
ESSAY

March 1987

Post Office Box 300
Simi Valley, California 93062

In case you've been wondering why this issue of ESSAY is late (even with our non-schedule), you should know that letters, phone calls, and literature orders have also been running late. There was a bit of a crisis when our new secretary left without giving notice. Nan was unavailable to come back in and pinch hit until now, so we did the best we could with volunteer help from the local fellowship. When Nan did come back to help out with our new, new secretary, she had everything cleaned up in a couple of weeks! She has been a marvelous gift to SA, and we hope she can continue, at least part time.

Please note the **Calendar**; it's our fullest yet. SAs are getting together all over!

An item of concern we're airing again at this time is Central Office finances. We're asking for groups and members to brainstorm the problem and come up with ideas.

The **Miscellany** section is a catch-all, but has some potent action items for you and your groups; don't miss it.

Also, we want to encourage groups to pass along copies of ESSAY to all members; if need be, feel free to copy them.

Thanks to all the members who helped out on this issue!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Groups are asked to please submit their events to the Central Office as early as possible for inclusion in ESSAY. Listing of events in ESSAY does not constitute endorsement or approval by either the Central Office or SA and is provided as a convenience to groups and members. Due to the uncertain scheduling of ESSAY issues, we cannot guarantee that all events will be listed. Contact designated persons/addresses for particulars.

March 14—Milwaukee Spring SA/S-Anon Retreat. "Attitude of Gratitude", Menomonee Falls, WI. 9AM to 5PM. Phone Mitch A. 414/255-2633. See enclosed flyer.

March 20-22—Warm Beach Camp, Washington State. Annual SA Retreat. Phone 206/742-1126. See enclosed flyer.

May 9—Cleveland's Fourth Marathon. Cleveland, Ohio. Call Jim McG., 216/382-3587.

May 23,24—Deutschland Convention. Bochum, West Germany. Contact SA of Germany at the following address:

Kontaktanschrift AS Deutschland

Postlagerkarte 050075 C

7500 Karlsruhe 1

West Germany

(Or, phone Joachim H. at 0711-762043.)

Our German brothers and sisters are inviting us to take part in their convention; some here are making plans to attend. Bochum, the site of a mining museum, is north of Bonn, between Dusseldorf and Dortmund.

June 5-7—Bozeman, Montana. Next International SA Convention, held concurrently with S-Anon. Theme: "Honesty." See enclosed flyer. Call Jesse L., 406/586-3688.

September 11-13—Vancouver Island SA/S-Anon Retreat, Easter Seal Camp Shawnigan, Victoria, B.C. See enclosed flyer. Call Bev, at 604/383-1729 or Alan, at 604/477-5168.

December 4-6—Los Angeles, CA. SA International Convention, held concurrently with S-Anon. Theme: "Sobriety." Flyer will be available at the Bozeman Convention in June and in subsequent ESSAY.

1988 International Conventions—In St Louis it was voted that the two international SA conventions in 1988 be held the second weekends of January and July instead of the first weekends of June and December.

Dear Fellow SAs,

I thought it might be helpful to let you know what our group from West L.A. is doing in response to the financial challenge facing our Central Office. We know that SA as a whole is working on ways to meet this challenge, and whatever recommendations are adopted, we here will seek to support them. However, we feel that whatever we can do in the meantime will be helpful.

At every meeting, the secretary makes sure to mention the SA Central Office financial situation and what that means for us and for the thousands who are still out there who will one day need our help. We then pass around a can just for SA Central, and suggest that those present put in whatever they can afford. We suggest they include any change they have in their pockets. This can is in addition to the regular 7th Tradition basket passed at every meeting. We've found that much more than loose change is put in, and that this can often receives more money than the regular basket.

It is not difficult for us in the fellowship to remember the vast amounts of money we squandered on our addiction and how much we are now saving as a result of SA. We are happy to contribute a small amount of this savings in the knowledge that it will benefit others. It also helps us.

Other groups in the L.A. area are doing similar things to help support SA. If your group has come up with any ways to help support SA, why not share them in the next issue of ESSAY? (T.M West LA group.)

Recommendations Regarding 7th Tradition Support of the Central Office

At the St Louis Convention December 6, 1986, certain recommendations were made for increased financial support of our SA Central Office work. The financial report presented showed that we would close 1986 in the red, which we did by several thousand dollars. The revised projection for 1987 is that we'll need about \$18,000 in member contributions to break even in '87 . The most we've ever contributed is \$10,500. The St Louis discussion led to the following recommendations:

1. That each group should "brainstorm" how to do their part in contributing to the expenses of the Central Office. One suggestion being used is to pass a second basket around during 7th Tradition time each meeting just for Central Office. This has been hugely successful where implemented. **If most groups did this, we'd have no deficit!**
2. Increase price of the SA manual to \$10.
3. Various groups (unspecified) should assume the responsibility for taking care of the cost of the free literature sent to those in institutions. For example, some prisons have requested twenty books at a time, and our policy is to supply these free of charge, since these members have no means to pay. It was estimated that last year one such facility alone received over one thousand dollars worth of literature.
4. That ESSAY should be subscribed to as a donation to SA.
5. A volunteer committee was formed to further brainstorm and coordinate these ideas and report back to the fellowship. This should be announced in ESSAY.

Progress in this area will be reported as information is available. If you have any objections (as some do) or ideas, write in. Your voice counts! **Now is the time to make your thoughts known and your voices heard, as we look together to God to find how we can be responsible to those who reach out to SA for help.**

The Central Office is seeing where more work can be done by the local fellowship to cut cost. Results so far are promising.

Miscellany

Sobering Thought.

"Institutions remain cumbersome, easily seduced by their own self-interest, preoccupied with their own survival. It's a melancholy and ubiquitous fact of life that once an ideal, any ideal, becomes institutionalized, confusion sets in between the accomplishment of the ideal and the aggrandizement of the institution." (From Forward Day By Day, 10/6/77, submitted by G.D., Galveston.)

Our ideal is sobriety and recovery by the grace of God. Let's not louse that up by shifting focus to the aggrandizement of either ourselves or SA.

Thanks to our German Members! In November of last year the Central Office received a check for \$100 U.S. from the combined German SA fellowship. This was collected during their second Germany convention in Koln, November 8th and 9th. There was a notation with the check which read, "Thank you for the 12th Step work of GSO." What a surprise, and how grateful we are. Thank you, our German friends, for being there and being with us!

SA to Follow AA's New Policy on Personal Contributions. Last year we understand AA raised the ceiling on direct contributions to GSO from any one individual in any one year from 500 to 1000 dollars. (This does not include any meeting-basket contributions that member may also make during the year.) SA will follow suit. The cost of living has risen since that ceiling was established years ago. Remember that SA is also IRS tax-deductible as non-profit charitable, in the same category as AA.

Floating an Idea—Group Inventories. The suggestion has been made that each group prepare a group inventory, that is, an inventory not of the individual, but of the group itself. Members would write anonymously their honest feelings about the group and turn them in. This could turn into an SA inventory if these were collected, copied, collated, and distributed to all. **What do you think?**

Group Nominations for Speakers. Each host city for one of our SA conventions has the problem of being responsive to the fellowship in getting speakers and leaders for the convention. The suggestion has been made that groups take group consciences in business meetings and make recommendations for such speakers and leaders.

How to Take a Group Conscience. The current issue (March '87) of the AA Grapevine has an excellent article on how valid group consciences may be obtained by a group, entitled "What's a Group Conscience?" There is much confusion in this matter. See the enclosed copy.

St Louis Convention. It's interesting to note that the 1983 SA Convention had seventeen attending, representing but a handful of groups. St. Louis saw some 130 attending, out of some 200+ groups.

Literature Orders. Be advised that most literature orders are sent Fourth Class Mail to save on postage. If you want faster service, please state that in your order, and postal charges will be added.

Central Office Phone. The phone number at the SA Central Office is 818/704-9854. Since the office is not manned a full 40-hour week, the answering machine is on a portion of the time and increasingly during the evening and weekend hours. Don't hesitate to leave a message, but it will save the Central Office money if you can call back. (Austerity!)

S-Anon Central Office. We are advised that S-Anon now has a Central Office. The address is:

S-Anon
Box 21075
Oklahoma City, OK 73156
Phone 405/672-8187

Translator for German SA Newsletter. We need someone in SA who can translate the German SA newsletter into English. Please advise.

First Step Inventory Pages. The three pages describing the First Step Inventory that were removed from the SA manual are now being provided on the Loose Literature List and are also now included in the SA Meeting Guide. A few members have been asking for them. **Does your group use the 1st Step Inventory? How's it working out?**

Change in Suggested Meeting Format. Suggested Meeting Formats now being issued with the new Meeting Guide are revised to delete the two lines concerning other members responding to those with under thirty days sobriety. Our egos seem to get in the way here, and we can easily lapse into a kind of group therapy approach, which we have found counterproductive.

Should We Bind the Pieces of Loose Literature-In-Process? We'd like to get member response on whether to start binding the loose pieces together and making it available to the fellowship in booklet form. These have been floating around for some time for member feedback, which has been very favorable, with pieces being added from time to time. **What do you think?**

From a Prison Psychologist

"I cannot begin to adequately express our gratitude for the literature which your office sent to the men...this December. The meeting book and the ESSAY pamphlets were quickly snapped up at our regular Monday night meeting. We have 19 men actively involved in the S.A. program here at "... and we are growing constantly. Word is beginning to spread throughout the institution that there is a program available for sex offenders who wish to help themselves. As a psychologist who deals with sex offenders in therapy, I am overjoyed at the newfound hope that many of these men seem to be gaining. Many of the men who participate in both the S.A. program and in sex offender therapy here at the clinic are distinguishing themselves in the rehabilitation process. Their high level of motivation, their renewed interest in making a new life for themselves and the degree to which they are willing to examine their own personalities are all refreshing things to see in the prison environment."

"Thank you for the S.A. program. I plan on continuing to support the S.A. members here...as long as I am available at the institution. Again, thank you for the literature which was so badly needed...."

"The men at...and myself wish to give a hearty hello and thanks to all of the other S.A. groups who are helping to support our endeavor here...."

J.I., Tenino, WA: "Recently we lost one of our members due to a tragic auto accident. He will be missed by all of those who loved him including all of his S.A. brothers here.

"Enclosed is a contribution to your work, in memory of Matt K. our departed brother.

"Our Monday night fellowships in Olympia are going well. We also have informal get togethers on Thursday nights, usually in Tenino. We have an average of 12 active members. The fellowships are helping all of us, and so is your material that we have purchased. Keep up the good work.

"In loving memory of Matt."

"What I Think Makes a Good SA Meeting"

The following two member contributions seemed to lend themselves to the above subject. We might consider this as a regular ESSAY feature if others want to answer the same question. (Please include your current length of uninterrupted SA sexual sobriety with your one-paragraph answer to this question.)

"I go to meetings to share at depth. This always entails trust, but it requires a higher consciousness. The group provides the higher consciousness, and my trust comes from God. Something magical happens when another shares honestly and at depth about himself. When this happens, I feel connected to that person because I invariably identify. I am compelled to share the secret thoughts and intents of my heart and to give back the gift of love and trust that was so freely given to me by a person that shares in such a way. With each consecutive sharing, the power of the gift passing from person to person creates a higher consciousness that lifts me up out of myself, and I feel a part of, and I feel whole and alive and good, and God is there.

"Having had this experience once, I must have it again, and I realize that I am responsible for getting it started. That requires me to lead with my weakness and share at as deep a depth as I possibly can and to pass on the gift that was so freely given to me in one of my first SA meetings." (C.D., ten months)

"The best meeting for me is the one where I'm able to name my weakness and have it ring true. I tell who I am and do not minimize my defects or manage what I say to have a certain effect. In this meeting, my brothers and sisters expose their brokenness as well. I can look beyond their outsides (good looks, articulate speech, high or low achievement) and see the true need for what I need; for the reality of God's action in their lives. There is sobriety; and we all stand for sobriety. We agree that we must change, that we need to use the 12 Steps and to choose God's way over our own to open ourselves to His gifts for recovery." (M.T., two years)

GROUP & MEMBER NEWS

R.T., Maui, HI: "THANK YOU so much for your response to my call. Your timing and willingness to help are deeply appreciated. With God's help, a corner has been turned, and with God's help, the grace will continue to come to take me one step at a time, one day at a time. Please send the enclosed literature a.s.a.p. I am drinking in the truth with pain and fear and hope and a dawning sense of freedom and possibilities. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your fellowship there for being available. God bless you all."

B.J., Peoria, AZ: "... (Phoenix) now has five meetings a week. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday...."

J.W., Houston, TX: "We kicked off our new SA meeting here at my place last Monday night. There were two of us! But two more are promising to attend next week. So we have a group of four: Sandy K., Charley M., John O., and myself. A few more have expressed interest and will possibly attend soon...."

R.F., Schenectady, NY: "I've been attending AA meetings in Albany and Schenectady. My sobriety, though inconstant, is absolutely working. I feel a great sense of joy and self-worth. Thank you."

J.E., Minneapolis, MN: "... We are growing slowly, moving out of the 'raw addiction' into the substructure of the disease...."

J.M., Cleveland Heights, OH: "Enclosed is a... donation from Cleveland's Marathon to be used to further SA's 12 Step work to bring the message of sexual sobriety to those in need of it...."

B.M., Vancouver, BC: "Just a short note to share where I am.

"I have been out of prison for two months. I am maintaining my sobriety by going to two meetings a week here in Vancouver. I will celebrate my first birthday on November 12. I am fortunate that people from some other groups will be there for the cake.

"Murray R. is maintaining sponsorship of the group in prison and is trying to get permission to go to another prison where some men have transferred to so the program can be maintained for them. When I am off parole in January 1988, I am going to join Murray R. in the sponsorship. How is that for positive thinking? Thanks for my sobriety."

N.L., Huntsville, TX: "...Here in the Huntsville Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections, we are not recognized as sick or in need of special help. But, we know! We have two groups of 10-12 men once a week plus a group on Fridays for education on what, how, where, when, etc. our faults lay and how to work on thought patterns as well as fear, pain, rejection, all the classic things I (we) were blind to on the outside. Maybe some day Texas will 'come of age.'

"Thank you for any help you can give me in this matter. Keep up the GOOD WORK!"

R.F., Ontario, OR: "...We (Ontario) currently have 3+ members and are meeting on a weekly basis."

T.K., Cottonwood, ID: "I have recently been incarcerated on a sexual crime. Within the correctional institution that I have been placed is a Sexaholics Anonymous program. I have gone to a meeting and was advised to obtain your white book on SA. It would help me a great deal to overcome my problem as I need to do. I understand that since I am incarcerated, there is no obligation of purchase, this is very appreciated since I am unable to obtain any funds in my situation. I am a young man (23) who desperately wants to straighten out my life and save my marriage and family. With your help, I will have a brighter future to look forward to. Thank you."

S.S., Kaneohe, HI: "...SA is alive and well, though small, in Hawaii. I am sec-treasurer for our Aloha group, meetings Sundays at 9:30 am and Thursday evening at 8:30 pm Step studyday--brand new). Just to let you know."

M.P., Tampa, FL: "Thank you for being there when I need you! Our group is going strong here in Tampa with a lot of honest sharing and recovery...I appreciate my recovery (thanks to a Higher Power who works through people)! I send my prayers and close in SA love."

L.L., Elmont, NY: "...This program has been a tremendous help to me. I had been acting out daily and now I have four months of sobriety one day at a time. Thanks."

B.C., Schofield, WI: "I am a recovering sexual addict. I have been attending meetings in Madison, WI, on Saturday mornings, and am very grateful this fellowship exists. I have wished such a group existed for years. I am 54 years old and many of those years were lost or wasted because of my lustful thinking and behavior.

"I live in Wausau, WI, which is 150 miles north of Madison so I have quite a drive to get to a meeting. It is worth it though....

"I started going to meetings in Madison over a year ago, went to a few meetings, then dropped out until two months ago. I have been sexually sober for two months now...."

R.G., Madison, WI: "Things in Madison are going well. We're experiencing growth and also a continued commitment to sobriety.

"Thanks for making the literature available to us...."

B.Z., Rochester, WI: "Our group would like to donate...to the Central Office. Milwaukee area SA is growing with over 25 members attending various groups that meet four times a week. Many are achieving a stable sobriety."

G.W., Ontario, OR: "When we are down, we have found it's of immense help to contact some other Group. Yes, just as the individual member can contact the 'Blues', and need to talk it out with an older member, so too the group spirit can sag, and needs to be lifted. When this occurs, then it is time that we chat with an older group or member. In our group meeting room, we have a speaker phone. This little instrument has been a God-send for us on numerous occasions indeed! To really know that there are other people just like us out there, and in this context, other groups that are dealing with the same things we are experiencing, is upbuilding to say the least. So, we here in Ontario, will always know that you're out there, and when we forget, dialing that phone will bring back the memory."

M.B., Cleveland, OH: "(donation)...on behalf of Cleveland Wednesday night. Your work and generosity of spirit bring serenity to so many of us. With thanks and gratitude."

M.T., Lansing, KS: "To date we have 30 inmates who want to join the SA group when it gets completely organized."

J.M., Cleveland Hts., OH: "...one result giving witness to His love for us - at Friday's meeting of the 9 men and women who participated, 4 had a year or more of sobriety."

T.M., Rochester, NY: "I am really so happy to have found a way out, after so many years of searching. And not only a way out, but a way to a closer relationship to God. All at the same time. I can't believe it yet! But it's happening to me, how wonderful it is."

"I am 43 years old and generally sober since March when I joined SA and probably for the first time in my life."

L.A., Lansing, KS: "Due to the enthusiasm and drive of a couple young men..., with the help of the psychologist, permission has been received from the prison director for the forming of an SA chapter. The director has stated that if there is adequate interest and if an outside sponsor can be found, he will see to it that the chapter has a time and place to meet.

"The interest has already been demonstrated in that on the very first evening that it was announced that an SA chapter was being considered, 30 inmates expressed sincere interest."

J.P., Nashville, TN: "We continue to have a stable core of members, and after each wave of newcomers, one or two more stick and seem to join that stable core. There is a lot of honesty and trust in our meetings, and the focus stays pretty much on recovery. Who would have thought it, a year ago? The message from Nashville, so far today, is hang in there and keep the meeting going - - it does get better!"

B.S., Cottonwood, ID: "I just wrote two inmates in K.S.P., Lansing, Kansas. And sent them literature of all that you have sent to us.

"...it really blesses me to see other sexaholics desire help. Inmates are crying for help to get S.A. started. S.A. works!"

R.C., Hutchinson, KS: "I still feel like no other drug ever could make me feel, for last night, I had the first real shot of a new drug. Called a S.A. meeting! Nan, through all my years of pain, and suffering, I finally knew for sure that S.A. has been my true relief.

"We had 12 men at our group, and it was a good (one), but (a) different feeling to be among a group of people who have the same problems, and to be there in one room, and yet get so built up. It is also different, because here in prison, where so many people are down on you for a sex crime, it is the Biggest Blessing from the Lord to be built back up!"

H.A., Nashville, TN: "It was certainly helpful for me to get in touch with some of the resentments I still had left concerning my brother in "... and how praying for a forgiving spirit is certainly helping me feel better about all of this. I have also been able to let go of digging out anymore from my past concerning the sexual abuse situations. I really believe I was beginning to get voyeuristic and for me there is a thin line between growth and getting vicarious stimulation from my own story."

D.M., Canastota, N.Y.: "I have been attending an SA group in Rochester, N.Y. since late July of this year. I completed treatment in an inpatient program in June, but have no SA in Syracuse, N.Y., my home. So I started to drive the 110 miles each week for the Mon. night meeting and then home again. I have found a wonderful support group in SA and can never thank God enough for this program. With His help and Dave G. and the rest of the group I am grateful to have just celebrated my first month of sobriety. And this occurring at a time when my wife has left me and I am losing most of my material possessions as a result of my addiction. Nonetheless, only as I stay sober can I hope to ever again regain what is important in this life, namely, my relationship with God, self-respect, my wife and friends."

R.C., Hutchinson, KS: "Great News! S.A. is now in the group right along with A.A./N.A./S.A.! Boy, this may be old news to you, but it is new to me, and I feel like jumping for joy! Praise the Lord!

"I can hardly wait til I attend my first group Monday night.

"May God continue to bless our efforts and spread S.A. into every prison in the world!"

J.M., Jean, NV: "I have been personally convinced that the 12-step approach to sexual sobriety is the most reliable treatment program, but was unsure just how far to pursue starting an SA group here "on the yard". The risks of admitting sexual crimes in prison are very high, yet I have found courage to step out. To my surprise, a number of men have said they, too, want help regardless of the personal price that may have to be paid."

J.L., Loveland, CO: "The Monday night meeting in Boulder is about to do a group inventory for the second time. A year ago, we found the meeting to be slowly dying. After we took a group inventory, the amount of health, experience, strength and hope expressed at the meeting increased dramatically. Since then, that meeting has doubled in size.

"A few years ago, newcomers seemed only to be curious or too scared to attend. Perhaps we had nothing to give them. Now our program seems to be growing. This is very exciting although scary at times. We do our best to offer hope and recovery no matter where any particular member is on the sobriety ladder."

Joachim, 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 Gronenback.

On November 8th and 9th we will have our second convention in Koln. I know the time is very short, but if it is possible for you, we would be glad to get a message from you or your group for this convention."

PLEASE go back through this issue and note the action items. These are the items on which we're really counting on you and your group for feedback and help. We want you and your group to share your ideas with the rest of the fellowship.