

History of the Southern Zonal Forum

July 28, 2007

As one of the long-term members I was asked to write up a history of the Southern Zonal Forum and present it to the body. I attended the formation of forums at the World Service Conference in Dallas, Texas in 1992 and I have as near as I can tell only missed four meetings outside of the WSC and only two of those meetings those being the last two.

First I would like to thank Andy S. for his untiring effort in keeping this body moving until we could move on our own, Keith N. for his diligent efforts in recording our actions of the past into what we call our Archives and last but not least the people who have attended and made this Forum one of the leaders of Narcotics Anonymous no matter what the feelings were at the time we were struggling to find a real purpose for our being. Thanks again.

At the World Service on May 1, 1992 Forums were recognized by the WSC. The Stated purpose of a forum at this time was: "This is not to be a political body. We try to avoid decisions. Our main purpose is to share and help each other." (Regions)

Attendees at that first meeting at the WSC were representatives of: Lone Star, Mississippi, Best Little Region, Oklahoma and Louisiana regions.

The first meeting of the forum was held at the Texas Unity Convention in Lake Whitney, Texas. At this meeting several early decisions were made that still happen today. To tape each meeting for records, to start every forum with a recovery meeting and to have a dance/speaker meeting at every weekend that the forum meets.

At our second meeting several other long lasting decisions were made that continue even today fifteen years later. To have a donation from all who choose to, set up a petty cash fund to pay expenses and send excess on to the WSC. We as a body also decided to have all who showed up have a voice at forum meetings.

When we first started meeting it was decided to meet 4 times a year with one of those meetings to be at the Conference. This lasted for quite a

few years until in 2005 we as a body changed to meeting 3 times a year with another meeting that happens at the conference every two years.

In February of 1993 the Kentuciana Region sent a representative to our forum on the Conference Agenda Report and they have been a part of the forum since that time. We lost The Best Little Region from west Texas near the first several meetings for at the time a lack of funds for that region. Later it was because of the expansion to the east that helped them in their decision making process to join with a forum closer to home.

In November of 1994 an administrative committee for the forum was formed consisting of a co-facilitator, secretary and a treasurer. Hoping to keep better records was a reason given for this maneuver. The next couple of meetings helped form the body we know of as the Southern Zonal Forum. In February of 1995 the Show Me Region sent down some spies for the still suffering addict to check us out. They had reasons known only to them but their request of hosting a future forum meeting was not only taken seriously at the time we as a forum body decided to allow them this request. Of course you now see where they are. You got to be careful whom you let into these meetings because they might just stay.

At the World Service Conference in April of 1995 the body of representatives of the participating regions decided to open a bank account to let our funds lie Oups lay. At this time the treasurer, aka ME, had held the money in a separate account that only had my name attached to it. I was uncomfortable with this situation but I could not get a direction from the forum. And then in Tyler, Texas in March of 1996 we had a showdown about money. You never have problems with money until you have some and we had accumulated a tidy amount \$851.38. And we discussed what to do with it and what not to do with it. Let me say that in St. Louis in the fall of 1995 the Zone sent \$535 to the WSC as our first of many donations.

As we grew in our experience we had more and more expenses to contend with. Our operating capital also had to grow. We started out with a \$500 prudent reserve, which grew to its present amount of \$1,750. When we reach this amount after a forum we send on every dollar above this amount. Over the last 15 years the Southern zonal forum has sent on to the WSC approximately \$6,805.04.

Several meetings followed where we as a new body with no direction tried to ask for and look for direction from anywhere we could get it. I personally was asked what the purpose of or what I thought the purpose of forums where and I responded that it looked exactly like we were to be an added level of service in the service structure. At the time there was a call for down sizing the conference and it appeared the fellowship was going in this direction. So as a zonal body we formed ourselves along these lines because again we were new and had no direction. I will get back to this just to keep from getting ahead of myself.

Up until 1995 the Volunteer Region had been a part of the Southern Forum and had not attended one of our meetings. Their RSR lived outside of Johnson City and their alternate lived in Memphis, Tennessee. In the spring of 1996 the RSR attended our meeting in Tyler, Texas and they then became another supporting member of our forum.

We now have Mississippi, Lone Star, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentuckiana, Show Me and Volunteer regions that were regular participants at the forum meetings. Because of some of the topics we were discussing at our meetings we had several visitors to our zonal meetings and as every one else they were welcomed.

In February of 1997 there came another growth opportunity as several attendees were grumbling about the amount of money being wasted at our meetings and not having any tangible evidence of these meetings. At this time the RSR from Lone Star presented the body with a ½ page set of what he called operating guidelines. We use them today. Another interesting action happened along the way that caused some thought and proved to be very needed for our body to continue to expand our usefulness to the regions that we served. We as representatives made some decisions at the WSC that were not looked on as necessary to be made outside of our borders of the Southern Zonal Forum. So we were instructed NOT to make any decisions except in the confines of our forum.

Along with the position that we found ourselves in at this time we as a body DID NOT WANT to be pushed in to being framed as our regions were. We were in favor of trying to change that debate thought process when we went to business meeting. We as a body decided to try something different; Consensus based decision-making. Although we have had our own struggles with this new, other than Robert's Rules of order, way of continuing our

growth. We also started the process of writing down the jobs, which we were doing at this time so we could keep a record of job descriptions and for the new people coming in to these positions.

In August 1997 our first effort in funding our position people that preformed for our forum was taken on as the forum decided to fund the secretary and the treasurer to attend the forum meetings. This funding consisted of ½ room night for 2 nights that the forum took place and the travel that it took to get to the host-meeting city. Shortly after the facilitator was added to the funding process. At the time it was asked of the body to use attending alternates to double in these positions. This seemed to work for a short time but the more we met and the more involved we were getting realistically the positions needed to be unfunded unattached attendees. This also helped by keeping the experience of past regional delegates involved in the growth of the forum.

We have struggled with finances at times because of not having a steady stream of money coming in that was constant. Several regions started sending a consistent donation to the forum because they believed in trying something to help in the communication with our neighbors in the fellowship. Our main method of fund raising for the longest was a donation amount of \$5 per forum and was raised to \$10 and the printing of t-shirts for each forum, which brings in another small amount. Several ideas have been bounced around to help with the funding of forum meetings and we have not as of yet made any concrete decisions to assist with this effort other than the donations from the member regions that support our direction

As we felt the pressure of regions we started trying to get the information of what our topic discussions were to be at not only the next forum but as far out front as possible. We also were trying to get a schedule of what regions would be the host of the upcoming forums. Our dilemma was we had spread ourselves so far that we tried to go north in the summer fall month meetings and south for the winter and spring meetings. This was a real struggle. We now have what we call a timeline that not only gives us a schedule of what region will be the next host but the regions in front of them that should be preparing for our next visit to their region.

We, as people that support the forum and recovery, focus on trying to add to a host asking us to come into their home. We try to get there early and make the most of our visit by making local meetings and asking the locals to

attend our recovery meetings at 8 am each morning that we are in their town. We as a forum try to focus on the areas within the hosting region that have needs that need to be addressed by someone outside the local fellowship.

One of our topics that we start the weekend with is Fellowship Concerns where anyone in attendance can voice a concern that affects their recovery. We also try to discuss what is the most pressing need of the hosting region. Other topics are chosen from the World Conference list or what the concerns of our local forum body feels are becoming high on its priority list.

August 1997 was another eventful meeting as I was designated as a temporary representative for the forum for correspondence and everyday business as needed by the forum. This position became one as a forum we thought would be necessary for us to communicate our information to other zones and to help gather information from other meeting zones that would help in our growth. I, Dickie Davis, was the first elected (this was before we went to a more approved version: selected) representative of the Southern Zonal Forum. This became another of those funded positions along with facilitator, secretary and treasurer

We also approved another pocket design we call the NASCAR design. Our first design was the word recovery in a circle with “Southern Forum Style” at the under side of the circle. These were used for identification for our forum. We try to use them on all our t-shirts and any other merchandise we have printed. We have etched mugs with the designs along with pens and note pads. In trying to account for all our history we also had a person agree to go back and capture all the important decisions that had happened previous to 1997. It was agreed on that every meetings minutes would have in bold any important facts that needed to be carried on.

Early on in our blurred vision the Mississippi representative started a yahoo discussion group for the zonal forum. This started out as a service based group but grew into something we felt we had to remove ourselves from. And then along came the Internet and websites and the rest was and is history. We started one and now have 734 members of this website and have 379,194 visits to our site since its inception in November Of 2003. At the time of our arrival on the website venue we until last year were the only Forum with a website.

The latest additions to our body were the Tejas Bluebonnet region and the Blue Grass Appalachian region. At most of our meetings since they were formed the Red River region has been a welcome and valuable visitor. These added regions like others have found our forum to be more advanced than others they border or they like the way we conduct our affairs as we continue to add to our number.

To rap all of this down we approach every meeting of this body with a desire to add to recovery wherever we meet. We want to treat every place we go with the love and respect they deserve. We attempt to have topics that are the forefront of the recovery where we meet. We struggle to have our own presenters of topics that we share. Our deal is we in the past always went to the World service office for answers to questions. They gave us answers that applied to a region in Michigan or Southern California but we could not use here. My experience as a representative for the Louisiana region was to go there for help. Now I realize that my neighbors have the experience and help for me that apply more than the WSO.

As I said previously when asked what I thought forums were set up for I answered another level of service. We of the Southern Zonal Forum positioned our body for that but I now believe that our purpose is more for bringing groups, areas and regions a level of communication that is different from we in the past used. Our service structure changed several years ago and forums were presented about this time. In 1992 there were forums already out in the world. Asia Pacific Forum was a leader in developing new and struggling countries with coming to know Narcotics Anonymous. The European Delegates Conference and the Canadian Assembly were also trying help with the different types of service operated by most of the United States as an after thought. H&I, PI, Literature review and phone line committees used for helping the newer still suffering addict to get in touch with our fellowship. So my thoughts are always going to that idea, how can we better prepare our part of this fellowship for the addicts that are not even here yet.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to add some of my thoughts into a lot of facts about the history of the Southern Zonal Forum.