

Today

August 2005
Volume 11, Issue 8

Inside this Issue

- 1** Tradition Eight
- 2** Letter from Rev. Seifried
Public Information
Literature Corner
- 3** Memories of Mary Ellen S.
- 4** Memories of Mary Ellen S.
continued
- 5** Memories continued
We want your shirt
Fall Retreat

Overeaters Anonymous
St. Louis Bi-State Area
Intergroup
9907-E Gravois Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63123
(314) 638-6070
Subscriptions \$8.00

TRADITION EIGHT:

**Overeaters Anonymous
should forever remain nonprofessional
but our service centers
may employ special workers.**

As a newcomer, one of the many things that surprised me about OA was that meetings were not facilitated by professionals. Ultimately, though, this proved to be a great attraction. Not that I didn't respect counselors and other healthcare providers--I have needed and benefited from outside professional help over the years.

But hearing people who were freely offering their experience, strength and hope was a powerful motivation to listen and trust them. OA members did not provide service at meetings for a paycheck or resume builder. One day at a time, I gradually trusted and accepted what these nonprofessionals said.

Some observers might infer that OA's nonprofessional status makes it a less credible resource for compulsive overeaters. The opposite is true for so many of us. No one can reach a compulsive overeater more quickly or effectively as a fellow sufferer.

The second half of Tradition 8 reminds us that special workers may be hired for the running of OA business. Our intergroup office has survived over the years through the efforts of volunteers and paid employees. These roles are best defined by the sane, balanced principles of the 12 steps. For example, I wouldn't expect a member who is a real estate agent to provide me with free listing services. Nor should a member working on the intergroup office's financial spreadsheet do this for free. Group conscience can be our guide to keep non-professionalism at meetings and professionalism in our service centers.

At my first OA convention, we closed the last session by repeating around the circle, "I put my hand in yours, because I care." Without Tradition 8, that statement could be: "I put my hand in yours because it's part of my job description" or "because I'm working on my masters degree." Gratefully, non-professionalism lifts our service work onto a spiritual plane where recovery can readily happen.

Some of you knew Mary Ellen S. who passed recently after a long illness. The following are excerpts from a letter to the fellowship from her family.

Dear OA Fellowship,

There are not enough words to express our gratitude to you for your loving support at the time of Mary Ellen's illness and death. More than that, we are so grateful for your faithful companionship these last decades.

Although she still struggled with food addiction, she was healed. She lived the 12 Steps and embodied the principles of OA.

When her faith waned, you gave her strength and courage. When she was lonely, you loved her and gave comfort. You were her life and love. You helped make this humble woman a great healer, loving friend and mentor to many. Your spirit allowed her to grow in wisdom. For us, she was the Greatest Mother in the world.

Although tears of sorrow continue to flow because of our great loss, they are now mixed with bittersweet tears of joy as we celebrate the richness of her life and the abundant gifts she shared.

Thank you for becoming our spiritual family. We are forever in your debt. Thank you for the flowers, cards, phone calls, prayers and other gifts. Mostly, thanks for your presence as you faithfully witness to the strength of our healing Maker.

With faith, hope & love,

Rev. Mark Seifried
on behalf of Mary Ellen's family

Public Information

Imagine the impact if each of us committed to taking three public information actions this year and encouraged our sponsees to do the same. Here are some suggestions for actions you can take to carry the message to the still suffering compulsive eater:

In your local area:

- Leave meeting lists in public places.
- Make sure you are listed in church directories where meetings are held.
- Write out "Overeaters Anonymous" instead of just "OA." Many people have no idea what these letters mean.
- Leave an old *Lifeline* at a beauty salon and barber shop, or donate subscriptions and have them sent directly to businesses such as these.
- Leave local meeting information, *Lifelines*, or OA pamphlets at local health fairs or community events.
- Donate OA books to local libraries and have an announcement sent to the local papers.
- Donate OA books to grade schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, technical schools, and medical libraries.
- Inform PTAs or civic organizations about OA.
- Check your local Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Center and other organizations to learn what they know about OA. Offer to provide an intergroup speaker to tell them about the program.
- Write a letter to a journalist telling them how OA has helped you.
- Write one article this year to any monthly magazine that would welcome a story that shares recovery from compulsive eating using the Twelve Steps of OA.
- Traveling... Take OA pride with you and carry the message in these ways:
 - Leave OA Bulletin Board Attraction cards in airports, on airplanes, in cabs or rental cars, in phone booths, rest area stops, and in movie theaters.
 - Leave OA literature and information in a drawer at the condo you rent on vacation.

- Find ways to provide information about OA as you surf the Internet. Or contact on-line media about OA.

Why wait? Now is the time, so simply do it. You will be amazed how easy it is to become involved in PI efforts.

Send articles to *Lifeline* describing your PI success. Share them locally and with WSO. Send WSO copies of OA newspaper articles in your area.

Don't turn down sharing about OA. If you don't feel comfortable as a PI spokesperson, pass the contact information to the PI committee. Someone from WSO, a trustee, or the committee will be more than happy to follow through.

Let's all carry the message.

Remember – OA Pride, Not OA Hide!

Reprinted from the *PI Piper* (2000)/ M.L. Board of Trustees PI Committee Chairperson

To participate in our local Public Information activities, call Lisa B. at 636-586-6276.

Literature Corner

Your literature chair, Ellen, will be at the OA Office on Tuesday nights from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. You can call her at the office if you want to place a literature order or check on an order. Here is her schedule for July, August and September:

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| August 9 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| August 16 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| August 23 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| August 30 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| September 6 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| September 13 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| September 20 | 7-8:30 p.m. |
| September 27 | 7-8:30 p.m. |

Please check with the office for any unavoidable changes to the schedule.

Reminder: Literature orders can be picked up at Intergroup or a Super Saturday. Please allow the literature chair 10 days to complete the order.

Abstinence opens us up to the whole range of emotions, from peaks of elation to the depths of grief. In recovery we allow ourselves to love and be loved. A dear program friend offers these memories of Mary Ellen, illustrating how she embodied so many program principles and highlighting her many years of service to OA in St. Louis. –KM

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.....

How Mary Ellen lived that Serenity Prayer. She loved it and reminded me of it quite often (as my sponsor for 15 years). In my entire life, I never knew anyone who embodied the love and complete selflessness as our dear, sweet Mary Ellen. Her love, acceptance, and compassion for people were unequalled. I never heard her say an unkind word about anyone. She never judged anyone. She always gave the benefit of the doubt to everyone and usually felt there must be a reason for the actions of others. She never saw the bad in people... and always found something good about them. Yes, sometimes she was hurt by the actions of others, but she was always the first to go to any lengths to keep the lines of communication open. She always said that life was too short to harbor bitterness and resentment. Her gentle spirit quieted me many times when my life was in turmoil and I will always hear her say, "Sometimes you have to be the bigger person. Life isn't always fair and you don't have to like it, you just have to do it." She heard that said years ago and loved it so much that she used it MANY times on me.

Mary Ellen came into program in February 1976 after her friends would come over, sit in her house and read to her from the "For Today." One of these friends wanted her to go to OA because she sensed it would help her live longer

(Mary Ellen's high blood pressure was a big problem then). She finally went to a meeting just to shut them up so they would leave her alone and quit bugging her. The first meeting she went to was The "New Me" at the Concord Methodist Church in Concord Village.

At that time there were only 4-6 groups in St. Louis. She always had such affection for that "New Me" group. It was home to her and the last meeting she was able to attend was the first meeting she attended: "New Me." How appropriate that she found her peace there at both ends of her OA life cycle. OA gave her many healthy years as her blood pressure problems lessened.

She wasn't in program very long when St. Louis started to grow and the fellowship wanted to open an office. She went along with some of the members to look at a possible office location (she lived in the area and was always ready to give service to OA when asked) and they wanted her opinion. She was not the first OA office manager, but it wasn't long until she found herself REALLY working the steps. That first OA office had a huge set of steep steps above a heating and air conditioning place at 9703 Gravois Road. There was a lawyer's office on the same floor that coincidentally helped us formulate our By-Laws and non-profit corporation at no charge. Isn't it amazing how HP works?

Things were very tight financially in those days (1977). The office ran on a shoestring and we had absolutely no funds set-aside for rent beyond the month we were living. We maintained that office on faith one day at a time. By the time Mary Ellen became office manager in 1981, this generous member would often not pay herself because there was no money left after she paid all the other bills first. There still was no savings account. This was a glimpse of her faith and "Turn-It-Over" concept that she would live for the next 29 years of her life. She always believed that God would provide...and He did. Before Mary Ellen became OA's office manager, she worked so hard getting that office together. The office was always her "baby." She fought so hard to make it a welcoming place of refuge for all who would enter. Her husband donated two huge desks and some metal filing cabinets from his job

(which we still use today), and Mary Ellen even talked him into helping carry them up those horribly steep stairs. She also got some filing cabinets from the Lindberg school district. She literally furnished that office and barely spent a penny.

In February of 1990, Mary Ellen was instrumental in relocating the office to our current location at 9907-E Gravois Road. She wanted it to be more handicapped accessible to our fellowship. And, she wanted to quit working those particular office steps. Mary Ellen used to sit on the steps with a pack of diet soda in her hands to get them upstairs. She found lots of help to move back down those steps with those big desks! She was able to organize a brigade of people to help move and even got someone to come in and paint the walls for us. It was pretty hard to say "No" to Mary Ellen. She always did so much for everyone else that it was an honor and fun to be able to do something for her and give service to OA too. I was even in there painting walls and I had never painted a wall in my life.

She was so dedicated to her job that one time she slipped on the ice and fell down her steps at home and broke her leg. She was told to stay off of it, but she came into work with her leg in a cast and step by step eased herself up those steps on her....well you know what -- an ability she learned while hauling soda up those steps.

Her astute accounting and people skills made her the perfect fit for our fellowship. Her voice on the other end of that telephone welcomed many, many newcomers into this program. She would receive calls years later from people who would say, "Oh Mary Ellen I am so glad you're still there." I remember calling her the first time 20 years ago to get OA information and she was so loving and kind. She wanted to send me information and I wouldn't give her my address because I was embarrassed. She was so loving and accepting of me right where I was and didn't push. It was her kind and gentle spirit that gave me the faith that this was a loving program. I eventually called her back. Little did I know at that time that I would talk to her every day for fifteen years and those were the days when you paid for all your long distance calls from Illinois to Missouri.

However, when I first met her I thought she was the “Great Mamooo of OA.” You see she was **THE** OFFICE MANAGER and must run OAright? Everyone always turned to her for the answers and I was so intimidated by her. I had a hard time approaching her. We have laughed about that for years, especially now that I know there is absolutely **no** “GREAT MAMOONESS” about being office manager. She always told me that it was her honor to work for OA. She loved it so much. She would have never retired if she hadn’t been forced to because of her retirement benefits.

She was so totally dedicated to the office and the fellowship. Years ago Region IV approached her and wanted to open an office with her as their office manager. She turned them down and said that if she had extra time she wanted to dedicate it to St. Louis. I still run across paperwork that she did and am amazed at how organized and precise her records and bookkeeping were. She knew everything about that office, the by-laws, and the traditions. She continued throughout her life to be a wealth of knowledge. Even as her health started failing and she was going through the chemo treatments she told the Board of Trustee members that she was always available to them by telephone to answers questions. She was so dedicated and respectful of her responsibility to the Board of Trustees that during her most difficult times of chemo she only missed **ONE** Board meeting. She would try to schedule her chemo around the BOT meetings. Sometimes she was so weak that she could not stay for the Intergroup meeting after the BOT meeting, but she made it to the Board meetings. She took that service to OA and responsibility very seriously. When she knew that she would no longer be able to leave the house and come to the BOT meetings she contacted the president and told her that she needed to resign because she would not be able to fulfill her responsibilities as a Board member. This was seven days before she died. The Board chose not to act on her resignation and I applaud their decision. Their gesture of compassion and love touched her heart very deeply (mine too!)

At Intergroup we were always asking her advice. Every time I ran across something at the office that I did not

understand I always called her and said “What do I do about this?” and she always knew the answers. I will miss her counsel, as will we all.

She was so involved in giving service to the fellowship. She led meetings; spoke at meetings, Super Saturdays and conventions. She was the treasurer for the newly formed international Region 9 from 1982-1984.

Memories of Mary Ellen S.

During those years, Region 9 covered nearly all groups outside the United States and Canada. From 1976 to 1982 she gave service on the local literature committee for World Service Literature. They would review drafts of proposed literature and send their opinions to World Service. She and St. Louis were instrumental in making a stand to reinstate the 1976 procedures covering the conference seal of approval on WSO literature. So when you hear about “Conference Approved Material” you can thank the St. Louis committee and Mary Ellen for taking a stand to support a valuable procedure that helps protect the group conscience in our literature. They would also hash over new pieces of material and were instrumental in the publications of many of our brochures and pamphlets. Mary Ellen helped write our “Fourth Step Inventory” booklet. St. Louis developed it when we had no other guides in OA for the 4th step. She helped form the Delegate Regional Advisory Committee (DRAC) so we would have input in both Region and World Service organizational structure and find ways to raise the money our Intergroup needed to participate. She was a DRAC delegate for many years, traveled with the Region and loved it. She spoke often of all the wonderful Region people that she came to know and love. Mary Ellen was also influential in the formulation of the first Region IV By-Laws. So you see, she not only worked on a local level, but Mary Ellen also had a great deal of input regionally and at the World Service level. She held many convention chair positions including

treasurer and was the financial liaison for the 1985 World Service Convention held in St. Louis. This was the year that she became involved in the entertainment. This memorable year is when I entered the picture and met her. We did entertainment for about ten years and what fun it was. She loved to have fun and she was always spontaneous. She was ready to go on the spur of the moment. What a zest and love for life she always had. The first big event that OA ever held was in 1976 at the Holiday Inn on Hampton in St. Louis. It was the first all day event to be held on a Saturday. It was the day before Super Bowl Sunday. Someone said, “What shall we call it?” Mary Ellen said “Well, if the guys can have a Super Bowl Sunday, we’ll just have a Super Saturday.” Yes, that is how the name “Super Saturday” was born. It was Mary Ellen who named it.

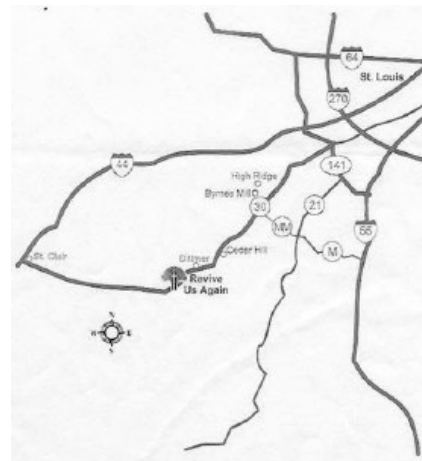
She sponsored countless members of OA. As one who was so blessed to be among that number, I can tell you that she was a wonderful sponsor. She was always there. She was never too busy to listen and to love unconditionally. Her compassion, strength, courage, and faith were so obvious in everything she did. Just being in her presence brought me serenity. That strength and faith carried her to her last breath. I have never seen so much courage and faith. She was an inspiration to all who were lucky enough to have been touched by her life. One of her most precious characteristics was her ability to love unconditionally. She was a master at loving others. When she listened to my Fifth Step (as well as countless others I am sure), she never even batted an eyebrow as I was squirming in my shoes. She was always so gentle and loving.

She had such a wonderful wit and sense of humor. She was always such a joy to be around. If Mary Ellen was there, it was a party. At conventions our room was always the party room and Mary Ellen was always the life of the party. It was always such a joy to be in her presence. She was such a positive person and always an eternal optimist. She knew how to find the good in every situation.

Many of us prayed for her for months asking for a miracle. Several weeks ago she said that she was so grateful that she was not in a lot of pain. She said to me

Fall Retreat

The 14th Annual Fall Retreat will be October 7-9, 2005 at the Revive Us Again Retreat Center at 8350 Hwy 30 in Dittmer, MO. This year's theme is **"Total Surrender, Total Freedom"**. Registration forms are available online at the Events page of the Bi-state website at www.stlouisoa.org.



All registration forms must be received by September 27, 2005.

Important Details

- Check in begins at 4PM Friday
- Friday supper is provided
- Program begins at 7:30PM Friday
- Retreat ends at 11AM Sunday
- All sessions during the weekend are optional, though we think you will enjoy them all
- Soft drinks and water (OASIS) will be provided for a small fee during the weekend.
- Towels are NOT provided so be sure and pack some.
- There will be four (4) people to a room. Please let us know if you have a roommate or mates.

If you are willing to speak (30 Day abstinence requirement) or to give service, or for more information, contact Jana G, 314-972-0871.

"You know we have been praying for a miracle for so long and I think **THIS** is my miracle. The miracle is that I am not having terrible pain. I am so grateful for that." WOW! What a gift she was!

We have all listened to her stories about her wonderful children and grandchildren. How many pictures have we seen of them and how many times did we all pray for her son Scott when he was critically injured. Her love knew no limits. Her faith carried her through when the doctors said "no hope" Mary Ellen said "My son will live" and he did. A mother's faith can move mountains. She just beamed every time she spoke of her children. I can tell you that her spirit lives on in all of them. They are all beautiful, warm, loving and caring adults and I am honored to know each of them.

I could go on forever. How do you sum up 20 years in a few pages? However, I had better stop or we will have to publish this instead of print it.

I can tell you that in her last days your calls, cards, flowers and prayers were such a blessing to her. She was overwhelmed by all the love and support that she received. You see she was so humble that she never realized how important she was in so many lives. She never realized that her legacy of love had touched the hearts of so many. She couldn't begin to imagine the impact her life has made on the world.

I was honored to be one of the six women pallbearers to carry my dear friend to her final resting place. I carried her after 20 years of her carrying me. I will always carry her with me. She will always be in my heart. The only thing worse than the pain of losing someone you love this much is never having had someone you love this much in your life. Someone told me that at Intergroup last month and I have held onto that with all my being because it is so true. If I could forego the pain of this loss in my life of course I would, but if I could only do it by never having had her in my life for the last 20 years I would not. I would never give up my memories of our friendship and the many lessons she has taught me. I know she will be missed by so many. She was loved, appreciated and admired by all who knew her. Her life was an

example of how to live, love and touch others.

I am honored to continue her legacy at the OA office and I consider myself the luckiest person alive to have been blessed with her love and friendship.

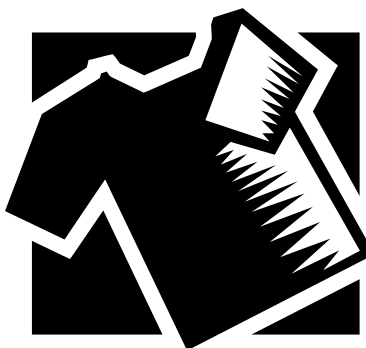
She came into my life, she touched me and I am forever changed because of it! Until we meet again dearest friend!

---Linda W.

WE WANT THE SHIRT OFF YOUR BACK!

Do you have a convention shirt from our 1987 convention? If so we would love to add it to our wall of memories in the office.

We have shirts displayed from every year from 1985 through 2005 EXCEPT for 1987 and we would love to complete our collection. The convention theme was "LIVING IN RECOVERY" and the logo was a heart with "O.A." written inside the heart and a rainbow cascading down into a pot of gold that says "LIVING IN RECOVERY" on the pot of gold. If you still have this shirt and would be willing to add it to our collection we would love to display it. Please call Linda W. at the OA office at 314-638-6070, bring or mail it to the office or bring it to Intergroup.



Service Vacancies

- 4 BOT Trustees
- 2 Region Reps
- 2 World Service Delegates
- Cassettes
- Newsletter
- Outreach
- Young People
- Twelfth Step Within

We need YOU! If you are interested in getting involved in Intergroup, please contact the Bi-State office by phone, fax or email, or talk with any BOT member.



Contacting OA

Bi-State Phone number:
(314) 638-6070

Bi-State Fax number:
(314) 638-6071

Intergroup Newsletter E-mail:
StlouisOAtoday@hotmail.com

St. Louis Bi-State Website:
www.stlouisoa.org

WSO Website:
www.overeatersanonymous.org

Region IV website:
www.oaregion4.org

WANTED Guest Newsletter Editors

If you are interested in being a guest newsletter editor, please send an email to the newsletter address.

Writing experience is not necessary.
Access to a computer is a must!

Reminder

Where & Whens will be published monthly. Each meeting is responsible for making sure there are enough copies at the meetings. If you need a copy, stop by the office or email the office, & we'll send you one.

New Meetings

SL 387 - Tuesdays 7:00 PM
Prince Hall Family Support Center, Classroom 1
St. Louis, MO

Upcoming Events & Business Info

August 27: 9am-Noon
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
Bridgeton, MO
Sponsored by the "Lit Up With Literature" Tuesday Night Mtg.

September 24: 9:30am-3pm,
Christ Church United Church of Christ,
7126 Bruno @ Bellevue
in Maplewood, MO
Sponsored by Group #025,
St. Mary's Sunday morning

October: OA Retreat Oct 7-9, see article with full details.

November 19: IDEA DAY
9:30am-12pm, 1pm-3pm
St. Joseph Hospital in Kirkwood
Sponsored by DRAC
Salad Bar \$6.00 with proceeds to WSO and Region travel

December: Holiday Booster under construction – more details later

January: OA's Birthday under construction – more details later

February 25: UNITY DAY under construction - more details later

To schedule a Super Saturday or other event, contact Ginnie H at (636) 723-0658. Any flyers for OA events submitted for dissemination to meetings or for publication in the newsletter must have received approval by the St. Louis Bi-State Area BOT (ask any BOT member).

Editorial Policy

As suggested by WSO guidelines, newsletters are to be a forum for experience, strength and hope. We encourage and give top priority to original material written by members of this Intergroup.

We reserve the right to edit any and all articles submitted for publication. Submission of article or flyers does not necessarily guarantee publication.

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily that of the St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup or OA as a whole.