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# ESSAY

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August 1986

Post Office Box 300  
Simi Valley, California 93062

Periodically, things catch my attention in such a way that make me wonder whether SA is going through some sort of trend. Recently, it seems to me, many of us are becoming more aware of the true power of the disease.

Once we stop acting out and the "blanket" of our drug is withdrawn, we begin to see that the true power of the addiction lies in the thoughts and intents of our hearts. These are mostly hidden from us at first, but are progressively revealed, if we stay sober, don't switch addictions, and are able to face what we see when the wraps come off. Sexual sobriety seems to be just the beginning. We come to realize we can't get comfortable and stay sober unless we start looking at the looking and thinking that lie behind it all. And the more we see, the more we realize that in ourselves we have not the power to change our hearts.

Now here's the marvelous news in 1986: People are not only staying sexually sober, they're getting victory over the looking and thinking! People are being drawn to that victory, are wanting it, and through the experience of others and their own surrender are finding it. "Progressive victory over lust..." is becoming a reality. It is possible! What a gift!

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**——FIRST EUROPEAN SA CONVENTION——**  
**Karlsruhe, West Germany**  
**June 14 and 15**

**J.H., Stuttgart, West Germany:** "Now I can fully understand the enthusiasm and hope, which were expressed from SA members in the comments to the Retreats you had in the U.S.A. Let me tell you some personal thoughts about our convention we had last weekend in Karlsruhe and what I experienced there....

"For me we had some true sharing and honesty in our closed meetings; recovery I could feel and see there. And in our business meetings we reached unity, I think. The spirit of God was stronger than my and our ego and resentment. But we reached that unity only because at moments when resentment and disagreement were in the room, we held hands praying the Serenity Prayer and let God come in. And we did that several times. And it worked. It was unbelievable....

"To understand how easily business meetings can blow us apart was important so we didn't forget 'that there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.'....

"The convention elected a committee (five members), which is responsible to the convention and has the following tasks: Literature (SA book, SA brochure, translations, tapes, etc.), communication with the groups in Germany, to organize a central address for SA West Germany, to organize the contact between newcomers or inquirers and people of the different groups in the country, and to administrate a central cash-box....

"The convention voted that in the committee which was elected on Saturday only members with more than 30 days sobriety can work and that they have to leave the committee when they have a slip....

"I felt strength, hope, and recovery during that convention. I think SA here in Germany is growing from the inside out. And I am very grateful for all that. God made it possible. We could not have done it alone. God seemed to be in the midst of us...."

**C.V., Heiligenhaus, West Germany:** "...The most important feature was—for me—the real unity about all matters. Through all discussions, which of course came up, with signs of resentment, we managed to go back to harmony, harmony in devotion to God—or a Higher Power—so that no grudge or resentment was left. I learned a lot about what is possible if one is really trying to work the program, rather working it; trying doesn't get us far. This is the most important fact about the whole convention—to experience how God works in and through a body of people, who are trying to see what He wants to show us. I am very grateful for this experience!...."

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## KANSAS CITY CONVENTION

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**D.B., Richmond, VA:** "....Kansas City was wonderful! What a high and how truly God given it was to make the connection with fellow sex drunks from all over the world. I was on a 'pink cloud' for a week or so afterwards and I've made some friends that I never had before. God was telling me through all the wonderful people there, that I was finally home and that my primary addiction is lust. What a relief to have an even deeper understanding and acceptance of me...."

**M.A., Milwaukee, WI:** "There's only two words I can use to sum up the Kansas City Conference: Astonishedoverwhelm-inggratitude and love. I also had some lust, but it didn't have much of a chance to take over while I was down there. My wife and I especially enjoyed the couples meeting, which greatly enhanced our love and understanding of love for each other...."



## — CLEVELAND MARATHON REPORT —

**T.O., Cleveland, OH:** "The time spent with other SA members is always rewarding, but Saturday was so warm and filled with the spirit of sobriety and love. Thank God for others who are struggling and who are sober."

**J.L., Cleveland, OH:** "I've been working and practicing this program for 16 months, and slowly the payoffs are coming through. I'm 53 weeks sober and gave away my experience, strength, and hope to this beautiful group of people in my first SA lead and got back serenity. Stay here."

**R.V., Detroit, MI:** "Challenging and rewarding—realizing I've gotten better and I have a long way to go, but with God's help I can make it."

**D.G., Rochester, NY:** "Again Cleveland did a wonderful job at hosting their second marathon. I came away with renewed strength, a great deal more hope, and a stronger desire for more sobriety, which is another way of saying an enhanced relationship with my Higher Power."

**Cleveland submits the following statistics:** So far 54 people requested info for membership. 34 of those have attended at least one meeting. 17 have stayed here and 14 of those have 30 days or more sobriety—most with three months—a couple at six months—nine months—a year and 1½ years! We started in September of 1984.

CIVAC, a hotline in Cleveland, AA, OA, and a lot of hospitals/treatment centers and doctors are aware of SA in Cleveland.

### Convention Tapes

Tapes of various sessions of the Kansas City and Oklahoma City conventions are available. Write for information to:

Keith H.  
1400 153rd N.E., Apt. B-375  
Bellevue, WA 98007

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## UPCOMING SA RETREATS AND CONVENTIONS

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Vancouver, B.C.  
Camp Fircom, Gambier Island  
September 5, 6, and 7  
Cost: \$45.00 (Canadian), \$33.00 (U.S.)  
Phone Murray (604)434-8314 or  
Mark (604)689-4305

Includes chartered boat ride, wholesome meals, and accommodations. Secluded retreat area with beaches, trails, mountains, and wild life.

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Chicago/Milwaukee  
Saturday, October 4th  
All are welcome!  
Contact Rick F. at (312)960-4228  
One-day retreat, sponsored by Chicago and Milwaukee groups.

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St. Louis, Missouri  
December 5, 6, and 7  
SA's next International Convention

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Baltimore-Washington, D.C. Marathon  
Saturday, October 18th, 10-5,  
plus evening meeting following.

To be held in Washington D.C.

All SA members are invited.  
For particulars, call either John or Teresa:

Teresa: (301)627-1384  
John: Home: (301)685-4375  
Work: (301)837-1140

## **Late Thoughts From Oklahoma City**

We spoke out of recovery and celebrated sobriety for three days in Oklahoma City. That first night as sobriety was held up so we could see the recovery on the faces of those receiving the hugs, chips, and joy that comes with clean and sober living, I felt a gentle Power wash through our gathering. Gentle, but in waves it came, nine years, four years, three years, "the class of '83," two years, one year, nine months, six months, two, and one month.

But for me the moment that touched off joy and gratitude and abundant hope for myself and all those "out there" was when those in their first 30 days, who wanted, were invited to come up for a "Desire Chip." This to me, though the rich gift of life and healing of this week-end was almost continuous, this moment is enduring for me, calling me ever more to the heart of our program. Indeed, calling me to the heart of the God of my understanding. That simple word: DESIRE, desire for sobriety. How thrilled I was to watch the faces of those who went up—some only after a reflective moment of decision. The joy of seeing a member who had been at my first step in another city two years ago—claiming that desire that has kept him coming back these two years, flooding me with strength and hope by manifesting that desire—never lost in the midst of much struggle, apparent defeat, discouragement: COURAGE.

Another with many more years than I in the program, claiming his recovery, witnessing to the Power that has given this life to him, acknowledging in humility the desire that gives courage to those who experience a slip: HUMILITY. I'm so grateful for those two who traveled so many miles to say a word I need to hear daily if I am to be sober today: I need others, I need the program, I need to acknowledge my desire for sobriety if I am to stay alive today, if I am to stay sober today.



Each person manifesting the desire for sobriety revealed to me in a specifically powerful way that this desire is at the heart of the program. This desire is the program one to twenty-four hours to nine years sober. Without this desire there is no sobriety. Simple as that.

With this desire there is sobriety—one day or ten years. No matter whether experienced in pain, joy, fear, or confusion the desire gives sobriety. More, it seems that the desire for sobriety is one with the desire for life, for freedom, for God.

How different from that distorted counterfeit masking as "desire" which seduces with illusory promise and leads to unfreedom, death of a relationship, and isolated hell so that desire, delight, affection are polluted with lust and led into the confusion of lust being named affection.

Like a spring that began with a tiny trickle of water inviting me into recovery in the midst of a tornado of pain, confusion, powerlessness, and lust, desire continues to spread so that desire now becomes the longing that every thought, fantasy, memory, decision, and action be touched by the same desire that invited me to surrender my life into the Care of the One who is truly caring. A desire that overflows and longs to share itself with others so that they may have hope and so that my desire for sobriety might be increased. It is fed by being given away.

Sobriety is a direction rather than a destination. Desire is deep and given. I can't will it. I can receive it and ask for it. I can nurture it, feed it, enhance it.

Desire Chips! Each face that mirrored it, each hand that took it, each foot that walked it,—you said it all. Thank you.

Anonymous

## Convention Planning

The St. Louis SA group is looking for our help and support in planning the December convention.

They're asking for feedback on previous conventions to help them plan for the one in St. Louis December 5, 6, and 7.

Now's the time to provide feedback on things you haven't liked, things you have, and things you'd like to have.

Don't be bashful! They're asking for it!

Write to: Tom M., 5350 Ferbet Estate Drive, St. Louis, MO 63128. S-Anons can write Linda at the same address.

## Convention Site Selection

Here's a subject that could use some real thought and input from SAs around the world. The problem is, just what procedure should we use for selecting the site of our national and international get-togethers? It seems our goal should be to make this selection process as representative as possible of the whole fellowship. All groups should have a voice in it. But how can they, if only those at each convention vote on where the next one will be? This is our current procedure. One suggestion is that the Essay newsletter provide the vehicle by which groups who want the convention in their city may put in their bid. Groups would present their plan in the newsletter, and all groups would then be able to vote.

**Please give us your thoughts on this as well as to the St. Louis planners.** Perhaps we might even try it out. If your city would like to host a convention, submit your proposal (dates, location, theme, cost, and etc.) to the Central Office for inclusion in Essay. What do you think? We ask that where possible, replies to this matter be the result of a group conscience decision, in writing.



## GROUP & MEMBER NEWS

**D.K., Stamford, CT:** "...We now have two weekly meetings in CT—the 'No Matter What' and 'Sobriety is Possible' meetings. A third will start on Tuesday, July 22, as a Step meeting; it's tentatively called 'Just for Today'...."

"Although we've had some people go in and out, there are two of us with over six months and a number of others who seemed to have learned what they need to learn from experimenting and who are committed to sobriety. One woman has almost two months, and some others are coming to a month. This is a truly virulent disease—I'm very grateful to be sober...."

**G.W., Ontario, OR:** "...Let me say that I truly enjoy being on your mailing list. The information I have received has come just at the most needed time. As it has been pointed out, this is the toughest act in town. For me, those are very true words indeed.

"I would like to report that we finally have an active group here in Ontario, Oregon. There are three of us that are finally meeting on a regular basis. We were thrilled when there came to us a referral from Cottonwood, Idaho. Yes, the act is hard, and SA is small at this time. I've had to rely on AA very heavily. As you may know, they just can't talk to me about my primary problem, and the more I look deep within myself, I firmly believe lust is truly the primary addiction. At any rate will keep trudging along at this time...."

**J.P., Nashville, TN:** "...Things are going well here. Newcomers are coming in from nowhere, and what's more, a few of them are sticking...."

**C.D., Galveston, TX:** "Enclosed is (a donation) to GSO from the 'Optional Group.' We took our name from 'Free at Last' page 15 'Sex is optional now—we have a choice....' We are small—only three regular attendees but interest is growing. We meet regularly one day a week although we attend AA and NA several times a week."

**T.K., Crowley, TX:** "...We are excited to be starting a group in Ft. Worth as there is really a great need. Many of the men that come to our group are ministers. At the present time we are meeting on a seminary campus, and I anticipate that is where we will continue to meet. May God bless you all as you continue your work."

**J.W., Dayton, OH:** "I am with the Dayton SA group. We got our group started in January and now have five regular members, with a number of transient members...."

**M.A., Milwaukee, WI:** "Milwaukee SA now has 15 regular members and five weekly meetings. S-Anon is also under way with five regular members and two weekly meetings. Our sobriety is growing...."

**J.B., Evanston, IL:** "Thanks for the mailings—most helpful! We are into a group of four—all of us in AA with five to twelve years sobriety...."

**M.B., Kirksville, MO:** "....We have established a small group here in Kirksville that meets three times per week. Everyone is very thankful that SA exists and now feel that they fit."

**D.H., Henryetta, OK:** "Howdy from 'Okieland'....Tulsa SA continues to grow slowly—numerically and spiritually, I guess that's the way it's supposed to be. We have six regular members with three new ones on Saturday and four regulars and two new ones on Monday. May God continue to bless and keep you all...."

**K.K., Rochester, NY:** "...Please know that we understand the importance of General Services activity and are very grateful for the efforts... others have put forth to make this program of recovery possible. For these reasons, we have committed to provide support to GSO on a regular basis....

"As a recovering alcoholic, I was constantly frustrated (frightened, self-loathing, etc.) about my inability to cease sexual acting out in spite of my new-found AA wisdom. This was very frightening to my AA sobriety because I was not maturing very rapidly at all.

"When I came to SA, the addictive nature of this disease made absolute good sense to me, and truly felt a surge of hope that there was an answer for me, and due to the strong fellowship I found and the grace to truly turn over my addiction to a loving God, I have been granted continuous sobriety since September 12, 1985—this in spite of 30 years of ever worsening acting out. Truly a miracle!

"My life is getting better now; with a wife and eight children, my diseases have had a lot of people to infect. I still get irrationally angry and fearful but by turning my right to entertain these feelings I have begun to allow God's love into my life (and my family's through me) a little better.

"Ultimately we are trying to get the word to those who have a very real need to know. We are torn between a need to share and a need to maintain some reasonable protection of our anonymity. May God guide us all in our efforts to share the 'Good News'."

**R.F., Woodridge, IL:** "We are growing in our Wednesday night group. There are now three Chicago area SA meetings.

"God is surely for our group. How anyone could stick with us not-so-faithful sex drunks is beyond understanding. Hope they stay....

"Enclosed are donations from Monday and Wednesday groups."



**B.S., Cottonwood, ID:** "....Our SA fellowship here has been a great help to my sexual sobriety. In our last meeting, we talked on the Fourth Step. I have found that by working the Steps, I am continuing to grow spiritually. As well as constantly being aware of my addiction.

"The first half-hour of our meetings we ask if anyone has had a problem come up in the past week that we may be able to help through our own experience, strength, and hope. And it all leads into the Fourth Step. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

"I have found two positive ways to take a fearless moral inventory of myself 1) By writing it down on paper, and 2) By talking to someone that has already worked the same step.

"I haven't been able to work this Step until incarceration. I was always afraid to see/or let others see just how low I really was. But once I started taking a moral inventory and sharing my character defects with others, I found it easier to face myself.

"Then I could start working on the obsession of 'lust' that was eating at me. Only by turning it first over to God.

"I have found myself to be more of a man, and putting away childish ways. By focusing on 'me' the less and focusing on other peoples' problems. Cleaning up my own house, then sharing with others how this Step has worked for me.

"This Step Four has hurt, brought pain, etc. Yet rewarding to see the changes God has made in my life by working these Steps truthfully and fearlessly. I am a new man, old things have passed away.

"I had people come up to me after our meeting and tell me that they felt different in this meeting (to the better).

"I believe as one takes a searching look at himself, and shares to others; it releases part of the shame, guilt, and fear.

"And the Lord is healing us spiritually, as well as emotionally...."

**B.L., Manly, IA:** "Thanks for the literature you sent in the mail. We had our first meeting last week and I am excited about our program getting started. Reaching out is the first step toward recovery. I am confident we will continue to grow—we are three and possibly four people now. It is such a relief to be able to be honest with others and find and give acceptance....

"The guidelines for forming a group and group participation were very helpful. This program is more carefully structured than the EA group I have been a part of the last two years. This is rightly so. Thanks again for all your help."

**G.G., Green Bay, WI:** "Within the past couple of years I've come to find out that I'm sexually addicted and want to become sexually sober. The pain with being sexually addicted has become too incredibly great, and I want to stop....

"With the little bit of information I do have I've started an SA meeting here in Green Bay. I need help and guidance though. If there is any information you can send me, I would greatly appreciate it.

"I am 24 years old and already realize I'm alcoholic and now sexually addicted. Starting this group has been scary, but already rewarding with the three meetings we've already had...."

**J.B., Appleton, WI:** "Good things are happening in the Appleton group—we now have two meetings a week."

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One group recently voted to call attention in a low-key way to how we dress in meetings, being ever mindful of the member who might find certain modes of dress a trigger and distraction. What precipitated it was the admission by a new member that he had been wearing shorts to attract others.

## MEMBERS SHARE

**G.A., Niagara Falls, NY:** "I have recently turned my addiction over to God through the work of some friends who had gone through it before. Needless to say, the release I now experience is so sweet, compared to the hell I was living before.

"Would you put me on your mailing list for ESSAY? I appreciate it."

**J.A., Seattle, WA:** "I appreciate very much the 'Another Look at the Mis-Conection' essay. Back when I was trying to deal with my addiction through analytic psychology, I read a lot of the writings of Carl Jung, the Swiss analyst. He said he had never seen a cure that did not have a basis in spiritual experience. For me, the addiction is a form of idolatry, a sort of gimcrack false religion. Turning to my Higher Power is a turning to the truth. Every good wish."

**J.D., Suitland, MD:** "....The SA program has been a life-saver for me, I will always be grateful...."

**V.D., Glen Burnie, MD:** "Having just joined SA on 25 April '86 and that is still my sobriety date, I am most grateful and hereby wish to thank you and the fellow members and especially our literature for helping me fight lust effectively for the first time in 50 years—Thanks, thanks, thanks, thanks, to AA, OA, EA, and last (I hope) SA. Enclosed please find ...of gratitude and put me on your mailing list...."

**M.S., Arnold, MD:** "....Your Mis-Connection essay...really hit home for me and helped me to give up my 'top plate' (remember that one?). Well, my top plate was another core addiction I had which I have to deal with and withdraw from and all that pain and growth."



**L.M., Heidelberg, West Germany:** "I believe if I saw myself as I really am, I would not be able to go on. And unless I see more of myself as I really am, I will not see any reason to go on....I learn by bringing my wrongs to the light. The more I reveal, the more I will have revealed. I can take my inventory, but until I share it with someone, I can't talk about my willingness to be rid of it.

"Things are different here than I think you imagine them.... what an absolute miracle Anonyme Sexaholiker is."

And he passes the following on from others:

"Why settle for sobriety when a spiritual awakening is within your grasp?"

"A spiritual awakening is more likely to occur in you than anybody, because you're hopeless."

**M.H., St. Louis, MO:** "I can't ever begin to tell you what SA has meant to me, or how it has changed my life. I still feel like I'm in the midst of an earthquake, and my whole old world is crumbling around me. But the real world that lies beyond is so peaceful! And beautiful. It feels strange not to be on the emotional roller coaster anymore after 30 years of living there. I still look for someone who is totally well and can spoon-feed me wellness. But I know that person does not exist. If he did, I would never be forced to learn tolerance of others' weaknesses, as I learn to accept my own. Thank you for all you've done, and especially for the immense help your SA Big Book has been. It is literally wonderful! Each time I read it, I learn new things. I guess I'm just able to hear and realize more because I've grown a little. It is so good. Thank you...."

**D.P., Whitney Point, NY:** "The Step meeting was on the 8th Step and I shared how I had to tell my older children what and who I was, and ask their forgiveness for being such a poor father who had never learned to love. Hopefully, I have felt changes, and I am painfully learning how to father—Lord, the pain I can feel at times because I don't know what to do or act or feel....

"I am becoming aware more and more how much this addiction has hold of the people of our country (and others) and permeates the society on so many levels. It feels so good, and is so destructive, and prevents any real growth in life...."

**J.B., Chicago, IL:** "Thank you so much for sending me the SA manual so quickly. I've already read it through and I'm astonished at how well you are able to put into language what I thought only I was experiencing. You really know! Thank you, thank you, thank you. You are doing a powerful work and I'm so grateful to you. I now realize I'm not alone in this and that there are others who understand and can help.... And God bless you all. Thanks again."

**J.H., Cottonwood, ID:** "Thank you for the return letter and the SA book and papers. They were worth the wait of ten days (due to the mail).

"I find them very interesting and helpful to me. I find the more I read, the more I want.

"It is a scary thing to look inside myself, but I believe it will well be worth it in the long run....

"I would like to thank all of you there for the warm and helpful welcome; it was most unexpected. I would also like to say that you've all been a great deal of help, just by being there in everyone's time of need—mine included. I'm thankful there is a place to find help without fear...."

**D.S., Warren, PA:** "I am presently incarcerated in Warren County jail, having been convicted of a charge of 'harassment by communications' (obscene phone calls). I have been a sexaholic since my teens but even through counseling and therapy, I was never able to get a 'handle' on my problem nor was I ever able to get through the denial stage, partly due to our ignorance of the addictive essence of this malady. I have despaired and rationalized my behavior for years but I am happy to say that at this time I have a vision for hope and a desire to achieve the true union of fellowship I have desired for so long...."

**B.E., Fairfield, CT:** "....I continue to go to meetings here in CT as well as NY. Sobriety frees me up inside; I'm less self-conscious. And strangely, time goes more quickly as I am more capable of getting involved in the demands of my profession without the burden of lust. Temptation is ever present; each time I have to decide—once again—and unite myself with my Higher Power.

"Thank you for being there when I needed you. Please accept my enclosed contribution for further 12th Step work."

**T.M., Tulsa, OK:** "I'm absolutely feeling inadequate, frightened trying to use words to express openness and caring instead of hiding behind them! Such a burden to try and walk around with! I started with comic books, adventure stories, text books, science books, philosophy, theology, ad nauseum—and when the great disillusionment became conscious, and my intellect turned on itself to punish and gratify (backwards?), then I filled myself with my comics, etc.—pornography and fantasies. The horror I begin to see is that the intellectual 'genius' and my rebellious pervert are me! The same! Protecting self, indulging self, glorifying self, crucifying self! I've always been the star of all my productions, whether hero or villain, healer or killer of others and self! What a 'picture' of unmanageability and lack of power...."



**D.G., Fairport, NY:** "....I am writing this letter for two reasons. First is to thank you for all the work you do for us at GSO. In particular, a special thanks for sending the references for newcomer inquiries. Second is to tell you that each and every reference is meticulously followed up on. They don't all stay, however. This program is certainly 'the toughest act in town,' and many find it not possible at this time to continue. There is comfort in the fact that they now know who and where we are, and we pray that they will come back if things get bad enough...."

**A.W., Cottonwood, ID:** "Hi again. Thanks so much for sending me a copy of the SA booklet. I now have three months' sobriety. The program really works! At the same time I'm sending this, I'm sending a letter to my sponsor in Boise, asking him for a contact person for the group there....The group there is like a second family to me....The group here is doing well....The program has shown me a way out from a hitherto unknown disease."

"I am currently an inmate at the North Idaho Correctional Institution. I began attending SA meetings in Boise about four months before becoming incarcerated. I found a great sense of serenity through those meetings. There were between four to six members usually attending our Friday night meetings. About two weeks before being incarcerated, my sponsor showed me a copy of ESSAY. In it was a letter from B.S. telling of the group here. Imagine my surprise! I thought that I was going to introduce SA to the institution! God had already brought the fellowship here."



The phone number for SA's national Central Office in Simi Valley, California is (818)704-9854. Due to our having only part-time office help, an answering machine is on a considerable portion of the time. But we do respond as soon as we can.



Another trend is that we're being tested. SA is spreading today, more rapidly than ever. And each new group, it seems, goes through the process of testing and refinement that we go through as individuals. That should be a comforting thought. It means that there is a process going on in SA. And a spiritual solidarity. Things aren't happening haphazardly, with no direction. We are being led onward—as a whole—even when we sometimes act like we're going our own way! So let us not despair when tested. We will be tested, both as individuals and as groups; but through it all, there is One who is seeing us through—together.



One of the best ways for groups to carry the message is to have a listing in the phone directory under the name of Sexaholics Anonymous. The name is beginning to get into the public consciousness, and one of the first things people do in trying to find us is call information. Cities that have such listings have found a source of newcomers. But responsibility is the word here. Groups should be strong enough so that the phone service continuity can be maintained.