

U N I O N

The word from the S.A. members around the country is unity. We're being welded together in a fellowship of recovery. Men and women are getting sober! Coming out of themselves into the light, and making contact with other members. Coming to. Becoming part of the healing process of each other's lives. That's good news.

And there's more. New S.A. groups are forming. There's cross-fertilization starting between groups. And the spouses have started their own Fellowship—S-Anon, patterned after the Al-Anon Family Groups associated with A.A. They've discovered they need a Program of their own. They haven't remained untouched; ours is as much a family disease as alcoholism. (Call Ann W. at 513/325-3229 for contacts.)

So much to be grateful for. Maybe I should make a list of my own; doing so has been known to keep me out of the "poor me's." What am I grateful for?

For my sobriety. I would have nothing without that.

For the sobriety of others in my life, even though they may be phone dollars away.

For the Presence. A God of my very own. A faith that works.

For the fact that most of the time I can now live comfortably with myself and others—one day at a time.

For the joy of seeing others gain victory over the obsession & come to life.

For the Fellowship this creates. I need this as much as anyone else.

For the love of other recovering men and women—a bond that's closer than anything I've ever known.

That all my needs are met (not all my wants).

We look back on our lives, even the bad times, and it seems we've always gotten what we've really needed. All of our past is what got us here; and we're grateful to be here. Think of where else we might be! Someone's surely been looking out for us, in spite of ourselves. And it seems He's more interested in our freedom and joy than we are.

O F F T H E H O N E Y M O O N ?

Another word from around the country is that many have come off their S.A. "honeymoons" and are facing the realities of living sober (or not living sober). We're finding out what the alkies discovered: we can't stay sober, joyous and free without doing the things that make us sober, joyous and free. And those things are no big mystery. We don't have to "reinvent the wheel," thank God; the 12 Steps are the distilled essence of what it has always taken anyone to live sober, joyous and free. But we're rediscovering them for ourselves through experience.

When we are new, when we could care less what those blasted 12 Steps are all about, when we don't even know which end is up, and when we're not even sober yet, all we have is Step 0: "We participate in the Fellowship of the Program." In whatever way we can: going to meetings, phoning other members, writing, getting our own meetings going, going to other types of meetings, reading the literature...

FIRST STEP

In the Los Angeles group we've experimented with doing a "formal" First Step. The member who was the "guinea pig" made notes on his sexual history as it bore on the development of his feelings & emotions and the powerlessness/unmanageability of his life. On the appointed meeting night he gave his First Step, referring to those notes. When he was through, he asked for feedback from the group, which then related its feelings about his story and what it was telling about himself. Everyone agreed the man was a sexaholic, powerless over his disease, and whose life had become unmanageable. The format this particular member used was as follows:

Key Incidents

Associated Feelings

What Does This Incident
Tell me about Myself?

The feedback revealed that using notes when giving the Step diminished spontaneity. The member who gave it agreed, but felt making the notes had been an invaluable experience. Another danger was the tendency to get too analytical. It doesn't seem to help recovery to know why we did what we did, but it does seem to help to see what it did to us and others.

This giving of the First is different than doing a Fourth Step, where we write down everything we have done to ourselves and others in a fearless and searching moral inventory. Some find they are incapable of doing a First Step right away; they're still making a slow turnaround and can't yet see the past clearly enough. You might want to try this in your own group and report on the results. We're all for accelerating the process of recovery. Let us know what happens.

GETTING TOGETHER

Some members have made suggestions about facilitating the bond of unity across the country:

(1) Tapes. Have groups or members record on cassette their sharing in meetings, as long as last names are not used. Thus, groups and "loner" members about the country can see how others are doing and how they're doing it. We've started this in L.A., and our tape will be available for any group or member who wants to order one. Just a couple of sharings at meetings is all it is. We plan to leave room on the other side so you can add one of your own stories and pass it along or exchange with others. Looks like cassette and postage will run \$2.00 actual cost to us when we get ours duplicated.

(2) Phone Network. There are many members who still have no group yet and write or call in wanting contact with other recovering members. It's been suggested that we have a list of members who volunteer to call or write other members. Some groups have already discovered the great benefits of not only meeting more than once a week but calling another member once a day or so. If you are a "loner" member or a group member and want to talk or write to other members, please fill out and return the form on page 5.

And do we have a volunteer somewhere in the country who will coordinate all this?

Speaking of telephones, I now have three-way service available; I can get two other parties on line and have a three-way conversation. We've had several transcontinental meetings via phone already this way. (We had to have the number changed. New phone #: 704-9854.) This additional service cost \$9.00 to install and \$5/mo to use. What a gift! A few other members have this service; if you do, let us know so we can tie you into the network. It's a service well worth having for anyone who likes to talk to other SAs. (The MCI Telecommunications long-distance discount service really saves. It knocks off at least a third from the regular price; more if it's used on off hours.)

THE MINNESOTA CONNECTION

The informal national group conscience we took recently has made itself known. All but two groups voted for dialog with Minnesota, but others who voted yes expressed reservations that we not compromise our alignment with the principles and traditions of AA. Acceptance of "Lust Kills" and "The Problem" was unanimous. Acceptance of the Statement of Principles was unanimous, with some feeling, however, that we should not try to finalize this kind of thing at this point and put it on the "back burner." By the way, our dialog with the Minnesota sex addicts may not get off the ground anyway; they seem to have backed off, so it's on "hold" for now.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

I'm enclosing some articles from this month's AA Grapevine, the monthly journal of AA. The best of AA is embodied in the Grapevine articles, and many use it as their "meeting in a pocket." (Subscription blanks can be found in each issue, available at AA meetings or local Central offices or by writing THE GRAPEVINE, P O Box 1980, Grand Central Station, NY NY 10163.) To the marrieds, I wholeheartedly recommend the article "How To Stay Married Though Sober." The others are also right down our alley.

12TH STEP WORKS WONDERS

Many of us are either just starting our groups or trying to get one started. In our last general letter of 12 October, we listed some hints for 12th Step work—getting new members. Chapter 7 of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) is entitled "Working With Others," and is a "must" for every serious member of S.A. Here's the first sentence (with references to alcohol changed):

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from slipping as intensive work with other sexaholics."

One is hard put to offer anything better on dealing with prospective members.

By the way.... I hope everyone knows by now that I'm not engaged in some sort of philanthropic or benevolent enterprise. I'm active in SA as an avocation; (my vocation is writing.) And for this very reason—it's the best insurance I can have for not "going back out there." Plus, there's nothing I enjoy more, once I'm doing it. But I suffer the same inertia, procrastination, and lack of motivation anyone else does. It's just taken a lot of practice to learn that to feel better, to stay sober, to experience real joy, there's no better way than trying to carry the message of my recovery—wherever it happens to be at—to another. I can't stand just plain sobriety; it's not enough. I need something to live for, and nothing better fills that black hole of emptiness always lurking behind the center of my being. The measure I give is the measure I get back.

7 TH TRADITION

"Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Some members have suggested we should tell everybody what the financial picture is at the General Service Office (formerly called SA Central), so here goes. First, everyone should know that we've gone in for non-profit (charitable tax-exempt organization status with the Internal Revenue Service. This means that all contributions to local SA groups and to SA General Service Office (GSO) are tax deductible. And once GSO gets its official exemption letter, we will go in with a letter listing all SA groups who want to be listed and get a Group Exemption Number, which can be noted on individual Income Tax Return Forms, officially legitimatizing all member contributions.

When I saw what happened in the Dear Abby column, I figured that paying for whatever the response to that column entailed out of my own pocket was one way I could make amends for all the persons I had directly or indirectly helped confirm in their disease. Now that SA is going strong nationally, it will violate our 7th Tradition not to have the task borne by the whole body of members. So here's the current cost of running the operation at GSO:

Total member donations received since June 22nd..... \$258.50
Current running expenses:

Postage.....	.37
Printing (11 sheets @ .03/sheet).....	.33
Envelope & label.....	.05

\$.75 per mailout

The S.A. phone bill averages about \$100/mo.

For example, the actual cost of mailing this letter and enclosures to every member on our GSO list will run over one hundred dollars. Each group should vote to determine if it wants to help support GSO and what percentage of its surplus over their own expenses should go to GSO.

"D E A R A B B Y"

Some of us are debating whether to let "Dear Abby" run the SA name and POB address as the opportunity arises within her column correspondence. She tells us that she gets a number of letters she'd like to refer to SA by merely giving to the readers in her column the SA name and POB address. Pros and Cons: This would mean more contacts for membership around the country, but not as many as the first time (2500 inquiries). The SA national membership would have to bear the expense from group/member contributions to GSO. It would mean another full-time effort at GSO for at least 2-3 months.

ALL DELEGATES TO THE GSC TAKE NOTE: You are responsible for obtaining the vote on this matter from the members/groups you represent. Please advise GSO.

By the way, this will announce the list of new GSC Delegates: Kent A. of Phoenix, John D. of Cleveland, Steve H. of L.A., Jim H. of NYC, Sherman H. of Boston, John L. of Fresno, Tom N. of St Louis, MO, Jim T. of Peoria, Lee W. of Houston, and Dave W. of Springfield, OH. (Some are new and some are holdovers.)

WHAT IS LUST?

I've been asked this question time and again and keep trying to get a better handle on it. I've enclosed another attempt to take a look at this most important subject: "What Is Lust?" Purely my own tentative thoughts based on my own experience in sobriety (I could never see what was really happening while I was practicing). If you disagree or have anything to add or clarify, please send in your feedback. Women too. Some women have trouble with the concept of lust, and we should get your perspective too. The diagram on the back of the sheet goes with the discussion. I hope to hear from many of you on this; we thus hammer out some important concepts together.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

This "letter" has turned out to be something of a newsletter. Which isn't a bad idea, as some have suggested. "ESSAY" was just an off-the-cuff stab at a clever name. Are there any budding journalists around? And I'm sure someone can come up with a better name for it. "Grapevine" for the alkie is certainly appropriate. (ESSAY = SA...get it?) Love to hear from you!

ACTION ITEMS *** ACTION ITEMS

1. ALL GSC DELEGATES: Obtain and send in the vote on "Dear Abby" (p. 4).
2. FIRST STEP FEEDBACK: Any groups trying this, let us know how it works out. (Sample First Step will be mailed out on request.)
3. GROUP SECRETARIES: Take up the GSO contributions matter in your next business meeting (p.4).
4. Anyone wanting to get in on the phone/writing network: Fill out and return the form below.
5. Any member: Let me know how you're doing. (213/704-9854)

*I am free small to work
could meet with you all
each week. Love K.*

Name _____ Address _____

Area code & phone _____ Best time(s) to call _____

Special instructions/precautions when calling _____
