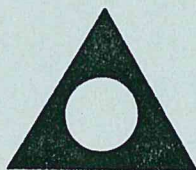




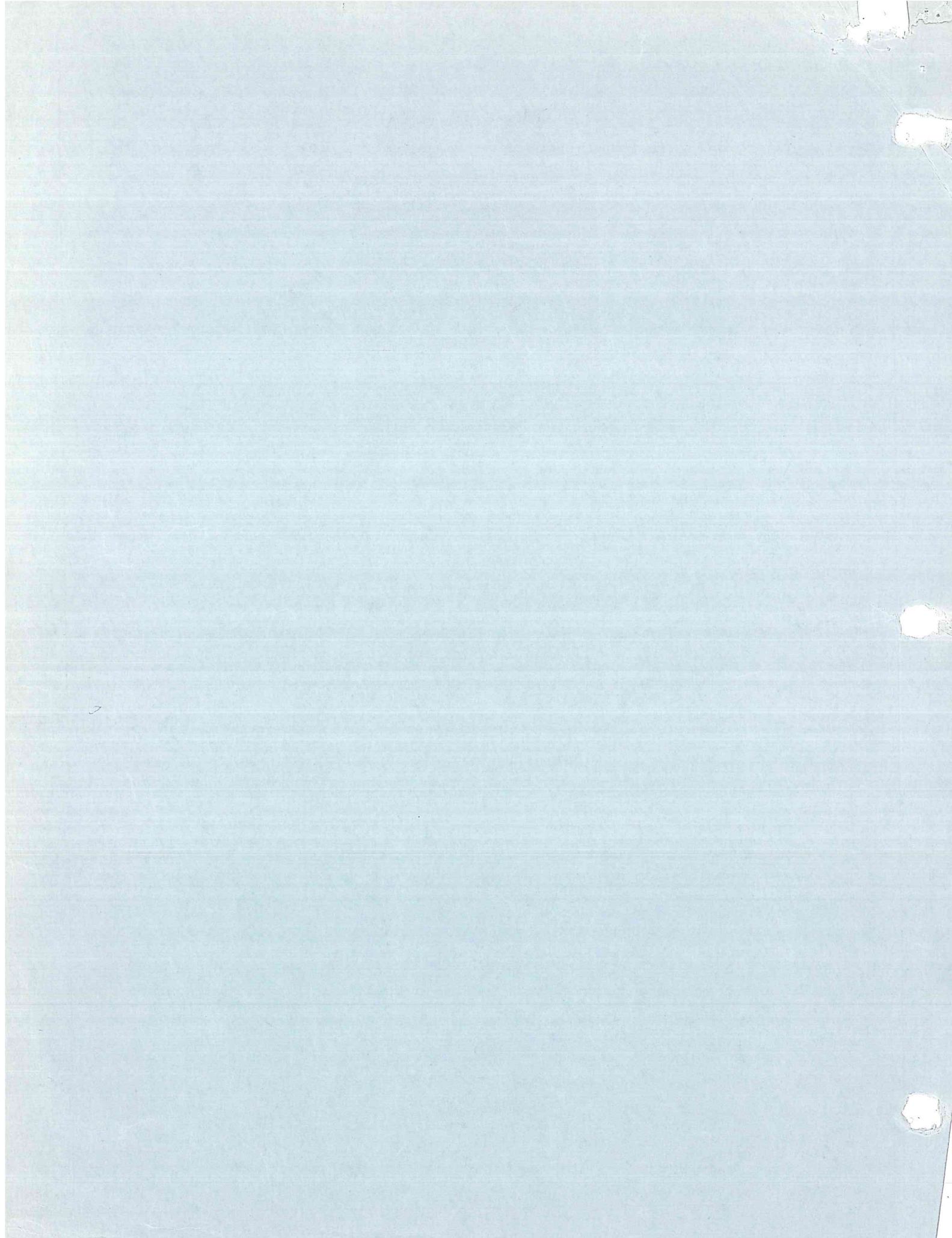
SIXTH  
INTERNATIONAL  
AL-ANON  
GENERAL SERVICES  
MEETING

*Theme: Let the Concepts Be Our Guide*

October 5-8, 1990  
White Plains Hotel  
White Plains, New York







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# Twelve Concepts of Service

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1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.
2. The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The Right of Decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. The Rights of Appeal and Petition protect minorities and assure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of the Al-Anon Headquarters to its Executive Committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service, the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of Standing Committees, Executives and Staff Members.
12. The spiritual foundation for Al-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

## General Warranties

In order that the Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power, the General Warranties of the Conference read: "In all its proceedings the World Service Conference of Al-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions":

- (1) that only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
- (2) that no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
- (3) that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity;
- (4) that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;
- (5) that though the Conference serves Al-Anon, it shall never perform any act of government, and that, like the fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

# Attendance

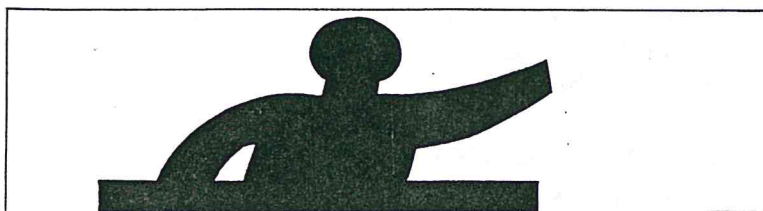
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The following structures were represented at the 1990 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting:

|                                      |                                          |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Argentina                            | Alicia Maria C.                          |
| Australia                            | Jean H.                                  |
|                                      | Hilda May R.                             |
| Belgium (Flemish)                    | Francine G.                              |
|                                      | Ria R.                                   |
| Belgium (French)                     | Monique C.                               |
|                                      | Raphaelle H.                             |
| Brazil                               | Maria Thereza G.                         |
|                                      | Wilma B.                                 |
| Finland                              | Sirkka S.                                |
|                                      | Alli N.                                  |
| France                               | Patricia S.                              |
|                                      | Simone L.                                |
| Germany                              | Heide I.                                 |
|                                      | Erna R.                                  |
| Iceland                              | Thorunn S.                               |
|                                      | Stefania V.                              |
| Italy                                | Fernando M.                              |
|                                      | Franco G.                                |
| Japan                                | Cecilia M.                               |
|                                      | Aiko Y.                                  |
| Mexico                               | Maria del Rocio C.                       |
|                                      | Maria Rocio A.                           |
| New Zealand                          | Jennifer S.                              |
|                                      | Margaret W.                              |
| Norway                               | Unn R.                                   |
|                                      | Siri R.                                  |
| South Africa                         | Louise C.                                |
|                                      | Denise C.                                |
| Spain                                | Maria-Luisa B.                           |
|                                      | Maria Carmen C.                          |
| Sweden                               | Bonny T.                                 |
|                                      | Vera I.                                  |
| Switzerland (German)                 | Ursula J.                                |
|                                      | Erika H.                                 |
| U.K. & Eire                          | Edith B.                                 |
|                                      | Monica S.                                |
| U.S. & Canada                        | Mary C.                                  |
|                                      | John B.                                  |
| International Coordination Committee | Bill S., Chairman                        |
|                                      | Myrna H., WSO Executive Director         |
|                                      | Mary Ann K., International Administrator |
|                                      | Syntha E.                                |
|                                      | Margaret G.                              |
|                                      | Robert V.                                |



## OPENING SESSION



The following structures were unable to send representatives to the meeting:

|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Colombia    | Netherlands          |
| Costa Rica  | Paraguay             |
| Denmark     | Switzerland (French) |
| El Salvador | Uruguay              |
| Guatemala   | Venezuela            |

### Opening Session

Bill S., Chairman of the International Coordination Committee, welcomed the worldwide Delegates to the Sixth International Al-Anon General Services Meeting on its tenth anniversary. The meeting brought together 45 Al-Anon members from 19 countries. The session officially opened on Saturday morning with a moment of silence and some special words shared by Bill, "My Higher Power has given me many assets and I know they are all gifts. We all have them, though they're different. Everyone has a place, a job, a uniqueness. We can all use our gifts in the fellowship of Al-Anon."

Signifying the global representation while maintaining the unity of our universal program, Delegates recited the Serenity Prayer at the start of each session in their native language.

To begin the weekend-long sharing, Bill walked around the room asking each Delegate to introduce themselves to the membership body. A special feeling filled the air as the meeting unfolded. "It's so wonderful to hear all these international accents; each of us brings something special. I want to remind you that this is your meeting," Bill shared as the worldwide representatives of Al-Anon listened on with hearts filled with love and gratitude.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) is to share the experience of Al-Anon's national services around the world through their Delegates. It will attempt to encourage the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining a worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It can also represent an expression of a 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 amidst cultural and language differences.

### Theme: *Let the Concepts Be Our Guide*

Bringing together representatives from structures in various stages of formation, a unified Al-Anon group found special meaning in the theme of the 1990 IAGSM, "Let the Concepts Be Our Guide."

The Twelve Concepts of Service are the foundation in developing worldwide Al-Anon structures. Throughout the meeting the universal language of Al-Anon was heard and felt as the Concepts guided the members through discussions, sharings and insightful messages.

### Invocation

*Margaret G.,  
International Coordination Committee*

"With hearts full of love and gratitude we thank you God, for having brought us together. Grant us Your grace and blessing on this International Al-Anon General Services Meeting. Be with us and guide us during this meeting so that when we come to



the conclusion, each of us will know the joy of having helped to carry the Al-Anon message around the world."

## Keynote Speaker Breakfast Session

*Alice C., Argentina*

I grew up in a home where alcoholism did not exist. There were some happy times, but there was also violence and quarreling. I never knew what to expect. I grew up silent and fearful of everything.

Time passed and I met a wonderful man. He was perfect except that he seemed to drink a bit too much. I was certain that after we were married things would change. When no children arrived, my husband and I decided to adopt. I was furious when the agency told me I would have to seek help before allowing me to bring a baby into my home. I couldn't understand why I was being told this—now I do.

Although I didn't like my first Al-Anon meeting I kept going back and began to discover and learn things. The concept of living one day at a time made sense; worrying about yesterday or tomorrow was not wise. I have finally been able to learn the difference between planning and projecting. When I stopped worrying so much, I found more time to make my days enjoyable. In working the program I was experiencing a change and soon volunteering at the group level. I was enthused by every piece of literature I could get my hands on—English or Spanish. I borrowed the group's copy of the Twelve Concepts of Service, but got so confused I couldn't make heads nor tails of it.

I was under the impression that the General Service Office *told* the groups what to do. Great was my surprise to learn that they *served* the groups. Visiting the GSO was a turning point for me—the meaning of service and all it implies began to come clear.

In 1977, Alberto attended the World Service Conference. On his return to Argentina we set about forming some of our Service Committees as well as a Board of Trustees. Each Trustee was presented with a copy of

the new Spanish translation of Al-Anon's Twelve Concepts of Service. I still found them confusing, but realized they were important as the Concepts were to be our guide in service matters.

When I first started volunteering I heard the words, "group conscience." A member explained that it really begins with each member setting aside preconceived ideas, listening with an open mind to the point being discussed, and ultimately being guided within oneself to a decision which could be expressed aloud for the benefit of Al-Anon as a whole. The Right of Decision makes this possible. Knowing that you are trusted brings out the best in you—this occurs at every level of service. The Right of Decision offers the Conference, Board of Trustees, General Service Office and its committees absolute confidence, thus, effective leadership.

The Concepts also remind us of the importance of participation. When I attended my first meeting I found that no one person was more important than the other; this created harmony, not only in the group, but in each member. The Principle of Participation is essential at the GSO and its Executive and Service Committees. We need people; we need to share.

The Al-Anon program is one of freedom. When a member with a minority viewpoint feels that a mistake in a decision has been made that could affect Al-Anon as a whole, they must feel free to say so. This is called the Right of Petition. This ensures unity and that the minority position is satisfied because the spirit of democracy has been put into practice.

On a national level, the Conference has entrusted administrative authority to our GSO so that the Trustees may act freely to manage and conduct Al-Anon's business in the absence of a full-bodied Conference. For the last few years, Argentina has been experiencing heavy inflation where one could literally see the value of money disappear. Effective evaluation and prompt decision was necessary. One of the Trustees with financial experience helped to no end. It made me see how important it is to have



different professional skills among the Board membership ensuring foresight and good planning. It is essential that the Trustees have freedom to act; if this had not been the case, our GSO in Argentina would have long disappeared.

The Trustees have legal rights whereas the Conference has traditional rights. We have found that if we keep in mind the different duties and responsibilities of the two, all is well; and for this we must let the Concepts be our guide.

In Argentina we have a Board of Trustees and a Comision Directiva. If our new bylaws are passed, this Comision will disappear. We will have our Board of Trustees who will act in matters of policy and finances and be responsible for final decisions. The Trustees will delegate routine management of the GSO to an Executive Committee. Concept IV says that, "Participation is the key to harmony."

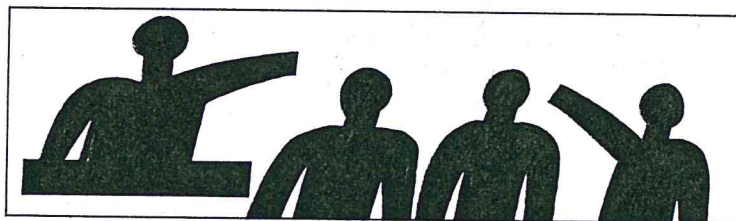
In order to work well we must know what our responsibilities are and where the final authority lies. We see a balance throughout the Concepts between the groups and the Conference and the Board

of Trustees. This makes way for effective decision-making and leadership.

Our structure continues to grow and there is no doubt that the Concepts will guide us. Due to the rocketing inflation in my country the question arises every month, "Have we enough funds to cover expenses?" Thank goodness we have sufficient reserve to carry us through. How wise Warranty One is when it says we should have "sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve."

Service has played a very large part in my recovery and it is chiefly due to being able to express my Right of Decision and know that Participation leads to harmony and sharing in all ways of life. I have learned to enjoy what I am doing, therefore, fear and worry are kept at a distance. The Concepts have helped me in my recovery and enriched my life. To end I would like to quote Samuel Johnson who said, "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it." For information on service matters we always say, "Let the Concepts Be Our Guide."

## GENERAL SESSIONS



### Voting Procedures

To ensure the voice of the membership is heard and the needs are met in a democratic way, the voting procedures were explained. As at past sessions, recommendations can be made by all voting members—Delegates as well as the International Coordination Committee—in written format from the floor or resulting from workshops.

Each recommendation will be read by the Motion Recorder and the IAGSM Chairman will ask for a voting member to make a motion, call for a second and open the floor for discussion. Only one motion at a time may be discussed. If there is disagree-

ment or need for further study, the Chairman may ask the originators to reword it.

Should there be a need for further discussion and study, it may be advisable to postpone action on the vote. The Chairman will ask the membership for a majority vote to table the motion.

Once finalized, the motion will be re-read and members will be asked to vote. Decisions reached at the IAGSM are submitted to the Al-Anon Board of Trustees at their next quarterly meeting for approval.

To determine the format that will be used, Bill asked the Motion Recorder to read the first motion of the 1990 IAGSM:



*That substantial unanimity for this IAGSM be a two-thirds majority.*

Members decided unanimously, by a show of hands, that 30 votes will be needed from the 45 voting members to achieve substantial unanimity.

The second motion read:

*That voting on all motions for the IAGSM be by closed ballot.*

Once again a unanimous show of hands decided the voting format for this year's session.

## **Executive Committee and Board of Trustee Relationship**

*Monica S., U.K. & Eire*

Concept VIII says: "The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of the Al-Anon Headquarters to its Executive Committees." In the U.K. & Eire this would be: "The General Service Board delegates full authority for the routine management of the General Service Office to the Executive Committee." So, why do we need an Executive Committee? Before I answer, I shall go back a little in history.

In 1960 there were 11 groups with service work done from the homes of Al-Anon members. In 1970 we formed a structure by dividing into 14 Districts; forming a Board of Trustees; incorporating as a non-profit company; opening a GSO, and holding our first Conference—all in one year.

Today we have over 1,000 groups and the GSO in London has five full-time workers, several part-time and a number of volunteers. It acts as a clearinghouse for inquiries, keeps records, stocks and distributes literature, dispatches our magazine *NEWS & VIEWS* and keeps accounts of all monies. It is a very busy office and numerous decisions regarding business operations need to be made all year round.

The General Service Board of the U.K. & Eire is composed of the Chairman, Treasurer, Chairman of the Executive Committee and six Regional Trustees. The General Sec-

retary and the IAGSM Delegates attend all meetings with voice but no vote. The General Service Board is the chief service arm of the Conference and is responsible for carrying out Conference wishes. It is also the principal committee of Al-Anon in the U.K. & Eire and is authorized to manage all its affairs including staffing and administration of the GSO. Because its responsibilities are so wide-ranging it cannot effectively oversee and manage the GSO. Since 1975 this responsibility has been delegated to the Executive Committee enabling the General Service Board to devote its time to the overall questions of policy, leadership and finance.

The Executive Committee meets every few weeks and is responsible for the smooth and efficient running of the office. It is a Standing Committee composed of a Chairman, who is a Trustee, the Treasurer (also a Trustee), General Secretary, a Staff Member and other experienced Al-Anon members. The attendance of three Executive Committee members at the Board of Trustee meetings eases communication and helps to avoid "double-headed management." To delegate is an essential part of Al-Anon service, just as to take responsibility is. It demonstrates the trust that we have in fellow members in service. We do well to remember that although we may be members of Boards and Committees, we are also Al-Anon members in a program of spiritual recovery.

While the wording of the Twelve Concepts of Service may not be changed for reasons of national structure, we can take the democratic idea, and the principle and use it in our own structure. The spiritual ideas behind the Concepts are universal and enable members in service to work together in harmony.

### **Discussion**

Many Delegates shared the concern that while they participate at Executive Committee meetings, IAGSM Delegates are not permitted to attend Board of Trustee meetings which restricts the information flow necessary to perform their jobs.



It was pointed out that this was also a topic for discussion at the 1986 IAGSM and a motion was approved stating that it was essential for IAGSM Delegates to be fully informed on all activities of the General Service Offices in their countries. It was also suggested that they be invited to attend Board and/or other appropriate meetings during their term of office in order to reflect their structure's current thinking and service needs.

A common feeling was to reaffirm the 1986 motion. Participants shared their experiences explaining the role that this motion had in their current structure. The sharing of information at all levels within the structure is vital to the continuing growth of Al-Anon worldwide. An ad hoc committee was formed to review the issue and recommend appropriate action.

After careful consideration and much discussion, the following motion was made, seconded and carried (43 Yes; 2 Abstentions):

*Since the IAGSM is now a permanent part of our Al-Anon structure, and in order to guarantee the flow of information worldwide, we confirm and underscore the 1986 motion that IAGSM Delegates be fully informed on all activities of the General Service Office in their country. It is suggested that they attend Board and other appropriate meetings during their term of office.*

## Why Areas Structure

*Wilma B., Brazil*

In Brazil it was very difficult to structure our states into Area Assemblies and we have been working at it for the past seven years. Information Services (Intergroups) were the first arms of our national structure. When we started to create Area Committees, members of these different states had a lot of trouble understanding each other.

Looking at the history in the United States and Canada, we see why the Areas structured:

In 1960 Al-Anon held a meeting at the AA International Convention in Long Beach. Those present from all over the U.S. and Canada voted unanimously to set up an annual Conference of Delegates, on a trial

basis for three years. This action was later confirmed by a poll of the groups. Some years after, the Conference had become a permanent foundation for Al-Anon's world service. The World Service Conference is the active voice and the effective group conscience of our society in world affairs.

The historical background in the World Service Handbook suggests that in order to obtain equal representation, the North American continent was divided into four quadrants by lines drawn through its approximate center from east to west and north to south. Three Delegates were chosen from each of the quadrants during the first year. In the succeeding years more Delegates were added. Following this formula all states and provinces have had the opportunity to join the Conference.

It was wonderful to read the history of Al-Anon's structure around the world in the IAGSM brochure. We can learn how the different structures are dealing with the problems involving development. In Argentina, the first General Service Conference was held in 1985 and voted permanent in 1987. The National Service Conference is held in October and composed of two Delegates from each of the 11 Districts. Finland is divided into 14 Districts. The Districts send representatives to an annual meeting. This material gives us a foundation which we can all build upon if we choose. Each structure develops in a slightly different way. While studying them, we can see two fundamental things in Al-Anon groups throughout the world over: the different sizes of the countries and the different stages of their structure. We can see that almost all the structures follow the orientation of the World Service Handbook adapting it as necessary.

One thing we have observed is that we are all using different names for the same services. For example, an Area World Service Conference is called Conference, Service Conference, General Service Conference, and National Conference. It may make our communication with each other easier if we all used the same terms.

In the 1980s we came to the IAGSM to structure our services at the national levels.



Now in the 1990s I think we will be concentrating our efforts on structuring our Areas.

*Francine G., Belgium (Flemish)*

A small country like Belgium is probably the size of an Area in the United States. However, the needs of an Area or District are quite different from those of a country. We have two separate structures in my country—Dutch-speaking and French-speaking.

Even a small country such as ours needs a good structure; for that purpose I shall share with you the problems we have struggled with in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

In the early 1960s a small number of people started to take care of the services within Al-Anon. It is far from easy to start Al-Anon work in a non-English-speaking country. There was no literature available in our language, so the early workers had to start translating pamphlets for use at meetings and to give to newcomers. Al-Anon had to introduce itself to Dutch-speaking Belgium, explain its goals and the reason for existence. With the growth of Al-Anon and the increasing number of groups, the service volunteers had difficulty coping with the amount of work in the GSO and calls for volunteers were made repeatedly.

During the 1970s, the Dutch-speaking GSO began to face the decision-making process: WHO was entitled to make WHAT decisions? It did not seem too difficult at first to give a definitive form (or structure) to an association after it had been in existence for over 15 years. The General Secretary at that time wanted to continue in his position for an unlimited period of time. This was considered unacceptable. Another problem was the organization of the yearly Service Conference: Who participates? Who determines the agenda, etc.? Some members wanted each group to be represented, newer members preferred a delegation of three members per province who would have the right to vote and serve for a limited period of time. This idea was based on the Service Handbook of the U.K. & Eire.

In the meantime, work groups had been formed in several provinces, where much

time was spent discussing the writing of bylaws and the difficulties that had arisen in attempts to structure the movement. The decisions which were reached, at great pain, were questioned again and again.

In 1981 things went out of control. The existing Service Office sent the groups information defending their point of view. Most groups did not understand all these quarrels. Official publication of the bylaws for Dutch-speaking Al-Anon was postponed systematically.

Five members decided to publish the much-discussed democratic bylaws. Candidates for the Board were sought to represent each province. We thought the structure was finally formalized. A few months later another set of bylaws were published by the members of the Service Office which called for a majority representation of *certain* provinces, which is not exactly democratic. It was really hard for groups and provinces to make their choice of GSO. There was even a division within provinces, which created a lot of tension.

The democratic structure wrote a Handbook that outlined the role of each link in the structure—Group Representative, Provincial Delegate, Service Conference and Board of Trustees.

In 1982 the first trial Service Conference was held. Only two of five provinces were represented. At the second trial Service Conference, three provinces were present and in 1985, all five participated. The structure gradually grew stronger and more and more members gained an understanding of its goals. The non-democratic structure decided to dissolve in 1985.

The growing pains in our small country taught us many things during those *very* difficult times. A structure cannot operate without a base that serves as a guide in the making of decisions that will be accepted by a majority. A Service Conference with representation from each group is impossible—even in a small country. Representatives must be elected with voting rights at the Conference. We also learned that rotation is required; no one must be allowed to become too powerful. Finally, we know that



important decisions must be reached by vote after careful deliberation.

### *Discussion*

Delegates expressed feelings reflecting similar problems during the early stages of forming a structure. Members shared that coming to the IAGSM makes one feel that problems are not isolated. In France during 1988, group conscience decided to decentralize and divide into 22 Regions on a three-year trial basis. In 1989, 18 of the 22 Regions sent Delegates to the Conference. Although a success in theory, financially the new structure is a problem. The personal contact experienced under the old structure seems to be lost. Sometimes it's very difficult to undo things, even when they are only on a trial basis.

Last year Belgium's nine Districts thought it time to structure into Areas. In spite of the enthusiasm, it was voted down. Board members were instructed to lay the groundwork and encourage members to move in this direction as they visited the Districts.

The structure in South Africa has been in practice for a long time, but members continue to refine it because the members' needs are constantly changing. The country is currently divided into six Regions with representation by one Trustee each. Each Region also has an Information Service that handles all the work since the country is large. Meetings are frequently held at all levels. A strong bond exists between the groups and the Regions.

French-speaking Belgium proposed the idea of restructuring, but the lack of service workers has influenced the decision.

Mexico has 31 states, but 25 Area Service Committees. The Conference Committee developed a plan to restructure the other states. The result of the study was that knowledge of service work is limited. Some Trustees have gone to the Areas to improve their understanding.

Spain adds more Areas as Al-Anon grows throughout the country. While they began with eight, they now have ten.

The World Service Office was asked about the current structure of the World

Service Conference. In response, the Delegates were advised that there are currently 67 Areas represented at the Conference. In 1990, 33 World Service Office members participated as voting members ensuring two-thirds of the votes were maintained at the Area level. In 1991, there will be 36 WSO voting members of the Conference. To alleviate this imbalance, several ideas are being considered including a lottery system whereby three members will be selected daily to participate with voice but no vote.

Australia shared their National Conference voting structure. Twenty-four members attend, but only 13 are voting members—four selected members from the Board of Trustees and nine Delegate members. The other attendee is the Committee Chairman who participates with voice but no vote.

## **Developing Committees**

### *Thorunn S., Iceland*

I am especially grateful to the IAGSM and the influence these meetings have had on the Icelandic structure.

Iceland is a young structure with the first group forming in November 1972. A year later it was decided to form a committee where two representatives from each of the groups in Reykjavik attended monthly meetings ten times a year. This committee operated as a District Meeting in the beginning, but grew into serving as an Executive Committee and a General Service Board. We called this the "Cooperation Committee" or "Service Committee."

There were difficult times finding volunteers; the representatives were often unsure about the program. Little material was translated. Group Representatives often asked members with only a few month's experience to attend the committee meetings.

The Literature Committee (or Translation/Publication Committee) was formed in 1976 with volunteers from the Service Committee. That committee translated, published and sold six pamphlets and the book *THE DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE*. In 1982 the Service Committee planned the first National Meeting which



was held in May. In 1983, the General Service Office opened for two hours a week. A volunteer secretary took care of all the finances, national and international correspondence, distributing literature and attending the Service Committee meetings.

In 1984 the members of the Service Committee sent two Delegates to the IAGSM and that is when our structure started to change rapidly. In March 1986 the first Service Conference was held. Two Delegates from each group in Iceland were introduced to the unity of Al-Anon through the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts of Service and the history of our worldwide fellowship. We were together listening, learning and discussing to the break of dawn. Together we started to hold hands the Al-Anon way. This Conference and the beautiful spiritual program is the foundation we have tried to build our structure on.

In the autumn of 1987, on the 15th anniversary of the Al-Anon fellowship in Iceland, our Icelandic Al-Anon bimonthly newsletter called *HLEKKURINN (The Link)* began publication. In Iceland the national habit is to order a magazine and pay later. (As a matter of fact, we Icelanders have a habit of arranging all our finances that way.) We found out why a lot of magazines give up in Iceland. Members wanted the newsletter, but only 50 percent of the subscription fee was collected. That is one of the reasons our newsletter is currently dying. Another reason is a lack of sharings from our members.

The decisions made by the Service Committee were transferred to the GSO. Early in 1988 two members were selected to form a committee with the secretary to take care of the business at the GSO. That was the first sign of the Executive Committee.

In August 1988 our structure attended the IAGSM for the third time. That fall an ad hoc committee was formed to study and plan a suitable structure for Iceland. The following year the committee presented a structure of five permanent Areas and seven Districts at the National Meeting. It was agreed to hold four District meetings with the Twelve Traditions as the main topic. All of a sudden, it was like we invented elec-

tricity. The light was shining all of the time. The whole country was connected through the District Representatives.

What had been started had to continue. The Structure Committee continued working and volunteers were asked to translate material concerning "structure building" and developing committees. They studied the Twelve Concepts of Service. The Eleventh Concept was translated as well as the pamphlet from the U.K. & Eire, "Why the Concepts," the bylaws and parts of the Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies, parts of the World Service Handbook and the pages originally left out of Al-Anon/Alateen Groups at Work. It was fun, but sad to remember that we were certain we had to leave those pages out when the Handbook was first published since we didn't need that material anytime in the near future. This has taught us to leave nothing out, to accept the program the way it is because it is built on the experience of others in the Al-Anon program.

Out of these translations and studies, our structure was developed. In times of doubt the members of the Structure Committee made some rewarding and encouraging phone calls to the World Service Office as well as the GSO in England. Our structure and guidelines for Service Committees were accepted at the 1990 National Meeting. Division of the country into Districts and Areas will continue. It is a great joy to see the growth in the Delegates and the groups. The greatest change in our structure was to implement a General Service Board in Iceland.

We have learned from experience that responsibility in service is needed in Al-Anon. Our General Service Board serves as the chief service arm of our National Conference and is carrying the responsibility of serving in the spirit of the Twelve Traditions and within the Twelve Concepts of Service.

We have a lot to learn, but trust that the principles of this program work—if you work them.

The Twelve Concepts of Service and all the service manuals have made it possible for us to build a suitable structure in Iceland. The Eleventh Concept gave us the principles to develop committees that oper-



ate in service so that unity and harmony in the Al-Anon fellowship in Iceland is now not just a dream.

*Maria Rocio A., Mexico*

In 1972, an Al-Anon volunteer group in Mexico City was conscious of the need to create a National Service Center in order to unify and give support to all existing Al-Anon groups. This volunteer group organized a General Services Committee.

The Committee started working on a National Directory and invited all the groups to be represented in a National Assembly (known today as the National Service Conference). In 1973, they celebrated the first National Assembly of the Al-Anon Family Groups with 13 represented Areas and elected the first Board of Trustees which continues as guardian of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service. At the same time, Central Mexicana de Servicios Generales de los Grupos Familiares Al-Anon, A.C. was formed. Today it is better known as the General Service Office.

In the beginning, a Coordinator to the National Assembly was named. The Coordinator, also named a National Public Relations Coordinator for Twelve-Step work, was responsible for all the work organizing the Assembly. Other responsibilities of the Coordinator included corresponding with Delegates and program agenda. The GSO Literature Department started to have problems with the importation of publications.

By 1976, the 4th National Assembly created workshops for Alateen, Finances, Literature, Correspondence and Public Relations. We were lacking people to sufficiently carry out all the work needed to be done; more volunteers were needed at the GSO. In 1979, at the 7th National Assembly thought was given to forming a Nominating Committee to recruit volunteers for the Board of Trustees and other committees. Due to lack of knowledge on procedures, this committee is under consideration.

In 1981, the first Conference Committee was formed at the GSO consisting of a volunteer Chairman, a Conference Secretary, other Staff Secretaries and a volunteer Hos-

pitality Secretary. At the same time Public Information, Institutions and Alateen Standing Committees were instituted with a volunteer Chairman (member of the Board), a paid Staff Secretary and other volunteer Al-Anon members. Conference Delegates were assigned to work with these Standing Committees. It wasn't until 1988 that the Archives Committee was established by the GSO.

We translated the WSO Standing Committee Guidelines and adapted them to fit our needs giving us a clearer vision of the constitution and procedures. Our principal problem was recruiting volunteers. There were occasions when we counted on only one solid committee. The rest were unstable.

In 1984, with much enthusiasm we wrote to the World Service Office requesting help in forming a Policy Committee. The WSO responded that the World Service Conference has ultimate responsibility for Al-Anon policies worldwide. We have, therefore, let ourselves be guided by the WSO and the WSC.

In 1987, we implemented an Events Committee to coordinate the Al-Anon National Convention and the National Congress. This was unsuccessful due to lack of volunteers. Therefore, the organization of these events has been administered by the personnel at the GSO.

It was proposed that we create a Regional Service Seminar Committee, as well as a Nominating and Executive Committee on a trial basis. However, volunteers continue to be a problem. We thought the Seminars would be a solution for encouraging members into service. This year, 1990, we celebrated our second successful Regional Service Seminar.

I feel that a lack of knowledge is the principal reason for our problem getting volunteers. We always look to the WSO guidelines and have had stupendous results.

I would like to share with you that the formation of the Nominating Committee has been a success. It has proven to be the best way to introduce volunteers to the Standing Committees at the GSO. We have had the same success with the Executive Committee. Now the Board meets quarterly and



the Executive Committee is in charge of daily routine GSO activities.

The National Service Conference in 1990 approved the forming of Long Range Plan with the purpose of establishing future challenges and to foresee the growth of the GSO. This Long Range Plan will enable us to avoid last minute adaptations to necessities.

### *Discussion*

Delegates from Mexico conversed on the growth of committees within their structure. Prior communications with the WSO regarding the formation of a Policy Committee in Mexico explained that the World Service Conference has ultimate authority for the Policies of the Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups worldwide.

Members were unclear on why local Policy Committees could not be set up to deal with questions on increasing literature prices, staff salaries, etc. Mary Ann K., International Coordination Administrator, explained that the Policy Committee at the World Service Office oversees those directives included in the Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies, and reports directly to the World Service Conference and Board of Trustees regarding amendments, changes and deletions affecting Al-Anon policy throughout the world.

Administrative policies relating to the day-to-day operation of the World Service Office are handled by the Executive and Budget Committees, and ultimately the Board of Trustees.

Committee structures in some countries have reached the growth point where members are interested in a Long-Range Study Panel as adopted by the World Service Office. Myrna H., Executive Director of the WSO, provided the history and purpose of this Panel. The former Board Chairman, Hank G., envisioned a group of members meeting to "brainstorm" on the "what ifs" that could impact the future of Al-Anon Family Groups. This concept was revolutionary, as we in Al-Anon have always focused just on today.

Today, the Long-Range Study Panel, subcommittee of the Board, meets once a

month to explore four to five topics designated by the Board of Trustees. One project currently being researched by the Panel is the feasibility of relocating the World Service Office outside of New York City.

## **Attraction vs. Promotion**

*Fernando M., Italy*

Al-Anon public information policy relies on attraction rather than promotion. The principle is clearly stated in our Eleventh Tradition. To thoroughly understand this Tradition, we cannot go without recalling the declaration of the Sixth World Service Conference in 1966, "...to go on living, Al-Anon has to go on growing if it wants to reach its primary aim to let all who need the help of Al-Anon know of its existence. We will reach our goal more effectively through attraction and cooperation rather than promotion and affiliation."

All of us who arrived in Al-Anon hopeless, physically and mentally exhausted, understand well the words of the WSC. To be able to grow and spread the message, to reach out and offer help, we should always conform our behavior to those principles which have been affirmed and strengthened in our 40 years of experience.

When we offer our services in a spirit of gratitude to Al-Anon and look into the Eleventh Concept we understand how fundamental and original the Al-Anon structure is for growth and unity. We must also observe the guidelines to avoid the risk of being misunderstood about Al-Anon's purpose and function and, consequently, breaking Traditions. When we introduce ourselves to the public, they do not know that we speak for ourselves—they see Al-Anon.

Public Information Service involves individual qualities that characterize the members of Al-Anon—understanding and tolerance; the principles natural to the program. Once we accept the program, we understand the meaning of humility that leads to a new style of life. Slowly we discover ourselves as different persons. All we have achieved through the program makes Al-Anon attractive.



We are attractive because all that we transmit is attractive. The word "promotion" can have the limited meaning of letting others know "who we are, where we are and what we do." In doing so we keep our behavior within the framework of the Traditions. However, if by "promotion" one refers to devices and strategies of essentially materialistic character, one refers to a concept that has nothing to do with our policy. If we give the impression that we are willing to "sell" our spiritual program, no doubt we would turn away those who intensely need the help of Al-Anon, just as we did.

In Al-Anon there is nothing to sell, we have no fixed and sure methods. Each individual is maker of his own recovery through his efforts, sacrifice and, very often, through pain. We share experiences and the message of love. Only the desire for peace, spiritual growth, personal family harmony has brought Al-Anon all over the world. It must be emphasized—this is not good to sell. By attraction rather than selling, we show great confidence in our program, letting others know us, exposing our feelings without shame or false modesty. Those who have served in Al-Anon before us hand over this principle and their experience to us.

With respect to these experiences and the spiritual principles that have brought Al-Anon's message of love and hope all over the world, it is our task to look forward. We do not want to change the world, but I like to think that my service, our service in Al-Anon, will be of help to those who will come after us. This needs no promotion, it is the Al-Anon miracle at work.

*Syntha E.,  
International Coordination Committee*

The term "promotion" makes me think of glitzy advertising and the hard-sell approach, the fancy money-back guarantee that promises success in 90 days or double your money back. Our preference for "attraction" is more conservative and, I feel, more valid. While attraction is more low keyed, it does not mean non action. We can't just sit and

glow. We have many avenues to follow—Easy Does It, BUT Do It.

My first thought is of the Public Information Committee—our liaison with the public. This committee provides knowledge and generates public goodwill towards Al-Anon everywhere. We have posters, radio and TV spots, videocassettes and literature to help the public become more aware of us.

In addition to the actual material, the World Service Office has suggested guidelines to remind us that, as we present the Al-Anon program to the public, we represent the fellowship. A working knowledge of Al-Anon, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and a sincere interest in carrying the Al-Anon message is important.

In my Area, we have cooperated with other organizations in setting up booths or display tables in shopping malls or at the State Fair. I feel that more of our literature is picked up when the displays are not manned—with the fear of discovery being what it is. Members who man the booths need to be comfortable about breaking their anonymity. One time an acquaintance recognized me at a display table and commented, "Oh, this is one of your volunteer jobs," not seeming to realize that I was there as a member.

A center had a set of posters showing signs of alcoholism in the family. One pictured a woman asleep on the couch, with the liquor bottles nearby. Another was a wrecked car with liquor bottles on the scene. One poster puzzled me; at first I couldn't see how the problem was being shown. There was a family at the dinner table set for five, but only a mother and three children were there. That wasn't normal, but it had become my every day.

A local newspaper included the time and date for an Al-Anon meeting in the area. My home group questioned such publicity in the paper; I explained the policy of attraction and how glad I was to get that visibility. I hope there is a way for more groups to be included. I heard about a new resident in a small community unable to locate an ongoing Al-Anon meeting. She did what she



could—decided on a time and place and put a notice in the paper. Five people showed up—they're on their way.

The philosophy of attraction vs. promotion is a thread that is woven throughout our program, not just for the Public Information Committee. The Institutions and Cooperating with the Professional Community (CPC) Committees keep this in mind as well. Bill W., AA's co-founder, suggested that we be friendly with our friends. We do well to let professionals know who we are, where we are, what we cannot do, what we can do and to do so without making false promises.

Various ideas have been used in my Area. Meetings on Wheels have taken our program to counselors. We have Institutions meetings, provided speakers for treatment centers, and, with advance knowledge, students in nursing, pharmacology or social work attend a regular meeting.

Through the years, the Literature Committee has never lost sight of the value of attraction with regard to our literature. Not only is the content carefully considered, but also the eye appeal. Each month, *The FORUM* shows this loving care too and a recent example is the new Alateen's 4th Step Inventory booklet. Once I had seen the cover, I couldn't wait to see what was on the inside. I wasn't disappointed.

Great knowledge is found in Alateen literature. The sharing about Tradition Eleven in the pamphlet *Twelve Steps & Traditions* for Alateen, tells us that care needs to be taken to avoid extremes. The hard-sell approach can be as harmful as hiding in the closet so no one knows we're there. They also suggest that we can help attract people to the program if we always remember that we may be the only Alateen or Al-Anon member outsiders have been in contact with and so, we should behave accordingly. Breaking anonymity in a one-to-one situation makes us a visible contact should someone be reaching out for the hand of Al-Anon. This is not a break of Traditions.

My hometown was the site of the Regional Service Seminar and I was a member. The Al-Anon Information Service in my hometown has increased our visibility in the

community by virtue of having an address and phone number to publicize. Yes, the use of the address and phone number are promoted, but not our program.

I can't say that I was attracted to the program the first time I was told about Al-Anon, but the seed was planted and when I hit bottom I couldn't get there fast enough. The feeling of acceptance at my first meeting was the magnet that kept me coming back. I'm grateful for that opportunity and that each of you came into the program and are here with us today—whatever the attraction.

## IASGM Admissions Committee Report

The Committee met on October 5, 1990, at the White Plains Hotel in White Plains, New York. In attendance: Bill S., IASGM Chairman; Patricia S., France; Alicia C., Argentina; Thorunn S., Iceland; Ursula J., Switzerland (German); Hilda May R., Australia; Maria-Luisa B., Spain, and Mary Ann K., International Coordination Administrator. Norway and Germany representatives were unable to attend.

The members were welcomed by the Chairman and then reviewed the purpose of this Committee, its history and current approved plan. The results of the August 1988 meeting in London, England, were also reviewed.

The following items were addressed:

**1. Should an IASGM Delegate be seated at an IASGM who pays his/her own way, but is not reimbursed by their own structure/GSO?**

Guidelines recommend that the Delegate be elected or appointed by the fellowship, Service Committee, Conference, or Board of Trustees of that GSO and not be self-appointed. Further, that each participating structure be responsible for the Delegates' expenses to the IASGM. Delegates should not pay IASGM expenses from their personal resources.

This question surfaced because of possible financial problems of GSOs. Delegates paying their own way may feel differently from those being financially sponsored by



the GSO. The Admissions Committee agreed that the specific financial arrangements were within structure's autonomy as long as the Delegate was financially sponsored by their GSO. Any reimbursement arrangements would be up to the structure's Board/Business Officer and the IAGSM Delegate.

**2. How would new structures begin attendance at an IAGSM?**

Using the established requirements for participating structures and qualifications for Delegates voted upon at the 1988 IAGSM, the WSO International Coordination Committee would make the determination and communicate the results to the Committee members and to the other participating structures. The Admissions Committee would review for approval any variance of the established requirements as necessary.

**3. Certification of Admissions Committee membership for the 1990 - 1992 term. The plan was reviewed and the following membership was certified:**

Two members from the WSO International Coordination Committee and one Delegate from France, Spain, Norway, Germany and Australia. Each structure will determine the individual who will participate since the structure is the committee representative. The International Coordination Committee will determine which of their members will participate. As soon as these are determined, all will be informed.

**4. To determine the Chairman of the Admissions Committee for the next two years.**

All incoming and outgoing Admissions Committee members in attendance participated. After discussion, a motion was proposed by Argentina and seconded by France that a member of WSO International Coordination Committee chair the Admissions Committee, assisted by a Delegate from Spain as co-chair for the next term. Motion passed unanimously. The International Coordination Committee will determine which of its members will fill that position. In keeping with established procedures, the International Coordination Committee will include time for an IAGSM Admissions

Committee meeting on registration day at the 1992 IAGSM.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to accept the report of the IAGSM Admissions Committee.

## **Relationship Between the IAGSM and the WSC**

At the 1988 IAGSM, an ad hoc committee was formed to look at the future development of the IAGSM and the conceptual idea of IAGSM Delegate participation with voice and vote at a future World Service Conference.

Bill opened this portion of the meeting by introducing Rita McC., WSO Conference Administrator, who had been invited to attend this session to provide insight into the structure of the WSC.

Cecilia M. from Japan reported on the ad hoc committee's recommendations regarding the relationship between the IAGSM and the WSC. Sheila A. of the U.K. & Eire, was the chairman of the committee, however, since her term expired in 1988, Cecilia presented the report. It was noted that the communication by the members was limited to mail correspondence during the past two years.

Currently six members attend both the IAGSM and the WSC. They include two Delegates from the U.S. and Canada, the Executive Director, the International Coordination Administrator and two members of the International Coordination Committee as WSO Trustees. These members ensure the IAGSM voice is represented at the WSC.

Before the possibility of IAGSM Delegate representation at the WSC can be considered, it is necessary to discuss the practicalities of implementation:

1. While accepting that the business of the WSC in some Areas, such as policy matters and international services is worldwide in content, a large proportion of its work seems to relate particularly to the U.S. and Canada. How can an IAGSM Delegate adequately participate?

2. Would an IAGSM Delegate to the WSC



represent all overseas structures or the structures attending the IAGSM?

3. How could an IAGSM Delegate to the WSC report back to the participating countries at the IAGSM and to the rest of the world?

4. What would be the advantages to the WSC?

5. What would be the advantages to the IAGSM?

6. Although the language of both meetings is English and all IAGSM Delegates should be able to communicate in English, the reality is that some IAGSM Delegates have a limited grasp of this language. Does this mean the IAGSM Delegate to the WSC would have to be selected according to language skills? There seems little point in participating unless the Delegate can fully understand the proceedings.

7. The funding of the Delegate to attend the WSC spread over all participating structures would not seem insurmountable. However, unless the report back arrangements are carefully planned, the expenses could be considerable.

In conclusion, IAGSM Delegate representation at the WSC would help to reinforce the bonds between overseas structures and world services. However, these bonds already exist and the IAGSM is well represented at the World Service Conference by those members attending both meetings.

All Al-Anon structures throughout the world have an opportunity to participate in the IAGSM with equal representation. The group conscience of the IAGSM Delegates, guided by our Traditions, Concepts and the IAGSM Statement of Purpose, is perhaps, at this time the way forward.

As a result of the ad hoc committee's study, a motion was presented to the IAGSM Delegate body:

*It is recommended that no Delegate be elected from the IAGSM to the World Service Conference and a proposed statement be developed to explain how the IAGSM and the World Service Conference can co-exist in harmony.*

The Chairman opened the floor for discussion. Members expressed the opinion that the timing sequence between the IAGSM and

the WSC would present an additional problem. Other sharings included the thought that IAGSM representation at the WSC is important to worldwide Al-Anon and the problems presented can be overcome.

The Delegates were reminded that there is an open invitation to all structures to attend the World Service Conference with voice but no vote.

Opinions included an expression that this meeting should not send a Delegate to the WSC since it would be difficult to have someone represent worldwide Al-Anon. An IAGSM Delegate would relate to their own structure rather than the full body. Others felt that each structure has its own Conference and the WSC is the Conference for the U.S. and Canada.

After much discussion and careful deliberation the motion carried with a vote of 35 Yes, 8 No and 1 Abstention.

As recommended by the ad hoc committee, members worked together to prepare a proposed statement regarding the relationship between the IAGSM and the WSC. After review, a motion was made, seconded and carried to accept the statement as follows (41 Yes, 4 No):

*The International Al-Anon General Services Meeting and the World Service Conference exist in harmony.*

*The purpose of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through their Delegates. It will attempt to encourage the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It can also represent an expression of a worldwide group conscience.*

*The World Service Conference (WSC) is where elected Delegates from the United States and Canada gather yearly as guardians of both Al-Anon world services and the Traditions.*

*Both entities seek to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery to families and friends of alcoholics. The actions of both bodies are communicated by the International Coordination Committee.*

*Selected members of the Board of Trustees at the World Service Office (WSO) are present at both the IAGSM and WSC linking the group conscience of these meetings.*



Cecilia continued the ad hoc committee's report regarding the future development of the IAGSM.

The immense values of the IAGSM to the unity of Al-Anon Family Groups worldwide is without question, also the benefits of shared experience of old, new, large and small structures cannot be overstated. However, if the IAGSM is to become the forum of worldwide Al-Anon, it is necessary to plan its future development and work on its expanded goals.

There is a danger that, unless we have such a plan, each biennial meeting will simply be a "First Step Meeting," welcoming new Delegates, new structures and learning to work together despite language and cultural differences. Obviously, this is very important and will continue to be part of the meeting, but to achieve greater involvement of the Delegates and more meaningful debate, the focus and balance of the meeting will need to develop.

Some points that could be part of a discussion on its future development:

1. Does the IAGSM wish to develop into an Al-Anon Family Groups international group conscience body?
2. How and when can the IAGSM become self-supporting for meeting costs and support staff costs?
3. Will the WSO always remain responsible for the physical arrangements of the IAGSM?
4. Can the IAGSM provide and fund members to be part of the International Coordination Committee?
5. The language of the IAGSM is currently English. This restricts many structures in their choice of Delegate. Will it ever be possible to have simultaneous translations for the other major languages of the world, e.g., Spanish, German, French?
6. Is it possible, despite the language problems, to ensure all IAGSM Delegates have a complete knowledge of their structure's business aspects and their National Conference?

7. Is it possible to ask all National Conferences, including the WSC, to submit important issues and concerns that are appropriate for an international group conscience, to the IAGSM?

8. Is it practical for some experienced Delegates committed to the growth of the IAGSM to continue in this service as well as encouraging rotation to ensure that new Delegates bring their experience and skills?

All of these points were raised by individual members of the ad hoc committee. There has not been an opportunity to discuss these in the normal committee manner as all communication has been by mail. Therefore, there may be a number of points which could be resolved if there is ever an opportunity for a "roundtable" discussion.

The IAGSM is still in its early stages; it is developing under its own volition, aided by the International Coordination Committee whose work on this agenda is providing a good balance of subjects for both new and experienced Delegates.

Participating structures are also becoming more experienced in Al-Anon international affairs as returning Delegates report to their respective structures. New Delegates also have a resource of background information for study from the reports of the earlier meetings.

All Al-Anon structures throughout the world have an opportunity to participate in the IAGSM with equal representation.

The group conscience of the IAGSM, guided by our Traditions, Concepts and the IAGSM Statement of Purpose, is the way forward, but if the IAGSM is to evolve into the group conscience of Al-Anon Family Groups worldwide, then it is essential to plan its future and to broaden its goals.

Bill S., Chairman, provided the members with additional food for thought: Should National Conferences send their concerns to this body? Should they go to the WSO? This is all something for us to think about. What do we envision as the future range of this meeting body?



## Responsibility, Communication, Leadership

*Bonny T., Sweden*

I started to study the Twelve Concepts of Service. The Ninth Concept reads, "Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service, the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership." This Concept contains a wonderfully wise essay on leadership written by Bill W. It's well-worth reading—even in circles outside AA and Al-Anon. New as this Concept was to me, I was struck by the foresight of our fellow members. What new light could I cast on the subject? Guided by our slogan, Keep It Simple, I finally realized that sharing some of my personal experiences will clarify my belief that Responsibility, Communication, Leadership actually are the key words to our whole program.

Being an adult child of an alcoholic father and the wife of an alcoholic, I had compulsively assumed much more responsibility than was beneficial for me. Coming to Al-Anon I learned that I am responsible for only myself. Bad habits are hard to get rid of. Filled with enthusiasm and gratitude, I transferred my sense of responsibility to the group.

It took some time before I could accept our slogan, Let Go and Let God. Working the Steps I realized how Lois felt, that humility does not imply obliterating myself, but seeing myself in true relation to my fellow man and to God. At this point I began to get a fresh perspective of the matter of responsibility. Being responsible only for me means relinquishing control, listening to others, showing respect and being patient. Before I came to Al-Anon I had lost my ability to communicate. My mind was so confused most of the time. My voice was loud and unpleasant. I was always rushing and bullying people. In my recovery program I realized Easy Does It. Realizing that my hectic pace would not accomplish more, I was able to communicate. I practiced communication by taking on tasks like chairing meetings, spreading the Al-Anon message

through Twelfth-Step work, becoming a Group Representative, translating literature, etc. Being a trusted servant is our kind of responsibility and communication.

A gift was my election as IAGSM Delegate. An even wider and deeper dimension of Al-Anon's philosophy was revealed to me. For a worldwide fellowship to function, leadership must exist. The leadership I had practiced in my family life had consisted of commanding and criticizing. Fear of not being respected, shame and guilt, had led me to believe that not having my way was another sign of my inferiority.

The major clue was the Concepts, which were a well-kept secret. You must remember that although Sweden registered at the WSO in 1976, it wasn't until ten years later that our Service Office was established. It's during the last five years that Al-Anon has had its rapid growth.

Learning about the Concepts and accepting them as our third legacy was crucial. It was a matter of trust, too. And trust may be what has been damaged the most during the year before Al-Anon. It's no wonder that hesitation arises when someone in the fellowship threatens my serenity by saying: "We need leaders in Al-Anon." The only kind of leadership I am familiar with is the destructive prior to Al-Anon. Now we may Let Go and Let God and trust the group conscience—but not another human being.

When we take charge of our lives we are responsible and courageous enough to define the qualities we seek in our leaders. We must communicate our views in a responsible, loving and caring way—with honesty. Having come this far, we may even have so much trust in ourselves to become candidates. One of the most important responsibilities is to inspire others to take on service. We all know that there is no way to enforce the unenforceable. So have no fear, either the selected leader will grow with the work or God will see to it that no unsuitable servant is able to harm us in the long run.

It may be a good idea, especially in a young structure to elect committees for specific purposes with rotating chairmen. On the



whole, rotation of service is a sound recommendation since there is no room for personal ambition in our fellowship.

In conclusion, responsibility, communication and leadership lie in the Al-Anon program of growth, personally as well as the structure. It's like the Al-Anon triangle, one without the other is not sufficient if we want to go on in our lives with love and gratitude.

*Bob V.,  
International Coordination Committee*

The election of the Group Representative (GR) is where it all begins. The future of Al-Anon is in the hands of that newly elected GR, for it is that person who will be eligible to fill the other elected positions on the way to becoming the spokesperson for all those members in the Area at the World Service Conference.

Let us remember that some of these people entered the doors of Al-Anon/Alateen battered emotionally and perhaps even physically. How can we expect them to become responsible, communicating teachers? We don't—it just happens.

We all know Al-Anon recovery provides miracle after miracle. Just look around at this room full of miracles. You may be the biggest miracle Al-Anon has yet to produce. Remember, you probably would not be here today unless other members of the fellowship had seen you as a responsible communicator and leader.

The process is long, but it seldom fails. Occasionally a power-driven egotist finds the way into service, but the election process usually shows these people for what they are. This is not taking another's "inventory," it is necessary for the well-being of our fellowship at heart.

It all began with a willingness to give back to the program. In my case, service restores me to sanity and provides my life with a fulfillment beyond my wildest dreams.

The next step to responsible leadership seems to be the simple application of the basic fundamentals of this Al-Anon pro-

gram. Several ideas apply to service, particularly, Let It Begin With Me, the Serenity Prayer, willingness, and courage. The spiritual power of the program provides for us a calm confidence in our decision-making process.

This is not to say we can accept the Let Go and Let God philosophy and do nothing to dictate our plans and prospects for the future of Al-Anon. When dealing with the world outside of Al-Anon, we are required to carefully gather the facts. Sound business decisions can be based on the reality of world business. To sum up a few characteristics which leaders and communicators generally display are, a capacity to grow, to be in touch with the world, open to new information. In the world of Al-Anon today, applying our Traditions and Concepts to the decision-making process is not always easy. We can be tempted to compromise them for what seems to be a good reason.

I was far from tactful in my dealings with the person in my life that suffered from the disease of alcoholism, but the program has taught me to express myself differently, even when violently opposed by another's opinion. A calmer demeanor brings about compromise and progress. Finally, honesty in our leaders is most necessary; a sense of sincerity and being just. It does not take people long to see through any camouflage which might be an attempt to hide a lack of this important quality.

I'm certain that each of you has a mental list of qualities for responsibility, leadership and communication. Our own individual personalities cannot be overlooked in discussing this subject.

Being yourself is probably the most important of all. I lost my identity some years ago trying to be someone I wasn't. Its only advantage was that it led me to the doors of Al-Anon. As a humble GR of the Cranston Ship Group I had no idea that I would be standing before Al-Anon leaders from all parts of the world sharing my thoughts. One Day at a Time produced another miracle you see standing before you now. I am humbled by this honor.



## COMMON CONCERNS

John B., Delegate from the U.S. and Canada, led the discussion on various topics of interest sent to the WSO.

### *Communication Between Structures*

The attendees were asked to share their thoughts on Delegates keeping in touch between IAGSMs. Members felt that the direct link to communication was through the World Service Office. It was recommended that each Delegate, perhaps submit a report to the other structures on new things that have been done in between the IAGSMs.

Other expressions included receiving bulletins from the countries as a good way to share experiences and keep in touch. One member felt that asking established structures for assistance results in good communication and gives the feeling of worldwide fellowship. Inviting other countries to attend National Conferences was also suggested as a way to keep the doors of communication open.

Relating to Sponsorship on a larger scale, i.e., one country to another, Australia shared that the first group in New Guinea has been registered. Even though they are a separate country, they are small, therefore, Australia provides service. Belgium (Flemish) and Norway Delegates explained how invitations to Conferences are extended to other countries in their geographic areas.

### *Board Structures/Relationships*

The first question discussed: Should Standing Committee Chairmen be members of the General Service Board? One structure relayed their experience to the meeting group. As a Standing Committee Chairman, she was invited to attend one Board of Trustees meeting annually. Since becoming IAGSM Delegate, she had regularly attended Board meetings and realizes all she had missed while Committee Chair. A recommendation was made to the Board that an ad hoc committee be formed to investigate this practice.

The WSO has volunteer chairmen who are not Trustees. One member felt this presented a major gap in communication.

Australia shared that they have two sustaining Trustees who serve on the Board and Executive Committee, as well as a Treasurer who attends both meetings. This results in a good cross-section of shared information.

In response to the topic on whether or not a General Secretary should be a Trustee of the General Service Board with voice and vote, many opinions were expressed. The Conference challenged this position in one structure citing non-rotation and double-headed management as two of many reasons.

The principle of participation is vital to the growth of Al-Anon was the general feeling of the group. The WSO expressed this as the reason for a Staff Administrator sitting on the Executive Committee with voice and vote, thereby ensuring quality communication. One Trustee explained that the General Secretary (Executive Director) provides valuable background, consistency and general input to the Board.

Other structures shared that the General Secretary had been a member of the Board in a non-rotation capacity. However, the General Secretary no longer has a vote, just voice which has not been changed. They felt no one person should be there indefinitely.

Participants were asked to discuss how to handle those in service who are not active Al-Anon members. Guidelines have been extremely beneficial when dealing with this problem. One structure explained this very situation happened only last month. When they were able to refer to the guidelines that clearly stated Al-Anon members in positions of responsibility should be active members who attend meetings regularly, they were able to handle the matter effectively.

The final topic relating to Board structure and relationships dealt with whether a General Service Board should present a united front to a Conference on an issue, particularly when some members are in opposition of the matter being discussed. There is a difference between unity and disagreement. The WSO Board operates that way. All matters are open to discussion in



order to obtain an informed group conscience. Even though one member may not always be in agreement with the decision, there is a sense of unity. Further, the Board of Trustees meeting during Conference week is open to all. Conference participants are given the opportunity to see that everyone may not be in total agreement, but decisions are reached after topics are thoroughly considered. This is where we see democracy in action.

### *Special Focus Groups*

The conversation centered around adult children groups that are open to those from dysfunctional families. The groups work well and members get help, however, should they be operating this way? Along this line, adult children groups were discussed in great detail.

When a common bond is alcoholism in a loved one, the group may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group. Those who have other problems look to their ancestry for the disease so they can continue to attend adult children groups.

Encouraging those attendees from dysfunctional families to start their own group has been helpful. A Delegate explained that they even supported them by sharing the Twelve-Step program philosophy resulting in Families Anonymous Groups. Overall, it was suggested that these members be strongly encouraged to form their own fellowship.

Concerns were expressed over the lack of literature for adult children. Suggestions were made, including one member who copied articles relating to adult children since newcomers need something to relate to immediately. Requests for literature directed to these members have come into the WSO over the years. Part of the problem in producing material is that the sharings from members tend to focus on the problem rather than the recovery. Al-Anon recovery material has been packaged for adult children members.

Additional concerns were expressed that adult children groups throughout many countries do not latch onto the Al-Anon program of recovery. It was recommended

Delegates continue to spread the message that Al-Anon groups are open to everyone, including the groups whose focus is adult children. Over time, some problems do tend to work themselves out. Experienced members can assist along the path of Al-Anon recovery.

## **Benefits of Participating at the IAGSM**

*Maria-Luisa B., Spain*

In order to evaluate the importance of Spain's participation at the IAGSM in London, 1988, I'd like to take you back and briefly explain how our structure began in Barcelona.

In 1978, after a visit from Al-Anon members abroad, we realized how positive and enriching sharing our experience had been. We understood that being in contact with Al-Anon Family Groups from other cities would allow us to make greater progress in our personal growth and strengthen our fellowship.

We consulted the World Directory and counted a total of 32 groups. We prepared a letter to send to all our groups and contacted the World Service Office for advice. They suggested we include a questionnaire with our letter. One of the questions was, "Do you realize the importance of having a Central Office in our country?" Our first reaction was fear. The name "Central Office" meant hard work, many problems and above all, a great deal of responsibility. We turned it over to our Higher Power and sent the letters to all the groups and isolated members. The replies, though few, were full of support and encouragement.

Taking advantage of the First Alcoholics Anonymous Convention in 1979, all Al-Anon groups were invited to send a representative. This first meeting together encouraged us to keep going. We began holding meetings in our cities, making our common goal stronger. According to the First Concept, "The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups." Consequently, we decided to have an Assembly



where all groups could be heard. From then on Al-Anon began to build a structure in our country and, finally, in 1988 we were able to hold our first Conference.

Up to this point our development has been positive, given the increase in the number of groups. We needed to take a look beyond ourselves and consulted with the WSO. However, we felt satisfied and were quite centered around our small country.

In a way, the same thing happened to me before joining Al-Anon. There was no group in my city and for seven years my only support was the knowledge I drew from the book, *LIVING WITH AN ALCOHOLIC*. Although I did make some progress in my recovery, I didn't find my way until a group was formed and I was finally able to share my experience with other family members and participate in service work.

Slowly we realized that we should share our experiences with other countries, thus humbly offering that which we had achieved, as well as benefiting from their successes. Consequently, the Board of Trustees decided to send a Delegate to the IAGSM in 1988.

Attending this meeting helped us see how well-organized and informed the participants were on the program. We understood that one can improvise in the face of an emergency, but it shouldn't become a habit. Once more we saw that good results come from good work. We were not really surprised by this first experience because we were fully aware that we had many things to learn.

After reviewing all we had heard and read in London, we realized that the office work was very important, but we were not very efficient due to our rotation system. Every year the new Trustee had to be briefed, and every three years the registered signatures had to be changed legally. These matters were discussed at our last Service Conference. We trust our next Conference will ratify a new system.

Above all, we believe that by attending the IAGSM, we have come to understand that Al-Anon not only exists in Spain, but that Spain is one more member of an association that is all over the world. Our ef-

forts must be directed towards making Spain a complete, worthy member, making Al-Anon stronger as a whole. With the help of our Higher Power and by applying our Fourth Concept, "Participation is the key to harmony," this will be done.

Finally, I would like to say that for Spanish Al-Anon, being able to meet with representatives of other countries is like having brothers and sisters all over the world, with the grace of God, we are able to embrace.

#### *Siri R., Norway*

The IAGSM means security for me. Being able to come together with Delegates from other nations to discuss many different situations and difficulties is important and necessary.

While some structures are small and others are large and well-organized, the things we handle are very much the same. However different we think our countries are, the Al-Anon structure is the same everywhere as long as we are faithful to the Steps, Traditions and the Concepts.

At my first IAGSM in 1984, I promised myself that the Concepts would be one of the things I would speak out on to try and get more members acquainted.

I know that living by the Steps does me good. In the same way, the Concepts will guide me in my service work. They are based on so much experience and wisdom that reading them ensures I am doing my service work in the right Al-Anon spirit. Our small country has good contact with our Nordic neighbors. What we have today is thanks to these IAGSMs. Once we get together we have so much to learn from one another. We have tried to arrange a service meeting for the Nordic countries, but so far have been unsuccessful. It seems to be easier to meet in New York than in one of our own countries.

District meetings are of great importance to give the groups a better understanding of our structure. However, this is not always easy. In the northern part of Norway, the winter weather makes this difficult. In other areas where groups are close they have had District meetings for many years. In



1991, when District Delegates meet at our Service Conference they will have greater responsibility to report back to their groups to increase their knowledge in the workings of our Al-Anon program.

The IAGSM gives us a view of what's ahead for Al-Anon in the future. We can also look back and learn from other members' experiences. It will take many years before Al-Anon is known and familiar to everyone in Norway, but things are getting better. Hospitals and doctors are getting to know us and taking us more seriously. Recently there was an article in a doctors' magazine. The groups were informed to follow up with public information work.

Thinking of the wonderful program we have, I must mention my deep respect and thanks to the early pioneers of AA and Al-Anon. In particular, Lois and Henrietta who had the clear vision for understanding and foresight. We all need to come together and talk to one another to build a strong, sound service structure throughout the world. For this we need the Concepts and the IAGSMs.

### *Discussion*

Many members shared their feelings of the benefits of participating at the IAGSMs.

The Delegate from Mexico reported that since the last meeting, Executive, Nominating and Regional Service Seminar Committees have been established and changes have been made to the rotation systems.

Reports are sent to each Area in Australia for them to hold workshops. Seminars are conducted with the Delegate to the IAGSM giving a full report on the meeting.

The IAGSM was a help to the Japanese Al-Anon members as they began 10 years ago. The Delegate from Japan stated, "In spite of the many accents and different languages, a strong energy and love can be felt through the dedication of the people." This proves that this program is working. This feeling is brought back and invigorates the groups to feel more confident as Al-Anon members. Based on Admissions Committee proposals, Belgium (Flemish) has added a chapter to the Handbook.

As a result of the IAGSM decisions from 1980 to the present, many structures have

made significant changes at their National Conference in voting procedures and development of committees.

As a member of the International Coordination Committee, Bob expressed his respect to the international representatives as the true pioneers.

## **WSO Board of Trustees Report**

*Mary C., U. S. and Canada*

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees held in July 1990, the Chairman of the International Coordination Committee presented the figures on the bids for the overseas IAGSM, showing costs from \$53,000 to \$85,000, after the equalized expenses were paid. Based on today's equalized expense, the cost if held in the United States, would be about \$30,000.

Due to our current financial situation, the Board reviewed the status of holding every other IAGSM outside the United States, and after consideration of these figures, a motion was made, seconded and carried that the Delegates of the IAGSM be asked to consider having the 1992 IAGSM in the United States as their contribution towards alleviating our financial difficulties, and that we seriously consider holding the IAGSM outside the United States in 1994.

It was explained that the costs for outside the United States included projections on airfares for Delegate attendance outside the host country. Since the United States has many airlines, rates are extremely competitive, while the international picture is not the same.

The Chairman of the IAGSM opened the floor for discussion.

Members were concerned over altering a previously passed IAGSM motion, however, all agreed that the financial situation worldwide is an inhibitor. Additional discussion centered on the financial projections within the next few years as they relate to this international meeting. Members also shared local cost-cutting ideas within their structures due to the current financial situation. After much discussion, a motion was



made, seconded and carried (40 Yes, 4 No, 1 Abstention)

*that the IAGSM accept the WSO Board of Trustees recommendation to have the 1992 IAGSM in the United States as our contribution towards alleviating the financial difficulties of the WSO and that the IAGSM recommend the 1994 IAGSM be held outside the U.S., if financially possible.*

### ***Alateen Policy Question***

Mary C., U.S. and Canada, chaired this session that focused on the statement:

"There are ambiguities in the policies concerning age eligibility for Alateen and the transition from Alateen to Al-Anon. Alateen problems in general need discussion."

To begin the discussion, Mary quoted from the Policy Digest and the Twelve Concepts of Service:

"Alateens are members of the Al-Anon fellowship. Where there is no Alateen meeting available, teens seeking help are encouraged to attend Al-Anon meetings. As the name implies, Alateen is designed for members in their teens. Members beyond their teens are encouraged to attend Al-Anon meetings. Family members below teen years may not be ready for the Alateen self-help program. Such children may have to depend on others to choose what they learn. This dependency could lead to the development of a teaching program rather than a shared learning experience."

*(Digest of Al-Anon/Alateen Policies, page 12)*

"Another of the unique problems is that, in the nature of things, Alateen membership is exceptionally fluid. There are no longtime members with a backlog of experience to give stability to the groups or to plan for Alateen's future. Youngsters grow up, go to college, get married, move away, join Al-Anon. They are teenagers, at most, for seven years. Therefore, since Alateen is part of Al-Anon,

Al-Anon must make those provisions which Alateen cannot make for itself."

*(Twelve Concepts of Service, page 28)*

A Delegate shared that several years ago it was learned that Alateen members were meeting to complain about their parents. Alateen members dropped out after Sponsors tried to correct the situation.

Germany stressed that teaching responsibility to the young members is the key. They need to learn that they are responsible for themselves. Sponsors need to share experiences, not tell them what to do.

Alateen in Japan started recently with some very unique problems. The education system in their country includes attending two different schools which tends to add stress to the children. Sponsors' meetings have helped keep the Alateen groups going and are achieving their purpose.

In France, Alateen members became so comfortable in the environment they were reluctant to change after reaching age 18. Some go to an Al-Anon adult children group. They have learned that strong Alateen groups make strong Al-Anon groups.

Along these same lines, the U.K. & Eire Delegate expressed that, in order for Alateen to exist, there must be a healthy Al-Anon group. Sponsors need to remember they have a limited responsibility—to listen. Sponsors do not have to sort out the lives of the members; we must always remember that we are powerless.

One group's membership included parents and their children. The Al-Anons got to know the younger members very well and an Alateen group was formed. The entire group meets for the first half hour, then the teens move to a separate room for the remainder of the meeting. When group conscience is needed, the full membership regroups for discussion. This has worked extremely well.

One way to encourage Alateens into service is to remind them of their right to have GRs attend Assembly meetings.

Sharing a common concern regarding the lack of Sponsors, workshops were encour-



aged as a means of increasing knowledge and awareness.

Additional discussion centered around spreading the Alateen message to those children who need it most—those who are living with active alcoholism. Many times these children are uprooted from their homes and placed in institutions. South Africa related their experiences of visiting these institutions, but so far have been unsuccessful. The message was to keep going back.

## DELEGATES' CHOICE

Myrna H., WSO Executive Director, led the meeting participants in a General Session that focused on issues submitted by the Delegate members.

### *Spanish Translations*

Considering there are over 4,000 Spanish-speaking groups worldwide, could the existing Spanish subcommittee include "Delegate" members from Spanish-speaking countries, as well as Puerto Rico, to gain a wide group conscience on Spanish translations? (This question was submitted at the 1989 World Service Conference from the Delegate of Puerto Rico.)

Several members shared this viewpoint of having a Delegate member of the IAGSM participate on the Spanish subcommittee of the International Coordination Committee. The general feeling was that assistance could be given on additional translated material, thereby reducing the time it takes to produce literature.

The Spanish-speaking countries met to discuss alternative means of developing translated material. A plan was formulated as follows: The WSO will provide a list of all literature detailing the Spanish translation status to a "country coordinator." The country coordinator would then assign each untranslated piece to two countries for simultaneous translation. Once translated, the material will be sent to the WSO for final review and to all Spanish-speaking countries for their information. Upon updating, the WSO would send the final approved manuscript to all Spanish-speaking countries who may be interested in reprinting the book or

pamphlet. It was agreed that Mexico would be the coordinating country.

Delegates from other parts of the world shared their concerns regarding the translation process, particularly the procedures to obtain reprint permission. Mary Ann explained the current process which begins when a country submits material requesting reprint permission. The WSO looks for members to review and make recommendations on the translated work. The submitting structure is given the option of accepting the recommendations or not; however, they are asked to review the material again for proper wording, etc. Several structures commented that this process has prevented them from making mistakes in the translated work. It was felt that although this process might cause delays, it adds a layer of protection to Al-Anon literature.

A suggestion was made that the WSO rely on the independent structures more for literature translations once a GSO is established and has worked through the translation process many times.

It was agreed that these ideas be taken back to Committee for consideration. Additional input from all structures was encouraged and the Committee will respond to the needs expressed at this IAGSM.

### *Translation Team*

There are difficulties arising from misconceptions and nuances in dealing with literature in translation. How do you get and retain a good Translation Team?

Switzerland (German) shared the excellent working relationship their translation team has. Each work is passed through two to four members for a consensus. As the German language spoken in the U.S. differs from their native language, the translation team reviews the WSO's recommendations and group conscience makes the decision. Copies of the guidelines for the Translation Team were distributed to all structures to assist them in developing such a committee.

Belgium (Flemish) has volunteers working on translations for submission to the Translation Team for review and approval.



## **WSO Organization**

How is the WSO staff organized? Is there an office manual? Do you make administrative decisions at Policy meetings? Is the Chairman of the Executive Committee also the Chairman of the Board or is it the General Secretary? What are WSO's experiences?

Myrna responded to the questions regarding the World Service Office's structure. Currently there are 68 paid employees at the WSO divided into business operations and service operations. The Executive Director oversees both functions and deals directly with the Controller, Supervisor of Business Operations and the Deputy Executive Director, Supervisor of Service Operations.

Business operations include accounting, group records, filing, production and the shipping departments. Service operations include those responsibilities assigned to the Staff Administrators regarding worldwide Al-Anon.

An Administrative Manual is produced containing guidelines on each function and is used by Staff Administrators, the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees.

A Personnel Manual is given to each employee containing detailed information regarding employee benefits and other work-related issues, i.e., dress code, timeliness, performance evaluations.

The Policy Committee is *not* used to make administrative decisions regarding WSO operations. The Policy Committee guards the Traditions and is responsible for the Digest of Al-Anon/Alateen Policies. The Executive Committee, and ultimately the Board of Trustees, has oversight of administrative decisions of the World Service Office.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee, Board of Trustees and Executive Director are three different individuals. On a trial basis, the Chairman of the Executive Committee and the Board were one and the same; however, this proved unworkable and now remain separate positions.

## **Discussion**

Myrna opened the meeting for additional questions and discussion.

### **1. How many WSO workers are Al-Anon members?**

All Staff Administrators are required to be Al-Anon members. While it is helpful for the remaining staff to be members, it is not mandatory in their performance of their jobs. When positions become vacant, notices are sent to groups in the tri-state area to recruit staff.

### **2. What does the Controller control?**

The WSO Controller is responsible for all business and financial matters and reports to the Executive Director. By nature of his position, he also works closely with the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees who is also the Chairman of the Budget Committee.

### **3. Does the Executive Director attend Standing Committee meetings, and how many volunteers does the WSO have?**

The Executive Director tries to attend as many Standing Committee meetings as possible in an ex-officio capacity. However, since they are all scheduled during Board week and some are simultaneous, it is not possible to attend them all. Therefore, the Deputy Executive Director and Staff Administrators attend as well.

There are approximately 30 volunteers at the WSO who work mostly at assembling packets. One staff member is assigned to coordinate their activities. Each Standing Committee has four to five volunteer members and the Executive Committee has volunteer members as well.

### **4. Are there any non-Al-Anon members at the World Service Conference?**

The Controller, who is not a member, attends appropriate sessions of the Conference and occasionally other staff members, who are not members, will also attend appropriate sessions to answer questions.

### **5. What about Intergroup?**

Intergroups operate independently of the World Service Office. It is preferred that



the name Information Service Office be used to identify this local arm of service.

Additional discussion centered on groups in other countries who deal directly with the WSO rather than contacting their GSO first. In some cases, the thinking of the WSO and GSO may appear to conflict. It was mentioned that while it is the group's freedom to contact the WSO, this contact tends to demoralize the workers of the GSO. It was suggested that the World Service Office make it clear, that once a GSO is established, the groups should contact them first as the guardian of group conscience. Both parties could then contact the WSO for clarification.

It was agreed that while this would be an ideal situation, it doesn't always happen. Over the years members have written to the WSO expressing concerns that a GSO is not following the Concepts or Traditions. It was stressed that the WSO does not want to undermine the service people, at the GSOs; however, it has been determined from our origin that the WSO has an obligation to explain what our experience has been. To encourage open communication, copies of our letters are always sent to the GSOs so they can be apprised of the questions raised in their respective country. The letters from the WSO are carefully worded and suggest an ongoing dialogue with members with differing views until the situation is resolved.

## WORKSHOPS/ REPORTBACKS



**Warranty One** - "Sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, should be its prudent financial principle."

*Denise C., Reporter  
Delegate from South Africa*

The workshop opened with the leader asking the group to participate by each reading portions of Warranty One from the Twelve Concepts of Service. This provided everyone with insight into the questions that followed:

### **I. Reserve Fund**

#### *What is a Reserve Fund?*

The general consensus of the group was the reserve is a fund set aside for emergencies and to enable work on an operating fund for at least three months to one year.

#### *Who sets the limits of the Reserve Fund?*

World Service Office explained that a non-Al-Anon financial advisor has been employed in order to invest Al-Anon's money in the best possible way. They felt they had

a responsibility to the groups to get the best return they could. This advisor could make changes and keep up with inflation, keeping in mind that the WSO is run as a business.

A question was raised on how this related to Tradition Six. The response was that interest is not seen as an outside contribution. A fee is charged by the investment company.

Other members felt they owed it to their groups to not let monies stand, but to be invested one way or another. The reserve fund keeps Al-Anon in a secure position.

#### *How is the Reserve Fund financed?*

One structure unable to operate as a non-profit organization has paid members of staff who put money in their own names, i.e. pension funds, etc.

#### *When is the Reserve Fund used?*

In addition to emergencies, the reserve fund is used for special projects which usually need approval of the Board of Trustees.



### *How do you educate service members to support the development of a Reserve Fund?*

A few suggestions were made: making members aware of the Seventh Tradition; sending letters to groups regarding the need for donations; reminding Delegates at the WSC; birthday gratitude contributions; having workshops on the Concepts, and learning to talk about money. The group felt that members should be continually educated about financial support.

## **II. Sufficient Operating Funds**

### *How can the membership be inspired to be more attuned to our Seventh Tradition and see the need to support our service arms?*

Some Areas meet on a regular basis and ask for donations for GSO. Motivating members seems to make them more willing to contribute.

### *How can the GSOs give support to the WSO in light of their own financial limitations?*

Some structures have a special collection for the World Service Office. It was suggested that monies to WSO be sent in a single sum rather than several smaller donations to get the best exchange rate. Another suggestion was that structures should be responsible for the larger part of IAGSM expenses.

A motion suggesting that the equalized expense for the cost of sending a Delegate to the IAGSM be increased was formulated by the Workshop and put to the floor of the IAGSM for discussion.

Bill S., Chairman, pointed out that the 1990 WSC and the Al-Anon Board of Trustees approved a motion that would increase the equalized expense 5% each time until the expense sharing reached 50% proportions. Members expressed concern over voting on such a motion without prior discussion within their structures. Questions were raised on the amount of an increase. Others shared the feeling that additional financial responsibility must be taken on by the structures. Some Delegates looked at the financially unstable countries and expressed concern over their ability to carry further financial burdens. After much discussion

and careful consideration, the motion was amended as follows:

*In keeping with the principles of the Seventh Tradition that the IAGSM support the WSO's plan to make this meeting more self-supporting by gradually increasing the Delegates' Equalized Expense over the years with the ultimate goal of self-support.*

The motion carried with a vote of 29 Yes, 5 No and 11 Abstentions. Since there were 34 actual voting members, substantial unanimity required 23 votes in favor of the motion.

## **III. Prudent Financial Principles Managing Expenses**

### *To fund the operation of your GSO, what percentage comes from literature sales and what percentage from contributions?*

The consensus of the workshop attendees was that the structures ranged between 10 - 80% for literature sales and 5 - 30% for contributions.

IAGSM participants were asked to provide their structure's breakdown on contributions versus sales.

| Country              | Literature | Contributions |
|----------------------|------------|---------------|
| Argentina            | 40%        | 50 - 60%      |
| Australia            | 60%        | 30%           |
| Belgium (Flemish)    | 45%        | 18%           |
| Belgium (French)     | 50%        | Not Informed  |
| Brazil               | 80%        | 20%           |
| Finland              | 70%        | 30%           |
| France               | 75%        | 20 - 25%      |
| Germany              | 60 - 80%   | 20 - 40%      |
| Iceland              | 65%        | 35%           |
| Italy                | 50%        | 50%           |
| Japan                | 40 - 50%   | 50 - 60%      |
| Mexico               | 70%        | 30%           |
| New Zealand          | 80%        | 20%           |
| Norway               | 95%        | 5%            |
| South Africa         | 70%        | 30%           |
| Spain                | 70%        | 30%           |
| Switzerland (German) | 25%        | 75%           |
| U. K. & Eire         | 40%        | 55%           |
| U. S. & Canada       | 80%        | 20%           |



*How do you establish budgets for the following year?*

The WSO establishes the budget for rising inflation and establishes a prudent reserve.

*How do you provide for Committee expenses in your budget?*

Each Committee is expected to provide the WSO with any plans that include finances for presentation to the Budget Committee for a decision on feasibility.

**Warranty Two - "None of the Conference members shall be ever placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others."**

*Pat S., Reporter  
Delegate from France*

The workshop consensus was that this Warranty reflects our system of checks and balances; our leaders are trusted servants and ultimate authority rests with the groups.

*Sometimes members acquire a certain authority by their long-term efficient serving. How is an "authoritative" person persuaded that there are no bosses in Al-Anon?*

In theory there are no bosses in Al-Anon, unfortunately, we tend to be controllers. So, how do we handle authoritative members in service? How do we prevent personality dominating principle?

It is essential to define responsibility and authority by having a clear chain of command and a regular system of review and evaluation. The WSO has an annual review of the Executives by the Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee. In other structures, the National Conference reviews and votes on the performance of the Staff and Standing Committee Chairmen.

*What means are used to bring together, on an equal level, Delegates and GSO Conference members?*

GSO Conference members and Delegates come together on an equal level. In structures where the Delegates are well-informed, there is no power struggle. Sometimes Dele-

gates feel less informed and not equal. It was agreed that the Regional Service Seminars and District workshops were excellent ways to educate Delegates. The Conference process itself brings us together as equals.

*Discuss the participation goals of the Area Delegates taking part in the Conference.*

The goal of participating Delegates is what is best for the fellowship worldwide and not who is right. The WSC Delegates come together as equals with the WSO Staff and Trustees; in other structures they just listen. One Area is still like the early days when the Delegates were wives of AA Delegates and merely along for the ride. It is essential for the Delegates to return home and report—spread the word. Smaller, newer structures are learning by example and should always read copies of the WSC reports.

*Is it possible for an office to function with volunteers only, without an Executive as a controlling element?*

It was agreed that an office cannot function without someone in charge—someone ultimately responsible but not necessarily salaried. Whether it is an individual or a committee, there must be someone legally responsible.

*When Al-Anon is faced with a tough problem, who has the priority: the Conference or the Board of Trustees?*

Priority depends on the nature of the problem. The Board has legal authority while the Conference maintains traditional authority. Two examples were given to clarify: The WSC agreed to publish a Spanish translation of *The FORUM*, but the Board rejected the request since it was too costly. In matters of finance, the Board has the last word. In another case, two films about alcoholism that mentioned Al-Anon were rejected by the National Conference in its role as guardian of the Traditions. When all the facts are gone over in detail, Conference and Board members usually come to the same conclusion. Letting each one have a say takes time, but unity is worth the time in the end.



*How can you ensure that no Conference member is ever placed in unqualified authority over another?*

Tradition Two, with its principle of group conscience, ensures that no Conference member ever has unqualified authority over another. Adherence to democratic principles, voting by substantial unanimity and rotation in service guarantee a Conference democratic in thought, word and deed.

### *Discussion*

Discussion at the close of the workshop was brought to the floor of the meeting.

*Do Delegates attend the World Service Conference to make the WSO accountable?*

Mryna H., Executive Director of the WSO addressed the membership body. As Delegates become more aware of their role at the WSC through applying the Concepts, they do not attend as spectators. Several years ago the Conference body noted inequities that were detrimental to worldwide Al-Anon, specifically the rotation system between the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees. These matters were brought to the attention of the Board and rectified. Overall, Delegates are more the voice of the group rather than the WSO. This results in a healthy democracy in thought and action.

Bill S. relayed another example of the Delegate's interest at the WSC. For many years, the nominating process for At-Large Trustees was the responsibility of the Board. Over time, the Conference wanted more input into this process, thus the Conference Committee on Trustees was born. The Conference provides an excellent checks and balances system.

One participant felt that part of a WSC Delegate's responsibility is to understand the workings of the WSO and report back to the Areas ensuring a thorough knowledge of support for the groups. Delegates seem to gain confidence over their three-year term. A Trustee's job is to listen to what the Conference body is saying. IAGSM participants were appreciative of the comments ex-

pressed which pointed out that problems can and do arise at conferences in every country.

**Warranty Three - "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."**

*Louise C., Reporter  
Delegate from South Africa*

The Warranties describe a process so well, especially for a new structure—brainstorming, discussion, vote. The principles of discussion and voting with substantial unanimity give us a feeling of being on the right track in Al-Anon. The importance of having well-informed Delegates was made very clear.

*Is a simple majority ever appropriate on any key Conference decision? Is substantial unanimity required for all Conference motions?*

The general consensus of the workshop group was that a simple majority is not really enough. Substantial unanimity by a 2/3 ratio could work better at Conference. Board decisions could be by a simple majority.

*Is there a time limit for discussion of a Conference motion? When does the Conference determine it has sufficiently heard from a single vocal minority? Who makes this decision? What can be done when emotions are reaching extremes?*

There are some Conferences that put a time limit of two minutes and one time at the microphone. Many had the problem of being tired, running late and emotions running a bit high. One person suggested a five minute "time out." Another suggestion was to table a motion and have a workshop on the topic.

It seemed important that the Chairman set the ground rules at the start of the Conference regarding voting procedures and time limits. Principles need to come before personalities. It is very important that minorities be heard. A single voice can come



through with a well-informed opinion. It is important that the meeting be brought back to order; the Chairman needs to remain unbiased on issues. When emotions run high it may be a good idea to write down what it is you want to say before expressing yourself.

*When should the substantial unanimity vote ratio be established (i.e., at Conference outset for each key motion)?*

It was suggested that the Chairman ask the members for a simple majority to establish what substantial unanimity will be at the start of the Conference.

*What is substantial unanimity (i.e.: simple majority, 2/3, 3/4, 99/100 or other)? Are abstaining votes and voided votes counted in the total to arrive at substantial unanimity determination?*

Most structures felt that 2/3 of the voting members was a substantial unanimity, although one structure used a simple majority for all decisions.

It was felt that abstentions and voids not be used to calculate substantial unanimity. The feeling was that this system may help people get off the fence and vote yes or no.

#### *Discussion*

The ensuing discussion focused on the issue of removing the abstention and void votes from the total count when determining substantial unanimity based on a 2/3 determination. It was agreed that the Conference group conscience needs to decide on the voting principles to govern the body.

**Warranty Four - "That no Conference action be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy."**

*Unn R., Reporter  
Delegate from Norway*

*Are there actually any events of that kind—personally punitive?*

The feeling of the group was that we shall strive for prevention and put our efforts into forceful actions to ensure there are no events of this nature.

*What is appropriate Conference action when dealing with a serious breach of Traditions in an Area?*

The Conference takes no direct action in such matters, but the Delegates share the problems and take them back to their Areas/Districts. Seminars on the Traditions and Concepts of Service should be encouraged.

*How do you handle ACA groups that do not join Al-Anon?*

We cannot take any action to make anyone join Al-Anon, therefore, we can only inform these groups about Al-Anon's Traditions, etc.

A clearer understanding of the following statement: The Traditions sometimes reveal gray areas where violations are often debatable and inconsequential. In such cases we refrain from offering suggestions, unless they are insisted upon. Many such problems can be solved by the local people concerned.

Many groups and individuals write to their National Office or World Service Office concerning problems in their Areas. We need to kindly ask members to solve problems themselves by studying the Traditions, Steps and Concepts.

*Very difficult problems arise when a person in charge is no longer doing the job, but refuses to take leave of it. Can one say in Al-Anon, "We don't want you anymore"?*

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the group is working. Group conscience meetings are a means to discuss similar problems. Another suggestion was to have the Delegate or another experienced Al-Anon member speak to the individual. A firm reminder of Principles Above Personalities was encouraged.

*If a derogatory news item is placed in a local paper regarding Al-Anon and anonymity, or if a former AA member sets up a clinic and uses our name on his advertising brochures, what is the best way to handle this?*

The feeling was to write a private letter to the concerned party and enclose a piece of literature, but remember to Keep It Simple.



**Warranty Five** - "That though the Conference serves Al-Anon, it will never perform any act of government; and that, like the fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action."

*Mary C., Reporter  
Delegate from U.S. and Canada*

Warranty Five gives us the right to appeal any decision we are not comfortable with. It assures protection of both the minority and the entire fellowship.

*Can the Conference make decisions for the groups?*

As the representative of the group, the Delegate has been given trust to make decisions in the groups' best interests. It is the responsibility of the Delegate to not misuse this trust.

*How can we persuade Conference members that although policies are not rules of government, we would be foolish to ignore them?*

We should not make up our own policies. We need to stay within the tried and true guidelines that are suggested by the World Service Office. Even if we do not have all the manuals translated, we have the Steps and Traditions to refer to. When Al-Anon was first formed, there were no past experiences to learn from. Eventually the Conference was developed to help us communicate. By sharing our experiences, the Concepts were developed.

*Is democracy better attained when each group has one vote at the Conference?*

Groups do not have one vote at Conference. The group votes to have a Delegate represent them and by this process, achieves the principle of representation.

*How can we solve problems of lobbying by a section of Conference members?*

We need to communicate and stress principles. Lobbying can take place because people are not informed. Workshops before Conference can be informative. We need to

recognize that we cannot change the strong personality, but we can help others understand that they have the right to make their own decisions.

*What is meant by "any group of relatives of alcoholics gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon group?"*

Membership is the choice of the individual. Tradition Three tells us that the relatives of alcoholics when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation and abide by the Traditions. The Policy Digest also states that anyone who feels his/her personal life is or has been deeply affected by close contact with a problem drinker is eligible for membership in Al-Anon.

#### **WORKSHOP - Reaching Out to Minority Communities Within the Structure**

*Vera I., Reporter  
Delegate from Sweden*

Minority communities within a country or structure often feel different, adding to the barrier and isolation of having an alcoholic relative or friend.

*What (if anything) has your structure done or plans to do to cross the cultural barrier and reach out to the minority population in your country?*

The U.K. & Eire has printed posters in the different minority languages. Australia shared that they produced a banner to help the Aborigines. New Zealand reported that an Al-Anon member had made contact with Maoris to discuss the program.

*It's difficult to define minorities. There is resistance in the Al-Anon groups to think about minorities. Has anyone experienced this and overcome it?*

It was agreed minorities be defined as a small group with a foreign language and different culture. It can also be blind, gays or refugees. The problem seems difficult to



solve. Some countries shared that they had made audiocassette tapes for blind members.

*Since our policy is to attract rather than promote, would it be right to change our approach in cultivating ethnic minorities?*

The best way to reach out is to go to the schools. In Scotland, a group has done this year after year successfully.

*Do groups that are outside their geographic boundaries of their native language register with the GSO in the country they live, or the WSO when outside the geographic boundaries of Italy?*

The World Service Office recommended that these groups register and inform their General Service Office of their existence.

*Anonymity, group autonomy and volunteerism are big problems for minority communities. Do you have any suggestions to help with these difficulties?*

Anonymity in small places is something which has to be discussed further. Mexico solved this situation through their guidelines. Volunteerism can be hard, but one way was to offer help and hold hands.

*How can we motivate members of the minority community into service?*

When the person is in the group the other member can motivate him/her.

*Alateen is a minority population in Al-Anon. How can we include them in service, especially at the Conference level?*

The consensus was that Alateen is represented through Al-Anon. Give Alateens responsibilities and they will be responsible. Germany shared many good experiences.

#### *Discussion*

Mryna H., WSO Executive Director, shared that a Minority Subcommittee of the Public Information Committee has been established to focus on attracting minorities into Al-Anon. They are learning that the best way is through public information.

#### *Last Minute Questions*

Delegates were asked to submit questions to the WSO prior to the start of the IAGSM for discussion as time permitted. There was only time for a few questions on the agenda. The questions raised will be handled in a separate report.

*Al-Anon adult children—I would like to hear other structures' opinions on how they communicate.*

Initial discussion focused on groups calling themselves Al-Anon Adult Children Groups, and not always following the Al-Anon philosophy. Members agreed that it all begins here. Over time, with encouragement from longtime members, these meetings become known as Al-Anon adult children groups and are more like Al-Anon meetings.

Workshops on concerns and resolutions to the problems of Al-Anon adult children groups were encouraged as a means to increase awareness and bring the focus back to Al-Anon. One Delegate shared a success story when a District Representative (DR) worked closely with an Al-Anon adult children group by guiding them through the Al-Anon program using the Steps, Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service.

A structure explained that Al-Anon adult children groups are slowly beginning to realize that they need a basic knowledge of the Al-Anon program before they can deal with recovery as an adult child. One country encourages members to talk to those their own age; someone they can relate to immediately. Sometimes when older members try to get the message across, the perception is that they are being told what to do. They are more receptive to listening when it is a "peer."

Everyone was in agreement that it takes time, patience and understanding to guide adult children members, ensuring that the Al-Anon program does not become diluted. The focus is needed by all to maintain the unified structure of Al-Anon.



### Questions of Interest

Bill addressed questions submitted by the Delegates.

*What is the Conference Charter? Where can it be found? Concept Twelve states, "the spiritual foundation for Al-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter."*

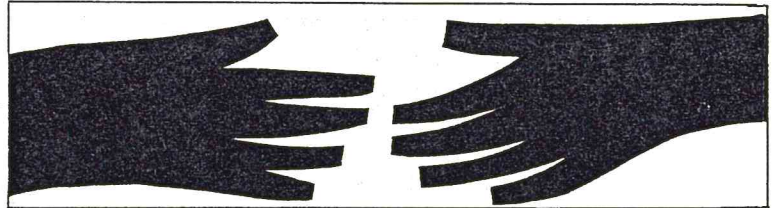
The Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter appears on pages 35 through 38 of the World Service Handbook.

*Clarification was requested regarding groups versus meetings (i.e., a group can have several meetings a week). A group meets several times a week with one GR and one Treasurer. Is it okay?*

The group is the basic unit of Al-Anon. Groups hold different types of meetings such as Discussion, Beginners, or Step Study (see Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work). A group has members who rotate as its trusted servants; meetings usually have a rotating chairperson and topic. A meeting is a session; typically an hour in duration. (This response appeared in the 1990 World Service Conference Summary, Ask-It-Basket, page 42.)

Yes, it is okay for a group to have more than one meeting/session per week, however, when any session develops a unique personality, it may be appropriate to consider establishing a new autonomous group with its own officers.

## Spiritual Meeting



### Thorunn S., Iceland

I came to my first Al-Anon meeting eight years ago seriously doubting my own identity. I tried to live the alcoholic's life for so long, I found an empty hole where my feelings used to be.

I'm the eldest child of four and was born responsible, so it was natural for me to take over the alcoholic's responsibilities immediately. Three months after we started living together I had turned my life completely over to the "care" of my very sick alcoholic. I was born with many good qualities, too, but in my relationship with the alcoholic the faults and negative attitudes took control of my thinking and behavior.

In the beginning, my husband was everything I had hoped for. The best way I knew to give love was to pamper him, mother him, and take part in every area of his life—including his dreams and fantasies. He became my Higher Power. His opinion and behavior towards me were the only reality. What a joy it was when love and ad-

miration were on top of his mind. Fear and insecurity took control when he was displeased, violent or blaming me for his lot in life.

Busy trying to please my husband to get his attention and affection, I stopped understanding myself or listening to my own feelings. His drinking was not a serious problem for me, rather it was his behavior between drinking episodes that was the problem.

The year before coming to Al-Anon was filled with terror and migraine headaches. I cried a lot and lost my temper. Frequently, I lost my temper with my beloved son—screaming at him for no reason at all until the tears started to run down his cheeks. To my horror, I felt nothing watching my baby cry because of me. There was something terribly wrong with me. Maybe I was going insane. I blamed my husband and tried to get him to admit his own insanity, but all I got was "go see a psychiatrist."

Threats of divorce were common and my greatest punishment was to deprive him of



my presence. We left each other many times, but how I loved the coming backs—the promises and attention of my higher power. In the end, when we finally divorced, alcohol had the final control.

A month later, after my husband went into a treatment center and joined AA, we started living together again. I found Al-Anon, feeling sorry for myself, fearful of my husband, resentful and absolutely frozen emotionally.

The atmosphere of the meetings was friendly, but I was very surprised to hear some of the women talk about loving their alcoholic husbands when I felt so ashamed for having fallen in love with such a faulty example of a human being.

One meeting a week was all I could handle because I didn't want others to see how bad I felt. The Steps, I thought, were only for the longtime members. The first two years in the program were hard years of angry words and ice-cold silences between my husband and I.

I envied others in my group who talked about the wonderful changes after the alcoholic stopped drinking. I got angrier and angrier at him for not changing. For the grace of God, I kept going to meetings. One member became my sponsor. In her loving care, I learned to talk without having to protect myself. She encouraged me to forgive myself and pour out all the anger and doubt.

Service was a turning point. At the Iceland National Conference, I had my first spiritual awakening. Suddenly it all made sense. Listening to others opened my eyes. Those attending Step meetings regularly, talked differently and all my senses were alert trying to grasp every word.

It was decided by a group conscience vote to hold weekly Step meetings and monthly Tradition meetings. The Tradition meetings became a challenge for me. I was so enthusiastic to do something, to get to know this program better that I offered to translate one Tradition each month.

I became eager to learn more and said yes to all service—committees, national service, volunteer work at the GSO. It was in service that I started to like myself. A lot of my good qualities came alive, stronger than

ever. I also learned to listen to others and respect their opinions. The program itself became my Higher Power and I gained complete trust in it and still have that trust today.

I still hadn't learned to apply this wonderful program at home. For the first time in my life I faced myself—the intolerant, inconsiderate, judgmental, controlling, angry person I was.

For the first time in my life I went on my knees and asked for help.

My husband and I started talking again, but a few weeks later he reacted the way he had always done and I reacted in my usual way—"that selfish, no good, irresponsible creature, he will never change." I poured this out to an Al-Anon friend and she asked me quietly why I was so angry? For the first time in years the word love came to my mind. I still loved that no good, unchangeable, irresponsible man. I cried because of things I had said and done to hurt this human being whose only crime was to get sick and love me at the same time.

Recovery took a long time and was often painful. It's not always easy to take life on life's terms, but there is progress in our marriage today.

The principles of this program and the Twelve Steps have led me to my Higher Power which I prefer to call God. This I accomplished with the help of the Second and Third Steps. Trusting another human being by taking the Fifth Step gave me freedom from my past. The Sixth and Seventh Steps helped me trust my Higher Power in every area and every situation of my life. The Eighth and Ninth Steps gave me the courage to make amends to those I have hurt. What relief and acceptance it was when I embraced and made amends to the person I had hurt the most—me. The Eleventh Step is my favorite. Each day brings me closer to my Higher Power by praying, placing each day in His care.

It was my spiritual awakening to apply these Steps in my life. I need this program even more today than I did before. Being involved in service gives me more than I can ever repay. I have learned to speak a new language, the language of love. I have fi-



nally learned to take it home with me where it belongs.

*Sirkka S., Finland*

I had told my husband many times that our life together wasn't well. Although he thought everything was okay, he drank too much and too often. I worried about the future; what would happen if he lost his job? He finally went to see the psychologist in the consultation center for family affairs. This didn't help us at all. My husband behaved like a gentleman, whereas I got nervous and lost my temper.

I started searching for help from different places. I told our parish minister about our family problem. He listened, but couldn't help since he didn't know much about alcohol problems at that time. I then told the public health nurse at my workplace. I felt she understood because of her education and job qualifications. She listened to me for over an hour; it was very good for me as I was on the verge of suicide.

Next I started listening to various relaxation programs. They helped a bit, but I was still searching for something more. I met a woman in a yoga course who had divorced an alcoholic and gotten help from an Al-Anon group. I decided to try that, but it took me a year before I would make the trip to the neighboring town.

While finally driving there for the first time I kept asking myself, "Is this worthwhile? What if the people are as sad and unhappy as I am." To my astonishment they looked happy and seemed to be "normal." They accepted me and I felt that, at last, I had found people who could understand me and my problem.

I read the Steps and thought they were quite reasonable. I realized afterwards, that they were made to be followed.

You all know Step One, "Admitted we were powerless over alcohol." Until then I imagined I had to do something to make my husband get rid of his drinking problem. Our life would have been happy and balanced if only he would stop. I learned from this Step that I can't do anything for him so there is no reason to try.

Step Two says that there is a Power who can restore me to sanity. I have believed in my God since childhood. I had asked Him many times for help, but was surprised when He didn't help the way I wanted Him to. I hadn't understood that I needed to follow His advice in all my affairs. He will take care of me and my husband. Steps One and Three were the most important for me. When I admit I am powerless and turn my will over to God, my life goes better.

Step Four tells me how I can learn to know myself. I have to search and take a fearless moral inventory. That was new for me, because I had considered myself quite a perfect person. From Step Five, I have learned that I should admit my shortcomings first to God and then to another trusted human being. This Step demands humility and honesty, but if I can follow it, it clears my mind. Steps Six and Seven suggest I ask God to remove them, otherwise it doesn't work. We all can guess whether this is easy or not!

I need not make a list of all the persons I have harmed, as suggested in Step Eight, because I remember them very well. If I have forgotten any, I know we'll meet again. The Ninth Step reminds me to make amends whenever possible. The Tenth Step is what I call my "everyday cleaning." When I am wrong, I need to promptly admit it. I try to make excuses for myself, but it doesn't help. Step Eleven means First Things First. Prayer and meditation come before anything else. This is the way that I receive guidance for my decisions.

There is a lake near my home where I go when I feel restless and don't know what to do about my problems. Meditation makes me check the course of my life and, if I have taken a wrong turn, change it. After having accepted this spiritual program I wanted to tell people who still suffered, about the Al-Anon way of life. That's Step Twelve, you know.

I'm happy to tell you now that these Steps, and the Al-Anon group as a whole, have changed my life. I now have the courage to live despite my husband's alcohol problem.



In Al-Anon I have found good friends whom I can trust. I need not pretend or play any role in front of them as they accept me as I am. I still lose my temper at times and get depressed, but now I know that I can always start from the beginning and live one day at a time in Al-Anon.

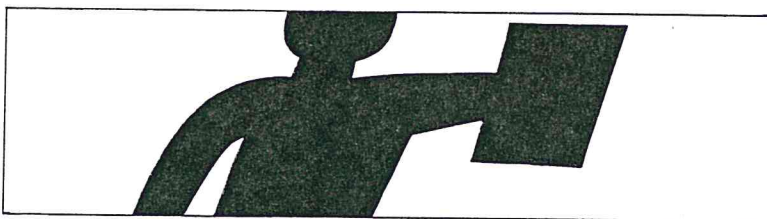
## Spiritual Meeting - Open Forum

As the Chairman reflected on the heartfelt words shared by these two speakers, he expressed some of his own experiences, "I was driven to Al-Anon because of changes in my wife's attitude. Life didn't become unmanageable, my wife became unmanageable." After finding AA, Bill's wife attended meetings until the late hours. Little by little, he realized he had to turn his life over to the care of the God of his understanding, "Every time I turn things over, they work out." Bill continued with his thoughts on how wonderful it is to be associated with the people in attendance and opened the meeting up to anyone who wished to express themselves.

Franco, Delegate from Italy, felt that the most important thing over the past ten years has been "the hand of God." With his wife in AA, it took two years for him to understand that there was nothing he could do about alcoholism, but plenty he could do about himself, "I was sick and had to do something." He realized that the only way he would be useful to himself and others was to work through the Steps. "Four years have passed and I am a totally different person. My group has helped me to accept Step One and move on. I am learning to be happy."

Unn, Norway's Delegate, reflected on her life as a child from a dysfunctional family and married to a recovering alcoholic. "I didn't understand alcoholism until I attended AA meetings to help my husband." Over time, Unn realized her life had become unmanageable and joined Al-Anon. "Having a sponsor is a revelation, especially when I work the Steps with her." Service work helped aid in her recovery particularly translating literature. On attending this IAGSM, Unn shared, "I now believe in miracles, thanks to you. I love you."

## MOTIONS



Decisions reached at the 1990 International General Services Meeting for submission to the Al-Anon Board of Trustees for approval.

1. that substantial unanimity for this IAGSM be a two-thirds majority. (unanimous)
2. that voting on all motions for the IAGSM be by closed ballot. (unanimous)
3. In keeping with the principles of the Seventh Tradition that the IAGSM supports the WSO's plan to make this meeting more self-supporting by gradually increasing the Delegates' Equalized Expense over the years with the ultimate

goal of self-support. (29 yes, 5 no, 11 abstentions)

4. Since the IAGSM is now a permanent part of our Al-Anon structure, and in order to guarantee the flow of information worldwide, we confirm and underscore the 1986 motion that IAGSM Delegates be fully informed on all activities of the General Service Office in their country. It is suggested that they attend Board and other appropriate meetings during their term of office. (43 yes, 2 abstentions)
5. It is recommended that no Delegate be elected from the IAGSM to the World



Service Conference and a proposed statement be developed to explain how the IAGSM and the World Service Conference can co-exist in harmony. (35 yes, 8 no, 1 abstention)

6. That the IAGSM accept the WSO Board of Trustees recommendation to have the 1992 IAGSM in the U.S. as our contribution towards alleviating the financial difficulties of the WSO, and that the IAGSM recommend the 1994 IAGSM be held outside the U.S. if financially possible. (40 yes, 4 no, 1 abstention)
7. To accept the report of the IAGSM Admissions Committee. (44 yes, 1 abstention)
8. To accept the proposed statement as follows:

The International Al-Anon General Services Meeting and the World Service Conference exist in harmony.

The purpose of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM)

is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through their Delegates. It will attempt to encourage the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It can also represent an expression of a worldwide group conscience.

The World Service Conference (WSC) is where elected Delegates from the United States and Canada gather yearly as guardians of both Al-Anon world services and the Traditions.

Both entities seek to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery to families and friends of alcoholics. The actions of both bodies are communicated by the International Coordination Committee.

Selected members of the Board of Trustees at the World Service Office (WSO) are present at both the IAGSM and WSC linking the group conscience of these meetings. (41 yes, 4 no)



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