

## World Service Business Conference – May 1-5, 2006

---

Hello! I am Mike Bernard, a gratefully recovering compulsive overeater, blessed with recovery from compulsive eating in Overeaters Anonymous since January 4, 1990. I have been abstinent almost that whole time, am about 80 lbs. from my highest weight of 268 lbs. and have released, by the grace of my Higher Power and the 12 Steps tons and tons of resentment, pain, and fear. And you have given me the honor of being the Baltimore Area Intergroup delegate to the World Service Business Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico from May 1-5, 2006.

This is the summary of my experience and of information provided at the Conference. There are separate and more detailed reports on the Business Meetings, Region Forum and Committee Work, Workshops, “Heard at Meetings,” and Miscellaneous Items. All will be available for review. The Intergroup will use this information to review and expand its service work.

When I first started attending OA I heard people qualify every time they shared for the first time at a meeting. For whatever reason, I almost never hear any member qualify now. However, at the Conference, I heard it constantly and I realized that I missed it. I encourage you to qualify when you share as it gives newcomers hope and all of us a reason to celebrate what recovery does for us. Recovery gives me new life and a better life every day.

I worked with amazing people at the Conference, all who “qualified” when they shared, and who have long-term recovery and significant abstinence from compulsive eating. We debated business motions, shared in workshops, discussed issues in Region Forum, and supported each other in meetings. I attended 11 OA meetings at the conference, as several were held each day – and I had the privilege of leading one on the 12<sup>th</sup> Step.

---

### Business Meetings – the Motions and other Actions

There were five business meetings during the week. What gave me chills was that each meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer, once in a foreign language, and then in English. The Serenity Prayer was said in Hebrew, French, Spanish, Swedish, and Italian.

The first meeting consisted of a roll call of the Regions where delegates and visitors were asked to stand as their state, province, or country was called. What a thrill to see people from all over the world! Reports from the Trustee Chair, Treasurer, Managing Directors, Region Chairs, and Committee Reports were reviewed and approved.

At the second business meeting, Trustee nominations were reviewed. Debbie Wilson of Region 3 (U.S. Southwest), Margaret Ann Brady of Region 6 (New York, New England, eastern Canada), Dominique Buffet of Region 9 (Europe, most of Asia, Africa), and General Service Trustee Michael Buckley (no specific region assigned) qualified, spoke, and answered questions. The delegates later affirmed and installed all four trustee candidates in an almost unanimous vote.

Business motions were discussed and acted upon during the second and third business meetings. The review of these motions was completed so quickly that the fourth business meeting finished two hours early. This gave everyone the opportunity for more free time to shop for souvenirs (which I did), spend time with new OA friends (which I did), and relax (which I did). These are the results of the motions:

- Move to change the name of HIPM (Hospital, Institution, Professional, and Military) to “Professional Outreach” – adopted unanimously.
- Move to change the structure of solicitation of and financial distribution for regions to co-host or host World Service Conventions – was split into two motions to address structure

- and financial distribution separately. The structure motion failed, the financial distribution motion was withdrawn.
- Move to combine Unity Day with the OA Birthday celebrations – motion was substituted with one that corrected a factual error in the original, then an amendment was suggested to change the time of the Serenity Prayer from 11:30 a.m. Pacific Standard time to 11:30 a.m. local time. The amendment failed, and the original proposal was withdrawn.
  - Move to add a ninth tool, “exercise” – the motion was amended to add a ninth tool, a “plan of physical activity,” which would parallel the tool a “plan of eating.” The motion failed with about 65% of delegates voting against it.
  - Move to amend the OA, Inc. By-Laws to require all groups and service bodies to have by-laws compliant with and including OA Subpart B – There were three motions, one each affecting Intergroups, National Service Language Boards, and Regions. The first motion failed, just missing the 2/3 vote required to pass. The latter two motions were withdrawn and all three will be reworked and reintroduced in the 2007 World Service Business Conference.

At the fourth business meeting, Trustees answered questions that were placed in the Ask-It Basket that was available all week at the Conference Support Center, a support area where OA volunteers guided delegates in their questions and concerns. Some valuable information was discussed, including these tidbits:

- If someone is cross-talking during meetings, it may be best to talk to that person privately to explain crosstalk, why it’s harmful, and show them in our literature that in the meetings we share about our own experience, strength, and hope. You may suggest to the member to discuss crosstalk with his or her sponsor and other OA members to fully understand it.
- When asked if extra Conference books are available, we were informed that Conference information, including the main conference book is available on the [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) website, but the books themselves are provided only to delegates as they are covered under the cost of delegate registrations.
- A “rapid report” of the conference motion results will be available two weeks after the Conference. A full report will be sent to delegates later, in approximately 30 days.
- If you remove your body from the truth, it waits for you. When you bring your body to the truth, you find the truth of recovery.
- It is important for all OA meetings and Intergroups to have and USE the “OA Handbook for Groups and Intergroups.”
- Meetings and service bodies can reprint, without permission any downloadable documents from [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), excerpts of items being used to perform duties. Also many OA newsletters state reprinting or use of articles is allowed by other OA members and service bodies.
- Sometimes we give too much weight to anonymity...so much so that members won’t know that we are giving service.

### Region Forum and Committee Work

All 200 delegates and trustees joined together in a morning-long Region Forum in which a host of subjects were discussed, including online “Listservs” and other services, cooperation of Intergroups, financial concerns of service bodies, and HIPM/Professional Outreach. Members were asked to answer two to three questions on a pre-prepared worksheet, discuss our experiences and thoughts in our groups of six to ten people. A spokesperson from each group then reported their answers to the entire body.

Every delegate had the opportunity to join a World Service committee that requires collaboration and service for one year. I joined the 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within committee and joined 30 others to form several subcommittees. I am on the Speaker List sub-committee, and my job is to receive applications for and update a worldwide speaker list, where members can speak at a meeting or other event anywhere in the world, should service body so choose to ask that member to attend.

Our Intergroup's Retreat Committee is going to take advantage of this list as there is a member from Cleveland, Ohio who we are strongly interested in asking to be our keynote speaker this August. We are researching transportation costs and will make the final decision shortly. The complete report on the Forum and the Committee work is available on the 2006 Region Forum report.

### Workshops

A full report of each workshop I attended is included in the 2006 Workshops report. Ten workshops were offered and I attended six of them:

- One discussed the “stigma” of membership and how members dealt with feelings of having to be a member of OA when nothing else worked. One member shared that she must share her OA membership. She can't let shame kill someone else.
- “Hearing is Believing” featured a powerful public information CD in which members discussed their experience, strength, and hope and what OA did for them. I bought the Intergroup a copy, which can be used in 12<sup>th</sup> Step work within and outside the program.
- A most informative workshop gave tips on how to deal with a disruptive member, whether it was a perpetual cross-talker or someone who threatening physical harm, stalking, or sexual harassment.
- “All About Conference” was for “green dots,” new delegates like me that explained how the business meetings are run.
- “Review of Parliamentary Procedure” was just that – a review of Robert's Rules of Order and OA's Standing Rules that are used to conduct the business meetings with the goal of running them smoothly.
- One of the most powerful workshops for me was the “Cultural and Ethnic Diversity” workshop. Several panelists spoke of the OA experience from their cultural, ethnic, or gender-specific perspective. Members were then invited to share of their own experience. It was a most enthusiastic group that shared some eye-opening experiences.

### Heard at Meetings

During the Conference, I jotted down phrases and statements that members shared that had an impact on me. My hope is that these will positively impact the recovery of our fellow compulsive eaters. The complete list is available on the “Heard at Meetings” report.

### Miscellaneous Items

Detailed in the 2006 Miscellaneous Items report is information that did not quite fit into a category of another report, such as information I heard about 12<sup>th</sup> Stepping and about items in the Hospitality Area.

### Now What?

At the end of the week, there was much excitement and buzz amongst the delegates about the information we have learned and the service we have done. We were most excited about bringing this gold mine of recovery back to our Intergroups and meetings. But quite a few of us were wondering where to begin. On May 6, Kalia, a delegate from Sebastopol, California called a

## World Service Business Conference – May 1-5, 2006

---

meeting to discuss how to spread the word. Here are some of the ideas that the 17 delegates in attendance discussed:

- Provide information in bits and pieces in newsletter articles and e-mail loops. There is a wealth of information to keep our service bodies and meetings informed all year.
- Post the delegate reports – in whole, in summary, and in pieces, on the Intergroup or service body's website.
- We can distribute a summary version of the report to our meetings.
- Incorporate some of these ideas in a marathon.
- Have your delegate and other delegates from other areas speak at our meetings, Intergroup meetings, and events.
- The World Service Board of Trustee members often pass through our airports to go to Albuquerque for Board Meetings. Make arrangements with a Trustee that's passing through the area to speak at meetings or events.
- Write in our reports how we felt about business motions and discussions and how it influenced our vote.
- Reports need to be only one to two pages...I will work on this one...
- Pick out things that our service bodies can do and make suggestions on how our service body can do this and add it to the list of goals for the Intergroup or service body. Create value from our Intergroup's investment of sending us to the conference. Our work here must be carried to our local service bodies.
- How can we distribute tapes and CDs from the Conference? We can create a lending library and ask for a deposit. We can publicize these in our newsletters and show how to order them.
- Go to each meeting in our service body and share about our Conference experience.
- Play the "Hearing is Believing" CD in our meetings and events. Share how we feel about what we have heard.
- Create a mock World Service Business Conference business meeting at our service body meetings to show how it works and to work through an upcoming motion.

### Conclusion

The World Service Business Conference was a most amazing experience. There is so much that we can share with compulsive eaters inside and outside the fellowship, and hearing the experience, strength, and hope of 200 OA members with long-time recovery and abstinence was profound. To see how the most basic of service bodies, the World Service level works inspires me to share in what I have learned and to affirm what our Intergroup already does very well.

I appreciate your service in providing me your and your group conscience's opinions on motions that will influence the entire fellowship. You helped create OA history. I can't thank you enough for this honor to serve as a delegate and look forward to continuing this service through my three-year term. As I work with the Intergroup to integrate this information into our service work, I hope that you will support a proposal and effort to send a second delegate to the conference, because there is an incredible amount of recovery to bring home.

I will be happy to come to your meeting to speak about my experience, strength, and hope with the hope that it helps your meeting reach out to our fellows. May you be blessed with ever deepening recovery every day.