

What a Time!

A Convention Participant Shares

Seven hundred recovering compulsive overeaters gathered at the Overeaters Anonymous Convention in Dallas, Texas, last August [August 3-6, 2000] to celebrate recovery, fellowship and OA's 40th birthday. The banner over the registration desk said it well: "Welcome Home." For our large extended family with recovery times ranging from a newcomer who said this was her first introduction to OA to Rozanne's 40 years, it was a grand homecoming.

Folks attended who had decades of recovery and abstinence. Many were maintaining well over 100-pound weight losses. One man who pitched at the closing had gone from more than 400 pounds to the 165 he had maintained for years.

Workshops were offered on everything from the Steps to the tools; to working a program; to spiritual, physical and emotional recovery. Marathon meetings went on around the clock. All kinds of special focus meetings were held (men in OA, folks with more than 100 pounds to lose, gay and lesbian, Spanish-speaking and more). Keynote speakers addressed the crowd at the grand opening, the dinner and the closing. Folks could rest, hang out and talk in the hospitality room and buy OA-related items from intergroups and regions in the boutique room. Everywhere we looked were folks wearing OA name tags. We met old friends and made new ones.

And the dance! What a night! What a time! There isn't anything like an OA dance. No one cares whether you dance with someone, alone, with folks of the same gender or with groups of folks. No one cares how you dress or how you dance; no one cares what you weigh or what shape you're in. It's one of the safest, most amazing experiences you can have.

We celebrated OA's 40th birthday with a party complete with sing-alongs; balloons telling years of recovery; and speeches by Rozanne, our cofounder, and A.G., the first man in OA and first chair of the Board of Trustees.

Three women from Venezuela, speaking from the podium in Spanish and broken English, donated money to the WSO. We were greeted in Hebrew, heard the Serenity Prayer in Japanese and listened to speakers with strong British, Brazilian and French accents. A French woman spoke who has been in program for 26 years, even though France has had OA meetings for only 24 years. We heard accents from different areas of the US, including many from Texas. The Seventh Tradition donation taken during the 40th birthday party raised \$5,000, and the Fork Hall of Fame raised \$2,000. We held a raffle for the beautiful black-and-white quilt made here in Region Three, called "Life Is More than Black and White." I was holding my breath to see who would take it home, and I couldn't complain when it went to A.G.

Hundreds of us made a huge circle around the room, held hands and closed the convention with "I Put My Hand In Yours." I'm grateful I could be at the Convention. For those of you missed it this time—remember New Orleans in 2003!

— *Edited and reprinted in Lifeline, December 2000, from Utah Soaring newsletter, Northern Utah Intergroup, August 2000*