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# ESSAY

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February 1989

Simi Valley, CA

## MEMORIES OF THE “REAL CONNECTION”

Memories of the “Real Connection” International Retreat in Salt Lake City will still be fresh for many members as this issue of the Essay appears. For many of us, this retreat felt like recovery often feels: emotional, sometimes tense and uncomfortable, yet open and secure. As we walked together through sharing our struggles and victories, we began to experience the joy of true union with one another. One member commented afterwards: “There were a lot of tears at this conference, more than I remember seeing before. It’s as if there was enough trust and openness for people to begin to let their true feelings out.”

The open meeting on Sunday morning, in which anyone could share with the whole conference, was an unforgettable experience. For over two and a half hours, people shared their gratitude for what the conference had meant for them, and for what the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous means to them. The meeting was a reaffirmation of unity at the deepest level – unity in a shared understanding of sobriety, unity in a hunger for a deeper recovery, unity in our commitment to carry the message to the sexaholic who still suffers. Our Higher Power was in that room, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

## REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP CONSCIENCE PROPOSAL

As you remember, over the past year the fellowship has been asked to approve or reject a procedure for taking an international group conscience on issues that affect SA as a whole. What follows is a report on that process, prepared by Katherine D., the chair of the committee to determine an IGC procedure:

The conference call for the International Group Conscience committee discerned, from the responses generated by the fellowships at the local level that substantial unanimity does exist to approve the procedure we developed. The vote was 5-1. According to point #14 in the procedure, the next step is for the five regions of 1) Chicago/Milwaukee /Minneapolis; 2) Pacific Northwest/Canada/Bozeman; 3) New York City/Boston/East Coast; 4) International/ Germany; and Baltimore/Washington D.C. to select a representative from each region. This is to be done within each region, much as local groups from one area join to form an intergroup. Each region's representative will serve for a two-year term, and the minimum length of sobriety for members must be two years of sexual sobriety as SA understands it, according to the procedure. We hope the regions will take action as soon as is practicable. Later in 1989, at the behest of the Committee, the last four regions are invited to elect an inter-regional representative from the following areas: 1) Kansas City/St. Louis/Oklahoma City; 2) Nashville/Southeast; 3) Salt Lake City/ Phoenix/Colorado; and 4) Los Angeles to complete the nine-member committee serving staggered terms of two years.

A special "Thank you" to the fellowship generally for making possible the committee's work and for help in completing its task of rendering what we hope is a workable procedure for taking an international group conscience.

## **GROUP SHARING**

Finding enough sober people is a problem. Loads of unsober people attend here. Things will change. Something for everyone doesn't work. Larry L., Givatayim, Israel

Our Wednesday meetings are growing and average 6-10 SA's. Our Saturday meeting is small but growing in numbers and sobriety. Kevin C., Ft. Collins, CO  
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All is well here. We have lots of sobriety at our three meetings... Our Montana State fall conference went very well. We had groups from Great Falls, Helena, Billings, and here. There were about 35 with 15 from Bozeman. Our Spring conference will be in Helena, in early May. Jess L., Bozeman, MT

SA seems to be on the verge of a great explosion around here. It may be that before too long we will see our number double. Jack R., Glen Ellyn, IL

After about a year of having no SA meetings in the Buffalo area, we are starting up a Monday night meeting with 5 or 6 regulars. That's on less 3 hour roundtrip to Rochester I have to make every week. Thanks be to God. David S., Buffalo, NY

We are still struggling here in the Ottawa area, only 4 members left. We read the SA booklet at the meetings but have a hard time in permanence of sobriety... Some publicity has been generated as a result of an article in Canadian press about SA. A group out West is responsible, but they passed on to us all the inquiries about SA coming from Ontario. John C., Ottawa, Ontario

Enclosed please find a \$50 check, a donation from the Thursday evening SA group in Stanford, CT. It has been too long since we have sent support your way. We continue to grow, and are building some long term sobriety. Four of our members have a year plus, and two have passed the two year goal. What tremendous gifts from the Higher Power to us sometimes pathetic sex drunks who are becoming real persons. Bill E., Stanford, CT

I have visited with W., and there is a third man considering SA in Casper, so we appear close to forming a group. I attended an SA meeting in Fort Collins, and W. has been to one in Salt Lake City. He and I are eager to get going. Len E., Casper, WY

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Our SA group here at the Diagnostic Unit continues to thrive. The spirituality and fellowship of the program is beautiful. God continues to send us the men who want to be in the program. We have learned that the quality of the men and the program is far more important than the quantity off the same. Richard S., Eleventh Hour Group, Pine Bluff, Arkansas

We send our best. Our meeting is growing strong! We had two members who celebrated anniversaries of 2 years and one of 4 years! Our conference was a success also. We will be sending a donation from the remaining assets as soon as we get the financial situation reconciled (perhaps another 10 years!) Believe it or not, we came out ahead financially, much to everyone's surprise. This was due to the great financial support the West Suburban groups gave us. Michael F., Chicago, IL

Our Boulder SA group is doing well. [There has been] a lot of recovery and people with two and three and five years in the program. Rick S., Boulder, CO

This check is for 2 groups, Greensburg, PA and Bethlehem, W Va (known as the Wheeling, W Va meeting) each donation was \$11 per group...these groups are starting to grow and we hope to have more next time. We are starting a group in Uniontown, PA, trying to get more places for people to get help. Barney W., New Kensington, PA

Things are going well with our group. Last Friday we had 11 members attending. The SA brochures we have out are doing well in guiding new members our way. I believe that by next summer we may have three nights going in the Green Bay area. Right now the Appleton and Green Bay area offers meetings four times a week. Phil, Green Bay, WI

There were only two at the last meeting, but we have dedication and a sincere desire to get sober. Catherine D.P., Atlanta, GA  
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Last night's meeting was exceptional. We've had some new members recently who have "kept on coming back." I'm proud to be a part of SA and our group. I started in SA when in Washington, D.C. and had received a good solid basis in SA and its traditions. Tom S., Warren, PA

This is to let you know that our SA group in Akron is growing steadily in membership and sobriety! This program is a life-saver for all of us. The fellowship has changed its meeting place once and we may have to move again because we are outgrowing our space. Patrick, Akron, OH

Most of us are like myself, newcomers who are having a tough time with Step One, but we keep coming back. It is a great sense of relief to finally have a place to come to and try to work the Steps and ask for help from the group and from God. I hope to meet you as we trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. Peter A., Salem, OR

Although SA continues to grow in Nashville, I still see peaks and valleys in our growth. We will get times of months of fifteen to twenty people and then we will go down to ten or twelve people at our meetings. It seems to be a constant up and down but each up becomes higher and each down becomes less. Needless to say, I am talking only about numbers of people. Concerning quality of sobriety, and it is still a hard pressed issue, we continue to grow with our sobriety base but it is a very slow growth. It appears that some people just take to the program like a duck onto water, immediately; and other people tend to fight it every inch of the way. Those fighters over the months either seem to not come back or they end up at Golden Valley. Harvey A., Nashville, TN

Greetings from the East Coast! We are growing and feeling more committed than ever to the fellowship. It has been a grow

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ing consensus lately, especially at our business meetings. Please accept our contribution. Armando S., SA Tri-State Intergroup, NY, NY

I would like to tell you a little about our group that we have here. Child Molesters Anonymous was founded in 1986 at the Wyoming State Penitentiary. Our founding fathers of this organization saw the need for this type of an ongoing support group. There wasn't any real help for people like me for my type of crime and I wanted something that would keep me from repeating these crimes over. I knew without some kind of program to rely on I do not think I would be able to keep my sobriety very long when I am released...Over a period of one and a half years we have been looking for a format that would give us the security in knowing we are not alone and will have support when we leave here. We were informed about the SA organization and started looking into the information that we would get of yours. Through group vote we decided that this would be the way to conduct our meetings. We also voted to contact you and get permission to become a chapter with your consent. The secretary of our group wrote to you and asked if you would send one dozen of your SA books to help get this group on its feet. We received these books and want to say thank you...We know as long as there are people who want to change for the better, we know this group will stay alive. Since we have gotten on a format that people like, the group is starting to grow again. We started with about four and now the group has thirteen members. Howard R., Rawlings, WY

Our group is small here in Davis-Weber County...and doesn't have the strength of a lot of time in sobriety. But we decided that we are a group of sex drunks willing to get sober together and stay that way one day at a time. Please accept our first contribution to the cause at the national level. Ron A. and friends, Davis-Weber County, UT

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As a group, we are in the process of determining what kind of group we want to be. Questions such as:

1. Do we want to be strongly newcomer oriented?
2. How much effort are we as members willing to put into our program?
3. Are we going to be a group which maintains a meeting atmosphere promoting complete honesty in our sharing?

Since we are a new group, with only one member with any length of sexual sobriety, we feel we need to ask ourselves this type of question, and more questions as time goes along. Bill C., Minneapolis, MN

I'd like to put on the record that a new group has started in the city of Arroyo Grande; though it is important that it be called the "San Louis Obispo Group," because of the city's relative popularity...I don't think I can possibly explain the joy that I had when we had our first meeting. Following the SA meeting guide gave me a sense of unity, something that I have really missed since I have moved from the greater Los Angeles area. Robert G., San Louis Obispo, CA

Though the OKC metro area has two other groups now we have been maintaining our membership, even increasing some. During the end of the summer we were having usual turnouts of a dozen participants. In the last few weeks this has dropped off to about nine. But we feel the SA program is growing in OKC. Kurt R., Oklahoma City, OK

Carol D. from Australia has written in to inform us that we misspelled "Sydney" in the October 1988 issue. Sorry about that!

## MEMBER SHARING

A note of encouragement to you! I have been involved in the program for several months now and at this point I have an incredible 5 weeks sobriety. Praise God for your program, I don't think I could do it without the meetings and literature. Bryan D., Dallas, TX

[The following was written in response to a paper by Roy K., "The SA Misconnection"] The SA program is not for everyone; because you so clearly put my own words down on paper, I can more clearly see how good the SA imperative is for me, too. I, too, have had the experience of looking at a face on a member of the opposite sex and starting to obsess about that person, making him into a god or a goddess (depending on your own gender, for I am a woman and you are a man). Personally, I feel that although the old AA advice was to turn your AA group into a Higher Power...this is dangerous advice for the sexaholic. After all, group members have real bodies, and those real bodies are often the source of our obsession -- our sexuality, which, if we make the group into a Higher Power, can mean that we are turning our sexaholism into our primary focus, our God if you will, and there goes the disease again (this time under the guise of help rather than harm!). Robin P., Hodgkins, IL

This past August, by the Grace of God, I celebrated my third "birthday" in this life-saving God-inspired program. Ceaseless are the gifts that befall me in recovery. The gifts come in the form of growth (sometimes painful) by learning more about who I am and acceptance of me, defects and all. I made a list of people I thought I had harmed while doing the first four steps and it was quite impressive. It showed everyone how terrible I was, gauged by the numbers on that list. My sponsor (God love him) poked a hole in my inflated perverted ego by asking a simple question, "Remember we make amends to people we have harmed; did you harm all those people?" 75% of the names immediately dropped off the list when I realized I really had not



harmed them. They were involved with lustful thoughts and fantasies in my head but they did not know it and still don't. What I further found out was that I left names off the list like my wife, my four children, my parents, sister and some others – the people I really had harmed. Some painful growth happened to me in re-making the amends list, now paying attention to the harm I really had caused. Many tears were shed (healing tears) at finally facing more of who I really am. I wanted to run but my sponsor will not let me and I felt much relief at taking his direction and sitting down with the people and actually beginning the process.

I have made two amends thus far starting with my wife and middle son. I truly believe God was with us as I felt the beauty, healing and love that came. I will never cease to be amazed at the miracles God performs in my life. It also never ceases to amaze me how much I doubt and keep asking Him to show me one more time. How annoyed I would be if another person treated me this way yet God keeps on showing me again and again. If I can adopt something said at the Rochester Conference, "I am never sufficiently grateful for that."

May God bless and keep you all and I do hope we get to meet each other as we "trudge this road of happy destiny."  
Dave G., Rochester, NY

I came to SA to save my marriage. I was addicted to sex with my wife and she could not tolerate it anymore. The emptiness left inside from the divorce was so great that no amount of sexual acting out could fill it. It was at this bottom that I got my current sexual sobriety. I accepted the fact of my addiction and knew deep in my heart that sexual sobriety was the only solution.

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In my first year I admitted to myself and others that I was a woman hater. The kind of pornography I sought, the fantasies that bombarded my mind, and the way I treated my wives, could no longer be swept away as insignificant. When I accepted this truth about myself, the healing began. In my second year I admitted my romance addiction. I found it more embarrassing to admit my addiction to soap operas and romantic movies than to my various sexual perversions.

With almost two years of sexual sobriety in SA I began to date. I was in love, committed to marriage (on the second date) and so was she. So why couldn't we have sex? We didn't know the answer, and we did not debate the issue, we just stayed sober. It has been four months since we broke up, and I'm beginning to see the value in not having sex before marriage. While we were dating we often talked about what wasn't happening. We weren't being possessive, petty or jealous. There was no push/pull manipulation that was so much a part of my past. Throughout my sobriety I had developed a strong support system within the fellowship. I continued to deepen these friendships, and to establish new ones, while we dated, and when the breakup happened I was hurt, but not devastated because I was not alone. My vision was not blurred by sexual obsession, and she was not a sexual fix for me. When it became clear that we were not right for each other, we talked it out, and parted as friends.

There is nothing easy about going through adolescence as an adult. I know how well sex works to relieve the anxiety and confusion associated with growing up. There is something about sex for me as a sexaholic that has short-circuited my ability to commit to a responsible, healthy, growing relationship. Just like I want the wisdom of years of sobriety in months of not acting out, I want to experience years of sober interaction and all the struggle and frustration it entails, in a few months of dating. I want to date for a while, get married and have sex. I don't want to give it time. I feel I need to be in control and to make the decision as to when I will meet someone, how long we

will date and when we will get married. Realizing my powerlessness in this area comes from trying to control and failing. I felt I had met the perfect woman for me and that I could make an honest commitment to her and to raising a family.

I see now that I am just coming out of denial about how much of a commitment phobic I have been all my life. I am beginning to understand commitment by practicing it. I am committed to feeling the emotional pain of life without resorting to drugs or lust. I am committed to staying sober and helping others to achieve sobriety, and I am committed to the growth and awareness that comes from not having sex before marriage. Commitment to sex led me to SA, commitment to a spiritual connection with people and sexual sobriety has led me to life. Curt D., Los Angeles

**Please note:** The comments in group news and sharing from members are taken from letters received by the Central Office. If you do *not* want to be quoted in the Essay, please indicate that in your letter.

## REQUESTS FOR FEEDBACK, AND RESPONSES

In the last issue of Essay, we published requests for feedback from groups that are experiencing problems or have questions about the way in which meetings should be run. RB in Wichita Falls wrote asking how other groups address the problem of a high rate of dropouts, and JB in Chicago wrote asking how other groups manage to give everyone enough time to speak. Robin P. of Hodgkins, IL offered suggestions to both of these groups, which are printed below. And Harvey A. from Nashville raises a question concerning the sixth tradition. If your group would like to request feedback from others on some question concerning the traditions, or the way in which meetings are run, or if you would like to offer feedback, write to us care of the Central Office.

To RB in Wichita Falls, Texas: Based on the experience I have had personally, and the experience of other 12-step programs, a certain amount of slippage and dropout is inclined to happen... The only thing that I can suggest (and this is based on my own experience, and solely on my own experience) is that if you have a way of getting in touch with "drop-outs," such as via the telephone, give them an occasional call just to let them know you care...Stick to messages which indicate you care, rather than coercive messages which would be read as twisting the arm of the newcomer... Refrain from the offering of advice. I know that when I sense that people genuinely care about me as a person...then I am much more inclined to go back to meetings than if the meetings seemed to be filled with those out to emphasize a cult-like adherence to a certain way of working the program or gaining members.

To JB in Chicago, IL: That problem sounds familiar from my own 12-step group! I, too, often feel cheated of speaking time at meetings. . My personal suggestion would be, if you have sufficient physical space at your meeting place, to split up into

four mini-groups after your preliminary readings. Robin P., Hodgkins, IL

I have a tradition question that I would like some help on. We were printing up a new schedule that will be able to fit in people's wallets. In printing it up as we have done before, we are including when the S-Anon meetings will meet...I have seen this done in other parts of the country concerning AA and Al-Anon and since we have been doing it here for the past few years, I have taken it for granted that this is an acceptable approach. However, I have lately been concerned with our 6th tradition and hope that we are not breaking the tradition by affiliating with or endorsing another group...I see [SA and S-Anon] as all part of the same program. But if I am under reading this, please give me your feedback on it. Harvey A., Nashville, TN

## NEWS FROM THE FELLOWSHIP IN GERMANY

### Roy's Trip to Germany

Roy attended the biannual German SA Convention in Schneverdingen on November 4th, 5th, and 6th and other German SA meetings during his three-week trip in Europe. He had not been to Germany for three years and reports being joyously grateful for the quality of meetings and sobriety there. He reports that the sobriety imperative is "alive and well in Germany." "I was especially struck with the warmth, depth, genuineness, dedication, and unity of our brothers and sisters who had come from all over Germany to attend," he said. "It was such a heart-warming, powerful, and useful time we had together, I just wanted to stay there and keep meeting with them." There are now some twenty-one SA groups in West Germany and Switzerland.

Following the SA convention, Roy held a three-session seminar at the Psychosomatic Clinic in Bad Herrenalb on November 8th, 9th and 10th. This proved to be a time of very personal sharing. On the following weekend, Roy was given the opportunity of holding a three-hour workshop at the First Conference on Somatotherapy (the first of its kind) in Paris. At his request, the German SA Convention had designated two German SA members, Ruth P. and Michael, to share in the workshop. When the designated French translator did not show up in Paris, it seemed all was lost, until one of those attending the workshop volunteered to translate English into French. When it came Michael's turn, Ruth translated his German into English, and the volunteer translated that into French! Ruth was also Roy's interpreter throughout Germany, doing a fine and tireless job at considerable personal sacrifice. Although most persons attending the Paris workshop were unfamiliar with the concept of sexual addiction and SA, the response was very positive and productive. Let us pray God will open the door in France.

Roy's wife Iris accompanied him on the trip; it was the occasion of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. There are tentative plans that tapes of the Clinic seminars and those from Roy's previous visit to Germany will be available at some future date.

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