

Arena

The newsletter
of
Continental European Region

CER is one of the 15 Regions in the
Service Structure of Great Britain

World AA Convention, Toronto June 2005 „I AM RESPONSIBLE“

Waiting to clear immigration in Toronto Airport I heard my name called loudly. Looking around I saw a former den Haag member bearing down on me with intent to hug. Coming out of Immigration I was greeted by a U.K. member. And so it continued the whole time I was there.

Friends I knew previously, friends I was only meeting for the first time, me myself – 45,000 of us descended on Toronto for the 10th World AA Convention. This was my third world convention and, I think, the one I enjoyed the most. For me in the past it has been over-awing to be amongst that many alkie at once and it is still all too easy for me to put up the barriers to keep you all from seeing my fear.

The event took place in the downtown convention centre beside Canada Tower (which I never got up) and the Skydome where the big meetings were held. It was huge. Getting from one end to the other took at least 15-20 minutes hard walking, more during peak traffic times when the queues to use the esca-

lators were looonnnngggg. Registration was open the whole week but I arrived on Thursday, just in time for the opening party. It went very smoothly and I hardly had to wait at all. After registering I sat outside in the sun and read the program to see if there was anyone from C.E.R. listed to share. I did recognise one name listed for the German speaking meetings, but that was it. C.E.R. had provided several speakers at both San Diego and Minneapolis but this time others were given the honour – which is the way it should be. The spirit of rotation.

The opening party was a big one. Outside there was both a rock concert and a jazz concert. Inside there were discos, both techno and 70s, a swing band &, I think, ballroom dancing. Something for everyone. Wandering around my name was called again – a friend from Bonn. As I sat and chatted with them Fred from Giessen, an ex-CER Delegate walked by. He has been living in Canada for several years now and sends his love to all who knew him.

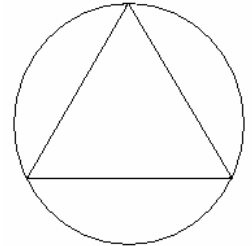
There is a funny thing about conventions that size. You keep meeting the same people over and over again. Other people who you know are there, and who you are looking for, you never see at all.

The meetings started the next day. I was not in a good place however. I was running three out of four from HALT and found myself unable to concentrate on the meeting I had decided to attend. I left and went into another meeting-where I met a couple of people from Triborders, who I treated rather brusquely. I am sorry guys. I did not behave appropriately. I just wanted out.

Leaving the convention centre I went and got something to eat. As I sat and ate I saw that the cure was in my own hands. I needed to work with another alcoholic.

So I went to Volunteer HQ and asked to be put to work. I was sent down to Registration where I put in a shift where I got to help alkie and to talk to alkie. And guess what. I ceased to be restless, irritable & discontent, stopped feeling alone in a crowd and began to belong again. Service **does** work. I am very grate-

Winter



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Breaking News

- Our Website has a revised format. It is now quicker to load and easier to navigate.
- Have a look and see what you think.
- www.aa-europe.org
- That's where you can find a meeting, register for an event or even read a copy of Arena.

Toronto 2005 – an appreciation

ful that I was granted the willingness to do something about my condition earlier rather than later.

The big opening meeting that night was awesome. We were late in so we were right up in the nose bleed section, and you really didn't want to have vertigo if you were sitting up there. The flags were paraded in and included one from China for the first time. That got a cheer I can tell you. Three super speakers made for a great meeting before we closed with the Serenity Prayer. That was the icing on the cake – I thought. 45,000 people saying the Serenity Prayer together – WOW!!!

Then a member led us in singing Amazing Grace. Goosebump time, really. Seriously awesome stuff.

Saturday I visited Sobercity, the unofficial part of the convention. I didn't really like the T-Shirts and they had no sweatshirts, so I got away fairly cheaply. Others spent more. A friend from N.Y.C., who lived for a while in Cologne, was speaking and I went along. Good meeting that was. In the evening I went to the Oldtimers meeting. A minimum of 40 years was required to share and the speakers were selected by lot. After being drawn they were led up onto the platform by some very young and enthusiastic AAs. They were all gung ho and were definitely NOT a glum lot. They absolutely insisted on enjoying life – and told us so quite loudly.

Later on that night I went to the Marathon meeting where I met people that I knew again. This was the

one place during the convention that any AA could get up and share and there was some good sharing from the floor. Walking down the street afterwards there was such a good feeling of peace & love.

Sunday was the closing meeting. Again three good speakers. We thanked Toronto and cheered San Jose who will host in 2010. A Mariachi band played out the crowds as fireworks were set off within the Skydome.

I have left out so much which was fun, spiritual, and unique. The new friendships, the fellowship, the celebration of sobriety. I really recommend trudging the road of happy destiny to San Jose. The experience will be worthwhile.

Stuttgart Serenity Seekers' 27th Annual Gratitude Day

16 July 2005 dawned clear and cool, promising a lovely day during which the members of the Stuttgart Serenity Seekers group would enjoy fellowship and share gratitude for the quiet joy of living sober lives among friends. Gratitude Day this year was again at the Stuttgart-Vaihingen Waldheim, a park-like setting with spacious lawns, ample meeting rooms and a great kitchen, as well as lots of room for kids to enjoy the outdoors on a fine summer day.

Everyone pitched in to set up the BBQ area and lay out tables and benches under the many shade trees in the park area. As the weather heated up and folks grew lazy in the summer sun, small groups gathered on the park benches in the shade to talk and just bask in the comfort of being together with good friends. The kids had a blast running about between the woods and the picnic area, and were soon conking out on the benches or stretched out on the grass.

There were plenty of meetings in which to share (when folks could be coaxed in out of the sunshine!) and we had the great fortune to have two wonderful guest

speakers: 'old-timers' Don H. from Prague and Mary S. from Virginia. Mary, with 49 years in the Program, was a particular blessing. She worked closely with Bill Wilson & Lois in the early days of AA and was full of stories of Bill and Dr. Bob and had a few personal, unpublished, photos of the founders to pass around.

Don H. was our guest speaker. A gifted storyteller, Don showered the group with his wit and personal perspective. His intent was to pass along three main points of his experience, strength, and hope. The first is the concept of 'Insanity B', not to be confused with the 'Insanity A' described in the Big Book. We're familiar with Insanity A – doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. Insanity B was described to us as knowing the right thing to do and then not doing it. Brilliant!

The second point was captured in the simple statement "Imperfection is a requirement for membership" in AA. Of course! How often we've read in the Big Book that we are not saints and that we strive for progress not perfection. How many of us still feel that we might be the exception to these principles?

Finally, Don expanded our understanding of Step 3 – "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Power greater than ourselves". Don gifted us with his insight that "decision takes a moment but IMPLEMENTING that decision takes a lifetime." The 3rd Step is best practiced every conscious moment, not simply passed through on the way to a rigorous writing of the 4th Step.

Gratitude Day, like all days, was a gift for all the Serenity Seekers and will be remembered with fondness in the years to come. Thank you all for coming; we enjoyed your company and look forward to next year's picnic. See you there!

And for the rest of you – come next summer!!! You never know who is going to be sitting around the table.



Conference Questions 2006

The conference questions have been published and can be viewed on the UK Website under http://service.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/library/AA-Service-News/125_Winter_2005.pdf. You will have to register to gain access however. It is quite uncomplicated tho'.

Since only 2 valid questions were received by the Steering Committee this year it has been decided to take a Group conscience based on the concepts and all committees have been asked the question:

In the spirit of Love and Service how can the Fellowship forge better working practices throughout the service structure of AA with particular reference to Concepts X & Y (Each committee has different concepts to work on)

A further interesting suggestion is the consideration to hold a future World AA Convention in the UK. Committees have also been asked to share

their experience on how Groups finance the purchase of Share, Roundabout, Grapevine & other literature. Guidelines 2 & 12 and the leaflet „The Pot“ give the background here. Your Delegates are very interested in the consciences of both yourself and your Groups. If you want to have a delegate come visit your group you can email your request via the website There will also be workshops taking place in the Region. Or just email them with your opinions. Raise your voice. AA belongs to you.

Some Future Events

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Feb 3rd - 5th | North Sea Convention, Ostend, Belgium |
| May 18th - 21st | 12TH Annual Convention in Ermioni-Thermisia, Greece |
| July 7th - 9th | Franconia round up, Pfronten, Bavaria. |
| July 23rd | Stuttgart. Gratitude Day |

Where is Region going?

At the November 5th meeting in Frankfurt a vigorous discussion ensued as Region planned its meetings for 2006. The current system of all rep-

resentatives meeting in a central point four times a year was criticised as insular. The Representatives to Region from many Intergroups expressed a desire to hold the meetings in different places in order to give local members a chance to attend as observers.

The opinion that the 5 hour meetings were too short was also expressed. With representatives attending from as far afield as the south of France and Southern Spain the cost and travel time involved compared to the amount of time actually spent working was seen as out of proportion. Two day meetings would allow more time for discussing all agenda items with the care and attention that they deserve, since the rush to catch trains and planes at 5pm on Saturday would no longer be necessary. The second day could be used to complete the agenda and to run workshops using a committee system on conference questions or Public Information, for example

Concern was expressed that the costs could increase quite a lot for many Region reps and that Groups and Intergroups would not necessarily see the costs as appropriate, withdrawing their support. The working weekends might be considered as holidays on AA's money.

Since the Intergroups were voting on the matter themselves through their trusted servants this was not seen as an insuperable obstacle. The representatives would obviously need to communicate how the still suffering alcoholic would be better helped through the extra work. The consideration that anyone could regard an AA business meeting as a holiday or a chance to play tourist was found amusing. We work and there is no time for tourism.

After a number of votes the final decision was to hold four two day meetings with Region business to be completed on Saturday where possible. The second day is to be used for a workshop on an issue of benefit to AA as a whole.

One of these meetings must take place in a different location to the others

The meetings will take place on the following dates:

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|-----------------------|---|--------------------|
| Feb 25 th + 26 th | Frankfurt | June 10 th + 11 th | Frankfurt (Brussels?) | Sept 9 th + 10 th | Amsterdam/Den Haag |
| Dec 2 nd + 3 rd | Frankfurt (Hamburg?) | | | | |

Open Service Positions :

Assistant Treasurer for Region

Host Nation Liaison Officers for:

North Germany ; South Germany ; France

Those interested please come to the next Region meeting on Feb 25th or send a CV to the secretary at aa-secretary@aa-europe.net

A VISITORS VIEW: 2ND BERLIN AA CONVENTION

I'd like to share a meaningful recent experience from a Stuttgart Serenity Seekers long distance point of view. My personal spiritual growth lies in the three Legacies of AA – Unity (= Fellowship), Recovery (= Fellowship), and Service (= Fellowship). For the mathematically inclined: the Legacies are a function of Fellowship. This personal integration requires regular retreat with members outside my home group. I love the sense of perspective I gather at these events, and the fun of being together with others who will never be strangers to me.

The hosts were blessed to hold this C. E. R. event over a beautiful warm late summer weekend from September 2 – 4. The theme, "... to create the fellowship you crave", was taken from page 164 of the Big Book and fit well with the philosophical nature of Berliners. The passage discusses the continuity of our society and the principals set down by Bill & Bob. Drunks together in sobriety today

are no different than the pioneers.

The convention was well organized; in fact, I recall advertising and notices almost a year in advance. Like most of us, I need frequent reminders. The residential neighborhood location was a facility like a youth hostel. The wonderful staff took care of our physical needs. I choose to stay in a group room, in bunk beds, eating hearty food at the meals with lots of coffee & snacks in between.

The place was in a quiet suburban neighborhood with huge stately homes & lots of trees & gardens. We were delighted to walk around in the mornings & evenings. I even found a place for Italian ice! Needless to say in this great city, public transportation was very easy. Many attendees took time to visit historic sights.

It was a truly international gathering, with attendees from some 15 countries. There were, of course, continual meetings – including meditation sessions, Al-Anon, and a workshop

on the topic of 'The Service Structure of Continental European Region'. The high points were provided by guest speakers: 'Jimmy Guitar' (from England) spoke on "The Age of Miracles", Jacqueline (from Frankfurt) shared her experience of growing up in Baltimore, and Audrey (a Berlin resident from Ireland) used wonderfully colorful language to describe how she came to know "The Fellowship of the Spirit".

The hosts, in the customary spirit of Berlin, even put on a little cabaret show for us - with skits and singing to remind us that 'we are not a glum lot'. I'm always in awe that there is so much talent among our Fellowship.

A few attendees decided that life in Berlin is not to be missed and stayed extra days. Alas, I returned to hard-working Stuttgart with warm memories and a renewed dedication. I want to go again next year and bring everyone I can to this lively fountain of spiritual refreshment.

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@hotmail.com



Change of Editor

Our editor of the last few years, Trudy C., has just rotated out of the position. She has been responsible for getting so many people to contribute to the Newsletter and to make it as interesting as it has been. The Region thanked her strongly for all her efforts – I am sure that all of you who have been reading her work will echo these sentiments and wish her well in her future service commitments.

My name is Steve R. and Region has honoured me by allowing me to serve as Editor, taking over from Trudy on her retirement. Some background.

My home group is the Mustard Seed Group in Cologne. In the past I have served Triborders Intergroup as Chair, as treasurer, as Region Rep. and run the literature supplies. At Region level I have served as treasurer and as a delegate to conference. At group level I have at one time or another served in all the positions we have on offer and am currently treasurer.

As you all will have noticed the look of ArenA has changed. This follows not from any idea that I think I can do it better than it was done in the past, but from the fact that my version of Pub-

lisher is an old one and I have to work within the parameters that I have available to me. Change has been forced upon me. Mind you there is nothing new in that. It is the way I grow. I hope that I will grow in this job and that you all find the newsletter as interesting as it has been in the past.

But it will only be so if you help. Please keep those articles coming in. It doesn't have to be much. A paragraph or so received as an email can be inserted very easily.