



Ed. Note: Welcome to this special issue of the newly renamed NEI monthly newsletter **The Top Line** that recaps S.L.A.A.'s Annual Business Meeting/Conference (ABM/C) held July 31-Aug. 3 in San Antonio, Tex. Forty-eight voting members attended, including seven Board of Trustee (BOT) members, two office staffers from S.L.A.A.'s Fellowship Wide Services office, and the editor of the S.L.A.A. monthly publication "The Journal." About one-third of the delegates were attending for the first time, and a handful came from outside the U.S. All were doing service in the spirit of the 12 Traditions to strengthen our Fellowship through developing new publications, allocating resources, and other actions that will continue to feed our collective sobriety. NEI chair Seth S. attended on our behalf. What follows is his first-person account. Thank you, Seth, for your service!

Observations from ABM/C 2018

Tuesday, Day One of the ABM/C, was orientation and set up followed by an afternoon General Assembly session on the economic condition of the FWS corporation finances. The concern continues to be the paltry amount of donations the Fellowship is receiving – only about 9%-10% of total revenue. This downward Seventh Tradition trend has been going on for the past three to four years and the BOT has attempted to deal with the drop in donations by more tightly controlling expenses. On the other hand, revenue from the sale of literature has been very robust - 80%-85% of total revenue. New literature has been introduced in the past year and it's selling very well. Notwithstanding the general concern about the lack of donations, the financial condition of FWS is better than it has been for the past couple of years given the tighter control of expenses and the increased literature sales.

Tuesday night was the group outing to the FWS office in San Antonio to meet the staff and get a better understanding of the size of the operation and the warehouse space (which has increased over the past year or so). During the Executive Director's presentation, it was noted that there has not been a backorder since 2011 (or 2012). This means that there is a lot of inventory on hand to fill new orders.

We also went to see the Alamo and the San Antonio River Walk, two impressive local tourist sites. On a personal note, there was an incredible downpour when we got to the Alamo and everyone was thoroughly drenched like drowned rats (my shoes were so soggy they didn't dry out until Friday with the help of a hair dryer).

Wednesday, Day Two, was the Webmaster's presentation, and other presentations about the election process involving motions. We then moved on to the motions themselves.

The motion to adopt the Meditation Book passed without any opposition and will be available for sale sometime within the next year.

The motion to adopt the Twelve Step Workbook ran into opposition from delegates who believed the introduction and parts of the workbook were too negative and not "supportive" enough. The initial vote by the Fellowship was a small majority in favor of adopting the book. The voting process, however, then provides for the minority vote to make comments as to why, in this case, the book should not be adopted in its present form. After further discussion, a second vote was held and the majority changed from being in favor of adoption to being against adoption. This brought about even further discussion as now the minority favoring adoption was afforded an opportunity to speak as to why the workbook should be published in its current form. After yet a third vote, the majority again switched, this time favoring adoption of the workbook. The margins on all of the votes were small and the discussion was lively, but respectful. After the results of the third vote, there was a challenge brought as to the group conscience of the fellowship (meaning on a straight up or down vote, did the results of the third vote properly reflect the group conscience of the voting members). The group conscience vote resulted in there not being a group conscience to adopt the workbook for publication and the book has to go back and have changes made so that it may be presented at the next ABM/C. This election process took a big chunk of time and the General Assembly was adjourned early on Wednesday because there was not enough time to move onto another motion.

Before the auction Wednesday night three delegates from the U.K. held an information meeting about the H.O.W. (Honesty, Openness, Willingness) method of doing the 12 steps. This method was started by S.L.A.A.

in Australia and is common in most of Europe, Australia and parts of Asia. The basic premise was developed by members of Overeaters Anonymous (OA). It was very controversial in OA and almost caused a split in the organization, but has been modified and now is the method of choice in the U.K. for doing the steps. The U.K. is planning to put the H.O.W. books on Sponsorship and the H.O.W. workbook for the 12 Steps on the ABM/C agenda next year as an item for discussion (IFD). Just a note, FWS raised over \$2,500 at the auction.

Thursday, Day Three, we discussed adopting the Anorexia Steps 4, 5, 6 & 7 workbook, eliminating the term "Lone Group" from the lexicon, and a by-law change regarding when BOT members enter or leave their official positions related to the BOT member elections. The workbook was adopted by the Fellowship for publication without opposition. The "Lone Group" motion discussion was very animated as there continues to be a very strong cultural undercurrent of autonomy for individual groups within the Fellowship – particularly in the U.S. I pointed out that the term "Lone Group" had historical significance and was placed in the somewhat awkward position of being the one who had placed the motion on the agenda (as the Chair of the Intergroup Communications Committee) only to argue against it during the discussion. The motion did not pass.

The motion regarding the change to the By-Laws was also a lively discussion. In order to change the by-laws, there must be at least a two-thirds vote in support of the change. I spoke to the concern, not about when the term began and ended but about the additional verbiage included within the motion that spoke to the ability of the BOT to call a Special Election for BOT members, which did not include the entire Fellowship at an ABM/C. Essentially my argument was that making this change to the by-laws could be used by a future BOT to usurp the ABM/C of the ability to elect BOT members and that it was a dangerous precedent to include this language in the motion.

The initial vote on this issue was two-thirds in favor and one-third either opposing the motion or abstaining. As such, the minority got a second attempt to change the minds of the voting members. After further discussion, the second vote resulted in the by-law falling one vote short of the necessary two-thirds vote (because it was amending the by-laws) and was defeated. The interesting wrinkle to this vote was that because the by-law change motion received over half of the vote (but not the necessary two-thirds to pass) the majority did not have the right to speak and attempt to convince members to change their vote. Hence, the by-law change was defeated, falling one vote short of the two-thirds majority required to change a by-law.

There were several IFD's that were put forth to check on the temperature/opinion of the Fellowship regarding changes to how we operate. These were not acted upon and the opinion of the voting members present is really no indication of how the voting members would decide these matters in a subsequent ABM/C. The IFD's included discussions about changing the cutoff for nominations for the BOT from Thursday morning to Wednesday afternoon; going to a regional structure similar to A.A. for the United States; the content of a draft booklet for the 12 Concepts of S.L.A.A.; and the content of a booklet regarding the gift of no contact submitted by the Healthy Relationships committee.

Friday morning, final day, was the time for the election of candidates for the BOT. Ned J., who was appointed to fill an empty seat to the BOT during the year was up for a confirmation vote by the voting members. In addition, three candidates were put forward for the three open seats on the BOT: Nancy G. (San Diego), PA (Houston) and Jay G. (Cleveland). The results of the election were that Ned J. was confirmed for his seat on the BOT and Nancy and PA were elected to open positions on the BOT. As it stands now there are seven BOT members: Rich K. (newly appointed BOT chair), Bob G., Earl, Ashley, PA (all three from Houston), Nancy G., and Ned J. Two open seats remain on the BOT. By Friday afternoon, I was totally drained and mostly brain dead. Remind me again why I volunteer to do service?

Oh, that's right -- service feeds sobriety! -- Seth S.

**For S.L.A.A. meeting updates, literature, or just more connection
visit www.slaanei.org or call (617) 625-7961**

2018 NEI Events

September

7-9 12-Step Retreat (Co-ed)
Anorexia Focus
Chester, VT

9 NEI Monthly Mtg @ 5pm*

28-30 12-Step Retreat (Co-ed)

October

14 NEI Monthly Mtg @ 5pm*

November

3 NEI Fall Gathering
Grace Church, Newton, MA

18 NEI Monthly Mtg @ 5pm*

December

14-16 12-Step Retreat (Co-ed)
Chester, VT

* NEI Monthly Meetings are at 5pm
Newton-Wellesley Hospital
Open to all S.L.A.A. members.
Allen-Riddle Bldg, Rm 100 (Small brick
building adjacent to main hospital)

Or participate by phone!

Call the conference line
(712) 432-6100
Passcode: 74128638#