

## A Guide to Serve Us

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1984 the Chairman of the World Service Conference (WSC) appointed himself and six others to a Select Committee “to prepare a draft Service Manual that will contain detailed description of the service structure of the Fellowship.”<sup>i</sup> Prior to this we were working from a version of *The NA Tree or A Temporary Guide to Our Service Structure* (TWGSS). The need to clarify things was deemed necessary because every year the WSC was making amendments to the TWGSS. When the Select Committee took a look at their task it was determined they could have a finished product ready for Fellowship approval “at the World Service Conference in April 1986.”<sup>ii</sup> This product was not presented to the fellowship in 1986; in fact we continued using the TWGSS for eighteen years. The delay in producing a detailed description of our Service Structure caused immense harm to our Fellowship. The harm came at great expense and carries on to this day; it’s time to take a closer look at the events.

In 1985 *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous* was released to the Fellowship for Review and Input. However, the *Guide* was missing three chapters, with a cover letter explaining how the Select Committee was proceeding.

“A new approach is reflected in this draft. An effort has been made to explain how the experience of the Fellowship has pointed to change and how our Traditions exist as the foundation for most of the duties and procedures. Some will say, of some parts of this draft, that an attempt is being made to change something that works and it should not be changed. The committee has been brave enough to believe that putting forth the ideas from the Fellowship, be they the same ideas or new ones, will result over time in the formulation and approval of a complete manual on service.”<sup>iii</sup>

This approach expanded the Committee’s aforementioned authority which was, “to prepare a draft Service Manual that will contain detailed description of the service structure of the Fellowship,”<sup>iv</sup> into authority to change the service structure of the Fellowship. Three years later the committee was proposing in the May 1987 *Newsline* that the work will be a full three years late. “The Committee will continue to receive written input from members, groups, and service committees c/o the WSO, until December 1, 1987... The motion adopted at the WSC, directs the committee to produce a final draft by July 1, 1988 to be considered at WSC 1989.”<sup>v</sup> In fact, this cycle of extending the project went on at every WSC using the, “same old story with a new set of words”<sup>vi</sup>, until 1993.

The WSC continually funded this project from 1984 to 1993. At the 1988 WSC the Select Committee name was changed to the Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service. Over the years this committee was primarily chaired by the WSC Chairperson – A total of only five different Chair people - with a committee comprised of a small handful of people appointed by the WSC Chair(s), and the Chair(s) of the WSC Board of Trustees (BOT). In the 1992 Conference Agenda Report (CAR) this committee introduced two Motions, that both passed. The first motion was, “To approve the booklet, “Twelve Concepts for NA Service” and the second motion was “To continue the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service for the 1992-93 conference year, its task to be completed by WSC '93.”<sup>vii</sup> Surprisingly the work was not completed by WSC 93 and the following motion was approved. “To accept the recommendation of the NAS [Narcotics Anonymous Service] Committee which reads; *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous* be set aside until the completion of the world service's inventory. At that point, the *Guide* will be assessed to determine whether it addresses any of the issues raised in the inventory. If it becomes apparent that additional revisions to the *Guide* are needed, they will be made, after which *A Guide To Service In Narcotics Anonymous* should go out for a one-year approval period culminating in a vote by the conference at the end of that conference year.”<sup>viii</sup> The 1992 WSC CAR included items

pertaining to our Service Structure, but these items were introduced by the Chairperson of the WSC Board of Trustees (BOT) not the Ad Hoc Chair. "This report contains the four items the World Service Board of Trustees are presenting for action at the 1992 World Service Conference: the World Service Board of Trustees Operational Procedures, the WSB Internal Guidelines, a one year proposal for dual membership on the boards of trustees and directors, and the Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust."<sup>x</sup>

It's difficult to accurately determine how much money was committed to this project. In examining the available financial reports<sup>x</sup> a conservative estimate is \$180,000 for committee travel. The amount of money spent by the WSC BOT, and the World Service Office (WSO) is impossible to determine from reports made available to the Fellowship. However, the amount can realistically be equal to the number mentioned above when you consider the travel expense for a single weekend in 1991, to an event called the "Second Albuquerque meeting... Expense: \$7,930.22. This was the expense for the participation of the coordinating and management staff of the office and the WSO Board of Directors for the meeting of the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service to review *A Guide to Service*."<sup>xi</sup>

Throughout these years the WSC had numerous occasions when a detailed description of the service structure would have been very beneficial. The WSC adopted an Ad-Hoc approach that appeared to be never-ending. From 1988 to 1992 more than fifteen<sup>xii</sup> Ad-Hoc committees were appointed by the WSC Chair/Ad Hoc Chair. In 1991, an Ad-Hoc committee was appointed to look into issues surrounding the Joint Administrative Committee (JAC). The issues were raised by the WSC BOT Chairperson not by the Fellowship. "Jack B. (Board of Trustees Chairperson) restated that his interest is in eliminating the Joint Administrative Committee as a body, not simply the fiscal responsibility of the Joint Administrative Committee."<sup>xiii</sup> The members of this Ad-Hoc were appointed on Tuesday April 23, 1991 and a report was requested by that Friday. The six appointed members of this Ad-Hoc returned on Thursday with a Motion, "That, for conference year 1991-92, the fiscal responsibilities currently assigned to the Joint Administrative Committee be reassigned to a committee composed of the treasurer of the World Service Conference and the Chairpersons of the World Service Conference, the World Service Board of Trustees, and the World Service Office Board of Directors. This committee shall be known as the Interim Committee. Further, the Interim Committee shall make necessary decisions affecting N.A. world services when the World Service Conference is not in session, mindful of priorities previously established by the World Service Conference."<sup>xiv</sup> These six members must have anticipated the call to service because they came prepared to re-invent our Service Structure and one year later the 1992 WSC CAR contained motions to dissolve the JAC and to assign the responsibilities of the JAC to the Interim Committee. The 1992 WSC CAR motion<sup>xv</sup> was virtually identical to the one those guys invented in three days.

Another interesting service related event happened in 1991. The World Service Office Board of Directors (BOD) presented the following in their WSC CAR report:

We are asking for your consideration on three proposals: a Unified Budget and a Budget Review and Utilization Committee, a World Service Travel Policy, and a Translation Policy. Rather than ask the conference to approve these proposals now, we would request that they be supported for further work, ratified for implementation, and then brought back for WSC approval in 1992. This would allow world services to utilize the policies, prepare a combined budget proposal, work out the bugs, and make necessary changes based on our experience with those proposals during the year. The conference would then be asked to accept or reject the proposals in 1992, or in 1993.<sup>xvi</sup>

These appear to be four proposals, presented in four separate addendums accounting for 28 pages of the 1991 CAR. It was 1996 before any mention of a "Unified Budget" was again presented to the Fellowship in the CAR. "Resolution E: To approve *in principle* the adoption of a unified budget

encompassing all world service funds.”<sup>xvii</sup> In reviewing the *1991 Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure* the following is the only reference to the duties of the WSO BOD. “The directors of the WSO are responsible for the direct management of the office: selection of principal workers, establishment and implementation of operational policies and procedures, and supervision of the overall operations.”<sup>xviii</sup> An inquiry was sent to our primary service center in February 2014 asking for the procedural manual and special worker job descriptions but nothing was available.

Until 1992, the Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service had issued three manuals for Review and Input. The 1989 version requested us to, “Keep in mind that the enclosed documents are only “pieces” of our proposal for a reorganization of N.A. services, which would ultimately call for the establishment of a national level in our service structure, a “world” services structure with a much different focus than currently exists....”<sup>xix</sup> When the idea of establishing a National level of service was introduced to the WSC in 1989 it “was met with encouragement by the gathered [Regional Service Representatives] RSRs, particularly those from regions outside the United States.”<sup>xx</sup> The Committee stated they were on the right track with their expanded authority to change the service structure “After releasing two earlier, less comprehensive drafts—one in 1985, another in 1987—the committee has now developed material based on a realistic assessment of the needs of our growing, worldwide fellowship, offering sound, consistent, principled solutions to our developmental problems.”<sup>xxi</sup> The work continued in the direction of this new level of service until:

August 16, 1992, a working group composed of Dave Tynes, Becky Meyer, Stu Tooredman, Joe Gossett, Anthony Edmondson, Steve Lantos, and Lee Manchester met to develop a model to be used in completing the chapters on national and world services for *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*.

The members of this group were in unanimous agreement with the points presented below. Rather than continue in the vein of earlier *Guide to Service* drafts, the group decided that a unified model should be pursued, one that does not provide for a separate American [translate to National] structure.”<sup>xxii</sup>

Years of work and a handful of people – primarily consisting of WSO Special Workers – derail a project that was so warmly embraced by the RSRs from outside the United States. They continued with:

The working group decided to recommend that no American [translate to National] conference be created, and that world services continue to serve NA in every country as they do now. The group acknowledged that, right now, there is no coherent program for delivering services affecting NA in the USA nationwide. However, the group believed that the fragmentation of our world services into independent arms (WSO, trustees, conference committees), *not* the lack of national focus in the USA, is responsible for poor USA service coordination. The working group is convinced that consolidation of world service administration--that is, the establishment of a single effective point of decision and accountability for world services when the WSC is not in session--is the most important step we can take to ensure creation and effective delivery of NA services in the USA and elsewhere worldwide.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

Not only did these WSO Special Workers decide to eliminate the idea of a National level of service they decided that the real problem was the division of power. They went on to clarify how they saw the need to create a Primary Service Board (PSB) to, “serve as the World Service Conference's main agency for the fulfillment of world services.”<sup>xxiv</sup> To achieve this amount of change, something monumental was needed.

The Interim Committee published the following motion in the 1993 WSC CAR. "That the World Service Conference engage in an inventory process, taking on no new projects during CY 1993-94." <sup>xxv</sup> While introducing this motion from the seven-member committee the author elaborated, stating that "World services have grown to the point where we are overwhelming our world-level trusted servants, leaving numerous volunteers burnt out and disillusioned. We have become so focussed on our own internal bureaucracy in world services that we focus almost none of our attention on the fellowship-at-large anymore. As often as not, what we do today serves the needs of NA world services more than the needs of NA as a whole." <sup>xxvi</sup> The Interim Committee knew what button to push to get the Fellowship to jump at this opportunity to evaluate World Services, even if it meant an inventory, especially when someone else was going to do it for us. The monumental feat was achieved by a simple act of contrition by the WSC Interim Committee. The results of a World Service inventory began in 1996 with two motions and eight resolutions being provided in the WSC CAR. "Resolution B: To approve in principle the adoption of a World Board [translate to Primary Service Board], replacing the current World Service Board of Trustees, WSO Board of Directors, and the WSC Administrative Committee." <sup>xxvii</sup> Another proposed resolution intended to eliminate the standing sub-committee structure did not pass. Fast forward six years, "We do remember the passion related to this topic back in 1998, but the truth is that the current standing committee structure has begun to experience the very same pitfalls as the pre-1998 standing committee system, when we were committee-driven." <sup>xxviii</sup> Subsequently the following was proposed in the 2004 WSC CAR, "Motion 6: To eliminate specific language about standing committees, except the Executive Committee, from the section Committees of the Board in the World Board External Guidelines in A Guide to World Services...." <sup>xxix</sup> Finally after almost eight long years the seven people that "were in unanimous agreement" on August 16, 1992 achieved what they set out to accomplish.

If we had a Guide that served us during this period of time I believe that more of our members would have eagerly joined the ranks of service. Perhaps we would not be of the belief that Regional Assemblies of GSRs is feasible, as stated in the current Guide to Local Services <sup>xxx</sup>, maybe we would have a clear understanding of what Group Conscience is when related to the Service Structure instead of fumbling around with something called consensus based decision making, and conceivably by now our internet presence would have evolved to point matching or surpassing Craigslist, giving addicts and family members a simple map to click on and discover their local NA contact information. Looking back and attempting to find the dots and then connect the dots behind the development of our Service Structure should not be so lengthy or difficult. We modified the Steps and Traditions from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) with their approval, to suit our needs. However, the *Twelve Concepts for NA Service* was not adapted from the AA *Twelve Concepts for World Service*. A paper prepared in 1989 to report on the History of the Twelve Principles of NA service – the predecessors of the concepts - declared something that seemed excessive. The report claimed that, "AA's evolution to the point at which these things [Concepts] were being written by its co-founder was from centralization to greater democratization. They were exploring the realistic parameters that should define their move toward fellowship wide participation in services. Our evolution to the point at which these are our glaring world service issues is in the other direction. Our experiment with full "participatory democracy" is straining, and we're being forced to learn about trust and delegation." <sup>xxxi</sup> The road to where we are as a Fellowship is marked with many trials and errors; in looking back to where we've been I believe we have a better view of where we're going. Do you think we are headed in the direction of more delegation or is it possible to go back to having some representation? Now that some of the dots are connected in a cohesive way something can be done to check the map, perhaps change drivers, and orchestrate a guide that will serve us not confuse and bewilder us and future members.

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- i [Newsline 1984 - Vol. 1 No. 9](#)
  - ii [Newsline 1984 - Vol. 1 No. 11](#)
  - iii [A Guide to Service In Narcotics Anonymous, Cover Letter by Bob Rehmar](#)
  - iv [Newsline 1984 - Vol. 1 No. 9](#)
  - v [Newsline 1987- Vol. 4 No. 4; Page 5](#)
  - vi [Steve Miller, \*Brave New World\* album; \*Space Cowboy\*](#)
  - vii [1992 Conference Agenda Report, Page 4-7 by Dave Tynes](#)
  - viii [1993 WSC Minutes, Page 46](#)
  - ix [1992 Conference Agenda Report, Page 15 by Becky Meyer](#)
  - x [1986 -1993 Fellowship Reports, WSO Annual Reports](#)
  - xi [1991 WSO Annual Report, Page 51](#)
  - xii [1988 to 1992 WSC Minutes](#)
  - xiii [1991 WSC Minutes](#)
  - xiv [1991 WSC Minutes](#)
  - xv [1992 Conference Agenda Report, Page 10 by Anonymous](#)
  - xvi [1991 Conference Agenda Report, Page 28 by Stuart Tooredman](#)
  - xvii [1996 Conference Agenda Report, Page 6 by Resolution Group](#)
  - xviii [1991 Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure, Page 12](#)
  - xix [1989 A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous - Part One Draft, Page V](#)
  - xx [1990 WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service Report to the WSC, Page 13](#)
  - xxi [1990 WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service Report to the WSC, Page 14](#)
  - xxii [September 10, 1992 letter to Members of WSC Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service, Cover by Steve Lantos](#)
  - xxiii [September 10, 1992 letter to Members of WSC Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service, Page 4 by Steve Lantos](#)
  - xxiv [September 10, 1992 letter to Members of WSC Ad Hoc Committee on NA Service, Page 1 by Steve Lantos](#)
  - xxv [1993 Conference Agenda Report, Page 8 by Mary Kay Berger](#)
  - xxvi [1993 Conference Agenda Report, Page 7 by Mary Kay Berger](#)
  - xxvii [1996 Conference Agenda Report, Page 5 by Resolution Group](#)
  - xxviii [2004 Conference Agenda Report, Page 22 by World Board](#)
  - xxix [2004 Conference Agenda Report, Page 23 by World Board](#)
  - xxx [2002 A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous, Page 93](#)
  - xxxi [1989 April, History and development of the Twelve Principles of Service for Narcotics Anonymous](#)