

Continental European Region



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2005

*CER belongs to the Service Structure
of Great Britain as region 15*

Published Quarterly



The Life and Death of the Zweibrucken Group

When I got sober in 1979, there was only one steady member of the Zweibrucken group. The small town is situated in southwestern Germany on the French border and, at the time, had a U.S. Army post on one hill and Air Base on another. Paul H. regularly opened Tuesday and Friday night meetings, both on military installations, where he faithfully made coffee and opened the doors waiting for drunks to show up. The first meeting I remember going to was in a conference room on the Air Base. Paul, being the only member had called people from Kaiserslautern, about 30 km. away, to come hold a real meeting for the newcomer. He did a lot of service work for the group as well as Public Information on the military installations making sure the word got out that AA was alive and well. He eventually got the rest of us involved at the intergroup level.

When Paul became ill two years later, Zweibrucken had two very strong groups that would carry on the traditions as we had been taught. By the mid-eighties, the group had grown to about 25 members and we needed to find a meeting place off base. We looked into different facilities and ended up (having meetings) in an old folks home located in the center of town. We grew to three meetings a week with active fellowship before and after. There were many birthday, holiday, and wedding celebrations. One of our members was an ordained minister and married two AA couples in the chapel of the old folks home. The unity and service was truly awe-

some.

By the 1990's, the American military had begun the draw-down and Zweibrucken was targeted for closure. The Air Base closed first followed by the Army post. The group continued for a while but by 1995 all the



Americans had left and the meeting finally disbanded. I was with the group for thirteen years and the memories continue to fill my heart with experience, strength and hope. That is where I learned the principles and traditions of AA. It is where many a lost soul found sobriety and learned to carry the message to the next suffering alcoholic.

Dora M.



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Tradition 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



I chair the, 'I got in trouble and don't want to loose my job so I'm doing my quota o f meetings' group where about every four weeks we see a bunch of new faces avoiding eye contact as the Twelve Traditions are being passed out. The tongue of the new comer gets especially tied up when they get to anonymity, at least once a month I discover a whole new way to pronounce it. Having a few years in I often find it easier to say than to adhere to but being the spiritual foundation of all our traditions it's got to be laid out before I can make any strides forward. As alcohol is called the great leveler in sobriety the leveler is anonymity. For me it means the type of humility that raises no person above another. Unity and anonymity are synonymous as we work toward a common goal. Getting back to basics with my pal Noah Webster I pulled up these definitions;

Anonymity- being of unknown or undeclared origin or authorship

Spiritual- relating to the *Spirit-* the active presence of God in human life

Foundation- the base upon which something stands

As ego was once the foundation of my thoughts and actions anonymity is the base that supports the presence of God in my life. When I practice this I remain on peaceful terms with those personalities that tend to clash with my own but when I don't the words of Sinatra, "I gotta be me, I gotta be me" star playing in my head and the me I gotta be no one else wants to be around. I'm glad to be a part of the 'Get me out of this mess' meeting, I get to learn from people trying their darndest to remain anonymous, especially when the traditions are handed out.

Author of undeclared origin



This principle and it's enormous implications, touches every aspect of our lives. Anonymity is humility at work. To maintain the humility of our Society we shall constantly take stock of our temptations and of our defects. The spirit of anonymity calls upon each of us for personal sacrifice in every level of our Fellowship's undertakings. Only through such willing sacrifices can we AAs meet our responsibilities to ourselves, to the victims of alcoholism everywhere, and to society as a whole. Here we clearly see that only sacrifice can fulfill responsibility; that only high responsibility can lead to mutual trust; and that only mutual trust can be the foundation for great love—each of us for the other, and all of us for God.

Bill W., The Language of the Heart pg 320

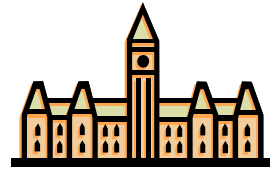
To the Editor: *What exactly are the "Twelve Concepts of World Service"*

The "Twelve Concepts of World Service" were written by Bill W. in 1962. Like the Twelve Traditions there is a short form and a long form. Their aim is to record the "why" of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost. They express traditional principles such as those that protect and encourage minority opinion or insure grievances are heard and properly acted upon. They define the relationships and legal arrangements that fuse the General Service Board with its primary committees and branches of service—AA World Service and the AA Grapevine, Inc. They lay out the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of AA's World Headquarters.

Getting involved in Service Work



You know, when I was asked to write something about service work I said, "You should get some one with lots of experience". The reply was, "Hello, you've done everything from group level to the General Service Board". I don't look at it so much as doing service work but more as being a part of the fellowship. I have done almost everything I was asked to do with the exception of those jobs that require skills in the spelling or accounting department (neither of which I excel at). I started with ashtrays and coffee (my sponsor's idea not mine), that's also when I really started to meet people in the fellowship. Every level of service has been pretty much the same, learning by doing. It's like taking a watch apart to see how it works (only the program still works when you're done). This is how AA started out, the 7th tradition, the literature, it's a 'learn as we go' process. I've learned that our primary purpose always comes first and foremost, principles before personalities is another big one and, the hardest for me, that my expectations are just that, mine and not everyone else's. When I start doing service work for any reason other than carrying the AA message then it's time to stop. I've met so many people through service, it has enhanced my sobriety tenfold but these are fringe benefits; I do this because, "I want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible. Jerry C.



We Can Make a Difference

At the Conference Steering Committee 8-9 Feb. 02, I suggested 'Youth/Young people in AA' as a topic for Committee 1 discussion. This evolved into the following conference questions in 2003:

"Would Conference recommend ways in which our fellowship can reach out more effectively to young people?" (question 1)

"Would conference consider recommending that the General Service Branch create a sub-committee of young AAs on outreach to young people?"

A short while later "The Young People's Project" was created.

This was covered in the Winter 2003 edition of Arena and followed up in the Spring 2004 edition with a total of five people sharing their experiences with coming into the fellowship as young adults.



Nearing 1 year sobriety I was finally ready to roll up my sleeves and do some service work. I was given the task of making decorations for our annual round-up. I awoke the creative part of my brain from its long slumber and after spending several nights between sheets of construction paper I turned out decorations that impressed even myself. It was a new experience to give with out worrying about what I would get in return. The effort put toward service work had rewards beyond staying sober another day. I was re-introduced to my creative abilities and continuing to exorcise them has become a vital part of maintaining both sanity and serenity. It took a while for me to realize the importance of service work. Opening a meeting or helping out in any way possible is an opportunity to give back what was freely given to me. I had spent much time being selfish or feeling unworthy of contributing but have learned, through AA and my loving sponsor, to value myself again and to use the talents God has given me.

Karoline C.

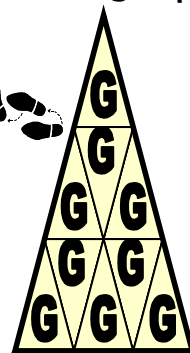
AA Service Structure

GROUP LEVEL service positions may include (but are not limited to) the following:



The GSR has the job of linking his or her group with AA as a whole. The GSR transmits the voice of the Group to the intergroup, exchanges up-to-date information, and carries this information back to the group making the individual group part of the collective conscience of the fellowship as a whole.

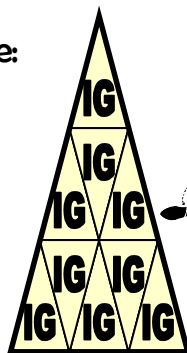
Intergroup positions may include:



Chairman
Vice-Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Public Info Officer
Archivist
Prison, Telephone & Host Nation Liaison
along with...

Several groups in a specified area combine to form the INTERGROUP

Region positions include:
Chairman, Vice-Chair
Secretary, Treasurer
Archivist, Web-Master
Newsletter Editor,
Public Info Officer,
Prison, Telephone & Host Nation Liaison
Officers as well as...



REGION is made up of Inter-Groups within a specified area

...Region Representative

The job of the Region Representative is to carry the Inter-Group conscious to Region and relay information back to the Inter-Group, GSRs then carry the information back to the Group.

...Conference Delegates

Each region is entitled to send six delegates to Conference. By serving on committees, taking part in workshops and voting on proposals, they carry the collective group conscious forward and report their findings to Region.

Conference Delegates are representatives from the regions within Great Britain and CER who, as trusted servants, are elected to carry the voice of the group conscious to Conference.



Conference Delegates form part of the ...



Be it New York or Old York



Your General Service Office is serving the needs of the fellowship

It is the communication center for thousands of AA groups and maintains communications with GSOs world wide



Archives



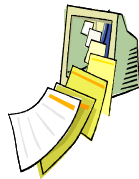
Directories



Web page updates



AA Service News



Maintenance of data bases



Literature Distribution



Accounting



GSO is the administration arm of the fellowship

The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain

The General Service Conference (Great Britain) is the guardian of the Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions of AA in Great Britain and English Speaking AA in Continental Europe.

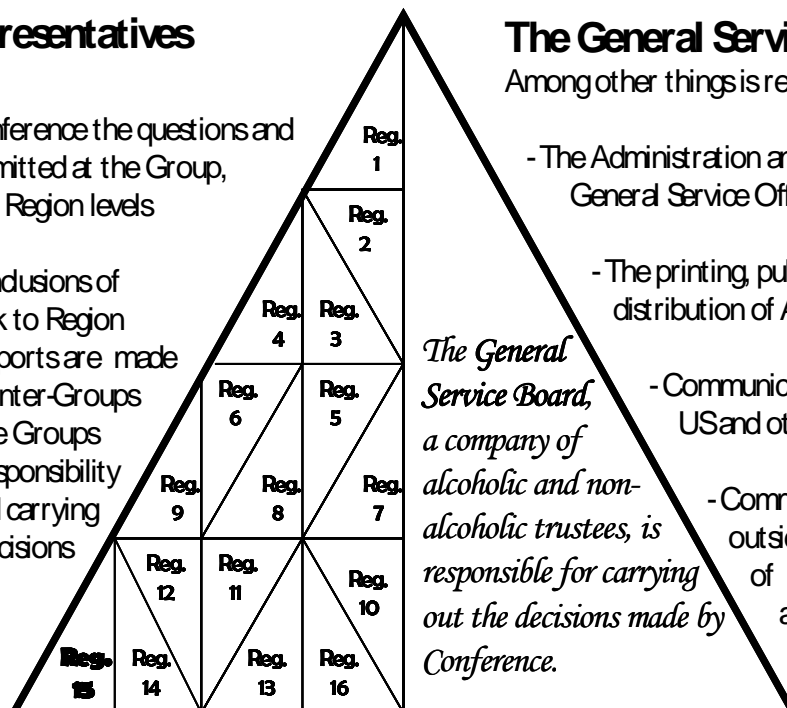
The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the group conscious can express itself in matters that concern the fellowship as a whole.

The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous

Conference is primarily made up of two parts

Region Representatives

- Present to Conference the questions and suggestions submitted at the Group, Inter-Group and Region levels
- Report the conclusions of Conference back to Region insuring their reports are made available to the Inter-Groups and Groups. The Groups have the final responsibility for initiating and carrying through with decisions agreed upon by Conference.



The General Service Board

Among other things is responsible for:

- The Administration and operation of the General Service Office.
- The printing, publishing and distribution of AA literature.
- Communications with AA in the US and other countries
- Communications with outside agencies in the field of alcoholism, prisons, and hospitals as well as the press, radio and television.

The General Service Board, a company of alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees, is responsible for carrying out the decisions made by Conference.

... GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE of which C.E.R. is Region 15



It Took What It Took

“The Honolulu Flash”



I was born into a family of farmers and railroad workers in Louisville, Kentucky, during the great depression of the 1930s. My parents were divorced when I was one at which time I was pawned off on my dear Grandmother to raise. She lived on a farm in Oil City, Kentucky, with her two old maid sisters, a brother and my great-grandfather. These were happy times though I was an only child living in an isolated farm area, my friends were my pet hog, dog and rooster who kept me company most everywhere I went. At eleven I wandered away from a church social to drink moonshine and ended up blind, staggering drunk. This was the innocent beginning of my progression into alcoholism, I was clueless as to where it was headed.

I eventually returned to the city and since my Father’s job entailed transferring often, I attended fourteen different schools before graduating from High School. My drinking became regular. I took a part time job to make extra money to have a good time and later left school to make money to have more good times. I worked hard and lived hard, this pattern continued throughout my Air Force and subsequent careers. Though successful I never accomplished the goals I had set my sights on. I didn’t recognize Alcohol as the problem.

I was proud of my military accomplishments – accepted for Army Officers Candidate School, Air Force pilot training, I had obtained the rank of Tech Sergeant in less than four years in service and was placed on special assignments but my drinking continued to progress and the “invincible Foe” started destroying my life. I lost my commission, pilot’s wings, an Attaché assignment and one stripe before getting out of the service. I shrugged it all off – you win some, you lose some.



My problems followed me into commercial industry. When my drinking caught up I would move on to another job. At age 24 I was paralyzed from the waist down due to excessive drinking that caused a colon blockage but I wasn’t diagnosed as an alcoholic. I had a succession of remarkable jobs, by age 38 I was Marketing Director for Central Pacific Area associated with the Apollo 11 Moon Landing and Retrieval Project and at age 39 I walked in the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. By this time I had lost two families, two companies, the opportunity for a Hollywood career and my self-respect. I came through the doors of Honolulu’s Aloha Group with two sober alcoholics whom I call my AA Angels. I was hopping to hustle these folks in AA to get me to a hospital before I croaked. I had lost everything but my penthouse however, shortly after I sobered up I became bankrupt, destitute and found myself living in a shack. Insanity crept in; I couldn’t even get a job as a taxi driver. I didn’t get the program either, at first. I was one of the sicker and thicker than others, I wouldn’t get a sponsor because I was too proud to let you know that I didn’t know everything. Trying to interpret the steps and traditions with out help was hell. After hours of self-teaching and re-writing the big book I came up with the new and improved program. I was merely two stepping, one then twelve, carrying the message before I was returned to sanity. I spread the disease, not the message.

Insanity came full force; I put a lock on my mailbox then griped that the postal system was intercepting my mail, I put master locks on the front door of my shack though the back wall had deteriorated enough to allow anyone to walk right through, I had three bank deposit boxes filled with comic strips and on Easter Sunday of 1970 became Jesus Christ and conducted my own sunrise service at the Punchbowl National Cemetery. During this time the only thing that kept me from out of the mental institute was the unconditional love extended to me by fellow A.A.ers who knew I was sick and doing the best I could. They protected me from those who didn’t understand, that is truly the miracle of AA.



“It Took What It Took” continued:




Eventually I got dumb and became teachable, got a sponsor and learned to listen. I have come to believe that I am not unique in any way; I’m just another drunk suffering from the disease of alcoholism. This was confirmed when, after telling my story at a speakers meeting, a young man thanked me for my share and said that he had been Jesus too. I have since met “John the Baptist”, “Abe Lincoln” and “Martin Luther King JR”, all who suffered delusions after they abruptly stopped drinking. They too are productive members of AA because of phrases like, “Keep coming Back” and “This too Shall Pass”.

Employment wise I had to start back at the bottom but in time was reinstated with the Department of Defense. I had a couple of slips in Vietnam and Istanbul before HP gave me the message that this was it. The first slip was after 15 months; I had met up with old drinking against my sponsor’s warnings. The second was in a bar, another thing my sponsor cautioned against, moral of the story; Listen to your sponsors! When I finally started working the 12 steps the AA way I was launched into a new dimension of living – a happy, joyous and free way of living and most important, I haven’t had a drink since 9 Feb. 1973.

AA has given me a second chance to see the world through sober eyes. I’ve traveled the world having many sober adventures with my wife of 27 years. I carried the message through the iron curtain (back when there was such a thing) and in the Middle East. These opportunities came about because I am serious about working the AA program the AA way. My first Sponsor, Arkansas Doc, told me that if I worked this program to the best of my ability I would far exceed my own expectations in life. Then he would pause and say, “However, if you be alcoholic like I be alcoholic and you mess with the program, it will do a job on you.” I’ve been busy in service work serving in many positions but my greatest joy is sponsoring those who ask. Being a part of someone else’s recovery is an experience I have come to cherish. I’ve taken part in establishing English Speaking AA meetings in Germany, Japan, and Guam as well as the United States. None of these accomplishments were my own doing, I am humbly grateful to my HP and AA friends around the world. I thank AA for God and God for AA. This same program that helped the first 100 AAs stay sober worked for me and will work for anyone who is willing to do it the AA way



Honolulu Flash was an active member of English speaking AA Europe and is now retired and living in the States.

 This man at the side of the road was fixing his flat tire. A police car stops behind his and the officer strolls to him to offer help. The man says he's doing OK and doesn't need help.

The officer takes a walk around the car to make sure everything is OK. He spots a large knife with a fancy handle on the passenger seat. When he asks about the knife, the man says it's his and he uses it as a juggler at the local circus.

The officer then asks him to demonstrate his act to be sure the man is telling the truth, and the man goes through his routine.

Meanwhile a car with two recovering alcoholics drives by. The driver says to his passenger, "Man ... I am glad I stopped drinking when I did. It's amazing what they make them do these days at those roadside sobriety checks!"

A drunk guy in Alaska decides to go ice fishing, so he packs up his stuff and goes out onto the ice. He starts sawing a hole in the ice, and a loud booming voice says, "You will find no fish under the ice!" The drunk looks up, ignores it, and continues on. The voice repeats, "You will find no fish under the ice!" The drunk looks up and says, "God? Is this God trying to warn me?" The voice says, "No. I'm the manager of this ice rink."

You're codependent for sure when you get kicked off jury duty for insisting that you're the guilty one.

Disbanded Groups: Birds of A Feather, the Zweibrucken Group

Continued from page 1

Poignant memories: The strongest memories is the tall dignified, old white haired gentleman who regularly came out of his room to greet the AA people and direct our parking. He spoke not a word of English but that didn't stop him He seemed a part of our group. When he no longer appeared, we knew he was probably directing the parking of angles. We missed him.

A funny anecdote: The Old Folks Home had a small aviary in the main foyer, we always enjoyed seeing the birds colorful flight and their cheerful chirping. They numbered about six finches and two cockatiels. Then one evening the bird population exploded and doubles in number. We puzzled over this explosion and a few of us discussed it. We finally learned that one of our AA group was moving and had "donated his birds" to the aviary. A couple of weeks later we noticed a lock had been added to the aviary door!

Dora



PICNIC

- ◆ South of France: On June 10th this year our wonderful fellowship celebrates the 70th AAiversary of its founding and we in the South of France are planning a picnic on the beautiful Island of St Honorat (off the coast of Cannes). The picnic will take place on Saturday the 11th on this small island set like a jewel in the Mediterranean where Cistercian monks have facilities that have been in use by various friars since the 5th century! The location allows for various activities that will culminate in a meeting under the Umbrella Pines as the sun sinks slowly in the West. Further details at www.aariviera.org
- ◆ Summertime Fun, AA & Friends BBQ/Picnic, Sunday July 10th at the American Consulate Compound in Frankfurt.
- ◆ The Stuttgart Serenity Seekers is hosting its annual Gratitude Day Picnic in Vailhingen, Germany on 16 July.
- ◆ The Mannheim AA group 'Keep it Simple' annual BBQ. Sunday 17th July 2005 at the Grillhütte Bürstadt (BBQ hut in the woods in Bürstadt)



Coming Events

Miracles in Progress
1st Wurzburg, Germany
Jun 10-12-2005

I Am Responsible
Toronto Canada
AA World Convention
Jun 30-Jul 3 2005

Sober in God's Nature"
Saarbrücken, Germany
July 1 - 3, 2005,
English Participation

"The Three Lagacies"
Pfronten-Weissbach, Germany
Franconia IG Round-Up
July 8 - 10, 2005,

Drunks in the Woods
Baumholder, Germany
Jul 29-30

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Baumholder, Germany
Jul 29-30

Sunlight of the Spirit
August 12 - 14, 2005,
Leusden, Netherlands IG

Sunlight of the Spirit
August 12 - 14, 2005,
Leusden, Netherlands IG

JOE AND CHARLIES BIG BOOK STUDY"
Aug 12th-14th Kolding, Denmark.

Create the Fellowship You
Crave September 2 - 4, 2005
Berlin, Germany

Helping Others"
Tossa de Mar, Spain
October 19 - 23, 2005,

...If You Work It
Wildenburg, Germany*
Oct 21-23, 2005

Hessen IG Round-up
Bleichenbach?, Germany
November, 2005

The Steps We Took" Annual
North Sea Conference Feb 3rd-
5th Ostend Belgium

Oh, what to write about....

- Your experience at a convention
 - Your group history
 - Tell us your story
 - Recovery related humorous event
 - Something that baffles you
- Any recovery related story is welcome**

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Deadline for next edition:

see aa-europe.net
for more details