
ESSAY

May 1988

Post Office Box 300
Simi Valley, California 93062

INTERNATIONAL GROUP CONSCIENCE PROPOSAL STATUS

As announced in L.A. in December, the plans for voting on the IGC proposal (included with January Essay), were that initial group feedback on the proposal would be summarized and forwarded to groups via an Essay mailing. Initial feedback from some fifty four groups (see list in this issue) has been received. Last word from the Committee is that they are still processing all these comments and that their summary will be out as soon as possible.

ACTION ITEMS FOR GROUP SECRETARIES

1. Nan, at Simi CO, has started sending extra copies of *ESSAY* to groups so that members who are not on the mailing list and who desire copies may get one. If your group wants extra copies of *ESSAY*, please let her know. The phone number is 805/581-3343, or write to SA, P O Box 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062.
2. Groups wishing to bid for the conventions in July of 1989 and January of 1990, send your representatives and proposals to the Rochester convention in July.
3. Provide any inputs from your group to CO regarding the publication of the typeset SA manual and new volume containing the loose literature (details in this issue).
4. Provide any individual or group opinions on the "Food For Thought" item in this issue.

CALENDAR

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by Essay or the Central Office.

May 14. Montana State Spring Conference. Great Falls, MT. For SAs and S-Anons. 10 AM to 5 PM. Contact Jesse L. at 406/586-3688.

May 21. Macon, Georgia. Dixieland SA/S-Anon All Day Meeting, 9 AM to 6 PM. "Fellowship and Discovery."
SAs contact: 912/745-6806; S-Anons contact: 912/745-1869 or write Dixieland SA, P O Box 2885, Macon, GA 31208.

May 27, 28, and 29. German SA Convention. Mainz. Located at: AM Gonsenheimer Spiess 1, 6500 Mainz, in the Evangelical Community Center. Begins 6 PM Friday; concludes 2 PM Sunday.

June 4 and 5. Wichita, Kansas Retreat. "Making the Real Connection." 12 noon Sat. to 12 noon Sunday. Villa Christa Retreat Center, 3033 W. Second Street, Wichita, Kansas. Call 316/651-1125 or write SA of Wichita, P O Box 16642, Wichita, KS 67216-0642.

July 8, 9, 10. SA International Convention. Rochester, NY. "Commitment." Holiday Inn, Genesee Plaza. Use enclosed registration forms. Members must make their own hotel reservations; cut and use hotel registration form on enclosed flyer. Discount air fares available; see flyer.

January 1989. SA International Convention. Salt Lake City, UT. Check subsequent *ESSAY* issues for details.

Note: Groups wishing to bid for the conventions in July of 1989 and January of 1990 come prepared to present your proposals in Rochester in July.

One member's response to a Convention: "The program told me what I needed to do to be sexually sober; the Convention gave me joy in doing it."

GROUP NEWS

Benson, Arizona. "We are still meeting regularly and following the suggested meeting format. Today the group has sent a letter to a local judge asking that if he comes in contact with persons who, through their lust, are injuring themselves or society. We tell him that we are a group of persons who stay out of trouble by helping others who are like us, and we asked him to put persons who might desire our type of help in touch with us." G.N.

SPRUCE PINES, ALABAMA. "We have a core group of about four people with others coming and going. It's been a great seven months for SA in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Thank you for all the help...." B.A.

WICHITA, KANSAS. "Our group is really growing. There is lots of interest in SA here. The professional community is really beginning to validate us and send us referrals. We had six newcomers last Tuesday! We've also gotten an answering service! We've been working toward this for a long time....I know when the number comes out in the phone book...our group will grow and change and be faced with some challenges. But God is with us and I think we can handle this growth." B.C.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. "Meeting-wise, things have really exploded around here....With such a strong network of SA meetings here, we're seeing a snowball effect: more and more people are coming to SA and telling someone else. Also, we've got a good rapport with SAA and SLAA....Some people (including myself) were unable (*unwilling* in my case) to let go absolutely. I came into SA gradually, once I realized I needed to follow the sobriety guidelines SA gave me. However, I can honestly say that without the 'leniency' of a floating bottom line offered by the other programs, I may not have progressed through the 'letting go' process. I may have given up on recovery altogether. In a sense, I'm glad I was able to sample all three programs because for me, recovery was and is as progressive as my disease. Thank God and SA (and SAA and SLAA)—I've been given my life back to me." J.B.

YORK, PENNSYLVANIA. "I would like to take this time to express my thanks for all the help and prayers from C.O. Our Sat. night group is still going strong. We made some bad decisions and mistakes, but God in his wisdom has been with us the past few months. We have three regulars each week, and the important thing is that we are very serious about SA and our lives. I want to urge all new groups to heed what C.O. says about running ads in any newspaper. This almost destroyed our group. Our intentions were right but it didn't work for us. We had people coming to our meetings but we didn't have any experience, strength, and hope. Someone said that there's a difference between carrying the message and spreading the disease. And if you were to look the word disease up it would say 'an abnormal condition that impairs normal functioning.' That is in a sense what we were doing; we were getting people that were just looking for something new to do on a Saturday night. But thank God we got off this endless merry-go-round when we did. Thanks for sending "Publicity and the Twelfth Step" because it saved our group. God doesn't make mistakes, but we do. Our group learned one very important lesson: to let God be God and let him decide when we are strong and able to have a larger group." T.G.

WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA. "Things were going rather slowly during March at our new meeting in West Palm Beach. We have been averaging four people on Saturday nights. Last week I went out of town and in my absence several newcomers showed up. Tonight...there were ten people. This is a 'Big Booklet' meeting, and we have sold most of our big booklets....Next Saturday we will have to share books if everyone shows...."

FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT. "We have a happy problem: we keep on running out of literature. The CT meetings—we have three now—have expanded to 10 - 15 people per meeting. We are beginning to need to organize a bit more....Sobriety is certainly growing. SA is our true lifeline.

"One of our members—who has two years of sobriety—said: 'If you stay sober, you grow like a weed.' So true. As individuals and as a CT fellowship, we are growing and feeling more alive." W.E.

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON. "Meetings have been running 9 - 12 people with highs of sixteen."

ASTORIA, OREGON. "Last September, with the help of SA groups in Portland, we started a local group here in Astoria. We now have five regular members and just got a P O Box....We are not a very affluent group, but we will try to send an occasional check to help...."

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON. "We are growing all the time and we need the big books as soon as possible."

NEW GROUPS

New groups that have come to the attention of Central Office since the last *ESSAY* are listed below:

Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Clearwater, FL
Northglenn, CO
Shreveport, LA
Garrison, NY

Ithaca, NY
Redlands, CA
Spokane, WA
Sioux Falls, SD
Astoria, OR

Note: If your group is not listed with CO, call Nan at 805/581-3343 or write to SA, P O Box 300, Simi Valley, CA, 93062.

BEHIND THE WALL. "The group here at K.S.P. is doing fine so far. It has dropped in attendance to about eleven. Our sobriety is getting stronger thanks to our Higher Power. Longest...so far is a little over a year by one inmate and four months for another." G.R., Lansing, Kansas.

[In March, four SA men spent the weekend with inmates at the Arkansas Department of Correction in Pine Bluff. They all returned with great enthusiasm, grateful they had gone. One of these reported it was "the most powerful experience of his life."]

"The past month we have spent enjoying the spirituality of the visit we had from our brothers in recovery from California and Kansas City. We didn't know what to expect, but we now want what we got as often as anyone would want to come...we are hoping this type of weekend becomes at least an annual event. For us it was fantastic....The visit has touched the hearts of many men here...that someone else had the same problems that they have and that something *really* could be done to recover. All three of our SA groups have grown stronger since the visit.

"Our goal now is to bring our program more in line with the Twelve-Step movement. It has taken us time to understand some of what we are learning, but slowly and surely we are getting there.

"Again, thanks for all your concern and care for us in the past year. We look forward to being part of SA for years to come." J.N., Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR LONER MEMBERS

Prisoners should write to the prison committee c/o Matt W. at:
P O Box 20412, Kansas City, MO 64195.

Other loner members should write: Elizabeth-Ann M., P O Box
457, Boulder, MT 59632.

MEMBER NEWS

T.K., Crowley, Texas. "I would like to share a metaphor which B.M. of the Ft. Worth group shared recently. He said that his sexual addiction could be described as follows:

'I'm walking along and I come upon this huge balloon—like a hot air balloon. There's this large rope hanging down from the balloon. As I grasp the rope, the wind begins to blow briskly. I cling to the rope excitedly in anticipation of being able to soar high above the earth, floating effortlessly off into the balmy blue sky. But instead of soaring, the balloon begins to drag me across the ground. In my mind I'm still believing that somehow I'm going to fly; thus, I mindlessly hang on with all my might. Far off in the distance comes this barely perceptible voice above the howl of the wind: *"Let go of the rope! Let go of the rope."*

'Ignoring the warning, attempting to drown it out, I am screaming: *"I'm going to fly; I'm going to fly!"* Strengthening my resolve, my desire to fly is so intense that I cling to the rope with all my might. But in spite of my hope and my resolve, I never fly. Instead, the balloon, as it rushes across the landscape, drags me along. I am pulled through cactus, sewers, across hills and through pastures. Never do I fly. My body is bruised and bleeding, yet with feverish determination I cling. Finally, I hear again, faint at first, but growing stronger with each repetition, that strangely familiar voice calling, no begging, pleading: *"Let go of the rope! Please let go of the rope."*

'Fearfully and hesitatingly I let go—first one hand and then the other. The surroundings become calm, my torn and aching body finds its rest, and to my amazement, I find that I can fly."

R.P., Maximiliansau, West Germany. "I want to make an amends to you. When I was at the L.A. conference, I took the chip for nine months of sobriety, when I had only eight. So I'm sending it back to you. I found my error when I wanted to tell the length of my sobriety for December 28th, and so I computed again.

"The conference was a very unusual experience for me. Being the first time in the U.S.A., (or any English-speaking country), the first time speaking in front of a larger audience, and the overwhelming love and appreciation I found. I can't express my gratitude to you all...."

J.G., Vancouver, Washington. "I now have over a year sexually sober. It works! Sometimes when life's foibles seem overwhelming I focus in on the miracle that I haven't acted out with my old patterns. I'm alive, not in jail, or dead from AIDS. And for that I'm truly grateful."

M.Y., Minneapolis, Minnesota. "I now have a place to be free from my addiction one day at a time, so I'd like to thank God and SA for that."

G.V., Seattle, Washington. "Hello from Seattle. I am writing to you as a relatively new person to the program, but have found it to be a saving grace to me."

R.P., Bonn, West Germany. "I'm still very, very grateful for SA. Like others, I too have found my spiritual home in SA plus the family I always longed for. It's a blessing to belong to this wonderful fellowship."

A.L., Rochester, New York. "I consider this vital program a way of life and an answer to many years of prayers. It's rewarding to face life for what it really is after all of these years. Could you please add me to your mailing list...."

E.W., Midland, Texas. "Thank you for your prompt delivery of this Big Book. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading it, even though I have experienced a lot of Pain and Shame. I feel a new freedom beginning. We have a group started here in Midland, and it is growing. Please put me on your mailing list...."

W.B., Wichita, Kansas. "I am happy to say my address has changed, as I'm now at a work release center and no longer at the Kansas State Penitentiary....Now I am attending the meetings of the Wichita chapter of SA and have appreciated their concern and openness, and I look forward to the meetings each week.

"I am so appreciative of SA and how it has been a vital part of my life since we began our meetings in May, 1987 at the Medium Facility at Lansing. I hope the group continues to be of benefit for others there."

T.G., Regina, Sask. "[Regarding the subject of what to do about sex offenders and the whole business of sexual dependency counseling] I have made a decision not to mix up the program with counseling. Looking back, I see how crazy I was to even consider getting involved in a 'professional' way! My main area of interest—profession wise—is in spiritual direction....Spiritual direction and the 12-Step program are real compatible. I am finding that quality Step work...accomplishes a lot of what is 'therapeutic' according to the professionals. Anyway, I have lost my desire to get into this type of counseling. There are just too many dangers to my own recovery and a sense of compromising the spirituality of the program.

"I am still unclear about offenders (level 3 acting out). The professional community is adamant that SA cooperate with them. They think that recovery for the offender is different (requires a separate program) than the 'ordinary' sexaholic. My opinion is that the 'quality' of lust and the power of the compulsion is no different, although consequences and unmanageability are. The man who masturbates compulsively seems to be in just as much bondage to lust as the incestuous parent. I think the program, if worked, is equally effective. I understand the concern about offenders, but disagree with professionals about recovery. It may be more difficult for offenders to be open and honest about their acting out—because of fear and social taboo. But I notice that when they do disclose, recovery can happen for them like any sexaholic.

"Our group conscience (roughly) is not to report offenders the first time they disclose but to impress on them the steps and the need to deal with the unmanageability and to bring the legal system in if necessary—on their own. SA members here may be the first in our area to contact Social Services to report on their *own* behaviors and to try and make things right!

"Is there any more info on the stand of SA regarding offenders and the disclosure of their acting out in meetings? In this area there is no help available for offenders—just jail! If they are really going to work the Steps they will have to take the law into consideration at some point, or does the group turn them over to the law right off the bat? Any thoughts? Or can you put me in touch with others with experiences in this area?"

[Those wishing to respond should write Central Office. Ed.]

NEWS FROM GERMANY

We're very grateful for Ruth P.'s work in translating the German newsletters into English. The following are excerpts from their sixth newsletter, dated February:

The next German SA Convention will be in Mainz, Friday, May 27 through Sunday, May 29, at Am Gonsenheimer Spiess 1, 6500 Mainz, in the Evangelical Community Center, starting at 6PM Friday and ending at 2PM Sunday.

On February 13 the clinics Ringgenhof and Hochsten (for all addictions) invited SA Germany to hold an SA Information Meeting. SA (and S-Anon) friends from Mainz, Karlsruhe, Wangen, Bonn, and Stuttgart held the meeting.

Excerpt from letters: "....At the beginning of my SA membership, when I was not yet able to stay sober continuously, I had great difficulty maintaining a clear standpoint regarding our definition of sobriety when talking to a newcomer, and first conversations with newcomers were very unpleasant for me. Today this doesn't surprise me, I was miles away from sober thinking! Today I know what an inner liberation I got from complying with the sobriety definition. I have become clearer and have lost all fear toward newcomers, of telling them clearly what our aim is.

"Therefore I think it is time to give up the secrecy, that for me are parts of our common disease, because in most cases the acting out of our addiction took place in secrecy. We should become aware of the fact that the principle of anonymity is about the anonymity of the individual and does not mean the anonymity of the groups or SA as a whole...." H.

Another letter begins as follows: "'....and his own enlightened self-interest must tell him this.' This sentence that stands at the end of the section 'What Is a Sexaholic and What Is Sexual Sobriety?' has become very important for me in my sobriety. Because I had already played around with the Program before I got to know about SA. I had not taken the first drink and was active in AA, but how could it be that after seven years I was nevertheless totally defeated? (Continued)

"Because as a relationship addict I did everything for others. I bought clothes to impress women; I cleaned my shoes so that I could tell my sponsor about it. I was afraid of losing my image. All my plans were directed towards what I thought others expected of me. How terrible my resentment was when I realized that my people-pleasing didn't work! I hoped for one reward for my conformity: the magical, ideal relationship within AA. To go on drinking and acting out lust without having to drink the first glass of alcohol, that was for me the essence of the Twelve Promises, and for that I did a lot. When I exercised, it was with the constant compulsive thinking that I needed to have the most handsome...body possible. When I brightened up my apartment then only to the extent that it served my self-advertisement.

"I was prepared to make a lot of sacrifices to this idol of self-obsession. And the more I bent myself, the more I craved for my pacifier and the more I lost my self.

"Until the game was over, the wine stale, and the attraction covered by sheer horror.

"Then I found SA.

"And now, everything was to start over—out of *self*-interest.

"My legs became as heavy as lead while jogging. And I'm only slowly getting used to the thought that I'm clearing up my life *for me*. Sometimes I'm startled how much the other has become second nature to me. How I like to put myself and my unfinished business to the side. But then again I ask myself, How was I able to live, driven by relationship mania, without this deep inner relationship to my Higher Power, which is so much more individual than I ever dreamt possible!

"God bless you all! It works!" M.

Another letter: "I am a grateful sexaholic, sober since November 1985, powerless over my lust, my resentment, my fear, and my devaluation. The SA program is the release for me. Here I have found my spiritual home....

"I used to act out...with many different people, but I never succeeded in getting any peace or overcoming my isolation and the terrible feeling of loneliness....it got worse, nearly fatally worse....I used to have brief relationships, constantly yearning for a new conquest, for the exceptionally wonderful woman. Today I am married, have a child, and am very grateful for this delivering change in my life, a gift from the Higher Power. (*Continued*)

"My old ego would rather create chaos. Today I'm getting to know the various aspects of a real relationship, for me a new, vast territory. Thanks to the Program, I cope well; after all, I can apply the Twelve Steps. I often have difficulty with Step Ten, but the relief is great afterward when I have been able to apologize for my mistake....There are still lots of amends to make....

"Since I've been turning over my lust, my resentment, my existential fear, and my devaluation to the Higher Power (every day anew), new horizons have opened up. New connections, friendships, that I used to long for, but was unable to live.

"As a sexaholic, I tend to live totally in the head, but in the meanwhile this has often moved down to by guts. Naturally, not only nice feelings surface; no, a very strong pain as well. But I don't have to be afraid of it anymore because I have the Steps and thus the Higher Power (Step Three), to whose care I have turned over my will and my life—the best decision in my life—daily, hourly, and more often, if necessary.

"Completely new feelings for me are intensive sympathy and compassion, or emotion...often that tears come to my eyes....Today I can feel joy, sometimes I feel a lot of strength; I look forward to the next day—all new experiences for me. Through that I am able to admit more about my dark side, can look at it more closely. Finally, I am beginning to recognize my character defects.

"I am very grateful for the SA way of life." b.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What do you think of the following statement, which might be used in conjunction with our sobriety statement? Please pass along any comments you might have to the Central Office.

We have found that more important than the mere length of our calendar sobriety is its quality and our own personal integrity. Physical sobriety is not an end in itself but a means toward an end—victory over the obsession and progress in recovery. We are often the only ones who know on the inside of our souls whether we are truly in sobriety and recovery. Better to surrender to the spirit of truth as God sees us than hide behind the badge of our sobriety date, live the compromise, cheat ourselves, and threaten the principles of our Fellowship and union with one another.

NEW SA MANUAL AND ADDITIONAL VOLUME

A decision has been made to go ahead with typesetting the SA manual and publishing it in 6-by-9 quality paperback format. This new edition of the SA manual would still have a plain white cover, as it does now. In the process, it is anticipated that a few changes may be made to the text where appropriate.

After a long delay, Roy has finally set about to gather the loose literature pieces that he has been submitting to the fellowship from time to time with various *Essay* issues into one publication. The material has been given to two editors, one in SA and one outside of SA, for suggestions on how these pieces might best be organized and presented in one volume. If you have any ideas on this or would care to suggest what this volume might be called, let Roy know by contacting the Central Office.

IGC COMMITTEE MATTERS

Since it was announced at the Los Angeles convention last December, Roy and the Central Office have been using the International Group Conscience Committee in an ad hoc temporary advisory capacity in day-to-day matters involving Central Office or SA as a whole. This is the only active representative body SA has at present, and it has been working extremely well. Following are some recent decisions made:

SA Affiliation with Other Sex Addiction Programs. The IGC Committee voted that any type of organizational affiliation with other sex addiction programs was contrary to our Sixth Tradition. This was with reference to a situation in one area where something called an "Intergroup" consisting of three sex addiction programs, including SA, was created which requested SA literature for a professional conference. SA has a history of friendly cooperation with members in other programs, even to referring people to them where appropriate, and some people attend more than one program. The point in question before the IGC was not such cooperation but affiliation. The long form of Tradition Six (found at the end of AA's Twelve and Twelve, reads: "While an SA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An SA group can bind itself to no one."

SA Convention Attendee Lists. The Committee suggests that if such lists of convention attendees are made available to members, "that each page...state clearly that the list is solely for SA purposes." This decision has come about due to unauthorized use made of the list prepared at the L.A. Convention, which was used for commercial purposes, and members expressing concern for their anonymity. This also has raised the larger question as to whether such member lists should be disseminated at all.

SA Literature. The Committee has given the go-ahead on issuing the SA manual in typeset paperback format and on assembling the loose literature in a separate volume (see details in this issue).

SA And The Media. The Committee deliberated a very intriguing offer for television exposure to a foreign country that would have given SA total control over the scope, depth, and type of coverage. Tempted strongly at first, they finally decided against it; SA would have to carry its own message. One Committee member's observation was noteworthy, in the light of the fact that other programs are pursuing media exposure: "Even if the other sex addiction programs outgrow us in numbers, we should hold true to our principles and be there for those who want what we want."

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