

## Area 13's First Mini-Conference -At a Glance!

John W. developed the idea of Mini-Conferences. John W. was a Panel 23 delegate from Washington, D.C., serving in 1973 and 1974, and a class B (alcoholic) Northeast Regional Trustee. In his brief biography in the 1974 General Service Conference (GSC) Final Report, it stated that he "originated the mini-conference idea." The first Mini-Conference was over a weekend (a day and a half) held in February at the Marriott Twin Bridges in Arlington, VA in 1974, while he was still delegate.

(Excerpt from the 1974 GCS Final Report) by John W., District of Columbia

Topic: Help Share the Conference Experience - Every delegate shares something like "It's a once-in-a-life-time experience – can't be described. Too bad you can't *all* go." But the experience rarely comes to life for the people at home.

When I returned last year, I tried to paint word pictures of the physical setup as well as a report on the actions. I described the meeting rooms, the placing of the microphones, the adjoining dining room with informal atmosphere and excellent food, and so on. Interest took a giant step forward.

Last winter we decided to pattern our assembly after the Conference, calling it a "mini-conference." We engaged a motel floor that permitted a layout like this one. We asked each group G.S.R. and at least one other member.

At the opening dinner, Niles P. told about the G.S.O. operation. We showed the G.S.O. filmstrip, followed by discussion. Members were asked to look over a packet of material and come in the net morning ready to work. Workshops and committees were headed by active, experienced members. We returned to the assembly room for reports and had spirited Ask-It Basket sessions.

We did get some criticism: "We didn't have enough time. We should take several days to do it right!"

Over 130 A.A.'s worked hard all day on a tight schedule, and they enjoyed it.



### Mini-Conference at the Marriott Twin Bridges

We asked a Panel 7 delegate to give the sense of the mini-conference. He said 'Gosh, this was great. I feel just like a delegate again!'

Another article from G.S.O.'s Archives on the first mini-conference appears below.

BOX 4-5-9 August-September 1974 News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A. Article: D.C. Area A.A.'s Get a Unique Look at the General Service Conference

Some A.A. members in the U.S. capital have uniquely experienced at first hand a replica of the Fellowship's annual General Service Conference meeting. "Fantastic," "terrific," and "eye-opening," were the terms 130 D.C. area members used most often to describe it, Fred F. writes us.

Several other areas are going to try the DC experiment, as a result of a description of the experience shared by John W., 1973-74 D.C. delegate at the 1974 Conference in New York.

Delegates representing both U.S. and Canadian A.A. groups attended the first of the annual six-day sessions in New York 4 years ago. And as John pointed out, each year delegates upon returning home, have enthusiastically tried in many ways to share the excitement and spirit of the Conference with groups in their areas - a almost any of the 730 – plus delegates now in the Fellowship can tell you.

John W. hit upon the idea of a local mini-conference to reproduce for G.S.R.'s (and local intergroup representatives) both the mechanics and the feelings

John experienced in New York at the 1973 Conference.

The District of Columbia A.A. assembly unanimously favored the experiment, and representatives from 121 groups attended the night-and a-day long session in a Washington motel.

Physical arrangements duplicated as closely as possible those in New York, microphone placement on the floor of the assembly room, six enclosed rooms (for workshops and committee meetings) and a dining room all on one level.

Speaker at the kickoff dinner Friday night was Niles P., New York, assistant G.S.O. general manager. There followed the latest G.S.O. color-and-sound filmstrip, with staff members describing services they perform for A.A. worldwide.

Then those present were briefed on the next day's activities, and everybody got a packet containing the agenda, committee and workshops assignments, and background materials to study overnight.

Agenda subjects Saturday echoed those of the annual General Service Conference then upcoming.

Members divided first into committees on finance, the Grapevine, literature, elections, institutions, and professional and public relations, each moderated by a former delegate. Afterward, a reporter from each committee reported back to the entire assembly at a summary session almost as spirited as the lively Ask-It Basket interval that followed. Lunch was informal.

Afternoon workshops, mostly headed by past intergroup chairmen, took up the A.A. group, relations between intergroup and the area general service committees, "principles before personalities," and "wearing two hats."

In addition, two unstructured workshops offered members a chance to discuss any matters of local A.A. concern.

Again, reporters summarized workshop proceedings when everyone reassembled, and more Ask-IT Basket questions were covered.

Many said they found new and important answers, to long-troublesome questions, others spoke of gaining insights into aspects of A.A. they had never known of before.

The monthly intergroup paper *The Reporter*, was asked to run Ask-It Basket regularly to answer questions the mini-conference hadn't had time for.

Sounding exactly like delegates leaving New York each year, nearly all the Washingtonians said it was work, all right. But practically everyone said, 'There wasn't enough time!' We should have gone on!"

"Our suggestion to other areas," writes Fred, "is to try a general service mini-conference to bring the Third Legacy to life. It really works, and we have found it is much better than trying to interest individual A.A. groups in A.A. matters and growth."

D.C. members enthusiastically voted to try another in 1975, twice as big.

Maybe you wonder how this was financed. Self-support, of course. Registration "donation" – including two meals – was \$17.50 per person. Most said it was worth twice that.

*From G.S.O. Archives*