

To the Chairman, 1984 World Service Conference and Conference Participants:

Since my election to the World Service Board last year, I have encountered many valuable experiences. I have worked with different committees and regions--primarily in the Northeast Corridor of the United States. I have had the pleasure of meeting and enjoying the fellowship of many addicts who want a better way of life. One of the most humbling and incredible experiences was when I attended the General Service Board meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I accepted an invitation arranged through Roger Teague, Regional Representative from New York City. The invitation was from Curtis Monahan, General Service Office Staff (Trustees Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community). My initial feelings were of a cautious, apprehensive nature. I am an addict whose choice of recovery is solely through the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I feel strongly that, in respect to the issue of members attending both fellowships, and then choosing to do service work in Narcotics Anonymous, it seems that the best example a trusted servant of Narcotics Anonymous can provide is to rely entirely on the N.A. program for recovery.

If I choose to do service for another fellowship, it would weaken my commitment to N.A., even though I will always have a debt of gratitude to A.A. because I attended their meetings when N.A. was first forming in Philadelphia.

I have attended the last two General Service Board meetings. The first was with Roger Teague and the second was with Bobby Bonds, R.S.R.-Greater Philadelphia, and Mike Bohan, World Service Board of Trustees for N.A.

After the first General Service Board meeting, I sent a report to Sally Evans, Chairman of the World Service Board of Trustees for N.A. After attending the second General Service Board meeting, my feelings were the same as after the first meeting. Here is a major portion of that report:

"On Sunday, October 30, Roger Teague and I attended the General Service Board meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. After taking a couple of days to reflect upon what took place there, I am deeply honored to have been present as an observer. The warmth, friendship and love extended from the people there was of an overwhelming nature. To say the least, it was an humbling experience.

Roger and I were met at 9:00 a.m. on the mezzanine of the Roosevelt Hotel by Curtis Monahan of A.A.'s General Service Office Staff and Gordon Patrick, Chairman of the General Service Board. The welcome was warm and friendly. We then went upstairs



to the meeting facilities and were introduced to the people in attendance. The atmosphere was comfortable and friendly.

The meeting was not at all as I had anticipated. It was classified as a 'session' of the General Service Board meeting. It was a Trustee Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community. The chairman of the committee was a non-alcoholic trustee. He is an M.D. from Virginia. At this meeting, I was introduced to a man named Dr. Jack Norris, of whom I will tell you more later. One of the committee members mentioned to me that this man was the 'Dr. Jack' referred to in A.A. Comes of Age. I was somewhat amused by this and later became impressed. My personal experiences with some 'old-timers' in A.A. have been mixed and I was being cautious. I felt that these people would be viewing me as 'Narcotics Anonymous' and not as myself.

As the meeting ('session' as it is called there) progressed, I was amazed by the no-nonsense, business-like approach to dealing with the subjects discussed. They had a member of the G.S.O. Staff (who is a paid worker) to record the minutes of the meeting. All members of this Trustees Committee were present and each one participated in discussion. I suppose it was due to their ages and maturity that everything was done with low-key effectiveness. The entire group appeared to be well informed and had much knowledge on the subjects discussed. The chairman left time at the end of the meeting for Roger and myself to share and ask questions. We mostly answered questions.

These people were interested in the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous. They informed us that some of the problems we now face in N.A. are parallel to those A.A. faced. They even asked if Narcotics Anonymous needed money, and explained that at one time, Alcoholics Anonymous needed a loan to help out in their growth and development.

After this first meeting, Roger had to leave and I felt a little uncomfortable being the only member from Narcotics Anonymous present. It was nice being there with Roger and I felt much more secure with another member of our Fellowship. However, I was asked if I would like to attend another session. Instinctively, I said, 'Yes.' The next meeting was on Correctional Facilities. It was called a Trustees Committee on Correctional Facilities. I learned that their Hospitals and Institutions Committee had grown so large that they had to divide into two parts. Besides the meeting I attended, A.A. has a Trustees Committee on Treatment Facilities.

There are two points I think require clarification. One is the contacting of parole and probation officers for pre-release prisoners. They have found that this to be an effective tool for someone working with an alcoholic in the prison system. The other point is sending 'sunshine letters' to wardens, thanking them for allowing meetings to be held in their facilities. The idea here is that even the toughest of wardens seem to have favorable responses to these letters and will usually pass this



information on to other wardens. The person who was the chairman of this committee was a non-alcoholic trustee and is the director of the prison system for the entire state of Texas.

Another interesting note is that this committee had a paid, free-lance writer to do the work on the Correctional Facilities Handbook. This committee also had a member from the G.S.O. Staff who recorded the minutes. This Staff Secretary answers all of the incoming mail that is directed to this committee. When questions come into the General Service Office, they are sorted and sent to the appropriate Trustees Committees to be answered. The Staff Secretary from this committee was new in her positions, but had already answered 875 letters in only 51 days. Her commitment to service was tremendous. Some of the replies were eight to nine pages long.

The chairman of the committee asked me to speak about Narcotics Anonymous' correctional facilities work. I did and the response was very positive. The attitude I perceived was that these people wanted to do whatever they could to help Narcotics Anonymous.

After the session had ended, I was invited to dinner. Afterwards, the Chairman of the General Service Board asked me to come up and share with everyone the services that were provided by Narcotics Anonymous in the United States and Canada. The dinner was attended by all of the trustees, members of the Trustees Committees, and the General Service Office Staff. For the first time in a long time, I was petrified. I prayed that I would be able to speak, and effectively describe, the services provided by Narcotics Anonymous. In spite of myself, things went well. Each person who spoke after me said that they were really interested in the growth of Narcotics Anonymous and that they would be glad to help in any way they could.

After all of this, there was a 'General Sharing Session'. At this meeting, each table discusses a topic provided by the Chairman. The topic was, 'What can we do to have better committee work?' Lois Wilson, Bill W.'s wife, had just given a talk on 'trust' the evening before and this was also discussed. Each table had discussion for approximately thirty minutes on the topic, and then someone from each table went up to the microphone and reported what their group had come up with. It was really interesting to observe the General Service Board discuss how to improve what they already had.

Dr. Jack Norris, whom I mentioned before, gave a report on the formulation of committee work. He has been a trustee since 1951. He told of the growth and development of committee work since the time he was appointed to the Board. There was only one committee in 1951, the Finance Committee. He spoke of the problems throughout the years and gave me a lot of hope for what may someday emerge from Narcotics Anonymous.

It was very interesting to see how the committee work is done and how these committees were formed. In A.A. there are two



parts to each committee. There is a Trustees Committee, which is made up of G.S.B. Trustees, non-trustee committee members, and members of the G.S.O. staff who are paid, professional workers. The non-alcoholic trustees are appointed to specific committees based on their expertise in matters relating to the respective committees. They are usually placed in an administrative position on the committee. The non-trustee committee members are people from the A.A. fellowship who are recommended for the positions based on their service experience. They are then elected to their positions by the Board of Trustees. For logistic reasons, these members are usually from the New York area. The committees meet monthly to work on projects.

Non-trustee committee members are rotated from one committee to another after one year. The non-trustee members have a term of four years. They do not need to have expertise in any one field of service. The man who impressed me the most was a bartender from New York City. He was very knowledgeable on all matters concerning correctional facilities, but he had never spent a day in jail. I asked him about this and his reply was, 'If you're uninformed and you want to serve, you'll learn.' I asked him what he would do after his four-year term was up, and he very calmly said, 'I'll just go back to my home group and make coffee.' This works as a checks and balance system so that no one gets a big ego.

The other committee is called the Conference Committee. This is a group of 'delegates' (in our service structure they would be the R.S.R.'s) who are picked at the General Service Conference. The term of this commitment is for one year. Each delegate is assigned to a committee by pulling names out of a hat. This ensures that the Higher Power decides who will serve on each committee. Throughout the year, the Trustees Committees meet to work on projects. After each workshop, reports are sent out to members of the Conference Committee for review and input. Then at the General Service Conference, these two two committees meet for approximately two hours. This system is working very well. They believe that a well informed group conscience rarely makes a mistake. The concept of the committee work is to keep the General Service Conference functional. Effective committees result in less time being taken up at the Conference in discussion, and the General Service Conference does not get bogged down.

I asked about the terms of the trustees. The non-alcoholic trustees have a term of nine years. They are 'Class A' trustees. I wanted to know why a term of nine years as it seem like an odd number. Their only response was, 'Why not?' The alcoholic trustees have a term of four years. They are 'Class B' trustees.

I noticed a number of things which suggested ego deflation. All of the people involved with the G.S.B. seemed concerned that no one take themselves seriously, yet each and every one of them knew why they were there. There are no 'ex officio' nor



'emeritus' trustees. The only time that a trustee, committee member, or a G.S.O. staff member stays a member of the Trustees Committee or G.S.B. is when they are working on a project that is unfinished. They are kept on as a consultant until the project is completed. In general, when the terms of service are over, the alcoholic members go back to their home groups and the non-alcoholic members go back to their respective professions.

Another thing I liked was that if someone from the fellowship requested a specific topic be discussed in their literature (like an I.P.), it went through whichever committee could serve it best. After that committee finished with all of the input, the piece progressed to the Literature Committee for composition and editing.

The last thing to mention about A.A. committee work is that it seems that Alcoholics Anonymous has non-alcoholic trustees to do the administrative work for the committees, but they make sure that at least one alcoholic trustee is a member of each committee. In this way, their trustees are the guardians of their traditions.

When the meetings were all over, I thanked everyone for allowing me the privilege of sitting in and observing. I said my good-byes and set out to leave for home. I was met in the elevator by Dr. Milton Maxwell, a non-alcoholic trustee. In talking with him, I learned that he was the founder of the Rutgers Alcoholism Program, which is a large institution for helping alcoholics. He was a nice old man who sincerely wished me the best. When we were walking out onto the ground floor of the hotel, we ran into Gordon Patrick, Chairman of the General Service Board, and Dr. Jack, whom I have mentioned before.

It was intimidating to be in the company of these three men as I knew that they were an important part of the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. I felt very odd saying good-bye to these fellows and this is when I really noticed Dr. Jack. I had learned that day that he was the founder of the Kodak Institute in Rochester, New York, another facility which helps alcoholics. This man had the clearest eyes I have ever seen. The man appeared to be totally at peace with himself.

I know this sounds strange, but when our eyes met, it seemed like he wanted to tell me something. We were in the middle of the lobby of a large downtown hotel, yet all at once it was as though we were in a vacuum and nothing else was going on around us. Something inside of me said, 'Go for it.' I began to ask many questions; these questions were directed to Dr. Jack:

Q. What would you change if you could change anything about A.A.?

A. Nothing; it works fine.

Q. What do you think is the single most important factor in the success of A.A.?

- A. Working the Twelve Steps and service work. Without service, we would all die if we had no opportunity to carry the message.
- Q. What do you do with people who try to use their influence in a manipulative way?
- A. Remember, there is One who is more powerful than all of us, and He works through us. It is our responsibility to do the best job we can. The Second Tradition is very powerful.
- Q. What would you say is the best ingredient for service work?
- A. Staying teachable.

These are some of the questions and answers that I can remember. I am sure that I will remember more later. Once again, all three of these men wished the best for Narcotics Anonymous and they all offered whatever they could to be of service. We then said good-bye for the last time, shook hands, and I left New York City having had an incredible experience.

I know this report has been long and I hope it was not boring. However, I felt that I should pass on as much as I could of what I heard and saw. The whole experience gave me a lot of hope for Narcotics Anonymous. The last thing that was said to me was that this is going to be a most exciting time in the history of Narcotics Anonymous. It's nice to be part of those times."

Bobby Bonds, R.S.R. from the Greater Philadelphia Region, commented on how A.A. appeared to gauge the growth of the Narcotics Anonymous program. A trustee from the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan believed in the segregation of A.A. and N.A. This trustee, in conversation with Bobby, told him that we are an entity of our own, even more than we know ourselves. He also expressed a sincere desire to help us prevent some of the mistakes they had once made. His belief was, "You can't keep what you have unless you give it away." This trustee from Canada bought a Basic Text as did many of the other trustees and committee members. They all wanted information as to where and how to obtain N.A. literature and meeting lists.

Since the meetings with the G.S.B., some good things have happened. A letter was sent out to all of the A.A. Intergroup Offices telling them of the growth of Narcotics Anonymous. This letter included the address of our World Service Office. Also, an A.A. Public Information bulleting was sent out to 88,000 A.A. mailing addresses around the world. As a result, the W.S.O. has received some inquiries from France. The A.A. Trustees Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community is working on a referral system for sending addicts to Narcotics Anonymous.



After putting much thought and consideration into the ramifications of these experiences, I only hope that in some small way it will help to create an attitude of cooperation, not affiliation, with the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The people I met at their meetings were all "first class." A member of the G.S.O. Staff sent me about forty pounds of material from the A.A. archives documenting the history of A.A. and the progress of committee work. Where does it go from here? I only know that more will be revealed--in God's time.

Thank you.

In service and in fellowship,

*Dutch Huber*

DUTCH HUBER

World Service Board of Trustees