Each member of the fellowship is a significant part of a great circle of hope. While respecting each other's individuality, our common welfare must come first. Our recovery depends on our mutual need and an atmosphere of trust.

"Coming together is a beginning," Cay observed. "Today is our beginning. Keeping together is progress; and working together is success."

The agenda of the 1984 IGSM was composed of the following items: Delegate speakers on Developing a Love for Your GSO; Electing, Financing, and Responsibilities of an IGSM Delegate; workshops on Finances, Service, Developing Committees, Public Information, Literature, and Alateen; WSO speakers on Growing Pains—Structure Problems, The Twelve Concepts, and an open discussion with Staff Secretaries from the WSO; sessions on the question of IGSM permanence, the 1985 International Convention and unfinished business. General discussion from the floor followed all of the above, enabling each Delegate to contribute his or her perspective.



OPENING BREAKFAST

Gudrun K., Delegate from Germany

Although I enjoy listening to life-stories, I am not very keen on telling my own. Still, I am grateful for this chance to tell my story, as it will help me with 4th Step work.

This summer, I went mountaineering in Austria. While climbing the mountains, I planned how I would tell my story. I decided that I would start it by telling something about my relationship with my mother, which had been difficult for a very long time.

As far back as I can remember, I have struggled to understand my mother. I have tried to learn why she was unhappy, and how I could help her. Although I have not been able to help her, I have found some explanations for her unhappiness. This is one: My mother was born in Austria and as a little girl during World War I she was sent by her parents to live in the country with relatives. She stayed with them until she married my father—a German—and moved with him to Germany. It seemed to me,

therefore, that one explanation for her unhappiness was that she missed the parental love a child needs.

I also remember always being especially kind and considerate toward my mother. I cannot remember ever having quarreled with her as a child; I hoped this would make her happier. In fact, I am still unable to quarrel, and I find confrontations to be very exhausting.

I tried to educate my father and brother to treat her as I did, because I felt the three of us were responsible for her feelings. Many years later, when I came into Al-Anon, I learned that my mother was emotionally ill and she acted toward her family the way an alcoholic would.

At 21, I left home to study at a university. I was determined to teach my parents what love was. As for myself, it took me a long time to find a man with the necessary requirements to fall in love with. At last I found one; he was an alcoholic and I married him.

I did not know from the beginning that my husband had a drinking problem, but very soon I came to dislike his behavior toward alcohol. During our first week of marriage, he told me it was because of me that

he drank. Although I was not aware of it at the time, I had found the child-like satisfying situation once again of trying to please somebody and of doing everything to avoid any confrontation. Of course, my husband did not stop drinking; he stayed in his behavior and I stayed in mine.

After a while, I began to wonder if something was the matter with his mind, and things started to change for me. I consulted a priest, but for two months I never mentioned my husband's drinking, nor did I indicate that I was worried he might be mentally ill. When the priest finally asked me if my husband drank too much, I denied it absolutely. Nevertheless, he gave me the telephone number of a woman and told me about Al-Anon.

I immediately called the woman and felt right at home. She became my first sponsor and I joined an Al-Anon group near my home. This was ten years ago.

I came into Al-Anon with an immense amount of negative feelings, the most obvious of which was fear. Al-Anon taught me my husband was an alcoholic and that alcoholism was a disease. Much to my relief, I learned that I am not guilty, but my behavior toward him and myself had been neither sane nor healthy. I began to change my behavior.

My first Al-Anon days still stand before me in sparkling, shining light. The times that followed, however, were not always sparkling; they were also fatiguing and depressing. I discovered, for example, I was stubborn and experienced difficulty in applying the program to my life.

The program has had a deep message for me, despite my stumbling, and after ten years I continue to profit tremendously from my group meetings. I understand that I am a typical Al-Anon member with typical defects.

My husband and I were divorced two and a half years ago, and one of my present problems is my loneliness. By marrying an alcoholic, I had chosen loneliness. By divorcing him, I chose loneliness once again. Gradually I am learning to accept it and

to love life as it is. I am learning to get rid of self-pity, anger, and fear once more.

I am also learning not to be angry when special people in my life do not behave toward me as I want them to. I am learning to let people see my life as it really is and not to hide anything in self-pity. And I am learning again to turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understand Him, to be able to *accept*. When I accept that I have chosen this life, I will still be alone, but not lonely anymore. And in acceptance of the fact that I am alone, I am allowing myself to do something about me, to seek the way to change the things I can.

DEVELOPING LOVE FOR YOUR GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

Pat B., Delegate from New Zealand

When Pat was asked to speak on Developing Love for Your GSO, she decided to approach the topic in terms of her own participation in service. Pat began by talking about *why* she became involved in service: she was a regular member of Al-Anon; she believed in the Al-Anon philosophy; she had office experience; she could type; and most of all, she saw service as another way in which she could express her personal gratitude to the Al-Anon program—it was an opportunity for her to “give something back for all I had received.”

Pat then discussed *how* she became involved. During the 1979 Conference, a decision was made to change the service structure in New Zealand. What had started out as a handful of service arms operating out of members' homes throughout the country, was now consolidated into a central GSO situated just outside the capital city of Wellington, in a town called Upper Hutt. Pat recalled that when she was asked to assist

the General Secretary in the GSO, she had no idea that this step was to represent her *real* beginning in Al-Anon service. Almost immediately, the General Secretary became ill and moved away. Suddenly Pat found herself the new General Secretary. "That's what I call going in at the deep end!" Pat was very frightened. Despite her participation in the program and her service experience within her own group, she was unsure of how the service structure really worked. Referring to herself as a slow learner, Pat admitted that learning the structure was a long and difficult process.

The responsibility of being General Secretary, she shared, set off a personal war within herself. Her own inner resources seemed insufficient to her for coping with her duties, and led to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Repeated calls upon her Higher Power also resulted in some frustration; He wasn't working fast enough, and wasn't doing it Pat's way. Back she found herself going to Step One, practicing patience, easy does it, and letting go.

Pat has come to terms with her shortcomings; she has found that when things seem desperate, her Higher Power does come through—with supportive mail, with donations, with love and encouragement from the membership. She has thus gained new insight into herself and a deeper appreciation of the fellowship; she views her activity in service as her 12 Step work and feels that support from the members and her Higher Power have been the secret to her success.

Listening to the tape of Lois and the Pioneers, Pat thought how similar were their beginnings, and she was able to see the progress that has been made in New Zealand in the past five years, "From two small dark, dingy rooms, down a back alley to a lovely sunny office that is centrally situated." Pat felt grateful and humble to have been chosen as one of the representatives for New Zealand.

"Everything in life is a contribution or a challenge." Pat concluded. She hoped that the challenge of addressing the Delegates would prove to be a contribution to the IGSM.

DISCUSSIONS ON THE GSO

GSO's role a clearinghouse:

Correspondence from the WSO will be channeled directly to each GSO, rather than to individual groups, districts, etc., in order to reinforce the GSO's role as a clearinghouse. Letters of appeal will also go to the GSO, as will correspondence directed to committee chairmen.

Ways to improve the GSO's identity:

The GSO can humanize and clarify its identity by actively listening to the membership, personalizing relationships within the membership (by including personal staff profiles in newsletters, by personal sharings at service meetings, and by becoming a member with a name rather than the "GSO"), and remembering to be a part of Al-Anon, not on top of it.

Improving communication between Groups/Areas/GSO:

In addition to remembering that each GSO is reflective and not directive, Delegates shared some other ideas on improving communication: conducting workshops with feedback flowing in both directions; Regional Service Seminars; sending committee chairmen out to Areas to share their experiences; encouraging groups to visit the GSO; holding Conferences regularly and cultivating within them an atmosphere of love and trust; being patient and responding to members' comments. Also recommended: taking GSO group inventory; removing "should," "must," "have to" from vocabulary and replacing with "might," "maybe" and "perhaps"; and remembering that in addition to individual identity, GSO staff also represent the GSO and their conduct reflects upon the GSO. Not all committees need be located in a centralized office, it was noted. Certain responsibilities may be undertaken from a variety of locations.

Love and the GSO:

The more we share, the more mutual love and understanding we cultivate. Not every group will love the GSO at once, but the Higher Power and mutual support will help in that development.

ELECTING, FINANCING, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DELEGATES

Jean G., Delegate from U.K. & Eire

The General Service Board for the U.K. & Eire, explained Jean, meets three times a year and elects a Delegate to the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting to serve a four-year rotating term. The Conference is presented with the new Delegate's name for approval.

The first Delegates to the IGSM recognized how important it was for them to have as much Al-Anon service experience as possible. They felt that at least one of the Delegates should have firsthand knowledge of the various work routines of the GSO. Experience, Jean said, has shown it to be an advantage to Al-Anon in the U.K. & Eire if future Delegates come from the General Service Board and/or the GSO (they could, of course, be GS Board members from Scotland or Ireland) since such members are currently active in service and are thus involved in the structure's current stage of development.

Financing relative to the IGSM Delegate is a very important budgetary consideration. The approximate costs of two airfares, correspondence, postage, copies of Handbooks and other literature, and additional travel expenses during the Delegates' terms of office are estimated and included in the Treasurer's budget. Conference members thus know how much money is available each year, and so inform the 827 groups throughout the U.K. & Eire.

Jean described how necessary it was to clarify that serving as a Delegate is not to be considered a "reward" for being in Al-Anon

service. Her reward from Al-Anon has been the peace of mind, serenity, and happiness she has found. She explained that being a Delegate is a good deal more than an hour or two of homework and attending meetings. Both Jean and Ruth (also a Delegate to U.K. & Eire) spent much time gathering information, talking and corresponding with Board members, the General Secretary, and members from other countries.

To stay abreast of the sequence of events since their appointment as Delegates, they have compiled a "Delegate's Diary." The Diary is a simple step-by-step record of important activities in which they have participated. Jean and Ruth hope it will serve as a guideline for future Delegates.

Jean feels that experience in any field is limited if it is not recorded and communicated to others. The information gleaned from the IGSM, therefore, is communicated to the membership in a variety of media; Highlights from the IGSM; a written report for District Representatives, Public Information Coordinators; reports to all General Service Board members and committee chairmen; and items for *NEWS AND VIEWS* magazine.

Jean shared that she also has a responsibility to herself; she must keep herself well-rested, recognizing her own limitations. "With the right attitude to the job, careful planning, and not leaving everything until the last minute," she concluded, "I am able to undertake the duties of a Delegate without undue pressure. I am truly glad to be here."

Evelyn M., Delegate from South Africa

Evelyn explained that because South Africa is such a vast and varied nation, certain measures have been taken to ensure that a broad range of South Africans are heard at the IGSM. Therefore, in addition to the Delegate chosen from the General Service Office in Johannesburg, a second Delegate is a Regional Trustee, representing any of the six Districts that comprise the country. Evelyn raised several issues regarding the selection

and election of Delegates: One, that experience with the GSO may be more important than broad geographic representation, and Two, that a 2/3 majority (or lacking one, the drawing of lots) may be a more appropriate method for electing the Delegates at the Service Conference than the method presently used.

Delegates' travel expenses are covered by a Delegates' Fund. Certain problems have arisen, however, in booking inexpensive flights to the United States. These fares are the least expensive available, but have involved rather substantial hidden expenses. Because this fare requires a two-week minimum stay, Delegates must subsidize their own accommodations for more than seven days. This places an unfair financial responsibility upon the Delegates (and in many cases, upon the Delegates' husbands). Financing, said Evelyn, needs some rethinking.

Evelyn reviewed some difficulties South Africa has experienced regarding the Service Conference's reception of Delegate's IGSM reports. The General Service Committee, she explained, has directly benefited from the reports and continues to feed the pertinent information back to the membership. Because this channeling of information is gradual, with much of the material filtering down in its own time, the Service Conference has been somewhat dissatisfied with the reporting process. They wanted more dramatic

results.

Attending the IGSM had provided Evelyn with the opportunity to exchange procedural and practical information with the other Delegates. She was particularly grateful for their suggestions about Conference themes, recording motions, and conducting informal pre-Conference meetings that included personal sharings.

Like Jean, Evelyn feels that being a Delegate must not be conceived as a "reward," adding that as mouthpieces for the rest of the service structure, Delegates are obliged to do their homework so they can effectively convey the sense of the meetings to the fellowship.

The extent to which the Delegates "carry the message home," is especially important in light of past dissatisfaction. Evelyn described how she and Annetjie (also a Delegate from South Africa) were taping nightly reports for the Trustees, noting that this method would ensure giving accurate personalized information. After the IGSM, a short report will appear in *UNITAS*, the South African magazine and a longer version will be sent to the Districts. In the days, weeks and months following the IGSM, the Delegates will continue to share their personal recollections and impressions as they resurface.

"The IGSM," concluded Evelyn, "makes us a unit. It gives a sense of belonging, and



demonstrates that we are truly a fellowship, a fellowship of friends."

DISCUSSION ON BEING A DELEGATE

- Serving as a Delegate is not a reward! It is a demanding task that carries a great responsibility.
- The first priority for selection as a Delegate is substantial service experience on local and national levels. Although English-speaking ability is necessary, it should not be the sole criterion for selection. Non-English speaking members who aspire to Delegate service should keep in mind the importance of learning English.
- It may be beneficial to try to select as Delegates those members with service experience relevant to the coming IGSM theme (e.g., to choose a member with P.I. experience if the next IGSM theme accents P.I.).
- IGSM Delegates have varying roles in their own country's Service Conference, determined by each Conference.
- Ideally, two Delegates represent each country.

STRUCTURE PROBLEMS AND GROWING PAINS

Sandy F., Deputy General Secretary, WSO

Sandy based her discussion of structure problems and growing pains on two lines from the suggested Al-Anon closing that apply as much to service as they do to personal recovery. One line refers to problems: "Whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too," and the other to solutions: "Talk to each other, reason things out."

Having once served as International Secretary, Sandy has been privileged to witness the beginnings of many structures; she also witnessed many problems, or "growing pains." For example, Sandy discussed the unfortunate situation in Flemish Belgium, where there are currently two separate service structures. Disunity is further occasioned by violations in our basic copyright guarantees by one of those structures. The goal of a sound service structure is to promote unity; what is happening in Flemish Belgium is just the opposite.

"Whatever your problems," Sandy repeated, "there are those among us who have had them too," reminding Delegates that the WSO has not been exempt from serious service problems. She shared a "growing pain" that affected the unity of the 1983 World Service Conference. At issue was adherence to the Concepts and the request by several Delegates, that the WSO be investigated. After much soul searching, it was felt that such an investigation was not within our Concepts. In the meantime, the seed of disunity had been sowed within the office as well as within the Areas and groups, diverting us from our primary spiritual aim.

"Talk to each other, reason things out," proved to be the key in resolving the issues of disagreement. It was decided that the 1984 WSC would begin with an open-ended "sharings" session, in which Delegates spoke freely about what was on their minds and in their hearts. As a result, Sandy found that the 1984 Conference was the most loving she had personally experienced. By talking with each other, Conference members discovered they were basically in agreement.

"Perhaps," Sandy concluded, "International Delegates would be willing to share their own experiences in handling differences of opinion among their own General Service Boards and Conference Delegates, or with situations where the membership has had a different view on how the GSO should be run ("The Right of Decision"). Such sharings might even lead to suggestions for resolving the growing pains as exhibited in the Flemish Belgium situation."

Gudrun K., Delegate from Germany

Since Germany has no Service Conferences as yet, the Board is involuntarily removed from the members, which creates a structure problem. The eleven member Structure Team agreed that the urgent task facing Al-Anon in Germany today is to introduce a Service Conference to link up service entities with the groups. Steps toward achieving this goal have already been taken.

One problem that threatens unity is the failure of the service structure to keep pace with the rapid growth of Al-Anon. Another threat to Al-Anon is the fragmentation of Al-Anon into different "sections" (e.g., one for those whose relative is sober, one for divorced, widowed, parents, children, etc.) which tends to separate members from each other. Gudrun's own situation—being divorced from an alcoholic—left her feeling isolated from the rest of Al-Anon. It was probably this feeling that led her to become involved in service.

Gudrun concluded by saying she recognizes one of her own strengths is balancing. She prayed this quality would help her deal with the tasks before her in Al-Anon. She was certain that the IGSM would give her perspective on her country's situation, and infuse her with the same enthusiasm and conviction she felt two years ago after attending the IGSM.

WILL THE IGSM BE PERMANENT? WHERE WILL IT BE HELD?

Myrna H., General Secretary, WSO

Before bringing the question of the IGSM's permanence to a vote, Delegates raised a variety of points:

- It is necessary to examine where the IGSM is going, what its goals are and what kind of voice it expects to achieve?

- Permanence will mean: enhanced influence at the World Service Conference, increased responsibility to provide membership with clear, substantive reports of IGSM proceedings, amending the Concepts to state that the IGSM is a permanent part of our structure.
- Two Delegates representing each country remains the optimum.

The following MOTION was brought before the Delegates:

That the International General Services Meeting become a permanent part of the Al-Anon worldwide structure, meeting every two years. It passed unanimously.

Site Selection:

Delegates discussed the criteria for site selection, for the 1986 International GSM and the possibility of moving the meeting to another country. Included in the discussion were the responsibilities of a Host Committee in another country.

- Inexpensive and good quality accommodations
- English-speaking volunteers working with Hospitality Chairman and committee
- Convenience to International Airport
- Convenience to GSO
- Someone to tape the proceedings
- WSO will continue to work out equalized expenses

The MOTION:

That the first permanent International General Services Meeting be held in the United States in 1986. It passed unanimously.

And:

That consideration be given to the 1988 IGSM being held outside the United States. Approved (30-yes, 4-no) Also passed.

The final MOTION brought before the Delegates regarding the IGSM was:

That site selection for the 1988 IGSM be placed on the agenda in 1986, and that only Delegates from structures that choose to, come prepared

with a bid, giving projected costs of location, accommodations, meals, meeting rooms, etc. Slides or photographs may be used in presentation of the bid. The motion carried. (33-yes, 1-abstaining)

THE CONCEPTS— KEEPING A DREAM ALIVE

*Mary Ann K., International
Secretary*

"When a person has something of value," Mary Ann said, "they usually set it down in writing, leaving their legacy to those who will appreciate it. So it was that Al-Anon's pioneers set down in writing Al-Anon's third legacy—the Twelve Concepts."

Before coming to work at the WSO, Mary Ann read the Concepts and thought some of the ideas interesting, full of idealism and often confusing. She couldn't see much practical use for them because she wasn't really involved. Her feelings were similar in a way to how she had felt about the Traditions as a newcomer—"Let's get on with the real help. Why even waste precious meeting time with letters from WSO about appeals?" She was too involved in her own situation and couldn't, "See the forest for the trees." She just had too much to do.

In time Mary Ann learned the importance of the Traditions, especially when her group was in trouble. After she came to work at the WSO she read and responded to letters from members serving in Al-Anon's national offices. They faced all kinds of service dilemmas and she began to see the wisdom stated in the Concepts: they hold not only spiritual answers but, when studied and discussed, they can bring to light creative solutions beneficial to all.

When Mary Ann began to study each Concept, she had to be cautious not to take a quotation out of context. "If a newcomer says at a meeting that she and her children are being beaten, one doesn't use the slogan Let Go and Let God. We trust the sharing of

the group would point to a different attitude. The Concepts, too, cannot be quoted out of context; we must be cautious to look for the spirit in the words and talk it over, reason things with someone else, as our closing says."

Looking more closely at the Concepts themselves, Mary Ann explained "that the center circle—the First Concept states, Ultimate Responsibility and Authority for Al-Anon World Services Belong to the Al-Anon Groups. Authority and Responsibility in the groups! How impractical," Mary Ann said, "How could we ever get anything done? How will we see, the forest for the trees? Nevertheless, there it is—the First Concept of our legacy. The other Concepts spell out in greater detail how to make this ideal a practical reality. They show us the way."

"In a sense," Mary Ann said, "the Twelfth Concept wraps all the others up. It is the widest circle stating the spiritual foundation for Al-Anon World Services. This spiritual foundation is contained in the General Warranties, of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter. These are not just a group of words put together and agreed upon by the early members, these words comprise a document that sets down the principles that provide conditions for freedom for members, prudence for service workers and growth for Al-Anon."

"We all paid a high price to come to Al-Anon; not in money but in wasted time, misdirected energy and heart sickness over the alcoholism of a loved one. Now after attending Al-Anon for a while we've invested time in the program, dedicated ourselves to service and are recovering each day. If we want to preserve our investment in the fellowship, so it can be given to others, a working knowledge of the Concepts will set us in the right direction."

In Mary Ann's early days in Al-Anon, she expected and looked for ideal behavior from those leaders in service. She thought that they owed it to the fellowship. A little while longer into the program, she found she was the service worker and a leader and she had to behave according to ideals and principles.

A former Delegate to the IGSM wrote: "It is important that we choose our leaders and do not allow them to emerge as a result of personal ambition." Another member wrote: "The Concepts inspire us to obey a Power beyond personal power which gives spiritual dimension to the printed words." "I don't know," Mary Ann said, "How words like harmony, balance and trust sound in your language but just hearing these healing words written in the Concepts lifts my spirits and sets me thinking beyond personalities, pettiness and competition."

"There are strong words, too, like authority, delegation, responsibility and accountability, without a loving Al-Anon setting some members would refuse service work knowing this was part of the commitment, but reading the Concepts we can be lifted out of ourselves and set on a higher plane of thinking."

"We must be realistic, too," said Mary Ann.

"In some places where Al-Anon has reached, such as Poland, China, Malaysia, democracy is unheard of. The idea of one vote for each Group Representative would be unthinkable, and having trusted servants for leaders would just be out of these people's experience. Yet, we have to try to pass on, by our example, how the *Al-Anon* structure is built on democratic principles which give each member dignity, freedom and hope, and that group conscience is our final authority expressed at Conferences."

"These goals can't be accomplished alone or in isolation. Just as we found we needed the group to regain our mental health, we find we need a united Al-Anon family to make the dream of Al-Anon's help, made available worldwide come true."

"Al-Anon will grow strong if we say *our* rather than *mine*. Al-Anon's future belongs to all members who say *our Steps, our Traditions, our Concepts.*"



EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

The following section represents a synthesis of the Delegates' perspectives on a variety of topics that evolved from: workshop sessions, sharing among each other, and the open discussion with WSO Staff Secretaries.

"Sufficient operating funds, including ample reserve, should be its (The World Service Conference) prudent financial principle." This guide was the basis of all ideas shared on finances.

FINANCES

The importance of prudent financial planning and management is reflected in Warranty One of the Twelve Concepts of Service.

Funds from literature:

The importance of this income should be communicated to the membership, though some Delegates doubted that literature sales could be relied upon for much of their income.

Groups' Contributions:

These monies account for a relatively small percentage of most structures' operating funds.

Encouraging contributions:

Clear, well-designed posters showing pie-graphs of the groups' financial contributions—especially compared to graphs of the GSO's financial responsibilities—was one suggestion.

The Seventh Tradition pamphlet is a good incentive and may be adapted by different countries to suit their own needs.

Delegates at Service Conferences can be educated about the importance of group contributions and can then bring that message back to their Areas. Countries differed on how they guided groups to divide their contributions—some suggested specific percentages; others offered no guidance whatsoever.

Financial reports and disbursements:

Descriptive monthly bank statements for an executive committee's perusal can educate committee members and provide control over potential financial problems.

At least two signatories should be required for disbursements and additional signatures should be registered for back-up.

Non-profit status:

Delegates discussed legally registering each GSO as a non-profit organization in terms of future advantages.

Bonding:

Bonding—that is, insurance against theft—entails mandatory prosecution. Thus, while a GSO would be financially protected by bonding, it could also unwittingly draw the name of Al-Anon into public controversy by participating (through the bonding company) in a prosecution. The merits of bond-

ing as a deterrent were weighed against those of early preventive measures, such as involving as many individuals as possible in financial responsibilities.

SERVICE

Al-Anon is always in need of dedicated service-minded members willing to give of their time and talents. Ideally, service members step forward, implement plans, encourage new members and step aside for others. How to keep this life cycle of service activity moving was discussed, along with the practical ways our World Service Conference implements ideas. Once service workers volunteer, their actions are always channeled through committees. The importance of developing committees was highlighted in all discussions.

Functioning of the Board of Trustees:

In some countries the Board of Trustees is very new and just learning how to function. In other countries, there are no boards yet, only committees.

Rotation of the Board:

Most Delegates agreed that three-year terms seem to work best, although in some structures there are simply not enough people to volunteer for these positions.

Longtime Volunteers:

It was suggested that recording the date a member assumes a service appointment, along with the scheduled retirement date (three years afterward, for example) can be built into the procedure.

In some cases, longtime service volunteers "just fade away"; in others, they get involved in different service positions; others rotate off to "sponsor" incoming service members. Sometimes they remain for long periods of time because there is not enough interest from other members.

Attracting members to service:

"Talent scouting" was recommended: through personal contact within one's own group and individual interaction to discover members' special talents. Other ideas included: service sponsorship, GSO Open House (with sheets made available for ser-

vice volunteers), inviting potential service people to sit in on committee meetings. It was suggested that new service volunteers not be overworked. Through word-of-mouth, newsletters and bulletins, members can be made aware of the service jobs that need to be done.

How an idea is put into action at the Conference level:

The World Service Conference suggests, the Board of Trustees approves and the WSO acts.

This procedure was specifically described for Delegates in terms of the following steps:

Concerns of a general nature brought to Conference by Delegates, are written and submitted at the Conference.

- All topics are distributed and voted upon by the entire Conference Membership.
- They are listed in order of the number of votes.
- The outstanding issues become agenda items for open discussion and the remainder are discussed in unstructured workshops.

Ask-it-Basket questions are sent to the World Service Office long before the World Service Conference:

- They are reviewed and channeled to the appropriate Committee or Staff member, when answered they are sent to be included in the Conference Summary.

Any Conference Member may recommend a motion:

- the Conference votes on the motion—if passed, then
- at its annual meeting usually the Board approves the motion, then
- the WSO administers the implementation, taking it to the appropriate WSO committee, and the committee does the necessary preliminary work (e.g., develops a format, secures comparative bids), and the Executive Committee makes a determination subject to final agreement by the Board of Trustees.

WSC Delegates and Committees:

New Delegates are assigned to Standing Committees, i.e. Alateen, Public Information, to involve them in specific work beyond their own Area's responsibilities. The WSO In-town Committee then communicates throughout the year with its Delegate members to keep them abreast of work in progress and elicit ideas and approval for projects.

Members' professional talents:

Some countries use forms asking members if they care to apply their professional talents to service tasks. Complying with such a request—or volunteering this kind of information to other members—does not represent a breach of anonymity.

Criteria for serving:

Regular, active Al-Anon meeting attendance (AA members may not serve beyond the group level). Guidelines have been prepared by the WSO for Trustee selection; some criteria to consider are: distance from meetings, length of time in program. A member's age and whether or not there is still active drinking are not considered relevant.

Travel expenses:

Donations are requested from groups and Districts to provide for District Representative's travel expenses. Board members are reimbursed from the general fund; Delegates' Conference expenses are equalized. In poorer countries, service people pay their own expenses—this obviously discourages participation.

Al-Anon Archives:

The Archivist at WSO explained how the Archives began. Data should be preserved wherever possible and often oldtimers have interesting archival material tucked away in their homes. To establish each GSO's Archives, it was suggested that a brief report be written on Al-Anon's beginnings in your country and send WSO a copy. Refer to Archives guidelines available from WSO and use common sense.

Unity on a national level:

Some ideas offered were: yearly conferences; open-ended sharing sessions before Conference proceedings and other service gatherings to air all grievances; special Area sharing sessions at Conferences; open dialogue and honesty. Experience shows that it is often people—not the structure—that obstructs unity, but as we personally grow, the

strength of our unity improves.

Purpose of Committees:

Delegates shared the following reasons for developing committees: to develop group conscience; to broaden the groups' voice; to keep continuity in various functions (so structures are not solely dependent on one individual); to enlarge Al-Anon's perspective on specific issues; to involve more members; and to fulfill the specific needs of the structure.

Participation on committees:

Members may be encouraged to participate on committees in various ways: Traditions workshops; service sponsorship (one-to-one); helping interested members with transportation or child care; clarifying that members are not required to finance their own service expenses; and enlisting members to help set up at workshops and assemblies.

PUBLIC INFORMATION, COOPERATING WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTIONS:

While the formation of the Institutions Committee was one of the first out-reach projects of WSO and Cooperation with the Professional Community the newest Committee, the efforts of all service workers in these areas are reflected in the goals of the Public Information Committee, to reach those still suffering the effects of alcoholism in a loved one.

P.I. Materials:

Delegates noted that Public Information

materials, such as posters and audiovisual material, often need to be adapted to reflect their country's national needs. All such adaptations undergo a process of "checks and balances" to ensure that Al-Anon principles and high standards of quality are maintained. It was also noted that Information Services may produce P.I. materials telling *what* and *where* Al-Anon is — but are to refrain from producing literature that attempts to interpret the Al-Anon program.

P.I. Coordinators and Committees:

Different countries' P.I. structures vary: not all have a P.I. Coordinator; some share P.I. service work with AA; one country reported having 26 Coordinators, some of whom have committees; still other countries have "middle management" Coordinators who report to Standing Committees and stay in touch with Regions, Areas and Districts.

P.I. Workshops:

One country conducts a five-day P.I. Workshop with varied activities; others hold workshops at national Conferences (where the Standing Committee meets with Delegates), Area Assemblies, or at District Meetings.

Health Fairs:

Most Delegates participate in Health Fairs where they often pay for booth space, represent themselves as individual Al-Anon members, and make literature available (at no charge).

Cooperating with the Professional Community (CPC):

At WSO, CPC was developed to function as a specific branch of P.I., aimed at informing the community about Al-Anon/Alateen through physicians, lawyers, business leaders, psychiatrists, psychologists, etc. CPC in the United States and Canada is preparing a film (one that will state the facts), and invited other countries doing this type of work to share their experiences. It was also noted that in some Areas, P.I. and CPC are undertaken jointly.

Institutions Services:

Preparing the way for an Institutions Group represents an overlapping of P.I. and CPC services.

After seeking permission from appropriate personnel of a facility, Al-Anon members can: Leave leaflets at the facility, speak at a Family Day, when invited; form an Institutions group focused on an introduction to the Al-Anon program and direct potential members to groups close to their homes. One service person does P.I., CPC and Institutions work in areas where only a small number of volunteers are available.

Registration:

Groups meeting at Institutions are divided into a separate category for registration: a meeting for newcomers with a transient membership is an Institutions Group. There are "home groups" with less transiency which also meet at Institutions because the location is convenient for members in the community.

LITERATURE

Unity is preserved in the printed words of our recovery literature. Each country reprinting, as well as WSO, continues to work to insure the Al-Anon material produced is universal in authorship, of the highest quality and available to those who need it.

GSO participation in Conference-Approved Literature and translations:

To ensure that CAL translations accurately convey the program message, it was recommended that Al-Anon members be encouraged to review translated material. Other suggestions for promoting Al-Anon unity were: requesting articles from other countries' newsletters and using articles about the Traditions to solve common problems.

Pricing and Discounts:

Depending on each country's needs, discounts vary. Most Delegates agreed that the importance of income from CAL should be

stressed, and that literature given away is often left unread. WSO charges five times the cost of printing most recovery literature and hardcover books in order to make a profit. That profit is then turned back into other services.

Reprinting by GSO:

Some Delegates reported a problem of timing between WSO revisions of literature and GSO reprints. They also requested advance notice of all WSO reprints be sent to GSOs. Same language countries observed that it is cost-effective for them to split the cost of reprinting.

Information Services:

Information Services may print one leaflet a year about Al-Anon in their area.

Ordering literature from WSO:

The following information was shared by WSO: Advance payment for literature orders is requested; bills of lading or invoices can be arranged; orders that are needed immediately can be sent air post (but requesting countries pay the difference between regular and air parcel post); ONE DAY AT A TIME is always in stock; the Spanish language literature on consignment offer was the result of a surplus, and offered on a trial basis only. (The offer will last until the supply is exhausted).

Al-Anon Logo:

The triangle enclosing a circle with letters inside indicates Conference Approval and should appear on all Al-Anon pieces. The WSO has reproduced this symbol by the thousands, and it may be ordered and pasted onto existing literature. It was suggested WSO leave space on the copyright page of all literature to accommodate each GSO's address stamp.

Spirituality:

The book on spirituality is scheduled to make its debut at the 1985 International Al-Anon Convention.

Agnosticism and Al-Anon:

Some Delegates observed that references to God in our literature may tend to intimidate newcomers and suggested that new literature clarifying Al-Anon's spiritual — as opposed to religious — orientation be prepared. Neither the forthcoming book on spirituality, nor excerpts from it in pamphlet form, were considered sufficient, and the following recommendation was brought before the IGSM for a vote:

That the WSO Literature Committee prepare a pamphlet on The Agnostic and Al-Anon.

The motion passed. (27 yes votes; 1 no vote; 5 abstentions)

ALATEEN

While Alateen is Al-Anon, a part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, Al-Anon members have a responsibility to our teenage membership.

Al-Anon acceptance of Alateen:

Some suggestions were shared: Al-Anon can use Alateen literature for meeting ideas; Alateens can be invited to attend service meetings; clarify to Al-Anons that Alateen comes under our umbrella (not AA's); stress Al-Anon's responsibility for Alateen sponsorship; place fold-cards describing Alateen on Al-Anon meeting tables; select workshop, Assembly, Conference themes that involve Alateen; make rooms available for Alateen meetings; and remember that teenagers' priorities may change, affecting their participation.

Sponsorship of Alateen:

Delegates discussed reasons why Al-Anon sponsorship is needed: adult participation can inspire serenity and helps to keep the focus on the program (rather than socializing); left alone, young people can be explosive and impulsive. They also discussed how to encourage Al-Anon sponsorship; con-

ducting open meetings, workshops, and study groups dealing with Alateen; asking former Alateens to sponsor; using ALATEEN—a day at a time, at Al-Anon meetings; and inviting Alateen input for sponsor selection.

GSO referrals to Alateen:

GSOs refer new members to local Alateen groups in a variety of ways: telephone; addresses; through Al-Anon; Lone Members; and Twelve Step letters.

Attracting Alateen membership:

P.I. strategies suggested were: displaying posters in places where young people congregate (e.g., schools, discos, fast food stores, etc.) with permission of facility; and developing hand-out size cards — one country has reduced a poster to this size. Alateen groups that have trouble attracting new members can take a group inventory.

National Alateen Committee:

National Committees are best organized through the GSO. Although it may take a long time for a National Alateen Committee to develop, Al-Anon members should continue to encourage Alateens to participate in Al-Anon workshops as a means of clarifying the service structure to them.

REGIONAL SERVICE SEMINAR

Keeping our membership informed about WSO activities and hearing from the service workers themselves is achieved through Regional Service Seminars. Some structures are beginning to follow WSO's lead and host RSS meetings in different parts of each country.

Objectives:

To acquaint the membership with WSO personnel and service arms — in person to clarify the role of WSO to membership.

- WSO does not have magic answers
- WSO Staff are not "experts"

(RSS Ask-it-Basket questions are, therefore, saved until the seminar end to de-emphasize the all-knowing image of WSO participants)

To give WSO Staff an opportunity to interact with membership on a personal level sharings from WSO open the sessions.

Functions:

Site selection is determined by RSS Committee:

The Committee always includes Regional Trustee from the site of the last Seminar and the Seminar Staff Coordinator and General Secretary. Guidelines in four parts are available from the WSO.

THE FORUM AND INSIDE AL-ANON

The FORUM, Al-Anon's International monthly journal, is a vital instrument in helping readers understand and develop in the program. Members share the personal application of the Steps, Traditions and slogans to contemporary life.

INSIDE AL-ANON, bimonthly newsletter, brings news from the World Service Office.

Sharings and Subscriptions:

Letters not used in The FORUM or *INSIDE AL-ANON* are often passed on to Literature Services for inclusion in Conference-Approved Literature to preserve its universality.

Mailing delays make it impossible for some countries to take advantage of discounts. WSO said it was possible for them to stagger the offers.

Most *INSIDE AL-ANON* subscriptions go through GSOs.

The FORUM is mailed directly to subscribers.

POLICY

The Policy Committee holds up questions, concerns and situations raised by our entire membership to the light of the Twelve Traditions and Concepts. After approval of a statement, on each issue, by the World Service Conference and the Board of Trustees, these decisions are recorded in the Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies.

Amendments to Policy Digest:

GSOs need immediate notification of policy amendments after the World Service Conference. This will enable them to adapt the new policy to their own needs.

The WSO replied that it could make this information available in the form of rough-typed versions of the amendments so GSOs would not have to wait for the material to come back from the printer in the United States.

Observers at Al-Anon meetings:

Delegates discussed the difference between *closed* and *open* Al-Anon meetings after it was noted that the Preamble's use of the word "friends" was rather vague.

"The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics . . ."

Some Delegates felt that such a broad term enabled virtually anyone to "qualify" for Al-Anon membership, including those whose motives may not be in harmony with our program's spiritual aims. However, Tradition Three states:

"The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend."

It is up to group autonomy to determine, within the framework of the Traditions, the qualification of its members.

Response to WSO policy:

Most structures try to emulate (at least in general terms) WSO policy, except when the structure is so small that WSO policy is not applicable. New structures are grateful for the benefit of WSO's extensive experience.

AL-ANON'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION JULY 5-7, 1985

A slide presentation highlighting the unique feature of Montreal, host city for Al-Anon's First International Convention, was



shown. Mary Ann encouraged the Delegates to bring back the message, to those in their country, that planners of this Convention hope it will be truly international in scope. This can only be accomplished if members outside the U.S. & Canada volunteer to actively participate in the Convention. Most members will accomplish this by speaking, but there are other behind-the-scene jobs that need to be done. A questionnaire will be sent to each member once they have completed and mailed in the registration form.

Emphasis was placed on checking the Al-Anon box, on the form, to insure proper registration and allotment of funds. Al-Anon and AA will have their Conventions side by side for three days, July 5-7, in this cosmopolitan city. The Queen Elizabeth and Chateau Champlain are the hotels where Al-Anon/Alateen meetings and activities will center.

Whether the Convention lives up to its theme, FELLOWSHIP — a worldwide celebration, is up to all who plan on attending.

MOTIONS:

The following motions were brought before the Delegates:

- That the International General Services Meeting become a permanent part of the Al-Anon worldwide structure, meeting every two years. (unanimous).
- That the first permanent International General Services Meeting be held in the United States in 1986. (unanimous).
- That consideration be given to the 1988 IGSM being held outside the United States. Approved (30-yes;4-no).
- That site selection for the 1988 IGSM be placed on the agenda in 1986, and that only Delegates from structures that choose to, come prepared with a bid, giving projected costs of location, accommodations, meals, meeting rooms, etc. Slides or photographs may be used in the presentation of bids. (33-yes; 0-no; 1-abstaining).
- That the Literature Committee prepare a pamphlet on the Agnostic and Al-Anon. (27 yes; 1 no; 5 abstaining)

SPIRITUAL MEETING— SERENITY PRAYER

A spiritual sharing session concluded the 1984 IGSM. Delegates who chose to, spoke about their personal experience with the Serenity Prayer.

Cay C., Chairman International Coordination Committee

When Cay was eight years old she had to undergo ear surgery, which resulted in paralysis of the left side of her face. This made her "different" and she hated being different. Cay had never shared this with others before, and she had avoided confronting it herself. Although it involved very strong feelings, Cay had buried them deep inside. When the feelings would threaten to surface, she would push them down: she did this again and again, she would push them back down again. Recently, Cay said, she became aware of how profoundly she had been affected by this. She realized that she had used her "differentness" as an excuse for not attempting things; she blamed it for her husband's drinking, and it was responsible for his failure to love her enough to stop drinking. Finally, Cay prayed for the serenity to accept her physical defect. What happened was that she found the courage to face reality and to tell herself, "This is the way it is whether I like it or not." She began to understand that serenity has nothing to do with physical perfection, but that it has everything to do with what is within. And that is where Cay saw that she was not different at all, we are alike inside. "Serenity," said Cay, "comes from striving to be the best me possible, and from accepting myself as I am, one day at a time." The Serenity Prayer helps Cay put all this into perspective: she does not have to like everything, but she does have to accept the things she cannot change. Now, she can love others as they are and accept their love for her.

Rosemarie P., Switzerland

After seven years in the program, Rosemarie was happy and her family life was good. She was therefore, thunderstruck when her husband said his feelings for her had changed and he wanted to leave. His decision, he said, was final. Rosemarie was paralyzed with fear and her children were shocked. All she had, she said, was the Serenity Prayer which was repeated and repeated. Her husband chose to keep the house, so Rosemarie was forced to go out and find an apartment for herself and the children. She continued to use the Serenity Prayer and found that it helped her cope with all of life's challenges. Three months after the separation, Rosemarie's husband asked her and the children to return. Again, she needed the Serenity Prayer, and again it helped her make a decision. She chose to return to him; today they are once again a family. Rosemarie knows that the Serenity Prayer will continue to help her overcome any adversity.

Elizabeth D., Australia

Very recently, Elizabeth said, her husband was able to confront his alcoholism. What was even more surprising to Elizabeth was that he had chosen to share this with her. She found the Serenity Prayer helped soothe her; it reminded her to use wisdom to moderate her overenthusiasm; it gave her the courage to refrain from trying to alter another's life; and it gave her the serenity to accept her husband's admission. She also had to accept that it was *his* miracle, not hers. Elizabeth was given another challenge—just prior to the IGSM—in the form of a choice. She chose to do something important for herself rather than for her husband, and discovered that her husband's problem took care of itself.

Herminia de F., Costa Rica

To Herminia the Serenity Prayer is a reflec-

tion of the entire Al-Anon program, and it has daily applications. It has enabled Herminia develop patience and has been especially useful in helping her handle a serious problem. Herminia shared that her husband suffers from a severe mental disorder which results in negative and destructive behavior. Although it has been difficult for her to distinguish between what she can accept and what she can change, the Serenity Prayer has helped her to act with wisdom and courage. Her Higher Power has blessed her with assistance from all sides: friends, family and concerned professionals. And, said Herminia, her husband has finally agreed to accept treatment.

Lolita D., Mexico

Lolita said that her husband became very angry when she first started going to Al-Anon and her children thought she was crazy. Thirteen months ago, however, her husband made the decision to join AA and last month the family accompanied him to his first anniversary. Tension was very thick in the car as they drove to the AA meeting, Lolita remembered, but suddenly she began to feel the Serenity Prayer enveloping her. When her husband, who was chairing the meeting, invited Lolita to share her feelings with the group, she was able to express her gratitude and speak frankly to the group and her family with serenity.

Ursula J., Switzerland

Ursula was made to feel very welcome at her first Al-Anon meetings. She was able to begin taking charge of her life despite the fact that her partner was still actively drinking. She found it difficult to understand any of the literature except the Serenity Prayer. She made a practice of writing it over and over, and found that this exercise calmed her. Whenever she felt nervous or upset, she would simply start writing down the Serenity Prayer, not really paying attention to its meaning. One evening her husband came

home and discovered the sheets of paper with the words to the Serenity Prayer written many times over. Several days later, he started going to AA. Was it because he had seen Ursula's Serenity Prayer covering the pages of paper? Ursula said she did not know.

Katarina W., Finland

Katarina shared that she is the daughter of an alcoholic. After her parents separated, Katarina decided that when she got married, it was going to be for keeps. Just to make sure, she had a Catholic marriage—Catholic marriages are forever, Katarina said. But things went wrong. When she recognized there was a drinking problem, she began going to Al-Anon. Unlike many other newcomers in the program, Katarina was not as concerned about helping her husband find sobriety as she was about saving the marriage. Although her marriage was the most important thing to her, Al-Anon could not save it. Three months and ten days after her first meeting, Katarina's husband left her. It was very hard for her to accept the breakup, but the Serenity Prayer gave her the courage to admit that the marriage was over. It is still difficult, Katarina admitted, to have the wisdom to know the difference.

Suzanne V.T., French Belgium

Suzanne had a great many problems as a child, she said, because her parents were so permissive. At 18 she left them to live with an artist. After trying to "fly" with him for ten years, she finally fell out of his nest. Suzanne shared that she needed very much to be loved, and she found an alcoholic who also needed to be loved. Although Suzanne knew she was far from perfect, she still blamed others for her predicaments; her characteristic response was to rebel. Living with an alcoholic simply made all her problems more acute and it became impossible for Suzanne to find serenity or to cultivate wisdom. After two years in Al-Anon, Su-

zanne surrendered; the Serenity Prayer was the tool she used to fight her worst self and to discover her best self. She also discovered rebellion was a waste of time, that pleasure was possible with a sober alcoholic, and she was able to be happy.

Jean G., U.K. & Eire

Jean's life with a periodic drinker provided her with ample opportunity for applying the Serenity Prayer. Later, when her adolescent son began to develop problems, Jean found another opportunity for reapplying the lessons she had learned in Al-Anon. Her son was not an alcoholic, but he repeatedly got into trouble with the police. At one court appearance, her son's lawyer suggested that Jean pay the fines to avoid court action. She chose not to pay and her son was sent to jail. Jean feels that his jail term (he spent his 20th birthday behind bars) was the best thing for him. Only Al-Anon and the Serenity Prayer enabled Jean to make the right decision at the right time.

Mary E., Costa Rica

Mary spoke about her children and how she, like all mothers, considered her children to be perfect. Mary discovered, however, that her younger child, Gabriel, was not "perfect" he had a learning problem. At first Mary was unable to accept it. She felt that her dreams for Gabriel had been transformed into a nightmare. When a teacher told her that her son was "different" Mary sought a second opinion. The doctor she consulted had an even gloomier diagnosis than the teacher's. He advised Mary not to enroll Gabriel in the first grade because, he said, it would be "a waste." A voice inside of Mary kept repeating, "Why him?", a voice that she realized was also asking, "Why me?" This "why me" feeling brought back all the pain she had suffered with the alcoholic situation. But now Mary had a program to live by and she had the Serenity Prayer to apply to her problem. She knew she could change

her attitude toward Gabriel, so she decided to become a partner in Gabriel's program. She had chosen to accept him with his limitations and, she said, "she was given a rainbow," Gabriel entered the first grade. Now Mary thanks her Higher Power for giving her a wonderful daughter and a very special little boy.

Helga B., Iceland

Helga shared that she has always wanted to change everyone and everything in her life – her husband, her children, even her cat – everything but herself. She began teaching 15 years ago and was happy to be teaching highly motivated children. Then in 1977, her school changed and she was given the students (ages 15 and up) with learning problems. Helga resented that these students didn't like to learn the way her other students had. She blamed herself and in 1978 she thought of leaving her profession. Then she found Al-Anon and began applying the Serenity Prayer (which she found easier to practice outside of the home than inside). She realized it wasn't the kids' fault they were unable to learn. Helga decided that although she could not change them, she could change her approach toward them—not to teach them. This helped them get closer to her and to trust her. In fact, said Helga, today when there are difficult children at school they are sent to her because she can relate so well to them. This would not have been possible without Al-Anon and the Serenity Prayer.

Ingolfur, K., Iceland

Comparing himself to a bottle of vinegar that's been sitting on a shelf Ingolfur said, he too, needs to be shaken up from time to time. In Al-Anon he learned that life consists of light and shadows and that he must accept them both. The "Serenity Prayer," he said, "is not a magic formula—it is a basic part of his life." Although it has been challenging for Ingolfur to appreciate the differ-

ence between serenity and carelessness, and to accept the things he cannot change, he is increasingly aware he only can change himself and his behavior. He has also noticed that when *he* changes, other things seem to change by themselves. Taking one step at a time helps him avoid stress; developing the wisdom to know the difference means that no one else can do it for him—he must discover that difference for himself.

Ruth P., U.K. & Eire

Ruth shared that it took great courage on her part to agree to becoming a Delegate. Although serving in this way represented an opportunity for her to "carry the message", she initially refused the nomination. After encouragement from others and much reconsideration, Ruth decided that since the membership had voted for her, then she had an obligation to serve them. She asked her Higher Power for the courage to carry out His will, which meant that she would have to believe in God from the very depths of her soul. Ruth said that she had for a long time been overshadowed by fear and a sense of failure – she worried that she lacked adequate education and skills. She began, however, to alter her view and to reclassify "obstacles" as "challenges." Ruth found she could meet such challenges by "changing the things I can," rather than "changing the things I am."

Joanne B., U.S. & Canada

Joanne has always been her own worst enemy, and her tendency to punish herself, overwork, and make herself anxious was intensified in her marriage to an alcoholic. As a member of Al-Anon, she had a hard time accepting the Serenity Prayer – although she could go through the motions of repeating it, deep down she felt she lacked the inner resources to make it personally meaningful. She felt she lacked the wisdom and courage. Joanne said she was able to make the Serenity Prayer real for herself after reading a let-

ter in The FORUM that had restated the prayer in more personal terms. It asked for the wisdom to know *myself*, the courage to change *myself*, and the serenity to accept *myself*. She admits to still being very intense and to pretending that everything is okay. But the Serenity Prayer has helped her change the things she chooses to change and to leave alone the others. She has developed a degree of wisdom and is able, with great difficulty sometimes, to sit down and truly listen, listen with her heart. She can celebrate her life as it really is without blindly striving for the ideal; this ability has added considerable richness to her life.

Monique V., French Belgium

Monique shared that it is especially difficult for her to look back on those awful drinking times, but she told of an incident back in the "bad old days" when the Serenity Prayer had pulled her through. After her husband had repeatedly threatened suicide, he finally took an overdose of sleeping pills. He was rushed to the hospital and Monique was left all alone, helpless and frightened. She remembered the Serenity Prayer and said it over and over again. Gradually, she felt relief from her Higher Power and knew she could cope with the situation. As it turned out, both she and her husband survived.

Marina H., Brazil

Marina said that she had come to the IGSM looking desperately for inspiration—inspiration in her life as well as in Al-Anon Service. As people shared, Marina was able to look back on the landmarks in her own life with new understanding and hope.

Siri R., Norway

Siri said she always uses the Serenity Prayer. At first she found it very difficult. She wondered how she could ever become wise

enough to "know the difference." Gradually, she came to trust that her Higher Power would help her. She knows her trust is justified, and her Higher Power is always there to help her.

Myrna H., WSO

For Myrna, it is easier to share a personal truth with strangers than with friends. Because she felt such closeness with the Delegates, she said she wanted to share her story with them. Sixteen months before, just after the 1983 World Service Conference, Myrna's father became very ill and she and her husband trusted their instinct to go to him a distance of 200 miles from her home. After their arrival, Myrna's father took a bad turn. The rest of the family was called to his bedside to await the inevitable. At the same time Myrna knew that in two days she was expected at a special Board of Trustees meeting in New York to help deal with a very serious problem that had arisen. Myrna was faced with the most difficult decision of her life: Should she remain by her father's side, or should she leave him to attend the Board meeting? Myrna needed the Serenity Prayer as never before. Although Myrna's father's death was imminent, she left for New York intending to return the next morning. Late that night her father passed away. Myrna shared with the Delegates that she had made peace with herself. "Her father," she said, "had been her inspiration," and she felt that his strength was hers. Her father's influence had given her the courage to change the things she could and her presence at the Board meeting on the day of his death was her tribute to him.

CONCLUSION

After the official portion of the IGSM was completed, Delegates were invited to a local Al-Anon group's meeting place for a "Potluck Supper", which included a beautiful spread of delicious home made food as well

as a charming skit performed by the members from all over the state of Connecticut. Again, unity and harmony prevailed.

The final day of the IGSM, September 25, Delegates piled into a bus and headed for Stepping Stones, Lois W.'s beautiful estate in the country. They had coffee with Lois and were able to tour the grounds. "Being here with Lois at Stepping Stones," one Delegate shared, "is like walking into the pages

of LOIS REMEMBERS."

Chairman Cay C. quoted Hippocrates, who said that healing is a matter of time as well as a matter of opportunity. "Growth," she said, "takes time. It, too, can be a matter of opportunity. The IGSM is an opportunity for growth in our service structures. As our service structures grow, so will the Al-Anon fellowship."

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