

First Asian Oceania Service Meeting

Twelve Stepping Your Neighbor Country

March 23, 1995
Tokyo, Japan

FINAL REPORT

FIRST ASIAN OCEANIA
SERVICE MEETING

of Alcoholics Anonymous

Held at

Kagurazaka Emile, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162

10:00 ~ 20:00, March 23rd 1995

Present:

Bob P [REDACTED] (New Zealand) Chairperson
Yukie Y [REDACTED] (Japan) Secretary
Alan N [REDACTED] (New Zealand) English Speaking
Minute Secretary
Takayuki H [REDACTED] (Japan) Recorder
George D [REDACTED] (USA/Canada) General Manager,
GSO New York, Key Note Speaker

Delegates:

Donna P [REDACTED] (Hong Kong)
Teresa S [REDACTED] (Vanuatu)
J.Y. H [REDACTED] (Korea)
Akiyo M [REDACTED] (Japan)
Naoto O [REDACTED] (Japan)
Trevor C [REDACTED] (New Zealand)

Observers:

Larry N [REDACTED] (U.S.A./Canada General Service
Board)
Dianne Y [REDACTED] (New Zealand)
Suzuki, C [REDACTED] (Japan, Office Standing
Committee Members)
Tanaka, S [REDACTED] (Japan)

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First Asian Oceania Service Meeting

Twelve Stepping Your Neighbor Country

1. THE MEETING was conducted in the English language and called to order at 10:30 am. The chairman extended a warm welcome to all present and asked George to extend the meeting's thanks to GSO, USA/Canada for making it possible for George and Larry to attend. The attendants stood for a minute of silent meditation on behalf of the still suffering alcoholic, then joined in the Serenity Prayer followed by the reading of the Preamble.

2. DELEGATE IDENTIFICATION. Delegates and other attendants identified themselves, their country and their service status.

3. KEY NOTE ADDRESS was delivered by George Dorsey who extended love and good wishes from A.A. in the USA/Canada and from the GSO Office staff to this historic meeting. He noted that A.A. is utilizing universal principles used by all nations to assist humanity to achieve a better life. This meeting was a continuation of the vision Bill had for the growth of AA Worldwide. He had confidence in A.A. unity so long as the members kept the primary purpose of A.A. to the forefront. His address was received with acclamation.

4. COUNTRY REPORTS were presented by delegates and were each followed by a question and answer session to clarify points and discuss the experiences of the respective countries.

There followed the reading of messages of good wishes, support and reports on A.A. in their respective countries as well as regrets for non attendance from GSO and WSM Brien J.N. Australia; Marie T O'B, Beijing; GSO India; Western Samoa AA; Tonga AA.

It was reported that Hong Kong had translated the Big Book into Cantonese, the language spoken in Hong Kong whereas the predominant language of China was Mandarin. GSO, USA/Canada will respond to inquiries regarding this matter included with the Beijing report.

Vanuatu requested copies of the pamphlets GSO New Zealand had had translated into Pacific Island languages. Bob P. offered to have them made available.

Discussion ensued regarding PI and the acceptance by indigenous people of translated versions of English language A.A. literature involving concepts foreign to some cultures. It was noted that although China may have many varieties of language, the written characters were universally understood.

5. HOW IT WORKS IN MY COUNTRY. Delegates delivered reports on the status of A.A., its service structure and experiences in their country. Akiyo (Japan) presented a report received from an American A.A. member who had helped to establish Cambodian A.A.'s.

6. After lunch was taken, an AA SHARING MEETING was held.

7. A wide ranging QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION was held on the reports of "How A.A. Works in my Country" identifying problems and assisting finding solutions.

8. THE FUTURE OF THE AOSM. Discussion commenced with a round the table uninterrupted presentation of personal opinions followed by discussion of all the suggestions raised. It was agreed that the consensus of the meeting was:

*That this meeting was well worthwhile and that meetings such as this, should continue.

*That the meeting be held every two years and among other aims, provide a forum for those countries not eligible to attend World Service Meeting.

*That there be no restrictions on the right of any country to be represented.

*That the chairperson should rotate every 2 years but that the Secretaryship be retained long enough to give a continuity of service and build a resource base of experience.

*That individual countries determine the qualifications of their delegates who shall number no more than two to provide for bi-annual rotation. The consensus of the meeting was that non-A.A. delegates should only be appointed by and represent countries that have a service structure, and that A.A. members have 5 years continuous sobriety.

*That observers are to be welcomed but shall have speaking or voting rights only at the invitation of the Chairperson.

*That each participating country pay its own costs.

*That New Zealand be asked to host the next meeting. (Preferred date - March 1997)

*That Alan N [REDACTED] (New Zealand) be appointed the next chairman, and that Yukie Y [REDACTED] (Japan) remain secretary.

*That the next meeting provide for 2 days of business sessions.

*That all Asian Oceania countries known to have AA be given an abridged report of this meeting and invited to apply for a full copy of all proceedings should they wish. A small charge may be applied to cover the cost of the full report of proceedings.

*That delegates present the AOSM report to their own countries with a recommendation for adoption.

*That the next meeting include on its agenda that opportunity to adopt a formal Statement of Purpose.

9. GENERAL.

Japan recorded their thanks to the participants in the feasibility meeting held during 1994 for the assistance given A.A. Japan get approval to carry A.A. to the Japanese Correctional Institutions.

George outlined resources available from GSO New York, including literature and translation facilities. The wisdom of applying an equalization to sale prices worldwide or by Zones, was discussed. For example, the Big Book prices are — US\$4.60 in China, US\$49.30 in Finland.

GSO NY has offered to circulate the report presented to WSM Cartagena on the activities of the International Literature Fund administered by GSO New York, to AOSM countries. The meeting thanked GSO NY for the offer and agreed this matter should be included on future meeting agendas.

Communications between loners, the demand for Amateur Radio sharing to cater for members living in remote areas as well as sharing using Computer networking was discussed. It was considered a list of contact frequencies or call signs would be of service if such could be compiled.

The meeting agreed that the names, addresses and telephone numbers of those attending the meeting be included with the report of the proceedings to assist communications.

Items of general interest to A.A. were also discussed and there being no further business, the meeting closed with the serenity prayer.

Welcome by Chairperson

I feel very privileged and honored to welcome you all to this, the first Asian Oceania Service Meeting. I feel that we are present at a historic moment for A.A. in this region of the world. We are continuing what Bill envisaged when he first proposed a world service meeting in 1967.

Unlike the European Service Meeting with its several languages, similar cultures in the main and shorter distances to travel; the Ibero-American Service Meeting with one main languages, similar cultures and longer distances to travel; we have many races, many cultures, many languages, and long distances to travel; but like the other two meetings we have one thing in common - the illness of alcoholism, its trail of despair and destruction, and our wonderful program of recovery.

Our theme of "Twelve Stepping Your Neighbor Country" is particularly appropriate to New Zealand because, being a younger country in terms of our culture and heritage we tend to forget that as far as A.A. is concerned we are in fact one of the older countries. We tend to forget that we have a lot to share with our neighbors, that we have a responsibility to those who may not have a service structure as developed as our own. Twelve stepping involves more than just one alcoholic talking to another, it also means one country helping another. We may have much to offer our neighbors, but we also have a lot to learn from them as well - it is a two-way street. We need to look beyond our own shoreline to the rest of our region, to help bring a unity to the area and a single sense of purpose.

At this meeting we will be sharing our experiences in dealing with problems that arise in our own countries; problems that can divert us from our primary purpose; problems with our 7th Traditions of self support; problems with anonymity; problems with other types of recovery programs - this is the place for us to share our knowledge gained from experience with each other. In doing this we retain our unity and our simplicity - our unity that is necessary for our lasting recovery, and the simplicity that is basic in the preservation of our personal sobriety.

May we have a successful meeting; may our sharing be fruitful and beneficial to all of us in this region; may we have a positive outcome that results in a suitable recommendation to take back to our own countries.

Bob F. 

Keynote Address

Larry and I would like to extend warmest A.A. love and all best wishes for the success of this meeting on behalf of your friends at G.S.O. and the General Service Board, U.S.A. and Canada.

Last night, during a walk, Bob mentioned that, although A.A. began in America, it is not an American idea. Reflecting on this, it seems to me that A.A. embraces principles that can be found in all cultures and that reflect a common struggle to find a way to lead a better life, in community with others, through spiritual means. A.A.'s timeless principles know no cultural, religious, political or ethnic barriers.

Not long before he died, Bill, recognizing that A.A. had reached other shores, had taken root and would surely grow, conceived an idea for a World Service Meeting. He suggested that each country, having a sufficient structure to enable it to do so, would send two delegates for a meeting of sharing to be held bi-annually. No decisions would be made other than those effecting the meeting itself. Last year's World Service Meeting was held in Cartagena, Colombia. Akiyo, Naoto, Bob, Trevor and Larry, who are here today, were among the delegates from 28 countries on six continents who attended that meeting. In 1980, "zonal" meetings were formed to be held in Europe and South America during the years when there was no World Service Meeting. In 1993, nineteen countries attended the European Service Meeting in Germany and about ten countries were represented at the Ibero-American Meeting in Brazil. Bob tells me he discussed the idea of an Asian/Oceania meeting with one of my predecessors (another Bob P.) ten years ago. Today represents the first step towards an Asian/Oceania meeting, truly an exciting event.

There is no part of the world that offers a greater opportunity, or perhaps greater challenges, for A.A. to fulfill its sole and simple mission — helping the alcoholic who still suffers. With respect to the challenges, all of you are better aware of them than we in the U.S./Canada. In Asia/Oceania there are all the major religions, and more people, probably more alcoholics, and more languages than the rest of the world combined. A.A. is not well understood everywhere in Asia/Oceania. It may be thought to be an American, a Western, and a Christian movement. Alcoholism may be little understood in terms of being an illness that is treatable.

While all of this may make the task more difficult, we should not be discouraged. In Russia and Eastern Europe, under Communism, alcoholism was considered to be criminal behavior or a mental illness. Yet, as Larry can tell

you, A.A. is now growing rapidly in Russia. Ten years ago there were about five to ten groups in Poland. Last year the Polish World Service Meeting Delegate told us that there were nearly 1,000 groups in his country. A.A. was slow to take root in the Mediterranean countries - some thought the nature of the culture and drinking habits in Mediterranean countries were such that A.A. would not work there. An English-speaking meeting met in Rome for many years and could not sober up even one Italian. Then there was one, and, in a relatively few years, A.A. has spread throughout Italy. A.A. is probably the most democratic institution in human history, and it was long thought that it could not flourish in non-democratic societies. But it took root in South America where the history of democratic institutions has been difficult, and is now thriving throughout that continent. We have translated A.A. literature into Turkish, Persian and Arabic, languages of Muslim countries where the use of alcohol is contrary to religion. A World Service Meeting Delegate from South Africa, who is a Hindu of Indian descent, will be one of the speakers at the Big Opening Meeting at the International Convention in San Diego this year.

The theme of this meeting is "Countries Sponsoring Countries." There are many examples of this in A.A. history. On an individual basis, naturalized Americans visiting their homelands and businessmen visiting countries, or returning to their own countries, where there was no A.A., have carried the message. On an organized basis, Mexico has sponsored newly-formed A.A. in Cuba and worked with the professional community to explain our program. German and Finnish A.A.s, along with other Western European A.A.s, carried the message to Communist Russia and Eastern Europe for many years, and continue to share their experience, strength and hope with A.A.s in those countries. Sweden has translated literature for Estonia and Lithuania.

The General Service Board U.S./Canada is willing to do whatever it can to help anywhere — not as world leader but simply as, for the time being, the largest service entity with perhaps the most resources. We have 90 employees. One staff member and an assistant work exclusively on international matters. Our Publishing Department works with overseas A.A.s with respect to translating, licensing and publishing literature. We have a continuing list of foreign literature projects which we can talk about later today. We listen carefully to all requests for assistance in the effort to translate and publish A.A. literature in new languages.

Other members of the World Service Meeting have contributed to the Foreign Literature Assistance Fund which our G.S.O. administers. For me, this represents a wonderful expression of the willingness of A.A.s everywhere to participate in the fulfillment of our mission to carry the message.

Bill frequently stated that "A.A. unity is our most precious possession." What does A.A. "unity" mean and how do we achieve it? It seems to me that it simply means that there are responsibilities to the alcoholic who still suffers that cannot be filled by one alcoholic acting individually, by one group as a group, or perhaps by one country acting on its own. Rather, there are shared responsibilities to protect and carry the A.A. message in which all A.A. members and groups throughout the world have an opportunity to participate. Last night we were talking about the fact that, although we refer to Bill's thoughts a great deal, much less is said about Dr. Bob's. As you all know, Dr. Bob believed we should "keep it simple" and that it all really came down to the principle of love and service. I have long thought that the two ideas idea of love and service are inseparable. Without a willingness to be of service, I do not see how I can really feel that I have love and, in A.A., it has been my long experience that service without love simply does not work.

There's no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the Asian/Oceania Service Meeting will represent Dr. Bob's vision of A.A. love and service at its finest.

George D. [REDACTED]

Country Reports

The Status of A.A. in My Country

Hong Kong

Alcoholics Anonymous in Hong Kong just celebrated its 25th annual convention and birthday in October 1994. Although it started out very small, it has continued to grow throughout the years. We are now a strong and thriving fellowship comprised mostly of expatriate members from England, Australia, America and many other countries. Being a transient place, visitors are common and hail from everywhere imaginable.

The service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in Hong Kong is somewhat unusual compared to other countries like the United States. We primarily consist of one whole large group made up of many meetings as opposed to having many groups existing separately. The reason for this is that Hong Kong AA still remains very small and is contained in a close geographical area. All of our meetings fall under one umbrella called "Hong Kong Group of Alcoholics Anonymous" .

Our group functions with one committee consisting of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. Also working with that committee we have individuals serving as secretaries to handle Public Information (media and schools) , Hospitals and Institutions, Literature, Housekeeping, Phone List and a Telephone Answering Machine Team. Each of these positions are held for one year by each individual and the turnover happens every October.

A committee/business meeting is held once a month and all pertinent items are discussed at that time. We try to encourage all committee members, meeting secretaries and fellow members to attend. As with all groups, we usually have many areas to cover and discuss such as finances, problem solving, sobriety events, meeting support and attendance, etc. We are no different from groups everywhere else, especially in trying to uphold the Traditions for the group and in dealing with "personalities before principles" .

Each meeting under this umbrella has a secretary/chairperson. This is covered on a six-month basis with the changeovers in October and April. Their duty is the same as all AA meetings worldwide which is to set-up the meeting areas, make coffee, greet members and lead-off and close the meeting.

As it stands now, we have a total of 27 meetings per week in six (6) different venues. These venues are made up of a central office (which also serves as the main meeting room with a meeting everyday at 6:00 p.m.) , churches and public facilities. We are able to offer two to three meetings most days in a variety of locations. They are mostly topic/discussion meetings along with a meeting for Men and one of Women, Step/Tradition meetings, a Big Book meeting and a Chinese speaking meeting.

We have approximately 120 members to date which can fluctuate as Hong Kong is a very transient place. We may have up to 25 changes quarterly to our active phone list. These changes are primarily due to people moving in and out, business travel and people taking extended leave. This makes for very interesting meeting attendance! In the summer months (June - August) , the meeting attendance drops dramatically with many members leaving the country.

We have a list of volunteers for twelve-stepping, speaking in schools, etc. There is a need for a temporary sponsorship program and we are considering the possibility for the future.

Almost all of our literature comes from the General Service Office in New York. Even the information printed in Chinese which is the native language for Hong Kong comes from the States. We now have a Chinese Big Book along with five pamphlets in Chinese. One of our local members translated the Big Book, which was then sent to GSO/New York for printing. It took him many hours of hard work to complete it and he is one our most active Chinese members. He has also provided Presentation #2 following this report on "How AA works in my country" . This will explain more fully the Asian/Chinese viewpoint on cultural differences.

Although the service structure we have been describing has worked very well to date, we are finding that we may have to consider changing the structure in the near future. Hong Kong AA is growing and we are adding new meetings constantly. Many of our old-time members believe it is getting too large to stay as it is. Tradition number four, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole" , may come in good stead for us. We are finding "personalities before principles" may eventually break up the large group into many smaller autonomous groups.

We are looking to the future with hopes. The changeover of rule in 1997 is fast approaching and we cannot project the outcome to our group. We are not anticipating any problems, although we are sure to be faced with some changes. There may be a drop in the expatriate participation here as many of our members have moved back to their home countries already. We can only apply the principles of our program and take it "One Day at a Time" and deal with

things "First Things First" . We are putting forth the effort today to maintain A.A. and sobriety for the group as a whole and will leave the rest to a Power greater than ourselves to decide the outcome.

Donna P [REDACTED]

Korea

The first seed of A.A. in Korea was planted by one member from Ireland 12 years ago, in December, 1982. The meeting was started as a halfway-house-type meeting at Sanggye-Dong. Later, a Catholic priest made a treatment center for alcoholics and spread the message.

Gradually, the number of meetings increased, so we needed the structure of a united group and an office. At first we opened the office at Yangjae-Dong located south of Seoul. After one year we moved it to downtown Seoul.

Now, meetings are largely divided into four areas and we have 23 registered groups and 300 regular members attending the meetings in Korea. There are some committees, such as literature, hospital, public information, mediation and so on. A business meeting of the united meeting of volunteers is held once a week. The hospital committee has a meeting once a month and discusses the relations with treatment centers. Also they carry the message to treatment centers approximately 25 times per week. Also the mediation, literature and public information committees have meetings very often.

We have a united group country-wide every three months and each groups has a meeting with the united group every month.

Recently, many women and young people want to attend the meeting and ask about Alcoholics Anonymous. Actually, the number of women attending regularly is increasing this year. A womens' closed meeting was started last year, but the number of women is relatively low.

The Big Book was translated in 1985, "12 Steps and 12 Traditions" in 1989, and "Living Sober" in 1994. Also we are continuously translating many kinds of A.A. pamphlets.

An International Convention has been held yearly since it started at Yong-Pyung in 1992. This year, the 4th International Convention, (of which the Kwangju Group will be in charge) , will be held at Mt. Jiri Tourist Hotel on the last weekend of October 1995.

J.Y. P [REDACTED]

Japan

Since A.A. arrived in Japan in March 1975, we came of age this year, and celebrate the twentieth anniversary in Omiya, a city north of Tokyo. This event will be the biggest gathering in the history of A.A. in Japan.

There are about 275 A.A. groups registered in seven areas in Japan. We have six central offices in the seven areas, each of them with paid workers. The only area without a central office is Hokkaido, the large northern island. About 3,500 members regularly attend A.A. meetings. Recently, many young people and women have joined the Fellowship. They now represent a greater proportion of our membership, and their opinions are given thorough consideration at our General Service Meeting and on other occasions. Since, in our experience, young people and women tend to have other addictive problems, such as drug habits and eating disorders, we have found it necessary to remind them and their therapists of A.A.'s primary purpose.

We have a good relationship with the professional community. Approximately 1,000 hospitals, clinics and non-medical facilities regularly receive the A.A. message. A few years ago, a Japanese sociologist declared that A.A. is basically for alcoholics who live in urban areas and whose life-styles are individualistic. Alcoholics who live in rural areas and who follow traditional customs, he said, are not suited to A.A. Nonetheless, with the guidance of our Higher Power, in recent years A.A. groups are growing slowly but steadily, not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas in which, in the past, A.A. had penetrated very little.

Although Japan has not yet set up a general service board, we have taken a big step forward forming a general service structure and board. Starting last year, the office standing committee, which handles the administrative activities of the JSO, was composed of elected, rather than self-appointed, members.

We have been translating many important pieces of A.A. Conference-approved literature into Japanese. We now have in print a new, revised translation of the Twelve and Twelve in which spiritual terms are more sensitively rendered than in the past edition.

Naoto C 

Vanuatu

A.A. in Vanuatu is relatively new. The first seeds of the A.A. program were planted by Dick K. from Australia, who lived sober in Vanuatu for more than ten years, as a loner. It was only in mid 1991 that a meeting of A.A. started with the membership of Toby C. from New Zealand, Vicky and Marcus from the U.S. and soon afterwards Teresa S. from Mexico, Keith B. from Australia and Bob H. from the U.S.

At the beginning we took turns to host the weekly meeting at our homes or office. In late 1991 a member made available an unused garage that we dressed-up and used as a permanent A.A. meeting place. One year ago a different member provided a room close to his home which is used until now for our meetings.

Our group has nine members, with an attendance of five or six at each meeting. There are two regular meetings per week, in the evening, of one or one and a half hours. We have also extraordinary meetings, as for newcomers, for whom we organize daily study meetings, for visitors or at the request of any member who may need it.

The service structure is minimum. There is a secretary, who takes care of our mail, answers inquiries, etc. The rest of the members volunteer to buy provisions of coffee and soft drinks and to bring A.A. literature when they travel abroad.

Vanuatu has three official languages: English, French, and Bislama. Our A.A. group is English speaking although some of our members are fluent in French or Bislama. Most of our A.A. literature is in English language but we have basic texts in French and two members had the translation made to Bislama of chapters four and five of the Big Book.

Teresa S. [REDACTED]

New Zealand

History. On January 3rd 1946, after reading a Reader's Digest article entitled "Maybe You Can Do It Too", our first member, Ian Mc, wrote to the New York Office asking for help and thereby started A.A. in New Zealand. In January next year the Fellowship will celebrate 50 years of Alcoholics Anonymous in our country.

Progress in the early years was slow and by 1948 there were five members in the country; the first A.A.group, with a membership of three, registered with

G.S.O. New York in June of the same year. The early members relied heavily on the Big Book to work the program. By 1951 there were six groups with a total membership of forty six. The first woman member joined in May 1949.

From the earliest times of A.A. in New Zealand, it was found that the groups that were healthiest were those that had a high quality of sponsorship within their structure, and today, more than forty years after they were started, this continues to be true.

Service and Area Structure. A national service structure for New Zealand was first suggested in 1960, about 14 years after A.A. had come to the country. The Intergroups of that time set up an interim conference which met in July 1961 and drew up suggestions for a General Service Conference and a General Service Office.

These guidelines were accepted by the Fellowship at the first National Convention held in February 1964, and the first official Conference was held in August of that year. From 1965 onwards the Conference meetings were held twice a year.

At first New Zealand was divided into four areas, with three delegates per area and one representative of A.A. Loners. At the 8th meeting in February 1968 three non-A.A. members were invited to attend, and in August 1969 the Loner representative was discontinued. At that time too, the structure was re-arranged to its present form of three areas with three delegates per area, four non-A.A. delegates, and a Chairman. The delegates (A.A.) are elected for a 3 year term, one rotating off each year. The Chairman, elected by Conference, stands for election each year and serves for a maximum of 3 years. These are the voting members of Conference. Also present, without voting rights, is the Conference secretary, the treasurer, the two W.S.M. delegates, and the Chairman of the Management Committee.

We do not have a General Service Board as described in the A.A. Service Manual, but we have a General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Incorporated as a legal entity which A.A. itself is not. This enables the Fellowship to enter into commercial contracts; for example, contracts of insurance, lease agreements, and such things as the purchase of literature. This removes the liability from the members of our service structure. Very importantly it also enables us to apply for legal ownership of the A.A. logos, the words Alcoholics Anonymous, and the A.A. symbols. The Board elects a Management Committee which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Fellowship's needs and the General Service Office. The Board is appointed by Conference and they act for and under the direction of Conference.

New Zealand has always been a firm supporter of the World Service Meeting and has sent two delegates to each meeting. Even when we were experiencing financial problems in the mid-80s, we still realized the importance of the W.S.M. and continued to send the two delegates.

New Zealand has 358 registered groups, 34 institutional groups, and 13 Loners, with a total membership of approximately 4,000. Each of the three Areas holds its own Assembly, usually quarterly, and operates under their own guidelines. We hold a National Convention each year, the site rotates through the three Areas, and is held in February.

The Areas also have Intergroups, a good training ground for future service at National level, and also for enhancing communication. One Area is experimenting with operating District Committees and seems to be having limited success.

The major cities each have a Service Centre that is run by the local groups, mainly for telephone answering services, literature, answering requests for speakers, and other similar tasks. The staff who run these centres are in the main volunteers.

Literature. Our General Service Office was established in 1968 and today has one full time non-A.A. employee. The office handles our literature supplies with most of it coming from New York. Our own publications include pamphlets in the language of the Pacific Islands.

The Fellowship is serviced bi-annually with a newsletter circulated to all groups with copies for members. The monthly magazine "Mainstay" is supported by annual subscription. Sales are stable but the magazine is barely self-supporting. The Service Centre in Auckland produces its own magazine "Unity" .

General. Our service structure in New Zealand is functioning well and is meeting the needs of a country our size. It is easy for the groups to be heard as, even where there are Intergroups and District Committees, they can voice their opinions, through their G.S.Rs., direct to the Assemblies and the G.S.C. delegates present. Possibly if we grow much bigger we may expand our service structure, but that will not happen in the foreseeable future.

Bob P. 

Messages from Other Countries

South Australia

Feb. 8, 1995

Dear Yukie,

I am sure you have been advised that the General Service Conference of A.A. here in Australia took the decision not to be represented at the inaugural meeting of the Asia Oceania Service Meeting at this time. I was at the Conference here in Australia at the time that the decision was taken.

I am also aware that your country and also New Zealand expressed their great disappointment at the World Service Meeting held in Cartagena in October of last year. This is quite well known here in Australia and I feel quite sure that the matter of Australia's participation in the Asian/Oceania meeting will be raised at the next Australian Conference in November of 1995. A number of people who will attend the Conference have expressed to me that they hope the decision not to be represented will be reconsidered.

I am, however, taking the liberty of sending a report about A.A. in Australia. It is basically similar to the one submitted in Cartagena but has been divided into two. The reason for this is that Australia first established our Fellowship in 1943 in Sydney. In the next few years A.A. Offices (called Central Service Offices) spread from Sydney to all of the Australian Capital Cities in the six Australian states and later to the larger provincial towns.

It is interesting to note that in our infancy our predecessors made a similar claim that "A.A.'s twelve step program of recovery was not appropriate for Australia". After the "demise" of our first AA Office we did change our mind and revived A.A. following more faithfully the recommendations that our American brothers and sisters were more closely adhering to.

So our earlier structure was a loosely bound system of Offices throughout the more populous centers in Australia. More lately the General Service Conference structure with a system of Area Committees and District Committees came into being. So we have a dual structure more or less working quite happily with each other and we try to be complementary in our efforts.

I hope this may be of some assistance and will follow up any matters you may care to raise.

Yours very sincerely in A.A. Service & Fellowship,

Brian J N [REDACTED]
Australian World Service Delegate

General Service Office
of Alcoholics Anonymous, India
26th December 1994

Dear Yukie,

REF: ESTABLISHING ASIAN OCEANIA
SERVICE MEETING

We had put up the idea of establishing the Asian Oceania Service Meeting at our XIV National Conference held on 10/12th December 1994 at Nagpur and it was suggested that the G.S.O. Board should decide on this issue. Accordingly the Board met on 24th December 1994 and have decided to endorse the formation of this A.A. Service Meeting.

However, we regret that due to financial restraints, we will be unable to send any delegates from India. But we will inform you regularly of our activities over here by sending you our G.S.O. Newsletter and other reports.

Wishing you all the best of success.

Yours in the Service of A.A.

JEET C.
TRUSTEE/GEN.SECRETARY

Beijing, P.R. China
February 3, 1995

Dear Yukie,

As my previous correspondence has indicated, we will not be able to attend the Asian Oceania Service Meeting in March due to mainly financial considerations.

However, we are extremely interested in receiving copies of presentation reports that will be given by the participating countries, for the suggested

topics have a lot of bearing on how we may/may not carry the message here in mainland China.

At the present time we are concentrating on reaching out to the foreign community in Beijing — in terms of Public Information Work and Cooperation with the Professional Community. Our primary difficulty at this stage is receiving literature, i.e. Big Books, 12&12s, and Newcomer pamphlets, that can be distributed during or in conjunction with our service work. Any assistance you may provide us with would be extremely welcome.

If you or your committee are not able to respond directly to this letter, please forward it to the appropriate personnel. Following the Service Meeting in March we anxiously await copies of the minutes of the proceedings.

Yours in love and service,

Marie T. OB.

Western Samoa

October 18, 1994

Dear Yukie,

We agree with the idea and establishment of an Asian Oceania Service Meeting. We wish you all well.

We are a very small group here, and no-one will be able to attend.

May your 20th Anniersary Conention be a success.

In February, next year, AA here will be 4 years old.

Yours sincerely,

Ray,
for AA Apia

Tonga

October 31, 1994

A.A. JAPAN GSO

Thank you for your invitation for us to send 2 members to Tokyo in March 1995. We think it is a great idea and wish you success. However, it is not possible for us to send any delegates — there are only 2 of us here!!

Our meetings have been going for a little over 1 year. We have had 3 or 4 casual visitors from overseas and 4 or 5 people drop in locally. Both of us found A.A. outside Tonga, and do our best to spread the word here — but to date we've not attracted anyone.

We live in hope, and ask that you give our Wednesday 7:30 pm meeting a bit of publicity.

Thanks for being there.

John & Lance

Presentations

How A.A. Works in My Country

Hong Kong

Alcoholism in Hong Kong

Alcoholism is becoming an increasingly serious problem in Hong Kong, particularly among the Chinese drinkers. And very little is being done to prevent and deal with this fast-growing problem, which one expert estimates affects at least 350,000 hard drinkers.

It becomes worrying that a lot of alcoholics themselves fail to realize that alcohol can kill, in various forms. Instead society endorses and in many ways encourages drinking, disregarding the dangerous and sometimes fatal consequences of alcohol abuse. The soaring consumption of alcoholic beverages are evidence of the growing drinking problem in Hong Kong.

The growth of potential alcoholics among the Chinese community in Hong Kong is alarming. In the 50s and 60s, only a few Chinese could be seen in bars. Now the situation is completely the opposite — expatriates are often the minority in most bars.

Alcoholics in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, local alcoholics wishing to overcome the problem can seek help from the detoxification unit attached to the Psychiatric Department, of a Government Hospital. Patients are usually treated for five or six days in such units, and released after their withdrawal symptoms are passed away. Detoxification is also available at a private hospital for alcoholics who can afford to pay a bill afterwards.

Long-term rehabilitation for alcoholics is not available in Hong Kong. Patients who can financially afford, can go to the UK, the US, Australia or the Philippines to undergo live-in rehabilitation programs. Nothing like that is available in Hong Kong.

Comments have also been made by the professionals that successful rehabilitation for alcoholics, like any other drug addicts, must be accompanied by strong follow-up care to prevent relapses.

A.A. Program for Chinese Alcoholics in Hong Kong

The number of calls from Chinese drinkers with a drinking problem is rising. Some callers ask if there isn't some kind of magic tablet that can take away their dependency on alcohol. They fail to realize that alcoholism is a disease. They simply can't accept it. What they want is instant cure.

Most of A.A. growth in Hong Kong occurred in English speaking meetings. In 1988, the start to get Chinese-language A.A. rolling, with dual-language meetings being launched in Street Sleepers hostels and reception centers in densely crowded districts in Hong Kong. The message has been carried verbally through our efforts in the last couple of years.

Several Chinese recovering alcoholics (at the moment, there are 5 Chinese active sober members in A.A. and among them, 4 Chinese members have stayed sober through the help of English speaking A.A.) in A.A. have shared that they realize today, there is no cure for alcoholism. What they have is a program of recovery. Whether they can recover depends on how they commit themselves to work the 12 steps program of Alcoholics Anonymous. They also shared that it is a process from which they never graduate. It is a commitment for rest of their life.

It was found that verbal interpretation had its limits and the Chinese alcoholics have restricted growth potential. It became quite clear that a consistent message needs to be presented in a written form. It was noted that conceptual fidelity of A.A. message to be translated accurately in Chinese is essential. It would be risky to do the job by professionals who have excellent translation skills but lack direct experience of recovery from alcoholism.

One of the Chinese member has been sober for 11 years with the help of the A.A. program. To express his gratitude to Alcoholics Anonymous, he has translated the basic text "Alcoholics Anonymous" into Chinese. This book was published in early last year (1994) .

Although cultural differences and religious philosophy, etc. form an important part of difficulties in Hong Kong, it should not be concluded that A.A. 12 Steps are not appropriate for the Chinese people in Hong Kong. The concept of 12 steps program is just so new for the Chinese mind in Hong Kong.

A Chinese old timer in A.A. fellowship believes that the major tasks for the growth of Chinese A.A. in Hong Kong are:

- required more active A.A. 12-steppers

(Not necessary Chinese speakers only, but English speakers in Hong Kong A.A. as a whole can be helped by Chinese Interpreters.)

- required more direct participation from Non-Chinese speaking oldtimers in Chinese meetings
(This might help the Chinese newcomers to feel the sense of belongings in a larger fellowship. This also might help to avoid the loss of interest in hearing just a few Chinese A.A. sharing in small fellowship. The average Chinese newcomers in Hong Kong have indicated that small fellowship would cause loss of interest to keep coming back.)
- required more Chinese A.A. literatures
(Hopefully, the Chinese text of "12 steps and 12 traditions" will be completely translated and published in the near future.
- developed closer links with hospitals in particular regards with Chinese sufferers who might join the program during or after detoxification at the hospital.

Conclusion

We can now look back on A.A. growth in Hong Kong since 1970s through expansion and consolidation to 1980s. What do we hope for 1990s? Having high hopes that, among other things, Chinese-language A.A. should really get off the ground in the next few years. As regards the future of Hong Kong and the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, we seem to worry about it rather less than others. It should be believed that we are learning not to project too much and to be grateful for what we have: something of immeasurable worth, and pass it away to others in order to stay sober. It is also, for us A.A.s (Chinese speakers or English speakers) in Hong Kong to believe that POWER makes the impossible come true.

Peter

Japan

In Japan A.A., we have about 270 groups and it is said there are about 3,800 ~ 4,000 members. Most members are sober and have been recovering by Alcoholics Anonymous.

They have a Home Group and believe in sponsorship. Some members are devoted to A.A. service work and believe in rotation, but some do not. Anyhow, recovering members attend A.A. meetings regularly.

In the A.A. groups, we respect anonymity as much as possible, but some members misunderstand the anonymity and think it means secret, or break their anonymity. Also we endeavor to protect our traditions. Also every member is doing his or her best to use the 12 steps. And we carry the message to suffering alcoholics in hospitals, treatment centers, or wherever. We do this for ourselves. I'm sure this is one of the most important things in our A.A. service. And of course we never forget to have fun and enjoy our delightful fellowship!

By chance, I received a letter from an American member last December. She asked me how to help Southern Asian members.

My answer is just "it is the same way. To carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world he or she may be, whatever the language he or she speaks and to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other, as stated in the statement of purpose at the WSM" .

Now I am convinced that Sobriety is a gift from God, carrying the message and sharing our experience from my heart is God's will. By helping others I help myself.

Akiyo M [REDACTED]

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is a Melanesian country with very strong family and group ties and a strong Christian influence. Until now, with one exception, A.A. members in Vanuatu have been expatriates with a Western cultural background. For many years Dick K., as a loner tries to carry the A.A. message to "Ni-Vanuatu" with drinking problems with some success, as several of them stopped drinking, but in all cases decided to join-back their churches and did not form an A.A. group as such. We think that cultural differences may have been the cause, although we do not think that this is reason enough to propose a change to the content of the A.A. program.

Maybe when there are more local members, they will decide to adapt, more than the content of the program, the style of the meetings to their needs. Two factors that will be relevant in this sense are;

a) Melanesian people — in our experience — do not like to share their personal experience in a group setting. They instead like to listen to a speaker, as in church.

b) The consumption of alcohol is usually combined with cava, a drink with sedative effects, but different from alcohol, used ritually and socially throughout Melanesia.

Teresa S [REDACTED]

New Zealand

New Zealand is a small country having a population approaching 4 million and a land area of slightly less than Japan. We shall on the 3rd January next year (1996) celebrate 50 years of Alcoholics Anonymous in our country. We have 358 registered groups, 34 institutional groups and 13 loners with total membership of approximately 4000.

When I joined the fellowship more than 32 years ago, there was not the wide ethnic spread that we now enjoy here. Initially the membership was European New Zealanders but with the growing acceptance of A.A. our membership now includes our indigenous Maori New Zealanders. From my observations these members of the fellowship do not encounter any greater difficulty than anyone else in accepting the 12 step program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the concept of a higher power as they each individually understand it. Our General Service Conference recently approved the printing of the "12 Steps and 12 Traditions" in the Maori language.

There are some members of the fellowship from the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands, who appear to have no greater difficulty in accepting the A.A. 12 step program and the concept of a higher power. The main difficulty seems to be that of language as the meetings here are conducted in English.

We also have a small number of Indians in the fellowship who have obtained and maintain their sobriety through the practice of the A.A. 12 step program.

It is interesting to observe that while there appears to be an increase in the number of women joining the fellowship these seem to be mainly European.

Due to the greater public acceptance of Alcoholics Anonymous as a successful recovery program more alcoholics are likely to seek help. In this regard we have a good public information network and also have an annual public awareness week during which we have exposure to television spots, radio talk back programs and the like. Perhaps these sources will help to attract those in need from the large number of immigrants from South East Asia and Polynesia.

Trevor C [REDACTED]

A Letter for Help

December 14, 1994

Dear Fellow A.A. Member,

Hi. My name is Ann and I am a recovering alcoholic. I am writing to you for help.

Five years ago, I helped start a Cambodian A.A. group, here in Providence, Rhode Island. We faced many obstacles in this endeavor such as:

1. No Cambodians in recovery
2. Language barriers
3. No literature (now we have 3 pamphlets)
4. Many people illiterate even in native language (Khmer)
5. Cambodian members unable or unwilling to main-stream into American A.A. groups
6. Confusion about differences between A.A. and treatment

Five years later, the group still exists, but has not grown much and does not function well independently. We do have 5 or 6 people who come regularly and are remaining sober.

My concern is as follows: many Southeast Asian leaders in the U.S.A. are saying that A.A. and 12-Step programs are not appropriate for Southeast Asians because of cultural differences, Buddhist philosophy, saving face, etc. I would like to refute this, as I believe A.A. will work for any group or culture, but I don't have any facts.

Do you have any information or personal experience that A.A. works for Asian people? If you would write back to me, I would appreciate hearing your story and/or thoughts on the subject.

Thanks you very much.

Sincerely,

Ann

Recommendations

This meeting recommends to the countries in the Asian Oceania area that:

1. The AOSM meets every two years, in the year alternate to the WSM.
2. Each participating country sends up to two delegates.
3. Finance be the responsibility of each country.
4. The position of chairman be rotated each meeting.
5. The position of secretary and the administration not necessarily be rotated on a regular base.
6. Every country in this region be eligible to send delegates to the AOSM.
7. The proposed next host country be New Zealand with the meeting to be held in March 1997 and be of two days duration.

It was also decided that observers be welcomed but they have no voting rights and only speak on the invitation of the chairman.

Closing Remarks

I would like to thank all the delegates present for participating in this, the 1st Asian Oceania Service Meeting. I would also thank the observers too, particularly George and Larry from the U.S.A., for their input. I feel both sad and glad at this point, sad that it is finishing, but glad that I have been present at this meeting, both representing New Zealand and as your chairman. It has been a meeting of joy in sharing and love in service. It is a further step forward in zonal meetings, held in conjunction with the World Service Meeting. It is continuing what Bill W. started.

I realize that some countries would have liked to be present, but due to circumstances beyond their control were unable to do so, but I hope, that after reading the report of this meeting, they will be able to be at the 2nd meeting scheduled to be held in New Zealand in March 1997. They will realize that this is just an extension of the service work in their own country, that they can learn from this meeting, and that they can offer help as well. Maybe it will help to establish formal service structures in those countries which do not have them at present. I feel that Asian/Oceania can offer more opportunity and much challenge for the spread of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Let us make sure that we progress from this meeting of "Twelve Stepping Your Neighbour Country", and that what we have done today becomes the basis for the future expansion of the Asian Oceania Service Meeting.

Finally may I offer our heartfelt thanks to our hosts, for their support and their administration work, the support of the Japan Service Office, their Office Standing Committee, and particularly my secretary at this meeting, Yukie Yamamoto.

I thank you for the privilege of serving the Fellowship in this position at the 1st Asian Oceania Service Meeting.

Bob F. [REDACTED] Chairman

For more copies,

A.A. JAPAN GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE
c/o Tachibana Bldg. 9th Fl.
2-23-3 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku
Tokyo 171, Japan

TEL. 03 - 3590 - 5377
FAX. 03 - 3590 - 5419