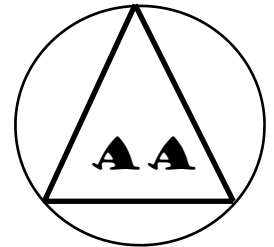


ArenA

The newsletter of Continental European Region

CER is one of the 16 Regions in the
Service Structure of Great Britain

Spring '06



Inside this edition

A Vacation with the Concepts	1
Wisdom from Belgium	2
Email from France	3
Greetings from Norway	3
Tradition 1	3
Trustee's Report	4
Future Events	4

Next Region Meeting

- When: June 10th + 11th
- Where: Brussels
- For further details contact the Region Secretary via Email aa-secretary@aa-europe.net or your Region Rep.
- All observers welcome

A Vacation? We think not.

I have been inspired and blessed since I became involved in service work for Intergroup and Region. As Alternate delegate I have come to ask myself the question: "How can we interest more of our fellow AA's in The Conference and the Conference questions or in Service Work in general?"

As I sat in the latest Region meeting I tried to view the proceedings through the eyes of those yet unfamiliar with Region. "What does Region have to do with day to day AA life and my home group? How can I best explain this to group members? How can I interest them in reading the Traditions in depth, let alone *The Concepts*? Does it really matter?"

Many may think: "Sure I can see how Intergroup is a good idea; we can publish meeting schedules and organize a national English speaking convention. But couldn't we do without this Region stuff? It costs so much. It seems to be all about travel and hotel costs; "Paid vacations" for the same people over and over, people it seems to me "who just want to run AA." I can accept that *The Traditions*, as dry and boring as they are, are necessary for my group to operate but can't we just leave it at that? *The Concepts* aren't even readable, let alone understandable."

At this Region meeting I asked myself from time to time, "What does this meeting today, its particular agenda items, have to do with carrying the message or service?"

This was at times hard to recognize in the specific issues being discussed, the time being spent on seemingly trivial matters and the 'waste of time' in going over a point again and again as yet another member thought it necessary to share his or her ideas with us. As alcoholics each of us seems to have an opinion on almost just about everything. And it seem that if I don't have one I'll make up one right here on the spot in order to not deprive you of the sound of my voice. We had a full agenda for the one and a half day meeting. Why couldn't my fellows exercise as much restraint as I and only contribute if what they had to add was new or different?

The answer came in answer to a comment to the effect that we limit our comments to those new or different. It was observed that we needed to hear every voice that wanted to share in the discussion; that it was more important to hear all who wished to contribute than to rigidly keep to the time schedule. How to resolve this, we had so much to cover? In a situation like this my impulse is immediate, anger, hurt. But at the meeting I realize that I am either going to have to storm out; right one more time, but angry and alone, or I am going to just have to trust that it will work out. Sit on my hands if necessary (and it was at times!), but stick with them, keep trying.

Just when I would think, "Oh no, not him, or her, again," someone would come out with a remark or comment cutting right to the heart of the matter, and identifying an issue that was very important to consider or keep in mind, or offering a

thought that I could also use in my day to day life and program.

A for instance - an item not on the already full agenda, new business, something that, in my view, should have had to wait until all other business was finished. It was about a request from some groups in a somewhat distant part of the continent, an area that one could argue would better fit in some other part of the AA structure. Why spend time on that? And what emerged was the importance of not shutting anyone out, of being inclusive, of Unity and of welcoming newcomers.

Wow, that happens in my group too! We are so excited when we get someone new. Wasn't that one of the things that convinced me, rather drew me, to come back to my second meeting? I often think that the true miracle for me was not so much the message I heard in my first meeting but that I something drew me to actually come back for the second (and third, fourth...) If I had been told: "Hi & welcome. We're busy tonight with an important business meeting, but please do come back tomorrow." Well.....

In the process of this weekend I learned again of patience, trust, loving service and gained a deeper understanding of these and of how they can work in my life.

For me a Region meeting means getting up at 5am on Saturday morning and travelling for 4 ½ hours, arriving just in time for a sandwich before sitting down at the meeting which begins at noon and runs until 5 or 6 in the afternoon. After the meet-

A Vacation with the Concepts – contd.

ing there is just enough time to check into the hotel, to have a short rest before going to a local Saturday night meeting. Dinner often has to wait until the meeting after the meeting. Then to bed if I am wise and lucky, perhaps by midnight. But wait, there was that 5 page proposal we were asked to read for tomorrow.....

Sunday up at 7:30 in order to eat breakfast, check out of the hotel and be in time for the start of the 9am meeting. The Sunday meeting lasts until noon, or perhaps 1pm. Then there is an hour or so of free (vacation!) time before catching my transportation home. Home at about 7:30pm.

This weekend cost my Intergroup a bit over € 150. I invested two weekend mornings of getting up well before 10 AM, 1 ½ hours in local transportation, 8

hours in a train, 2 ½ hours walking around in a strange city looking for a quick bite to eat or a meeting, 10 hours of business meetings, and 3 hours of a regular AA meeting and the meeting after, with new faces and old friends.

A vacation? Not at all. An inspiring weekend of hard work with fellow AA's, Yes!

The Concepts define the balance between a lofty spiritual idea of a loving god, as heard through the collective voice of the individual groups, being the highest level of authority and responsibility in A.A. and the practical down to earth fact that society at large, and the law in particular, will hardly recognize this authority as having any legally binding validity whatsoever. In a social and legal sense the incorporated General Service Board is the boss. Only they can enter into legal agreements to rent

office space, hire employees, sign contracts with city governments for multi-million dollar conventions, or with a printer for a few hundred thousand copies of a book.

The Concepts define the relationship between the groups and the Service Board and the trustees, and they are basically about trust. They define the structure which links the Board and trustees on the one hand with the groups, and through them individual A.A. members, on the other.

The Concepts are about a trust we talk about quite often; trust the process, trust your higher power, and trust your home group's group conscience, even in times you strongly disagree. It will be alright. It will work out for the best. Let Go, Trust God.

These may be difficult to put into practice, but at Region and Intergroup I have an excellent opportunity to learn from calmer and more experienced members in an atmosphere of love and respect.–JR

Wisdom

My wisdom consists of doing or wanting to do things which lie within my boundaries – but also meeting challenges, dreaming a little and taking calculated risks. Little of this applied to me 25 years ago.

It's foolish to attempt a broad definition of wisdom. It was all very well for Oscar Wilde to say, with tongue in cheek and brandy glass in hand, that experience is the name we give to our mistakes. Unless I am mistaken, wisdom and experience are not one and the same thing. *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ...*

The two wisest things I ever did were to stop drinking and to stay stopped. If I am in any doubt (and I often am) as to what wisdom is about, I only have to reflect for a few moments in my driving mirror to see where I have come from before focussing on where I would be now if I hadn't taken the decision to draw the line.

When I first stumbled across A.A. (I had not been wise enough to stop earlier) I was willing to listen to the experience, strength and hope shared by the people in that room – and to act upon it to the best of my

ability. I particularly latched onto the slogans because they were short, sharp and snappy enough to penetrate the fog in my brain. *First Things First. Easy Does It. Keep It Simple.* Stay off the booze one day at a time and trust God.

Even as a boy of ten whose dad had died in the war and whose mum had picked up the bottle I was inordinately fond of proverbs and quotations. That instinctive childhood wisdom has stood me in good stead. Of course it was later to be washed away in a flood of alcohol.

Snatches like *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread* are the wise man's stock-in-trade.

I also like the way the 12 Steps say practically everything I need to know in a couple of hundred words. Of course they are only suggestions, just as it's only a suggestion that you pull the rip-cord when you jump out of an aeroplane. Regrettably I am not wise enough yet to turn to them for help more often in difficult moments. The sum of the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosophers is expressed in the two words: *Know Thyself*. This result is obtained by working Step Four, the moral inventory,

when it is carried out fearlessly and thoroughly. Wisdom is very much concerned with eschewing fear...

This leaves me with the Serenity Prayer, a religious proposition in three parts. It's a sad fact that my sobriety will not change the world, only my attitude towards it. It's good news, on the other hand, that there is somebody up there who knows the answers and whom I can turn to when faced with awkward decisions.

MC

„You have Email“ from France

There is a strong desire to see our Fellowship prosper here, and several of us work quite hard at this. We have a bit of fun in our ramblings, in that we organise picnics on the coast in the summer, all the IG meetings are preceded by lunch, and the groups are very much 'included in' at Intergroup.

I insist that IG is at the service of the groups, and not the other way round. There is also some long-term sobriety around, which helps, and nobody, so far, is 'running the show' except a 'loving God as we understand.'

Greetings from a new friend

Hello.

I just wanted to send a special thanks to those that attended the Region meeting this weekend. I know that I got the opportunity to speak to many of you, even if briefly. When I arrived in Frankfurt, I was welcomed by local members or our program, and when I arrived to the Region I was welcomed by those of you there.

I suppose that Welcome is not the best word to describe the feeling that was present this weekend... With moving around, both locally in Canada, and now here in Europe, it has been a while since I have really found a place to call home in the rooms. The challenges that come for many when up-rooting and going some where different, with different languages, different cultures, and well different AA structure, or lack there of.

I know that I shared my memories with a few of you briefly, but I remember my first "area" or region meeting when I was in my early days in sobriety. It was one of the most profound experiences of my sobriety. I came with great doubt as to the "beauty and spirituality" that was said to be found in these forms of service. I did not quite understand the "beauty" in a bunch of drunks bickr'n about whether the sky was blue or navy...by the second

day of the meeting I think that I understood it, and I understood it again this past weekend. The common purpose that guides us all, the common desire and hope (even when it is muddled by personality conflicts) that maybe, just maybe, what we do that day will keep the doors open for one more person. The unity, security and lifeblood can be renewed when we join together is something that has no words.

It is sad to know so many of our fellow members don't realise the gifts that come in service - or are never taught. It is more than writing a manual, more than updating some information, more than completing a task or duty just because it needs to be done and dare I say it....it is even more than the coffee served there. It is a sharing of experience, strength and hope, the kind of hope that only the once hopeless can truly understand. It is the life raft.

It is easy to get caught up in being a "productive member of society". Gosh, when the hopelessness starts to dispel, when I actually gain some days in a row where my life has peace and contentment, even joy. Things I never thought I could have, things I couldn't even fathom, I can step to far away from that moment of clarity I was given. God did teach me how to handle things that used to baffle me, and then I got new

things, but I don't wonder anymore (most days) if I will get through that moment or trial. Sometimes I take that for granted, it is these rooms and those sharing this journey that help me to maintain, to self check, to remember. I was given a gift beyond belief, and that gift came through those that showed up, that discussed the 'color of the sky', that said " I remember, there is a way out".

I hope that I can bring even a small piece of the spirit that was renewed in me this weekend, a small piece of the desire and passion, the understanding of the wholeness of this program, and how many people are there, meeting and working so that my home group can continue to keep the doors open, and help people get to them, and the value of this kind of service both in personal sobriety and for those struggling. I know that I can count on CER's support and experience. I will do my best to bring ya'll back in spirit to our small but mighty few here in Norway.

Well, long-winded, as so many of us are hee hee. But I wanted to let you know, that this weekend I knew, that no matter what comes quickly and slowly in my AA community here, I know that I have a **home** at Region, and there are no words to express the gratitude in my heart for that. I almost doubted if I would truly feel that again. All the best. TS.

A French Email - contd.

I guess that in ex-pat groups we need each other, and need to be united, perhaps more so than if we were 'lost' in a comfortable illusion of the Fellowship in our own countries - we can take nothing for granted, so we work, and enjoy it for the most part. This need to 'work at it' shows us the rewards of this work, the rewards of service, rewards which would be only theoretical were we not so hard working. Laziness may be attractive, but it is ultimately very unfulfilling. JFO

Tradition 1

Tradition One: "The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our Society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole or AA dies. Without unity, the heart of AA would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God" (12x12 p.129)

Today I know I can not tear down my fellow AA because they may just be the one person who has my message for any given day, to help save my or someone else's life. It has

been shown to me time and time again that gossip and character assignment of members of this fellowship not only endangers my sobriety but of many others still to come. There is a great checklist for working the traditions on a personal level. When I first starting asking myself the questions outlined in the checklist I was surprised at how poorly I was applying the traditions to my everyday life. What I know today is that I need every single one of you, as I never know who God has chosen as a channel to deliver his message to me. Thank you all for being a part of my life.

With Love and Service, GW

Trustee's Report

My first year on the General Service Board as an Class A (alcoholic) Trustee started out with a briefing from the general secretary about the responsibilities of a trustee, which include both an AA and a legal element. That is sometimes the hardest part - getting the laws and the traditions to fit together.

Then I was assigned my "discipline" or primary job focus - Employment. Working with the regional employment liaison officers I was also tasked to go to the Italian AA Service Conference. I was also selected to be a delegate to the European Service Meeting. This was a great opportunity to meet members from the host nations of C.E.R.

I have also been tasked as a member of the working party for 12 stepping minors in AA. In the last twelve months I have learned a lot about the fellowship and the intricate workings behind the scenes. We have a great team working for the fellowship at the GSO and we have a great fellowship working all the time to help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. There is always a lot of work to do, but together we can make it. Jerry C.

Useful Facts:

Region Bank Account: Account Name: Steven Blake
Bank: Kreissparkasse Bitburg-Prüm, BLZ 586 500 30 Account No. 559781
Swift / BIC: MALADE51BIT I.B.A.N.: DE97 5865 0030 0000 5597 81

Newsletter Contributions: arenaguys@gmx.de

Future Events (full details on Website)

- May 25th – 27th **28th Annual Rheinland-Pfalz Round-Up, Queidersbach, Germany**
- June 2nd – 3rd **2nd Annual AA International Round-Up, Würzburg, Germany**
- June 3rd **Cologne Mustard Seed 10th Anniversary BBQ**
Email: colognesteve@gmx.de for Flyer
- June 18th **Summer Time Fun BBQ, Mühlheim-Diestesheim (near Frankfurt) Germany**
Email:- aa.hessen.ig@gmail.com for Info
- July 7th – 9th **15th Annual Franconia Round-Up, Pfronten-Weißbach, Germany**
- July 9th **"Keep It Simple" Picnic, Mannheim**
- Aug 11th—13th **International Convention AA Netherlands Veldhoven, Holland. Infos: www.icaan.nl**
- Oct 18th – 19th **"Head for the Med" 2006 Costa Brava International AA Convention**
- Nov 3rd – 5th **2nd Annual AA Convention, Nice, France.**
www.aariviera.org or Email: NiceConvention06@aol.com
- Nov 3rd – 5th **12nd Annual Hessen Roundup, Bleichenbach, Germany.**

New Email Contact Address for Arena

I have been locked out of the arenaguys Hotmail account and have not managed to break in again. I used it once when I first took over, but the password doesn't want to work anymore and Hotmail uses the wonderful system of sending a temporary emergency password to the same blocked account. After doing this the old password loses its validity. Work that one out for logic.

So I have decided to transfer allegiance to GMX (who send emergency passwords to a different address!). With immediate effect the new address for submissions to ArenA is

arenaguys@gmx.de

My thanks to all contributors of this edition. I really appreciate your efforts.

Steve R, Editor

Region Website:
www.aa-europe.org

Where to Find

The deadline for getting your group's meetings listed in the 2006-07 A.A. International Directory published by GSO, New York is **Monday, May 8.**

The information should be sent to:
Karen Hale, Manager, Support Services
Her fax number in the U.S. is:
(212) 870-3003

The mailing address is, of course,
GSO of Alcoholics Anonymous
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York, NY 10163 USA

And their telephone number is:
(212) 870-3400

The following information is needed:

Group Name
Language
City
Number of Members
Meeting Place: Address, City, Country
Meeting time
Mailing Contact Name, postal mailing address, and telephone (and whether it can be listed in the Directory)
Additional Contact Name and telephone (and whether it can be listed in the Directory)
Web address