

April 1958

Welcome, "Panel 8"

DEAR PANEL 8—In mid-January we wrote a belated letter to all of outgoing (Panel 6) delegates in which we said in part:

"It was decided at our staff meeting today that for the April issue we would like to print some form of special welcome to the new delegates from the outgoing ones. A few words from you with any suggestions you might have for the new delegate, or any benefits you personally have gained as a working member of the Conference, will help us to make this a *composite* expression of your total delegate experience."

Oh dear! Oh dear! Naomi, our lovely lady ex-delegate from Kentucky, puts our present dilemma in her opening sentence: "You said 'write a few words'—now honey, you know alcoholics better than that." Actually we never dreamed we would have so many answers, so fast and so very, very good. Space just doesn't allow for full quotes from each reply and so we are listing those concrete suggestions which we feel will be of the most practical help, along with a few of the very real—if intangible—rewards expressed by all of the writers.

Here are the items from Panel Sixers we thought would be of the most pre-Conference help.... *H. W.*

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. "Just before leaving for the Conference, read (or re-read) the 'Third Legacy Manual.'"
2. "When each new delegate receives his package of Conference agenda, inform them to please read the previous Conference report before the session opens and I think time will be saved by not bringing to the floor ideas or propositions that have already been disposed of in previous years."
3. "New delegates should understand that they are expected to ask any

kind of questions and speak freely on the matters that come up for Conference consideration. The purpose of the Conference is to get an expression from the grass roots AA of which you are a part."

4. "New delegates should make it a point to meet personally every one of the trustees and all of the General Service Headquarters personnel and Grapevine staff as they will find this a very rewarding experience."

5. "If they, with or without spouse, intend to see any shows or do any sightseeing, they should plan to arrive in New York several days early, or stay several days after adjournment of the Conference. These new delegates may not realize how heavy the work is or how much time is consumed during the days the Conference is actually in session."

6. "As an ex-delegate to the Conference, I have deemed it my most important duty to offer my time and my experience to my successor. Before the fifteenth of January, I had turned over my complete General Service file to my successor. We plan another session together before April 1 in order that the delegate for the next two years can receive all possible information and the benefit of my experience even before he attends his first Conference as area delegate."

7. "To my mind, your greatest responsibility is in carrying the things you learn to your area. Don't try to do the job alone, use your committee and General Service Representative. Remember what you and I have learned, that the more people who participate in AA the better the results. You and I haven't stayed sober by listening, we have stayed sober by working at it. Do not feel bound by some small segment of opinion in your area, on some particular subject. . . . People rely on your judgment or they wouldn't have chosen you as delegate. Remember that no individual can form an intelligent opinion on anything until he knows all the facts."

8. "The only advice I would give would be the same as to the new man coming into AA—'take it easy' and 'keep an open mind.'"

INTANGIBLE REWARDS

1. "From ten o'clock in the morning until eleven at night, through lunch and dinner you will work together in the same conference room. You will argue on occasion, you will laugh together many times and sometimes you may pray together for a few minutes during these five days."

2. "You feel the true meaning of unity. It's the password for the five days of meetings. Here we learned the vital functions of our General Service Headquarters and our AA Grapevine. How we, the delegates are links between the groups and service board, a trusted servant to

strengthen the chain and pass the message on to our AA sisters and brothers and the millions of alcoholics who still don't know. AA *has* come of age and it is our job to carry on."

3. "My continued association with AA gave me sobriety, and much more from my group. I learned more from the inter-group level, then Provincial (area) . . . but it was not until going to the Conference in New York that my understanding of AA was really broadened into a full acceptance of its world-wide meaning."

4. "A humble approach and the full acceptance of the Conference conscience sends you away full of good ideas."

5. "I believe that unity of AA as a whole is of the utmost importance. We as delegates do not attend for our own personal gain. We are the servants and the representatives of the groups of our areas."

6. "We always keep an eye on the main purpose of AA—'to help the sick alcoholic recover if he wishes.' "

7. "I am very happy to have our new delegates share the experience I have shared. The rotation system existing in AA is, I think, the most charitable and human tradition that AA has created."

8. "The wonderful friendships you make! I may never attend a Bird Dog Champion Field Trial, but Earle told me how it is in Sedalia. The salmon on the Miramichi now mean more to me because Doug lives up there. Maybe someday I can accept the invitation to try for the Pacific variety—if I do I am going to have Don show me a Wyoming elk on the way. . . ."

9. "You will gain something from this experience that will stay with you the rest of your life. That Higher Power is attending every meeting with you, He dwells in the heart of everyone there, ever guiding, helping you make some of the most important decisions of your life."