

# the TRANSFORMER



*Why We Facilitate  
Workshops*

## Tribute to Fred Feucht

by Rudy Cypser (Radiant Rudy)  
Katonah, New York, USA

Starting with this issue, the responsibility for publishing the *Transformer* passes from Fred Feucht to Chuck Oropallo. So ends an eighteen-year pioneering chapter of the *Transformer*, and the start of a promising new chapter. We all wish Chuck “happy sailing.”

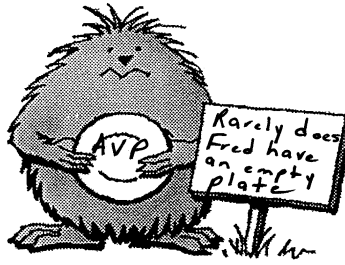
Steve Marshal was the editor of the first few *Transformer* issues, starting in 1984. Then Fred took over, fashioning a regular means of community-building among AVP facilitators. Like a newsletter, it held all kinds of interesting items: prison slang, new exercises and light & livelies, workshop schedules, and sometimes the names of persons who completed workshops or personal stories.

Starting out as primarily the news in Westchester, NY, the *Transformer* became the state newsletter in 1986, branching out to statewide activities and more contributed articles. In 1990, the publication was done on computer, and a series of new looks took off. And in 1992, it became the AVP/USA newsletter.

Fred’s AVP life started way back in 1981, and he led his first workshop with Larry Apsey in 1982. As a member of the Education Committee, he helped to improve the early AVP manuals, which set the tone for future workshops. He’s done more than 120 AVP workshops since then. And as head of the Westchester Area Council since 1985, his leadership has guided over 1,000 workshops in Sing Sing, Taconic, and Bedford Hills Correctional Facilities.

In 1992, Fred was among the founders of AVP/USA at a crucial meeting at the Mariandale Center in Ossining, New York and at the 1994 formation meeting in Maryland. As a member of its Board of Directors, Fred helped to evolve the young AVP/USA organization.

Fred has managed to work productively with the Sing Sing administration in many ways. He’s gotten permission to run weekly Poetry Workshops and Creative Writing Workshops for the inmates, and the



strong inmate teams hold monthly support meetings for facilitators. In 1996, Fred guided the cadre of over 50 men who serve as AVP facilitators at Sing Sing to coordinate a multi-inmate-organization program, *SIXTY DAYS OF PEACE* at Sing Sing. Hundreds of inmates signed the pledge. Followed

by five subsequent annual *PEACE WEEKS*, all this has been credited with helping to cut in half the rate of stabbings at Sing Sing.

Fred has been the driver behind all the Westchester community workshops, too—not only by providing staff and training materials, but organizing the food team—which often included himself for one or two meals—baking muffins and coffee-cake for the snacks, and making his famous tomato/vegetable soup and tacos for lunches.

At 71, Fred still manages a full time job, applying his creativity to new expansions of the medical communications business he’s in. Putting out the *Transformer* for the national organization and the *Westchester Word* newsletter for his local chapter, conducting and coordinating workshops, attending prison-facilitator meetings, providing food when needed, conducting monthly chapter meetings, and making innumerable AVP presentations with notable clarity, have all been done in his “spare time.”

Over the years, “Faithful Fred” has embodied the AVP spirit. Fred’s father was a Lutheran minister, and Fred has followed in his footsteps—as an AVP “minister” to thousands of men and women who have benefited from his 21 years of AVP service. Encouraging without being evangelical, non-judgmental, accepting happily whatever you can give, and getting people to work together, he’s been always willing to fill in doing the job that no one else is doing, adding good humor and new ideas. This leaves an army of grateful participants, including thousands of prisoners, hundreds of college students and many others whom he has served through community workshops.

## Following a tough act...

by Charles Oropallo (Cheery Chuck)  
Peterborough, New Hampshire, USA

When I received the above article from Rudy, I was astonished at what I did not know about Fred! Discovering all those incredible things about Fred’s life reminded me of the wonderful warmth and closeness that occurs when I learn new and interesting things about any of the people around me—just like I experience during workshops as community is built.

Every now and then, something wonderfully connected to AVP happens that encourages, motivates, or just plain moves me. Recently, I took copies of

existing *Transformers* to several local printing companies. None had ever heard of AVP. A gentleman at one establishment came out to discuss the job and before we even got into the details looked into my eyes and said to me, “You know—I looked this over—you people are doing very important work.” I cannot adequately express to you how delighted and proud I was to be part of “you people” when he said that.

And we should never forget, we ARE doing very important work—requiring that we overcome our differences and continue working together as a team to accomplish it.

I look forward to keeping the *Transformer* available to us, and will hope for your support in the form of submissions of articles pertinent to our cause!

# Virginia National Gathering Report

by Susan Hefte (Serene Susan)  
Clearwater, Florida, USA



Friends, it is my pleasure to report on the National AVP Gathering that Darrell (Hefte) and I just attended. We found ourselves wishing you were with us, saying ‘oh wouldn’t this person or that be interested in this’ or ‘wouldn’t so-n-so love this.’ *So take this report as an early invitation to join us next year in Minnesota. Mark your calendars: Memorial Day weekend, Friday evening through noon on Monday.* Darrell and I have a great time at these annual meetings renewing and creating friendships with folks of like mind and heart. This year we shared our cabin with our friend Ann Ward (AVP/USA President and font of knowledge about all manner of things related to AVP) and found ourselves laughing and talking long after lights out.

The setting this year was more rustic than last—or next—at “Camp Hanover” just north of Richmond, VA. The weather was beautiful with clear warm days and cool nights. Everything was lush and green with trails winding up and down the bluffs above the lake. Some even braved the rope bridge across a narrow part of the lake! The cabins were typical camp dorm cabins, decent mattresses on platform, and most with bathrooms elsewhere.

The attendance at the National Gathering continues to rise. This year we had about 90 participants, up about 10 from last year. This included former inmates who were now involved in AVP on the outside, some returning to prison as outside facilitators, some working to help folks coming out of prison to adjust to life outside. Some of these persons have become master level counselors and social workers, the Conference Committee Chair this year is one example of this.

There were old-timers who had been with AVP from the beginning, 27 years ago, to newcomers just beginning their relationship with AVP. Most of the local AVP groups are focused on prison work only but there were others that worked in schools, churches, and communities to create a rich mix of applications and inspiration for each other.

Susan Oropallo set us up with a version of the “three question interview” Friday night that had us pairing up with someone we didn’t know well and asking three questions of interest and then reversing it. This was a bit chaotic, fun, and wonderful. She also provided some Light & Liveliest elsewhere in the weekend.

Sef McBride led us in a gathering on Sunday morning, ex-inmates first, responding to the question, “What AVP means to me.” Surely this was a most tender and meaningful part of the conference for many of us.

The annual business meeting, Sunday afternoon, was interesting and productive with reports from the various committees and from each of the regional representatives on what the “Locals” (local AVP groups) had been doing over the past year. These regional reports were great to hear. So much is being done all around the country with old established groups (NY reporting 167 prison workshops this year) and relatively new groups (such as AVPTampaBay with our first prison workshop the month before the confer-

ence) working hard to get established. And we were able to commiserate with groups struggling with various issues that come with the territory, such as other groups co-opting AVP for profit and without acknowledgment. New business that came out of these reports was then assigned to the appropriate committee for work during the year. One important request, second year running, is for a new treasurer to take over the fine work of Tom Truitt. Any volunteers? Tom has been handling AVP/USA finances for years. We (AVPTampaBay) recently worked though getting our ‘501C3’ status as a non-profit organization with his help. This business meeting is the legal reason for gathering and it offers the vital opportunity for face-to-face committee work instead of the year round conference calls.

I attended the CLRG committee meetings. We again noted the need for more contact with the Locals as well as funding from the national organization to help support necessary travel. Once again I found myself drawn into more involvement—from Conference Committee member the first year, to Conference Committee Chair/coordinator, year two, to Vice President, year three, to Regional Coordinator, now. That means that this year I will try to stimulate more action on the Regional level to gather information and give support to local groups as well as call for CLRG phone conferences several times during the year.

The Locals, such as AVPTampaBay, are the mainstay of the organization, facilitating workshops and such. The regional representatives serve by informing locals, who were not at the National Gathering, what is happening nationally and regionally. They also inform the national committees as to needs (funding, educational, communication, sage support) from the locals.

Darrell went to the Education Committee meeting where the Advanced Manual and supplement issue was discussed. Grace McGrath and Alan Taplow had this well thought out from conference calls and other dialogue so that it was well presented.

For reports on all committees and regions, look for the information on the AVP/USA website.

These meetings are the head of the conference where the work of the AVP organization is done. But the heart is in the many opportunities to have one-to-one and small group interactions with our peers from all across North America. Primary in this were the workshops.

The workshops were divided into four tracks with five 50-minute sessions each. So you can get a bit of the flavor of these options, here are the choices as they were presented:

## “AVP Workshops: The Nuts and Bolts”

“Quick Decisions—Workshops from Hell,” Steve Angell, facilitator. Bring a story of your most challenging experience as a facilitator, and hear how others think they would have handled it. [This was fun and perspective stretching last year when I attended and Darrell videotaped.]

“Creating Alternative Agendas,” Terry Kayser, facilitator. Exploring strategies to use when workshop dynamics change and render the prepared agenda useless.

“Transforming Power Mandala,” Bob Barnes, facilitator.

“New AVP Exercises,” Chelsea Kesselheim, facilitator. The new manual? Light and Liveliest? Role-playing? Whether new exercises or variations on old AVP exercises, come prepared to enjoy and to share your discoveries! [This

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is one I attended, it was great! Lots of new ideas. Chelsea and I worked closely last year when she took on the role of site coordinator. It was good to play together again and experience her creative exercises. FYI, three years ago, Darrell facilitated a "Light & Livelies, new and old" group that was also very rich and videotaped.]

"Strategic Listening," Tom Truitt, facilitator. Interactive practice session on mediator's technique for reaching win-win agreements. [I went to this as well, interesting approach for acknowledging feelings and values before getting down to the issues.]

### **"Ex-Inmates: Reintegration Issues"**

"Support Systems Inside—The STEPS (Support, Training, Education, Partnership)" program currently running in western Massachusetts.

"The Way Home," Barbara Carter, facilitator. The Way Home is a program that operates in Delaware that reaches out to men and women in their transition from prison to home. [Darrell reports this was powerful, informative and inspiring.]

"Stigmatization," Sef McBride & Charles Oropallo, facilitators. An ex-inmate panel discussion of living with stigmas within the community and how AVP can help.

"Forgiveness—the famous F-word," Teresa Tyson, facilitator. The presenter will talk a bit about her experience with [forgiveness] as a violent crime "victim" (notice the quotes) and mediator and share some readings, music and participatory exercises (not in the Advanced Manual) to use when the topic arises. [A participant told me Teresa is an excellent facilitator and that the workshop was quite meaningful.]

### **"Participation: Growing our Organization"**

"National Program Evaluation," Terry Kayser, facilitator. An invitation to provide input and express interest in joining a program evaluation of AVP in prison settings by other regional groups. Hear what is proposed in Minnesota working with the Wilder Foundation. [Darrell says this was provocative and raises questions about finding funding with major foundations. The Wilder Group felt AVP was worthy of major foundation support.]

"Going Back In," Charles Oropallo and Jo Kurzmann, facilitators. An ex-inmate panel addresses some of the Why and How of ex-inmates going back into prisons as community AVP facilitators—how we can encourage the process allowing ex-inmates back inside as volunteers.

"Houses of Healing," Kathy Rubenstein and Carol Peters, facilitators. Learn more about this Emotional Awareness program, which uses psychological and spiritual healing techniques to develop personal insight and responsibility, and encourage forgiveness and transformation—an excellent follow-on to AVP.

"The Impact of AVP on Inmate Behavior," Stan Sloane, facilitator. Encouraging findings from research conducted at the Delaware Correction Center in Smyrna, DE.

"A 'New Reality'," John Shuford, facilitator. Anger Management through AVP. [Darrell found this to be provocative and packed with concepts worthy of another session.]

### **"Special Topic: Restorative Justice"**

"Vermont's Reparative Board Approach to Restorative Justice," Alan Taplow and Don Kesselheim, co-facilitators. A new half-hour video of the Vermont Reparative Model, followed by discussion of how citizen volunteers may participate in healing process. [Video showing the process in action, well done.]

"Restorative Justice Inside Prison—Exploring the RJ/AVP Relationship," Barbara Toews Shenk and Ann Ward, Co-facilitators. Exploring the links between a variety of prison-based Restorative Justice approaches and AVP. [Excellent handout packet, video, and presentation.]

"AVP Community Conferencing in Prison," John Shuford, facilitator. Simulating a community conference within the AVP trainer community when an inmate trainer has demonstrated behavior in serious violation of guidelines or prison rules. An example is an inmate getting into a fight and ending up in the hole.

"HIPP," Darrell Heffe, facilitator. Workshop formats, network, polity [regarding] TP? AVP Alliance? Brief opening remarks, discussion. [Facilitator comment: "Even though small in number, it was good to have an interested audience. It was interesting to explore the HIPP/AVP connection in light of the philosophy and history involved. I think the youth initiative was the silent participant in the conference. I share some of the responsibility for that silence. There are AVP youth initiatives happening in addition to HIPP. I wish to know more about the AVP school initiative in Tulsa."]

Two other major offerings were from our keynote speakers: Carl Mays, an international motivational speaker, presented an hour and a half talk sprinkled with some very funny stories and some good connections to AVP. He had done his homework and then put us to work gathered into nine small groups to brainstorm about a series of questions that he had gleaned from his pre-conference AVP information gathering work. The responses were then reported to the whole group.

Chuck Oropallo, Conference Coordinator, invited Carl because Carl had been one of the few persons who responded to Chuck's request for books and information while he was in prison. They established a relationship that has developed over time. Chuck's delight in Carl's willingness to be present at this conference was wonderful to behold. A too-good-to-hope-for dream come true.

Tom Lagana, author of Chicken Soup for the Prisoners Soul, was with us throughout the conference. He told us stories from his book and about his visits to prisons wherever he travels (which seems to be everywhere). Tom was an engaging speaker and a pleasure to have around. I think he was quite impacted by the conference and may even try out our workshops. As he said, he "is not an AVPer.... Yet."

Another highlight was a repeat from last year by popular request. Nancy Penney led the group in an evening of International Folk Dances. This is truly a community builder and great fun. Carol Byrd (from Tampa Bay) noted last year that she would never have expected to be dancing with ex-inmates and having such a good time. Nancy roomed with the four women that came from Tampa Bay last year (Carol, Leslie Bouwman, Jan Urbanski, and Claudia Hunter) and was really disappointed that none of them made it this time. I hear they stayed up late at night doing Light & Livelies and exercises for youth and laughing a lot.

Of course, we had breaks and meals, and personal time to hang out. That's when some of the best things happened: in-depth conversations, brainstorming, and just plain silliness.

Please seriously consider coming to the National Gathering next year in Minnesota, Memorial Day Weekend.

You won't regret it.

# Getting Hooked on AVP

by Steven Angell (Smiling Steve)  
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, USA

(From a 6/17/02 interview between Charles Oropallo and Steven Angell)

## How was it that you came to be involved in AVP?

I was on the scene in New York State when the Eastern Social Action Committee of New York State was looking for ways in which to be proactive about the subject of peace. The first thing that came up was the Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) project. I wasn't directly involved but was tangentially involved with the group when they were working on that project in 1972.

Then in 1975 this group in Greenhaven Prison in New York expressed interest in having us give them a workshop on ways of dealing with violence—dealing with conflict—other than getting violent. This smaller group took the work they'd been doing with CCRC and upgraded it—drawing material from as many other sources as they could—and created the model for an adult workshop, which they then offered to the men at Greenhaven in 1975.

That program—that “workshop”—was quite successful. It was followed soon after by a similar workshop at another prison in New York State, Auburn Prison, so in a period of two or three months, we'd offered two of these workshops. Both had been received very well.

I was not at this time involved in these workshops—I just knew what was going on. My involvement had been behind the scenes with a yearly meeting group, the Peace and Social Action Committee in New York.

When AVP was being offered at the Greenhaven Prison, it was known as the Quaker Project in Community Conflict (QPCC), so it sort of had that as a rather awkward name—not one that really carried much spice to it. One time, the group that had been doing the workshop was leaving the prison and one of the officers there said, “Well, how was your workshop in Alternatives to Violence?” We latched on to that as an appropriate name. We said, “Oh, well, that's perfect for a name!” So, we started calling it our Alternatives to Violence Workshops and that then got changed to AVP. So that's how that came about.

At the time of the first workshop at Greenhaven, Lawrence Apsey, who was sort of the founder of AVP—although there were others who were well involved—asked my wife and myself if we would provide hospitality for one of the facilitators, Bernard Lafayette. He was a man who had worked with Martin Luther King when he was doing his thing down south.



Chuck Oropallo and Steve Angell at the 2002 AVP National Gathering in Richmond, VA.

We welcomed the opportunity to have Bernard in our home. Since it was a three-day workshop, we had the opportunity to talk with him in the evenings after he'd been doing the workshop in the prison with the men.

This was my first contact with the project when it started. I didn't immediately get involved myself, but when this group

decided to incorporate, they

asked me if I would serve on the board of directors for the corporation, AVP New York. I agreed to do this and so I was on the board of directors. This was about two or three years after the first workshop—about 1978 now—and I haven't done a workshop yet. So we formed the corporation, which gave us tax exemption for contributions, enabled us to solicit foundations, and stuff like that, which we couldn't do when we were part of a religious group, which were the Quakers.

I was not doing any workshops and a couple of people (Janet Lugo and Ellen Flanders) were saying to me, “Steve, you ought to know what we're doing if you're on the board of directors.” So I couldn't disagree with them.

I was a little resistant at first because I was a busy guy then. I had a full time job and stuff like that. Finally, I acquiesced around 1980 or 1981. I did a basic workshop up in Albany with Ellen Flanders as the lead facilitator. I don't remember who the other facilitators were. And then I was hooked—I mean, I did the first workshop and I wanted to follow through on another one. I did the training for facilitators - we didn't have a second level workshop then. That was with Susan Hesse. Then Larry Apsey coaxed me to go with him to Fishkill Correctional Facility and do a workshop there, which was my first workshop in a prison. I've been doing them ever since. So that's how it all got started.

## What do you think it was for you that made you continue doing AVP?

Well, for this I'm going to have to go way back. I sort of always had it in my head that I wanted to do something to help free the planet of war—of violent activity.

I had a childhood experience. We Friends believe we have “leadings.” I was born right after World War I, and I heard people talking about that war—how men were in trenches a few yards apart shooting at one another—trying to kill one another. This is a five or six year old that I'm talking about. I said to myself “This doesn't make any sense. If I were there, I'd just get up out of my trench and say to everybody, ‘This doesn't make any sense! Why don't we all just go home?’” So, that was my earliest pacifist expression I can remem-

ber.

In both grade school and high school I tried to get speakers. I was a student who helped plan assembly and stuff. Back in the early thirties in ninth grade—I didn't do this but I guess our school administrator did—we got Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the president—to come and talk to our school. Because of my activities with the students in terms of student programs that focused on resolving conflict and like that—I sat on the platform with the superintendent—so I guess I made a childhood introduction of the wife of the president. Back in those early years, being a peace activist was very much a part of my persona. When I moved from ninth grade to tenth grade, we had an International Relations club. I became president of the club and we brought Fred Lupe, who was a peace activist, to talk with the student body then. So all through those years I was actively concerned about world peace and other ways of solving problems than through violence.

This was just sort of a maturing of this interest that really got me hooked on AVP and I've been hooked ever since.

***What is your hope or dream for AVP and what it does in the world?***

The program rapidly spread in New York State from among the prisons. The original concept of AVP—at least in my mind—was not that this was just designed for work in prisons. The way I used to express it, I said, "Here we have a program that works toward a more peaceful planet and we've chosen the prisons—one of the most violent institutions in our society—as a place to test it out." And, indeed, that's what we were doing.

A significant change in my life took place in 1988 when my wife died. I was her caretaker during the last year of her life. She died of breast cancer. I was getting communications from my friends around the world who were saying, "Steve, you ought to come visit us." So I thought, "Well, that's a great idea, I'm free now of this responsibility, and no reason why I can't go traveling around the planet." Although I'd never traveled outside the United States, except to go to Canada, my wife, before she died, told me I was "going to be the most well traveled member of the family." I couldn't see how that was going to be. She had a vision.

Then, I'm getting these invitations from friends abroad saying, "Why don't you come and visit us?" And I'm thinking, "Yeah. Why don't I go visit them—and take AVP with me!"

Tokyo was my first opportunity. In 1988 when the Quakers had a Triennial in Tokyo—every three years we had an International gathering of Quakers—I was

the New York Yearly Meeting representative to that gathering. I offered to give an interest group on AVP. So that, other than Canada, was the first time we'd done AVP outside the continent. When I was in Tokyo, I had contact with Val Ferguson, who was General Secretary of the Friends World Committee worldwide. She had become interested in my participation in Alternatives to Violence, then with activities with Friends worldwide, and I got an invitation to join a U.N. group representing Friends on the Alliance of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice because of my work in prisons with AVP. There was no specific connection between my work in the NGO Alliance and AVP, but I was making contacts with Friends worldwide.

In 1990, I began planning an around the world trip to share AVP. I was part of a United States delegation that went to China. I was in social work and got an invitation to join a group that went to China. While I was there I had a chance to meet with a few Quakers in Shanghai, and share with them about the Alternatives to Violence Project. We had an evening together and I had told them about AVP.

Ellen Flanders and Janet Lugo took AVP to Britain, I would think probably in 1989. They did some workshops there. That was a good foundation for my later appearance in 1991—I wanted to do AVP there because I had a clear vision that I had a responsibility for helping to share this program more broadly than in the United States.

This all intertwines because in 1991 I set up this worldwide travel program which took me to Britain, to Europe, and I've been in Asia, I've been in China, then to Central and South America, and then to Australia and New Zealand. I had been to Africa.

In 1995 in Cairo, Egypt, was when again I took AVP to the Crime Congress. We got Elaine Dyer, a New Zealander, to address the whole crime congress—I only think she had something like ten minutes—and she talked about AVP. Plus, we had a number of workshops on it, and so forth.

While I was on that trip—that was an around the world trip we started—I went to the west coast, Hawaii, Australia. Anytime after I got involved in 1981, wherever I went I spread the seed for AVP. So it was in connection with the 1995 U.N. Crime Congress in Cairo that I got to Africa and we did workshops in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda. And now we have a very active program going in central Africa utilizing AVP, and it's quite active in South Africa.

And who knows where else, because AVP has now spread many places in the world!

"This doesn't make any sense. If I were there, I'd just get up out of my trench and say to everybody, 'This doesn't make any sense! Why don't we all just go home?'"

Steve Angell at 5 or 6 years old

## **B**ecoming a Facilitator

by Lenard Hall (Laconic Lenard)  
Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

At the time I finished my Level II workshop you had to be ‘invited’ to take a T4F. The only reason I got invited was that a very good friend of mine happened to be a lead facilitator and insisted that I be invited. When I became a facilitator that was the first thing I changed. I guess that I became a facilitator mostly because some people really didn’t want me to.

In my Basic and Level II workshops, I was the ‘participant from hell.’ I was resistant, reluctant and very confrontational. It wasn’t until I began facilitating workshops that I really started to change. I guess this was partly because of the fact that facilitators can’t pass which made me really think about answering things; having to explain Transforming Power; and some exceptional community volunteers. AVP gave me a structure for my own spiritual beliefs and a way to communicate them. It made me see the beauty of the human spirit in everyone.

I do workshops now because I think everyone should be exposed to AVP. I have a hard time with the levels of bureaucracy in the program. I always go back to the basic tenets of being a grassroots organization and that power seeps up rather than trickle down. So I tend not to be very popular with the majority involved in the power and control of AVP. I keep it free and real. I know that the success of a workshop has nothing to do with me but that when you get people together in this way magic happens. I am part of that magic but I don’t create it.

I believe that someone should not facilitate unless they truly believe that there is always an alternative. Always, not just in certain circumstances. They should be open to anything and adaptable. I have seen so many facilitators who are stuck in one way and can’t think outside the box. They have to be able to accept people at whatever level they are at. I have noticed that facilitators here seem to prefer people who share their middle class values and views. They are dissatisfied with younger people who have different ideas. They must see there is no wrong way only different ways. They must be non-judgmental and lead by example. They must always be looking to empower others rather than taking power for themselves.

## **M**y Interest in AVP

by Jim Loomis (Journeying Jim)  
Cambridge, Maine, USA



All I had heard about “AVP,” and my memory is hazy here, was that it was a program of some sort for men in prison. I heard about it in the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, in 1996, probably, from Sheila Garrett. I attended a gathering at Powell House (New York) with her shortly thereafter and viewed the original video made of a prison AVP group in Canada. I

remember that Steve Angell visited one evening to talk about the program. He was very informal, and what really stayed with me from that meeting was just the idea: working in prison groups on violence.

I had been away from group work since 1975. Prior to that, I had worked with psychotherapeutic groups, worked in Head Start, and established and directed a halfway house for teenagers, among other things. I was hungry to work once more in the “field,” as I had in New York City Head Start, at Liberty House, and the Provincetown Drop-In Center—all of which involved “street work” of one kind or another.

So, all I needed to know about AVP was that it was a program for prisoners which used group process to deal with issues of violence.

Just why this was so compelling to me I can only guess. I do know that group dynamics had, for a long time, been what I considered a specialty for me. But I was, and had been also for a long time, very aware of the violence in my own upbringing. And I knew that, although I had never “acted out” violence (as I then understood it—my awareness was focused on the physical violence—the subtleties, the emotional manipulations, the intellectual games, the controlling behaviors, largely escaped me as forms of violence), it lurked, in my makeup, as very much a possibility. There were, in fantasies that I entertained from time to time, the romantic justifications that we know are often so apparent to justify violence.

What I had not reckoned with—what truly surprised and engaged me and spoke to me of the street that had attracted me in my former work—was the basic honesty with which these men (I have not worked with women) engaged the process of the workshop. It did not matter whether they spoke frankly at one time or another; it did not matter if they affected scorn; they were deeply involved in the workshop, as though it were a matter of life and death.

This dedication was rare in my experience, and it met a need in my soul. It spoke of an ultimate purpose to my work, and it does still.

## **A**VP – Why do I do it?

by Grace McGrath (*Amazing Grace*)  
Middlebury, Vermont, USA

“How do you do it?.. People sometimes ask me this when they find out the commitment of time and energy that it takes for an AVP prison workshop. I guess what they really mean is “why do you do it,” knowing that I have an active family life and a demanding job.

There are times that I wonder about that myself:

- When I’m climbing out of my warm bed on a cold dark morning to face an hour’s drive to the prison.
- When I’m staring at another barely edible styrofoam tray of prison dinner.
- When I’m frustrated by yet another bureaucratic mix-up that interferes with the workshop.
- When I’m feeling tired and cranky and the role plays are flat, there are conflicts on the team, some participants are determined to convince me that non-violence is impractical and I’m muttering to myself “Trust the process, trust the process.”

Of course, by the end of the workshop I remember exactly why (and how) I do it. I look around in the closing circle at the faces that three days ago were closed and wary and see the intelligence, sense of hope, community feeling and inner spirit shining in those same faces. I see tears glistening in the eyes of “hardened criminals” and often feel them in my own eyes. While some workshops are glorious, and some are just OK, they all have their luminous moments, many of which are etched in my mind:

- At my first prison workshop, I watch men who were likely to have violated bodies of other people work together in a trust lift to rock a fellow prisoner in the gentlest possible manner to the sounds of soft music.
- A man who plays the role of an off duty policeman in a role play sheepishly confesses that he never realized what a hard job police officers have, and he doesn’t think he can look at them the same way again.
- A participant at a community workshop who had struggled with some personal issues the night before rushes in on Sunday morning crying, “I understand! I understand! My mother is just trying to do her best!”
- Two participants in a workshop acknowledge to the group that they were enemies before the workshop but



found out they have much in common.

- A young self-described “stick-up man” struggles to compose himself after playing the role of someone being robbed. “I never knew how scared those people were! It’s awful!”
- Over and over again hearing “I only came here because I thought it would help me get paroled but this has been really important to me.” Or “I never thought I could have fun in prison.” Or “I can’t believe it. This feels like family.”
- The times that a Light & Lively or even a Role Play takes such a comic turn that we all take many minutes to recover from our belly laughs.
- Watching the English speakers wait patiently and respectfully for the concepts to get translated to a Spanish speaker, and then watching understanding dawn in that person’s face.
- Watching people use the safe atmosphere to show off their talents in singing, dancing, rapping, acting, drawing, perception or making people laugh.
- Hearing desperately homesick men speak movingly of what matters to them in their lives: homes, parents, work, children, lovers, pets.
- Watching the inside facilitators month after month grow in confidence and leadership skills as well as in a deeper understanding of what non-violence really means.

The other question people ask me is “But does it make a difference?” Of course I realize that for some participants the workshop is *only* a brief respite from the brutal monotony of prison life. Others may learn some skills, which they will use on occasion, perhaps resulting in a few less violent incidents in their lives. Others may begin to re-evaluate some of their tightly held prejudices and be open to new possibilities. For some, however, I can see that the experience is the moisture that begins to soften the hard shell around the seed of their inner selves, and they gradually begin to blossom toward the light. When we are present to see this process in another human being, we are truly privileged.

Of course the real reason I do AVP workshops is for myself, but not only because I need to continually confront my own violence within. It is also because even a small dose of the nightly news begins to poison me with despair about the brutality and viciousness in our world. But each time I do a workshop I am reminded again of the innate worth of each person, and the possibility of transformation even in the belly of the beast. I can return to the rest of my life with faith and hope.



# How I Got Involved

by Martin Hattersley (Motivated Martin)  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

It's a strange story, how I came to be involved in the Alternatives to Violence Project.

Back in 1988, Alan Welsh, the dedicated but unpaid Executive Secretary of the Alberta Human Rights and Civil Liberties Association, had consulted me in my professional capacity as a lawyer, over the strange takeover by a new executive for his organization, shortly after it had run a highly successful casino, that had netted it several tens of thousands of dollars in a single evening. The money was somehow beginning to disappear in unexplained ways.

At that time, Alan, whose heart was compassionate itself, had appointed himself as a kind of unpaid and unofficial Ombudsman to the inmates at the Edmonton Institution, whose every complaint he believed and tried to rectify, and who regularly visited them as one of a Prison Fellowship team on Saturday nights twice a month.

We got talking about his work at the Institution, and, being both a lawyer and a clergyman, and more out of curiosity than anything else, I took up Alan's invitation to come with him to a Prison Fellowship service at the "Max" some Saturday night.

It took some time to fill in all the papers and get clearance, but in the end, on the first Saturday in July 1988, I made my first visit "inside." After having my ID checked, and going through searches and scanning and numbers of buzzing or clanging remotely controlled doors, I was surprised at the very normal and friendly atmosphere that prevailed in the chapel, and for the first time met inmates whom I remember, and in some cases keep in contact with, even today.

I was away at a conference in Ontario for the second meeting that month, but was asked to be the speaker at the next one, the first Saturday in August, the 6th.

It was on Wednesday August 3rd that my eldest daughter, Catherine Greeve, was found murdered in a washroom in the Churchill Rapid Transit Station in downtown Edmonton, by a person or persons then unknown.

So on August 6th, it was a unique experience for me, father of a murder victim, fresh from seeing her body at the Medical Examiner's office, to find myself preaching the Gospel within the Edmonton Institution to a congregation a good number of whom were themselves doing time for murder.

I kept visiting in that program for several years, and in its own way, found it very therapeutic for the space I was in. At least I was with people who knew what crime, and the justice system, were all about. But during that time, some of those who went out with me to these services, told me about this remarkable program they were doing at Bowden, some two hours drive South of Edmonton.

Persuaded by them, I took my Basic there, and soon after that, the first available Advanced, which was at William Head out in British Columbia—a place which, if only

it wasn't a jail, would be one of the most beautiful seaside resorts you could ever meet. From then on to a T4F at Bowden, and from there to facilitating year by year in the Edmonton community and at a whole number of different institutions in the Edmonton area. And I hope that I will still have the chance to do many more.

Added to this more recently, has been the chance to become a member, and later Chairman, of the Citizens' Advisory Committee for the Edmonton Institution, and in that capacity, to meet on a regular basis with inmates, staff and administration, become familiar with their problems, and communicate these both internally and by way of education to the general public. This experience, of seeing how a jail really works and is organized, has given me very valuable experience—and a respect for those involved that it is hard to acquire in any other way.

Why do I do it?

- One motivation, certainly, is that the very strange circumstances of my getting involved in the prison system were to me a "call." I have had the opportunity that very few victims have, to have met those involved in crime as *people*, miserable and misguided as they may be, rather than as monsters, as they stay in the imagination of many victims, year after year. And in AVP, I have found a way that they can be helped to become better people than before.

- A second is the sheer joy of seeing people "get the message," and learn how to live differently. For twenty years, I was choir director at a number of different churches, and the joy of building a collection of untrained voices into a source of beautiful music was one of my greatest delights. The joy of AVP is very much the same—turning "rough diamonds" into a harmonious team with the skills to deal peacefully and competently with the challenges that life throws at them. That's a very special sort of music!

- Thirdly, I think, is my deep appreciation of the simple practicality of the course itself, which condenses a Bible full of theology into a very simple, non-preachy, mandala, and demonstrates the effectiveness of respect, consensus, cooperation and Transforming Power. Every time I facilitate a course, it seems as if I learn more and more deeply, and appreciate even more the wonderful diversity of human nature, which often seems to appear more honestly in the jail environment than in our too self-satisfied communities "outside."

- Fourthly, and finally, a simple concern for public safety. When the person responsible for Cathy's death was finally identified and convicted, it was found that he was someone who had spent most of his life "in the system," and was temporarily out on Parole. In AVP, we have a way of seeing that such persons learn to be safe in the community, once they are out "on the street." With every course we complete, we can breathe a little easier when we go to bed at night, knowing that we have made a real and long lasting contribution to public safety. Consider the value of a human life, and recognize that it's worth the investment! It's my tribute to the wonderful daughter I have loved, and lost.



## **I facilitate AVP workshops because...**

*by Craig Richards (Creative Craig)  
Norfolk, Massachusetts, USA*

I learn from listening to my own heart, and from listening to the hearts of those around me. Not the kinds of things that I can learn in my head, but rather the kinds of things that I can embody, the kinds of things that I can only pass on by living them, not by talking about them.

I facilitate AVP workshops because of the feelings I get when a workshop works. The feeling that everyone is accepted for who they are, with their faults and all. The feeling that things will work out, that everyone has something to contribute, that the contributions will be made at the right time, and in the right manner. The feeling that if



things somehow start to go wrong or to not feel right in some way, that the group will be able to bring things back on track. The feeling of being accepted and supported by everyone in a workshop, especially if the workshop started without any feelings of acceptance or support.

I facilitate AVP workshops because it feels good to do something to help others as well as myself—not in a sense of providing for what is lacking, but rather in a sense of inspiring the group, of letting the group know what is possible so we don't settle for less, of letting the group know that we have the inner wisdom and tools to handle any situation, if we develop confidence in our ability to access those tools and the belief in our own wisdom. In fact to let everyone know (and to remind myself, too) that we aren't lacking anything that we really need.

I facilitate AVP workshops because I learn so much from them. Not the kind of things I can learn from a book, but rather the kinds of things I can

## **Continuing my Involvement with AVP**

*by Richard Nethercut (Radiant Rich)  
Concord, Massachusetts, USA*

My initial involvement began in November 1991, when the Concord Prison Outreach offered a basic AVP workshop at its office in a West Concord, Massachusetts church. I was already attending a weekly Bible study at Shirley Minimum and the chaplain there recommended AVP.

My motivation was to do something positive in memory of my daughter, who had been murdered. And AVP offered prisoners an experiential program that could help them avoid recourse to violence in the future.

Since becoming a facilitator ten years ago I have appreciated the great value of AVP to me as well. It has been an enriching, healing experience. It is wonderful to see Transforming Power at work in these workshops.

I also have enjoyed the organizational side of AVP: serving as AVP coordinator for Eastern Massachusetts and at two Massachusetts prisons; helping to introduce AVP at four state prisons and a federal prison medical facility; getting involved with AVP at the regional and national levels.

I expect to be involved in AVP as long as my health permits though hopefully at a more leisurely pace than at present.

It has helped give meaning and hope to my life in retirement. It has certainly been a part of my spiritual journey and has reinforced my faith. I am deeply grateful for that.



# Where Transforming Power has taken me

by Charles Oropallo (Cheery Chuck)  
Peterborough, New Hampshire, USA

“Why do we facilitate Workshops?” “What keeps us involved with AVP?” After a lengthy discussion I had with Steve Angell resulting in his thoughts being printed in this issue of the Transformer, I began to more fully realize the complexity of the query. I must have been naïve when I thought these would be simple questions to ask, much less answer. The fact is that the reasons why individuals get involved and stay involved with AVP vary tremendously.

The beginning of my own involvement with AVP seems like it was not too long ago! It’s just headed toward ten years.

I arrived in the New Hampshire State Prison in Concord in 1985. In 1992, the first AVP workshop was introduced there. Another inmate with whom I had become friends was invited to attend it. This person was not only my friend, but also my mentor and a great source of encouragement toward positive change for me. At that time he had begun to undertake his master’s degree in sociology. It was a monumental task while inside. His own dedication to self-improvement and helping others while he was incarcerated, more than he’ll ever know, had sparked my interests in taking college around that time. I really did not believe I could ever attain a college degree. In addition to the inmates in my circle of friends involved in education, many corrections staff—especially in the education and mental health departments and my unit—actively encouraged me. However, the primary difference with peer encouragement was that it was more consistent. By that, I mean to say that for one thing, a question could be asked at just about any time, seven days a week. Another factor was that my long-term peers were, like myself, going to be there after corrections staff had moved on to other positions and so on.

At that time in my life, I had a tremendous amount of pent up hostility and anger. One of the ways it manifested itself was in my endeavors as a rather prolific jailhouse lawyer. Over time, I had become a real thorn in the side of the corrections administration. In my case, what I truly did not realize at that time was that I really needed others to blame for my own shortcomings. It was far too painful at that time of my life to look at myself. I became involved with college initially because of my desire to hone my legal skills.

Earlier, I said my friend was involved in the first workshop. I knew of a couple others who were also part of it. What struck me as interesting was that those involved seemed incredibly invested in the workshop during the course of the weekend it occurred. As an inmate, one has the unique privilege of listening to other inmates’ views on the various programs. Community volunteers who have never been imprisoned have shared with me that they would love to be a fly on the wall in such circumstances—to hear the thoughts of workshop participants when back in the “prison” society.

It needs to be pointed out that at that point in my life, I was coming to realize deep down inside that I really needed to do a lot of work on me. I was able to develop a sense of what programs appeared to really work as a result of that “pod-talk” that regularly occurred when the men came back from various programs.

What happened next could have put a strain on my friendship with this individual. Fortunately it didn’t. At the completion of his

weekend, he said, “Chuck, you need to do AVP.” I believe I responded with something like, “I’ve got tons of things to keep me busy.” Then he said, “No, I mean you REALLY need to do AVP.” Oh, and don’t let me forget to mention that he told me I would get a certificate for completing it! Well, I did not feel real receptive to the idea at first, but did agree I would try it out.

The time came for my basic workshop. It was only the second basic workshop held in that facility. I came totally prepared. Prepared for boredom, that is! I brought a book along to read. I doubted that “these people were going to teach me anything” that I didn’t already know.

Deb McIlwaine led the workshop. Her cofacilitators were Bob Hillegass and Tor Bejnar. There was a community volunteer there also, Randy Kezar, who participated. When we started out, I think all I heard at first was that I had the right to pass. At one point I remember being off in a corner reading while an exercise was happening. It was then that I had the opportunity to talk with Bob, one of the cofacilitators. He mentioned that he had heard from other inmates that I was a jailhouse lawyer and commended me for wanting to help others. I want to tell you that to inmates in a basic workshop, community volunteers are generally perceived as people in charge, often on the same level as corrections staff. It was the first time anyone “outside” had commended me on anything having to do with my “practice of law.” He successfully pulled me back into what was happening. I also felt a strong connection with Randy. I had been a missile systems engineer prior to prison and Randy was also an engineer in the electronics field. I remember that I felt a strong sense of belonging and of community as the workshop proceeded.

On Saturday evening, when I saw the Trust Lift being done, I reluctantly agreed to be lifted. This was a huge leap for me and extremely difficult, because I truly did not know how to trust at that point in my life. In retrospect, there is a high degree of probability that participation in that workshop was a key factor in my beginning to truly take action to effectuate positive personal change. Filled with the sense of community and closeness to others that is so evident by the end of the basic workshop, I signed up for the advanced.

About nine months after my basic workshop, my advanced happened. Again, Deb McIlwaine led the workshop. Cofacilitators were Bob Hillegass, Dick Cornelius, and Randy Kezar. I did not feel as enthusiastic about it at the beginning as I did right at the completion of my basic. The nine months in between workshops took its toll inside, I believe. Many people are surprised to hear that I actually neared a physical confrontation with another inmate early in my advanced. I can honestly tell you that I did not see AVP in my future. I managed to stick with the workshop and complete the advanced. Although I remember few other specifics about it, I do know that I had started to believe in AVP as a viable tool for the reduction of violence within the prison. How I saw it work had to do with eroding the hierarchical boundaries that are generally a stark reality of life inside. Everything in prison seems to be exaggerated, such as feelings, responses, reactions, hierarchies, etc. I noticed that people who had attended workshops together continued to communicate outside of the workshops, where they might not have done so in the past. It appeared to lessen the tension between individuals.

It was about thirteen months later that I was invited to participate in my Training for Trainers. I had completed my associate’s degree and was working on my bachelor of science in human services. Once again, Deb McIlwaine led the workshop. Augi

## the TRANSFORMER

Backer cofacilitated. I felt very differently about the T4T. I entered it with some trepidation, not knowing if I would be capable of dealing with the group or what was expected of me. The turning point for me was when I discovered that I could do it. All of a sudden I was excited about the possibility of being involved as a facilitator with AVP. Something else also happened. I realized that I had something to offer and was now learning how to offer it. I had learned through personal experience that there was hope that behaviors can truly be changed and I began to accept my own shortcomings.

I saw this as extremely important and I wanted to share this newfound hope—to give back. I signed up to facilitate every workshop I possibly could. I felt that if a stubborn guy like me could relax enough to rethink his worldview and perceptions, anyone could. I still believe that to this day—that I am not special—that anyone who wants to do or accomplish things in his or her life can do so. I wanted to help with the organization. My organizational roots with AVP can be traced back to when I became the second inside coordinator in the Concord, New Hampshire facility.

After finishing my undergraduate studies while still incarcerated, I continued my college endeavors with support and encouragement from my family and some of the AVP facilitators I had gotten to know. I was accepted into a master's program, working on my graduate studies toward a master of arts in psychology.

Another very interesting thing that I believe was directly related to AVP happened in my life as well. I had been developing a good rapport with the unit manager of my housing unit. With all of my legal endeavors, I had definitely burned some bridges with the man who was the warden of the institution at that time. I sought my unit manager's advice on how I might try to repair some of the damage. I was really starting to believe that it was better to try to get along with people rather than having mistrust and friction. At that point I began to withdraw the remaining lawsuits I had pending against corrections. My unit manager of the time took on the role of a mentor with me, and I will always be appreciative of our talks. I still see him occasionally—he is a parole officer now.

AVP doesn't just work in a vacuum. It has connections to other programs that are not always apparent. I always recommend that if people are going to study something or improve themselves in some area of their lives that they view it from numerous perspectives.

One example of this comes to mind. Knowing that I was not involved with any particular organized religion, an inmate asked me one day why I was participating in a Christian-based anger management program offered at the prison chapel. I said, "Because I don't know all the answers. I do know, however, that different methods work for different people. Besides, it gives me greater understanding about how to find solutions to use when dealing with anger and violence. I find that looking at the problem from different directions makes it easier to solve."

I like using as an analogy my taking a CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) exam once for Introductory Psychology. When involved in my undergraduate studies while inside, I had the opportunity to utilize such proctored examinations to "test out" for some course work. When I did this for Introductory Psychology, I read, from cover to cover, seven different psychology textbooks. Suffice it to say, I scored about as high on the exams as one could hope to. After continuing to score so high on a number of these exams in a variety of subjects, some of my fellow inmates who were also involved in college started asking me if there was some sort of "trick" to scoring so high on the tests. "There sure

is," I said. "The trick," I told them, "was to see the problem in your head from as many different angles as possible. Problem solving is a matter of perception and perspective." Based on that premise, I always recommend that individuals involve themselves in as many different programs as they can, in order to be able to view problems as fully as possible.

Another area of my life that I believe AVP has helped me with immensely concerns tolerance of others. I have become secure enough as to not feel threatened by those who are different than myself. I am a firm believer that feeling threatened by those whose ideas don't comport exactly with our own is nothing more than feeling insecure about ourselves and what we believe in.

My belief in the AVP principles, coupled with the work in various capacities in the helping field, keeps me involved with AVP. My organizational involvement did not stop with being an inside coordinator. About five months after my release I attended an AVP New Hampshire (AVPNH) meeting held in the community. I proposed we develop a web presence to facilitate wider exposure of our organization. I still remember the excitement of putting it all together the night of the meeting and days following.

Then a problem arose at our Concord facility and the program was in danger of being lost there. Corrections staff were truly dedicated to rehabilitation. Feeling so strongly about it, my wife, Susan, and I offered to help any way we could. She was able to facilitate the workshop with the help of Jim Loomis of Maine.

I was told I would be able to go back in as a facilitator after I had been out for one year, which at that time was only a few months away. I went to the AVP USA Annual Gathering that year in New Jersey. That was when I was getting to know Dick Nethercut and joined the Conference Committee. I also met Toby Riley and joined the Technology Committee. At the first annual AVPNH meeting a couple months later I agreed to be Secretary of our local organization. The following year I agreed to be its State Coordinator. At the Annual Gathering in Colorado, I agreed to chair the AVP USA Conference Committee. Prior to this past Annual Gathering in Virginia, I agreed to handle the Transformer. In Virginia, I agreed to once again chair the Conference Committee and help ready the national organization for our 2003 conference in Minnesota.

I recently learned what a Quaker "leading" was from Steve Angell in a lengthy discussion with him about the details of what brought him into AVP. If I ever did have a leading, it would have had to have been the awareness of my capability to help others see ways to improve their lives that occurred during my T4T workshop. It has been an ongoing process for me. I facilitate in prisons because I want to share the good that AVP has helped me find and I know that facilitating others in their quest to find that good is the right thing to do. I am acutely aware that oftentimes, incarcerated individuals just need an excuse to not act in the manner in which the prison inmate hierarchy encourages. AVP workshops encourage that to happen. I know there are worthwhile human beings in those places who just need the opportunity to receive the encouragement that I got.

My AVP experience, as well as experience facilitating and teaching while inside, all helped prepare me for the opportunity to work with violent offenders as a mental health therapist in the community while finishing graduate school.

Looking back over my thirteen years of incarceration, I'd have to say that I got quite a bit from the New Hampshire Department of Corrections, especially AVP. I took advantage of many opportunities I'd have never otherwise had. I was helped and I helped.

Giving back is simply the right thing to do.

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# What I Believe about Facilitating

by Rere Hassett (Remarkable Rere)  
Ithaca, New York, USA

In 1981 three men came to the Elmira Friends Meeting. They were Lee Sterns, one whom I cannot recall his name, and a five-year-out former inmate facilitator who credited AVP with his 'transformation.' This ex-inmate had gotten his MSW, was married and was starting a family. I was amazed. As a child growing up in Elmira, only half a block away from the warden's home, criminals fascinated me. We children playing in the creek that went behind our house and the warden's house would scare ourselves into believing that we could be held hostage by a trustee fleeing to the river. Whenever the trustees were at the warden's home, we would creep up the creek to look at them.

I was intrigued enough about AVP to attend a workshop. I did NOT experience the great 'high' that so many participants feel. I was then painfully shy. I was honest about my relationship to violence (the rage in my heart, the self-righteous 'punishing by silence'). It was not hard for me to identify with the many aspects of violence that middle class people practice. But I felt 'vulnerable' in the workshop composed primarily of other Quakers who had a vested interest in believing themselves non-violent at core. I had 'proved' myself unfit to be a Quaker, through my admissions of the 'violence' hidden below the veneer of peace-keeper.

I describe myself as a regular person filled with more than the usual amount of anger, fear, and self-righteousness. I describe myself by discipline—as a non-violent person! My non-violence is work. And my years of doing workshops inside CF helped keep me honest about my own struggles to maintain a non-violent and compassionate view of my world.

My great struggle with the status quo of AVP came in the form of the Training for Trainers workshop—that there was NO mechanism for assisting people to grow as facilitators. No mechanism to sort out those who would use AVP as .... whatever (not what AVP's purpose is). The concept that AVP will work out beautifully is sometimes a very naive and dangerous viewpoint. Yes, people vary in abilities (to write, to read, to articulate). If a person is sincerely willing to 'walk the talk' then I will assist them in growing to their fullest potential.

But to believe that everyone who wants to become a

facilitator should be allowed to do so disregards a greater responsibility that we, as the AVP community, have to our participants. Most volunteer agencies have some process not only to TRAIN their volunteers, but also to evaluate and dismiss them (or continue with a different dimension of training). This is a wisdom not necessarily born of anything more than liability concerns.

In the course of thirteen years I have had to 'retire' one facilitator and tell two that they were 'not ready—at this time—to be apprentice trainers.' Of a total of 88 facilitators whom I have assisted in training, that isn't a lot of rejection. There were two other facilitators that I should have followed my gut about and told them that they were not yet ready to be facilitators. I told two women that they should work in women's prisons only. Their sensuality was too 'toxic' in male facility. I have told one person that they were not ready to become a lead trainer.

I have never dismissed a potential trainer/facilitator for reasons of difference in style/attitude. I ask only for openness to Transforming Power and AVP. Trusting god and trusting the process does not shake out the facilitators:

- who use AVP as a dating service
- who use AVP to pass contraband and use it to find new candidates in the prison population to exploit
- whose hypocrisy is evident to everyone

except those of us who 'walk the talk' (making us the 'chumps' and making AVP less credible)

- who are 'wounded' and utilize AVP as their personal therapy tool
- who would become 'drunk' on having authority/power "over"
- who are sexual predators

Who am I to judge? I had better be absolutely straight about my motives and my shortcomings. I am 'judge' from the perspective that we are all flawed human beings struggling to find happiness and meaning. But, as John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address, "Here on earth, god's work must truly be our own." So I tell people straight where we (the facilitating team of the T4T) feel each candidate needs to grow. We offer them the option of becoming prepared to retake a T4T—or possibly another advanced or another basic—the steps vary. We NEVER say "never"—just "not at this time." And then we lay out the specific steps that could make that individual more ready to try again.

Who am I? Well, someone told me that they had

Something that has  
always driven me  
crazy is the way in  
which 'we' of the  
liberal/left spend our  
energies fighting  
each other.

All the while the real  
enemy gets stronger.

Rere Hassett

# **Nigeria: The Next AVP International Conference**

*Labor Day Weekend 2002  
Lagos, Nigeria*

*by M.A.K Momodu, AVP Nigeria*

**I**n the last decade, AVP has become a healing influence in Africa. Today, AVP is working in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Some of the most exciting work of AVP is happening in Africa. There could be no better place to hold the 2002 International Conference.

The conference will be held in Lagos, Nigeria from Sunday, September 1 to Wednesday, September 4.

**"From Non-Violence to Social Empowerment"** is the theme of the conference. This is an opportunity to connect with the international AVP network and learn how the AVP program has reached beyond narrow prison walls to empower social change and heal social unrest.

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The conference program will include:

- Keynote address
- Presentation of papers.
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- Tours & social events

Some of the topics covered will be:

- Links between Global & Local Violence
- Addressing Ethnic community & (intra-state) violence

- Exploration and Introduction to nonviolence dealing with the AVP
- Doing AVP in Prison
- Doing AVP in Community and school workshops
- Partnership with other bodies
- Strengthen Support for nonviolence
- Universal Courage of transforming power to say no to violence
- The gendered face of violence
- AVP and War-post War reconciliation
- International politics of AVP
- Integrity of AVP and its future as an International movement
- AVP in Developing Countries
- Also featuring sounds and sights from across the globe, drums, dances, costumes, display of the culture from all participating countries, as well as African musicians

Social events, tours and cultural activities are planned. This will include a visit to the Badagry slave site. This attraction reveals man's inhumanity to man, it will give participants the opportunity to see what Africans went through. A Visit to National Museum will enable us to see collections of Nigerian artifacts & Monuments.

## **Conference Costs**

Arrangements have been made for the conference site and the conference hall.

The cost for conference participants will be \$180.00US, including meals, accommodations and conference materials. For companions of conference members there is a special companion rate of \$100.00US. For students and unemployed participants the rate is also \$100.00US.

**Please register today!**

**Use the registration form on the next page.**

## 2002 AVP International Conference Registration Form

Lagos, Nigeria • September 1 to 4, 2002

### Participant Information

Last name Dr. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country \_\_\_\_\_ Mail code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Companion Information

Last name Dr. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

### Registration Fees

Full Participant \$180.00US

Unemployed/Student Rate \$100.00US

Companion Rate \$100.00US

Date & time of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

Airline \_\_\_\_\_ Flight \_\_\_\_\_

Date & time of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

### Travel Arrangements/Visa

Please contact the nearest Nigeria Consular office and if invitation letters are required, please contact the local organizers.

AVP-Nigeria

E-mail: [avp@linkserve.com](mailto:avp@linkserve.com)

Phone: 01-4971359

*(Ed. note: From NH, USA1 had to dial 011-234-1-4971359 to get through)*

### Payment

Conference registration will be confirmed upon receipt of payment. Payment will be accepted in US Dollars or Nigerian Naria. Please clearly indicate your name and address on money orders. For money transfers send to Citibank New York, 111 Wall Street, New York, NY 10101, Swift Code CITI US 33, For A/C of Citibank Nigeria - A/C 36055521 for further credit to Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) A/C 0007853017 (Please mark AVP 2002). All transfers must indicate name and address of sender.

Please return this Registration Form to:  
**Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Nigeria**  
5 Ogunlesi Street, Off Bode Thomas Road  
Onipanu, Palmgrove, Lagos NIGERIA

### I would like to lead a mini-workshop (2 1/2 hours) on:

Workshop title \_\_\_\_\_

Aims of workshop \_\_\_\_\_

Name and address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Equipment needed \_\_\_\_\_



(“Rere Hassett” from page 14)

“concerns” about me doing prison work. Though pressed, they would not elaborate on those concerns. I went on to be a very excellent facilitator, trainer and contributor to the Education Committee and AVP New York. My first two years as an AVP facilitator were tortured by self-doubt. Every workshop raised the specter of “concerns about you.” Is this what she meant? Finally, one facilitator in whom I confided my agonies told me to quit if it hurt that much. But he also said that the loss would be AVP’s if I did quit. Given permission to quit—yet affirmed in such a way—I continued for another eleven years.

I absolutely believe that we MUST have standards in AVP for facilitators. I believe that we should address “team-on-one” with each candidate the areas that we feel that they may need to work on before the T4T starts. The team is also responsible to express areas of strengths at the same time. We ask each participant if they feel that they have any areas of ‘weakness’ upon which they would like to focus and receive feedback. We as a team have to agree through consensus that a person is ‘ready,’ and on the last day we give the feedback.

At the end of every workshop in our community area council (it was Perry City in ‘my’ time) we had a feedback session for team members within a week of the end of workshop. So, the feedback and expectation of continued growth occurred on an ongoing basis. Every member from Lead to Apprentice was given feedback—both positive and areas to grow—by every other member of the team. This hones our skills of observation and of processing.

I hasten to add that the two area councils with which I was integrally involved have gone into quiescence only to

be restructured by newcomers. I have no information on whether the evaluative model of T4T is still in use in any form anywhere. If it is not at least an option—for those who feel humble enough to use it—then the loss is AVP’s and the consequences of serious harm may be done to participants.

Something that has always driven me crazy is the way in which ‘we’ of the liberal/left spend our energies fighting each other. All the while the real enemy gets stronger. In AVP’s case we want to correct each other—and violence grows.

I “PAID a price” for trying to reshape AVP into a more open, joyful and inclusive organization. My integrity—the only thing that I truly own—was besmirched almost universally. Would I like to return to AVP? Hmmm. Would I like to be poked in the eye with a sharp stick? I have made amends to those whom I hurt in my AVP time. But not a soul has even hinted that they understood just how hurt I was. First—do no harm. I am still smarting. But do not feel too sorry for me. I had seen two other people get reamed in AVP, before I took it on. I knew exactly what I was getting into. Making AVP in its business meetings as open, joyful and inclusive as our workshops are was worth the pain.

I hope that those who know the evaluative model of T4T—and who helped create and modify it—are willing to come forward and create an evaluative model for T4T. Frankly, it takes more skill than most AVP facilitators have to do the evaluative model. And misused, it could do more harm than our current way of T4T, e.g., “trust the process.” And that comment on ability has nothing to do with education. It has everything to do with heart and commitment to the discipline of non-violence.

## **You** can contribute to the *Transformer* by:

- *Subscribing for yourself*
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- *Subscribing for another friend*
- *Submitting articles*

## **KEEP UP WITH THE REST OF THE AVP WORLD!**

See Peter Hoover’s info  
on subscribing to the  
Facilitator’s Discussion  
List on page 18

**It’s cool & it’s free!**

## Contacting the National Organization

**President:** Ann Ward 814-234-4978  
ajw109@psu.edu

**Vice President:** Susan Hefte 727-799-0683  
drshefte@aol.com

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**Committee of Committees:** Diana Couch avpcouch@aol.com 661-942-6759; Ellen Flanders, 518-899-4418; Grace McGrath, gmcgrath@sover.net 802-388-6576; Charles Oropallo, charles@avpnh.org 603-924-6759; Toby Riley, tobyriley@quaker.org 609-265-6969; Ann Ward, ajw109@psu.edu 814-234-4978

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**Technology Support Committee:** Rick Krouskop; Charles Oropallo; Alan Taplow; Toby Riley, chair tobyriley@quaker.org 609-265-6969

## Sharing AVP ideas Worldwide via AVP-L

by Peter Hoover (Persistent Peter)  
Ithaca, New York, USA

*“AVP-L@CORNELL.EDU is a discussion list open to certified trainers of creative conflict-resolution workshops held under the auspices of the Alternatives to Violence Project, Inc., or its approved national (U.S.) or international equivalents. It is designed to facilitate communication among these individuals, with discussions to center around facilitation techniques, workshop exercises, and other useful information pertaining to the mechanics of facilitating AVP workshops. To preserve the confidentiality of workshop participants, please make comments about such individuals generic.*

*To subscribe, send an e-mail message indicating where and when you obtained your AVP facilitator certification, where you currently train, and any other pertinent information you care to include to the list owner, Peter Hoover, at prh4@cornell.edu.”*

If you send an e-mail to me, Peter Hoover, at prh4@cornell.edu, inquiring about the discussion list for AVP facilitators, you'll get the automatic canned response above. But you might want to know more.

I am an editor at Cornell Publications Services, part of the Division of University Relations at Cornell University. Previously a paleontological preparator (1960-1970), and a research paleontologist (1970-1992), I landed at Cornell in 1993 in a highly computerized environment and found, to my astonishment, that my employers were happy to have me use the benefits of that environment to enhance communication among my fellow AVP facilitators.

I started AVP in 1988, in the Perry City Area Council in New York's Southern Tier, and within a couple of years became a member of its governing board and a lead facilitator. By 1992, complications from Type II diabetes had sufficiently compromised my stamina that I was no longer able to actively facilitate full-length weekend workshops, and I sought another avenue to serve the cause of AVP. Hence AVP-L.

The discussion list, which facilitators can sign up for by following the above directions, now has 242 subscribers, who hail from a dozen or more countries and facilitate in half a dozen languages. Contact me at prh4@cornell.edu for more information.

# Browsing the World's AVP Websites

One of the quickest ways to discover what's happening concerning AVP is to browse the various AVP websites. You can find out what's going on in a variety of places around the planet! I suggest starting with the AVP/USA site has links to most listed below.

Be sure to type the address into your browser exactly as it appears below. Include all colon (":"), forward slash ("/"), dash ("-"), underline ("\_"), and tilde ("~") characters. Also, remember that after the occurrence of the first single forward slash character, web addresses are upper/lower case sensitive.

Check these out and mark add them to your browser's favorites if you plan on visiting them regularly:

**AVP/USA:** <http://www.avpusa.org>

**California (Northern):** <http://www.webcom.com/~peace/PEACTREE/avp/homepage.html>

**California (Los Angeles):** <http://www.avp-la.org/>

**Canada:** <http://www.avpcanada.org>

**England (London):** <http://www.avplondon.org.uk>

**Germany:** <http://www.pag.de>

**Maine:** <http://www.avp-me.org>

**New Hampshire:** <http://www.avpnh.org>

**New Zealand:** <http://avpa.cjb.net>

**Minnesota:** <http://www.fnvw.org/avpnf.html>

**Vermont:** [http://members.tripod.com/~AVP\\_VT](http://members.tripod.com/~AVP_VT)

**Washington:** <http://www.scn.org/edu/pbp>

## AVP/USA's New Contact List

You can find both the AVP Local Group Contact List and Workshop Activity on the Contacts Page of the AVP-USA website, or you can go there directly by entering <http://www.avpusa.org/data> in your browser.

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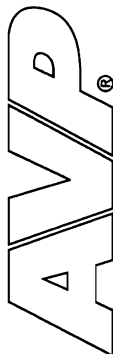
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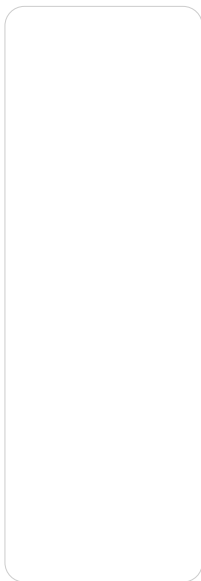
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Transformer Editor: Charles Oropallo

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