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# ESSAY

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October 1986

Post Office Box 300  
Simi Valley, California 93062

## **Last Call for St. Louis!**

Time's running out for supersaver air fares for our next international convention in St. Louis December 5-7. We're rushing this ESSAY out, hoping everyone can get in under the 30-day advanced notice required for discount air fares.

See the enclosed flyer from St. Louis for all the details.

A very full and well-planned agenda is being thoughtfully and cooperatively prepared. And yes, S-Anons will have their own get-together, as well as meeting with us in some meetings.

**Special Note:** In St. Louis we'll be voting on the site for the next two international conventions (traditionally held the first weekends in June and December 1987). Interested groups: Be sure you have your local group or area's group conscience backing before presenting the proposal for having the convention in your city. Also, be prepared to give dates, place, and theme or content.

Reports from recent one-day SA get-togethers (reported on in this issue) confirm what we always seem to learn; whenever we cross group and area lines and get together under God and the principles of the program, good things happen in us and to us that we otherwise miss out on.

It's like coming out into the light. Sometimes it seems more comfortable staying where we are, but once we get out into the warmth, how good and clean and life-giving that sunshine feels. Hope to see you in St. Louis!



## RETREAT AND MARATHON REPORTS

### Midwestern Area Retreat, October 4th, Mt. Prospect, Illinois

Forty-seven attended, mostly from the Chicago and Milwaukee areas, but also including members from as far away as Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa, and California. St. Luke's Lutheran Church was an ideal setting. (Mt. Prospect is the only city we know of where church names are added to city street signs. Wish we knew the history behind that.) Several SAA members attended, and we had marvelous rapport and unity with them. We were welded to one another in a bond that transcends labels and organizations. There was unity in desire, purpose, sobriety, and love.

The retreat was loosely structured intentionally, allowing more freedom of response to the need and mood of the hour. The day opened with going around the circle, each of us giving the nature of our disease, length of sobriety, and why we were there. This was followed by a member who shared his own personal experience, strength, and hope, followed by questions from others. There was a working session on sponsorship and other group issues. After lunch, there was a general sharing, and more feedback. The final session<sup>was</sup> according to many, the high point of the day. After prayer and quiet, and beginning with the leader, as many as wished gave away their "top plate." (Read the article by that title elsewhere in this issue.) Then we stood, and embracing in the circle, closed with the Lord's Prayer, eyes open, looking each other in the face. What a powerful experience! SA at its very best. Thank God.



### **Baltimore Marathon, Saturday, October 18th**

J.A. of Maryland reports that it was attended by some 40-50 persons. Out-of-towners were from New York, central Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, as well as those from the Baltimore-Washington, DC area. The largest "foreign" contingent was seven from NYC. Eight meetings in all were held, kicked off by the Get Acquainted meeting, with four speakers. The closing meeting, led by T.H., was the sending away of the "top plate" (after the Warm Beach, WA get-together on Steps 6 and 7)—a very powerful experience where members who chose gave away the current sticking point (top plate) blocking further light and growth.

J.A. says, "We all feel very grateful concerning the Marathon. The high point for me was in the small chapel where, as one member was sharing how he now accepted the fact that he no longer needed sex—a breakthrough for him—the sun broke through clouds and shone in the window. (We remember a similar thing happenng in Portland, Oregon.)

### **Cleveland Marathon Saturday, October 18**

There were 24 men and women in attendance, from not only the Cleveland area, but Toledo, New York (7 or 8), Detroit, and four from Warren, PA. After initial introductions and sharing, there was an Ask-It-Basket session, where previously written subjects were withdrawn and discussed. The session then divided into groups. After lunch, speakers were Dave G. and Jack D. The closing session was on gratitude. One member said the marathon reaffirmed his belief in the 12 Steps and Higher Power, reminding him of how grateful he should be; that others were still successful in sobriety and progress after a year in the program.



## *GROUP & MEMBER NEWS*

**S.O., of Lincroft, NJ:** "....Another SA group has begun to meet in Lincroft, NJ, on Friday evenings at 8:30. It is held in a parish center.

"Our Monday afternoon group has remained stable with five members. Due to the time of the meeting (1:00), some people may be eliminated from attending."

**B.S., of Tucson, AZ:** "....The Tucson meeting is growing in numbers and recovery....We are co-operating with S-Anon in planning a spring retreat at the beautiful Picture Rocks Retreat Center north of Tucson March 6-8, 1987. More details will be forthcoming. The plans are to have this retreat deal with couples' issues in recovery, building trust, etc...."

**D.G., Fairport, NY:** "....All is going well with our group. Sobriety is beginning to build in some but there is still great struggle. God has blessed us with some wonderful people. God has also blessed Rochester with S-Anon and they have been meeting for a couple of months now. The Buffalo people have started their own meeting, but we have one who commutes two hours one-way from Syracuse once per week, and he is very grateful. We should have a good contingency going to Cleveland for the one-day retreat, and several of us, including my wonderful wife, are going to St. Louis...."

**B.P. of Castanea, PA:** "....We really enjoy the literature you send periodically, we use them for our main topic at our meetings. I would like to donate this extra five dollars to this cause....The ESSAY helped me very much knowing that there are a lot of small groups around like ours and with not a lot of time of sobriety...."

**R.H., of Geneva, NY:** "Enclosed please find a donation from Clifton Springs group. We have been meeting at our present public location (a hospital) for two years. It's hard to believe! I've seen a lot of people come and go. Our group is small with four regular members. Half very sober (one year and two and one-half years) and half never making more than 30-40 days....We are reading from SA's book, since we need a firm focus on principles of recovery. Principles rather than personalities...."



**H.A., of Nashville, TN:** "Miracles are certainly happening here in Nashville. Last night we had 16 people at our SA meeting. We broke into two groups and then after an hour we met altogether for ½ hour beginners meeting....

"The group is really developing a sobriety base. We have now one person with 28 months, two people with 22 months, 3 people with 9 months, and a few people with 4 and 5 months. I am finally seeing what it is like to be in an SA meeting consistently with sobriety. I am finding new aspects of my disease that I had not known were there...."

**B.T., of Salt Lake City, UT:** "We had a nice three-year anniversary. Jesse and Mike came down from Bozeman to join us. Lots of chips went out. Steve, Mary Ellen, and Tandra, not here) got three year plus Jesse.

"Mary Ellen and Al (got his one year) announced a wedding before the end of the year. John got his one year, he and Jodi got married last month. Several got one year. S-Anon is going pretty well...they're starting doing 1st Step inventories now to help the new ones as so many new couples are coming in...."

**S.D.J., of West Minot, ME:** "I'm writing to inform you of a new SA group in South Paris, ME. At this writing, we number three and are soon to add a fourth...."

**D.M., of Washington, DC:** "....Monday and Thursday are our largest meetings, with 22-28 average attendance. We have two meetings on Saturday, a 7:00 (Beginners) and an 8:30. These vary greatly in attendance. The 7:00 from 2-10, and the 8:30 from 6-18. As yet we do not have any refreshments at meetings...."

**C.L., of Milwaukee, WI:** "The Milwaukee Saturday SA group would like to donate...to SA Simi Valley.

"Without the literature available from Simi Valley, our growth would be most difficult—if not impossible."



**M.T., of Lansing, KS:** "A small group of inmates has joined together and are currently endeavoring to start an effective SA group. Here at K.S.P. we have four active members, as well as several others who have shown a definite interest in the group.

"Recently some of the Mental Health staff have expressed an interest in the group and have requested further information.... At this time, our meetings are impromptu get togethers during our yard time and usually take place as we walk or exercise...."

**T.H., of Grand Junction, CO:** The SA group in Grand Junction meets twice a week....Our group is studying the book and Steps on Thursday and discussion meeting on Monday....

"Most of us have long-term AA sobriety so we are comfortable with the Traditions, etc. However, we're all finding the SA sobriety more difficult to obtain and hoping to grow in time...."

**J.H., of West Germany:** "SA in West Germany is slowly growing, I think in quantity and quality. There are groups in Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Nurnberg, Mainz, Stuttgart, Koln, Bochum, Bremen, Hannover, and in the psychosomatic clinics of Bad Herrenalb and Gronenbach.

"On November eighth and ninth we will have our second convention in Koln.... "

**M.F., of Detroit, MI:** "....Michigan has grown, our Friday night Palmer Park Group in Detroit, has between 20-30 members weekly. Now, since Memorial Day, the second group started in Warren, MI, on Monday night with attendance now around 10-20 weekly. The Fourth of July started our Lansing meeting of three with now attendance around 10....

"I am excited to be a part of this growth—a long way from the person who crawled through the door two years ago. We also have started our first correctional facility meeting unofficially—we had five inmates and our two facilitations last time. We meet every other Tuesday, just sharing to make them aware of our fellowship and that someone cares. We call them out on private visit and have three mini-meetings...."



**M.P., of East Ridge, NY:** "This note is to let you know the current number of active members in the 24 group of Sexaholics Anonymous—13—and to send in to you our semi-annual group contribution...."

**S.M., of Murray, UT:** "....We are also starting a new once-a-month meeting in Salt Lake City. It will be the first Saturday evening of the month, and it will be an open SA meeting with S-Anons present, and it will be a speaker's meeting, and we will also hand out sexual sobriety chips to all those who qualified during the previous month....We also feel this is a good way to pull all of our people together for a meeting."

**D.D., of Mason City, IA:** Our North Iowa SA chapter has been meeting since early summer of this year and consists of four members...."

**Warren, PA,** has a new group in the Warren County Jail.

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## ***MEMBERS SHARE***

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**D.B., of Richmond, VA:** "....I have recently finished my 4th and 5th Steps, which is a wonderful feeling, and my lust seems to have lessened for now considerably. I am now trying to work on getting to know my wife again and repair the damage there.

"Looking forward to St. Louis."

**R.W., of Denver, CO:** "What a relief! I just finished Sexaholics Anonymous and the light came on...."



**G.D., of Galveston, TX:** "...I'm clean and sober, too, thanks to God and SA....my ego boundaries coming down thanks to 'The Joy Response' and the people in SA."

**G.S., of Winfield, IL:** "...I stopped acting out (masturbating) because I saw that it was a behavior that isolated me. It kept the fire of fantasy aflame. It kept me in a world apart from the real world. I want to be part of that world. I don't want to just watch it pass by. I am 30 years old now. I have come a long way, and have more to go. But, today I have a program, a fellowship, and God to help me along that way. I shall move along that path with a grateful, loving, and giving heart...."

**D.V., of Lubbock, TX:** "My SA book has arrived. I thumbed through it. I'm now on page 26 taking it word by word an inch at a time.

"The painful findings have put me on that 'Pink Cloud.' My eight years in AA now after returning from a 13-year slip makes what I'm reading very understandable. I'm also a member of OA. I know the AA program is valid in all living areas, but it does take what it takes to search out all denial areas...."

"I am sober today and will face tomorrow when it gets here...."

**J.D., of Sandusky, OH:** "Thanks for the information on where to go and whom to contact in SA. I was impatient for that! Though I have to drive a lot of miles—I can't tell you in words how different I feel inside. Almost as if I'm 'home at last' and somebody understands. All those years in AA finally made sense.

"Thank you for being there. For being in existence! I had begun to think there never was going to be real help for me. Now I know there can be if I but give myself to this program and the fellowship. Thank God for SA."



## ALONE, LOST, FORGOTTEN

This is how a sexaholic in prison feels. For many of them there, prison time is spent in lockup for fear that they will be killed by the other inmates. If a sexaholic is found out in prison, he is in big trouble, for the most hated crime in prison is the child abuser or wife abuser.

There is little or no help in the prison system today, and it is up to sober sexaholics like you and me to help these men and women. As a recovering sexaholic, I have been writing to men and women and young adults in prison for the past six months and still more are coming to me via the mail for help. Each is a sexaholic in need of help and is willing to give help if help were given.

There is only one thing needed to help: a sober loving life that can relate to a sexaholic who has abused a child or an adult and is willing to open to your own life. If you are willing to write a letter at least once per month, please contact me via the mail and I will send you the name and address of a sexaholic in prison. Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the address listed below. AT NO TIME ARE YOU TO SEND ANY MONEY TO A SEXAHOLIC IN PRISON. Letters are all that you are to send, with a possible stamp now and then.

Living in sober love,

Michael P. Gallagher  
Rural Route #3, Box 89  
Larned, KS 67550



## Central Office Financial Status

Expenditures to date, 1986	\$28,244.30
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Credits (incl. Literature sales and contributions)	\$23,079.50
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Deficit to date (as you can see, we're in the red)	- 5,164.80
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Percentage of SA groups contributing to SA Central Office 12th  
Step work....less than 10%.

## Facts and Figures

Pieces of mail handled (not incl. Newsletters)	3886
Number of Newsletters mailed	2185
Number of <u>Sexaholics Anonymous</u> books disbursed	1607
Number of SA brochures disbursed	7762
Number of Meeting Guides disbursed	105
Cost of last ESSAY Newsletter	\$1034.86



The largest expense in the SA Central Office is our non-sexaholic secretary's salary (without whose very efficient help Roy would be totally lost). No SA members are paid for their volunteer work. Starting with the second quarter of 1986, our secretary's salary was increased to \$10.00 per hour to be more in line with competitive rates. She averages 30 hours per week, which means her salary averages \$300 per week, going as high as \$450 when the workload necessitates it.

During the first part of 1986 SA was entirely self-supporting. There was great joy expressed when this was first announced in Oklahoma City. However, now we are not. Let's pray, talk, and work for a better solution to the increasing demands for Central Office Twelfth Step work, the crucial link in our national and international growth.



### **The Top Plate**

We may be experiencing something significant in SA. The Maryland Marathon and Mid-Western Regional reports (elsewhere in this issue) state that the most powerful session of the day (October 18th and 4th) was when, under example of the leader, those members who chose, "gave away their top plate." As far as we know, this first took place in the Warm Beach, Washington convention last year. In each of these three cases, it was reported by several to have been the most potent or meaningful experience of the get-together.

What is this "sending away of the top plate"? It was first used as a practical way of working Steps 6 and 7 as a group exercise. The top plate refers to the spring-loaded plate dispenser in cafeterias and salad bars, a stack of plates whose weight brings the level of the stack down to about counter-level. As the top plate is picked up, the stack rises, exposing the next plate underneath.

The idea is that there often seems to be one thought, attitude, or behavior in our lives that's standing in the way of further recovery or growth—one sticking point in our wills, one thing we're consciously hanging onto that obstructs, that's holding things down. Of course, at first, this was our addiction itself; without picking it up off the stack, so to speak, and dealing with it, we weren't about to go anywhere. It covered all the other pathology. Once we got sober though, this exposed the next defect, which we could then see and acknowledge and work the Steps on.

Often we discover the next plate to be a particular resentment, dependency, or other form of our drug; usually these are merely different manifestations of the ego-force that underlies our addiction—the Big I. We're always faced, it seems, with something too precious to let go of, "self-will which has always blocked the entry of God" (12 & 12, Step 3, page 34).



"Even the best of us will discover to our dismay that there is always a sticking point, a point at which we say, 'No, I can't give this up yet.' And we shall often tread on even more dangerous ground when we cry, 'This I will never give up!' Such is the power of our instincts to overreach themselves. No matter how far we have progressed, desires will always be found which oppose the grace of God."  
(12 & 12 Step 6)

"I can't let it go!" we say. But we are the only ones who can—and do. And when we do, the grace and love and peace of God flood back in and restore us and make us whole and joyous again.

But there must be someone to send them away to; that's why <sup>we</sup> may need some such special experience with each other and the One who has the only remedy for our wrongs, the only one who can bear them. Our experience seems to be validating the very heart of our program—Steps 4 through 10—the forsaking and righting of our wrongs. It seems to be showing us powerfully that whenever we bring out into the light of one another and send away to God such thoughts, attitudes, and behavior, we connect in a very powerful way with the larger presence, and the light then floods into our souls. We are freed, and we are cleansed. That which was in the way is out of the way. The plate is clean, and the peace of God prevails within and fills our hungry soul with goodness. And, we are one with each other.

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