

ASIA PACIFIC FORUM

Aotearoa New Zealand • Australia • Bangladesh • China • Guam • Gulf States • Hawaii • Hong Kong
India • Indonesia • Japan • Korea • Malaysia • Nepal • NERF • Pakistan • Philippines • Singapore • Thailand

A network of  communities

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The 2003 World Convention was an awesome event and I will do my best to capture some of that spirit for you in this Newsletter. The theme was about how **"A Simple Way of Living"** has brought so much freedom to so many of us over the past 50 years. We were blessed to be with many of the people who have worked so hard from the beginning. The history of NA in the US was shown in videos and shared by speakers. Tom C. and Bob B shared their experience over the years and it seemed that we were walking those steps with them and with the others that were in the early days. The steps forward and the steps back all held so much valuable experience. Even more exciting (for me) was to see so many APF delegates in attendance and to hear them share information about their fellowships in their various countries. All around me I could hear people saying, "I never knew we were in Pakistan or in Singapore." It felt like an explosion of NA joy all around me.

At the opening meeting on Thursday night, a few members who were there in the early years shared what it was like in the beginning and a few of the speakers told stories about Jimmy K. There was a really inspiring video shot with Jimmy K showing where NA started and describing what it was like in the beginning. It is hard to believe that this worldwide fellowship started in this tiny little house with only a few dedicated addicts to carrying the message.

On Friday night the stage was full of international speakers (3 from APF communities) and each one shared the experience of how NA started in their country. There was a video clip shot in Nepal during the last APF meeting. It was so moving to hear each person share about NA and what it meant to their individual recovery to feel a part of the larger NA World. Even when there was very little English spoken you could hear the joy, feel the personal sense of freedom and know that recovery is happening on a global level. Brut (from Japan) told his story and it was moving. From the moment he began to speak about the miracle of sharing his need to help someone who soon after "accidentally" sat down next to one of the pioneers of our fellowship on an airplane and how NA started in Japan it was a "God Shot". It was humbling to listen to the speakers from our region tell how they found recovery. Amed Al H from Bahrain told how he set up a group with another addict and even though they didn't like each other they "kept coming back" putting principles before personalities into perspective. The meetings we now have in Saudi Arabia are a direct result of one addict helping another. Listening to Nors from Singapore tell how NA in Singapore is growing was moving for everyone.

Delegates from all over Asia could be heard in many of the smaller meetings. Jeanine from New Zealand and Garth from Australia spoke at the APF meeting and the room was packed. I sat next to Danny U and we were so happy to be surrounded by our APF friends that we were both in tears much of the time. Ron and Bella from Australia were in many of the meetings that I attended and it was good to share the progress that they had been such a big part of. It really did feel like a great big birthday party. Each time an addict shared how they went to a meeting somewhere or heard about NA and found a small place where they could open a meeting you could imagine NA growing. Stories of addicts opening meetings by alone and turning up week after week until another person came showed how we became the fellowship we are now. One of the most inspiring events was the Geographical countdown. So many of us were part of that and APF communities got some of the loudest cheers but when the prisons that were connected to us by telephone identified themselves, the room went wild.

There were lots of workshops on everything from Intimacy to the 12th Step Call. You could look around and see addicts from Europe, South America, Australia and Asia all shaking their heads in agreement. The feeling was the same. We are all struggling with the same issues and we are all reaching out to each other. The entertainment was, "A little of something for everyone." Strangers dancing, little kids singing along, people interpreting jokes for non-English speaking addicts and laughing hardest at themselves. Addicts from Israel sharing photos and stories with addicts from Saudi Arabia gave a feeling that peace in this world does exist somewhere. We are maturing as a fellowship and there were wheelchairs and walkers as well as baby carriages and toddlers. I am sure, like at every other convention I have ever been to; people were falling in love and starting their lives over.

Meeting with the other APF delegates was wonderful and many of us were telling stories about our APF brothers and sisters that couldn't come, constantly saying, "This is the kind of thing Shuradi would love" or "I wish there were some more guys from India or Thailand here." It felt like everyone was there in spirit. No one got much sleep as there seemed like too much to do, too much talking and laughing and all around you could hear people screaming and yelling, "There is my friend from.....!" The Merchandise Ballroom was where you could really see how many of us were there. People happily stood in lines for hours, finding friends from other NA events, catching up with their recovery and their lives. On the last day there was the Alternative Merchandise (my favorite, I must admit) and I worked there along side my sponsor and friend Tali. We have done this together many times, but as we handed out the APF merchandise and heard the stories over and over again of how people were touched by the sharing of APF members, we laughed and cried and knew we were part of something amazing.

Many of us attend a lot of conventions but this was a special one and we all knew it. There was a big group in attendance from Hawaii and they made a big banner inviting everyone to Hawaii in 2005 for the next World Convention. This will be the first World Convention held in within an APF member community location. Already the Hawaii region is talking about inviting the APF and how they can help to make it possible for many of us to go.

This, "**A Simple Way of Living**" has been working for a lot of us.

Yours in Service
Kerry S
Newsletter Chair