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# *Essay*

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March 1991

P.O. Box 300  
Simi Valley, California 93062

## **SOBRIETY SURVEY ELICITS UNPRECEDENTED RESPONSE**

The overwhelming response to the survey shows how SA is passionately concerned about the issue of how sexual sobriety is interpreted. Over 75% of responding groups hold to traditional SA sobriety (see the report inside). However, over 18% hold to non-traditional sobriety; we have a house divided. It's time for honesty and soul-searching. Let's set about resolving the division. There's no way we can be *one*—the requirement for personal recovery—and yet be divided in heart and principle. Thus, this issue of *Essay* is perhaps the most important ever. The subject is now in the light; let's face it squarely and courageously, putting principle before personality.

Roy K.

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

- Group and Member News
- Report on the Sobriety Survey
- **New Feature:** *Box 300* supplement with Central Office news, other business matters, and special reports.

*Also with this mailing:*

- Group and Members Comments Accompanying the Sobriety Survey

*Coming up in the next issue:*

- Member Feedback on the Sexual Abuse Issue

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

**April 12, 13, 14, 1991— German SA Convention.** Write to SA Group Freiburg, PLK 172642 E, 7800 Freiburg, Germany.

**July 12, 13, 14, 1991—SA/S-Anon International Convention.** Chicago, Illinois. See enclosed flyer and registration forms.

**January 1992—SA/S-Anon International Convention.** San Diego, California.

**German Newsletter.** The November 1990 German SA Newsletter has been translated into English. Copies are available free from the Central Office. Many thanks to the generosity of Gregory A. of Niagra, NY, who did the translation. Gregory also includes a personal note: "I'm experiencing a deep feeling of sobriety and peace at the present time. It is so wonderful—that elusive surrender *is* possible!!

**Oklahoma City Says Thank You.** "To SA Everywhere, from SA Oklahoma City:

"How many ways can we say thank you for the conference? Or how do we love you for being there and being you? Let us count the ways. Thanks to:

"The Canadians for coming so far and bringing so much. Long distance travelers in general, Californians in particular—including Roy K. whose inspiring talk is still talked about here. Those in their Seventies and those in their Twenties—and in between. All those who broke down walls and barriers by being honest about problems with sex, LUST and living with the Problem in general. You made us remember that together we have a Solution. Those who came forth to sing, tell stories, play the piano and otherwise delight. All those—especially—who came from all over to share their best all over.

"There were many, many good shows of sobriety. How about our own Jerry: No booze, no pills, no Smoke, NO LUST—but a labor of love on a Unicycle while juggling three tennis balls with a grin! Bravo! Encore!

"May you all continue to 'take the actions of love.'

"With gratitude, SA OKC"

"P.S. . . . Chicago, here we come!"

## **REPORT ON SOBRIETY DEFINITION SURVEY**

Roy K's 12 December 1990 letter to SA groups invited groups to respond to what he felt was SA's interpretation of the sobriety definition:

Regarding SA's definition of sexual sobriety, "married" means traditional, legal, heterosexual marriage, and "spouse" does not include "committed relationships" with either the same or opposite sex.

Groups were invited to express whether they affirmed, did not affirm, or chose not to respond to this statement.

### **Mechanics of the Survey**

To provide a system of checks, survey responses were to be returned on the SA letterhead provided. Individual groups were identified by name, city, meeting day and time, contact person, and address. Responses were dated, and comments were solicited. The matter of how the survey at group level would be conducted was left up to each group. The target date of 4 January was chosen so the trend could be reported to the Oklahoma City convention. Due to time constraints, about as many responses came in after that date as before. Cutoff date (*Essay* preparation cutoff) was 22 February.

### **Results of Group Sobriety Survey:**

Number of groups responding: 170

Number of groups affirming the 12 December statement: 128 (75.3%)

Number of groups not affirming the statement: 32 (18.8%)

Number of groups marking "chooses not to respond": 10 (5.9%)

Ambiguous responses (not counted): 8

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[Comments from groups and members accompanying the survey responses are included in a separate supplement. Roy K.'s report, "On the Sobriety Survey and Why It Was Not an IGC" appears in the *Box 300* supplement, also in this mailing.]

## GROUP NEWS

**Welcome to the following new groups!**

Bakersfield, CA  
Bremerton, WA  
Columbia, TN  
Dodge City, KS  
Eugene, OR  
Florence, AL  
Green Bay, WI  
Guam  
Idaho Falls, ID  
Japan

Johnstown, PA  
Liberal, KS  
Marion, IL  
Merritt Island, FL  
Netherlands  
Ontario, NY  
Pasadena, CA  
Racine, WI  
Winona, MN  
Woodward, OK

**Olympia, WA:** “....Our chapter is doing quite well, with over 30 active members and a weekly attendance of at least 16-20. Everyone finds support, encouragement, and hope through these meetings and the literature you have made available...” **R.Q.**

**Berkeley, CA:** “....Our step study meeting in Pleasanton has been growing steadily in numbers and in sobriety, and currently has between 10 and 15 regular members. We are giving out 60 and 90 day chips. Two meetings in Sunnyvale and Santa Cruz are also growing, with committed and faithful attendance, including a member who travels over 80 miles each way. We have just started a new meeting in San Francisco.” **D.K.**

**Steubenville, OH:** “Hello from SA Steubenville. We’re nine months old and averaging six to eight members a meeting. Thanks for being there and giving us sex addicts a chance.” **B.M.**

**N.S.W., Australia:** “....We are only in our infancy but know we are part of the whole. We are learning about the Traditions and are abiding by them to the best of our ability. There is a lot of unity of purpose and to follow suggestions we receive from the literature. Our members send greetings to all at the Central Office as well as to all members of SA.” **R.C.**



**Washington, DC:** "We have two meetings each week in downtown DC during the lunch hour. When these were started over two years ago, they were very small, but there was a consistent core of people who attended regularly and that gave these meetings a continuity. The daytime meetings now have a regular core of at least a dozen members and the sobriety and recovery are growing. It's a real blessing to have this oasis in the middle of a Washington, DC workaholic day." **B.K.**

**Portland, OR:** "We averaged 25 each week over the summer, which includes two newcomers per meeting. We're looking for another Sunday location."

**Seattle, WA:** "We are averaging 15 people a week, lots more regulars than a year ago. I am told our meeting is only a couple of years old and now is larger than the Friday meeting which spawned us. We're building a Northwest support network of people who attend in Vancouver, British Columbia and Portland, Oregon. Our groups are alive and recovering." **R.W.**

**Chicago, IL:** "The Friday meeting continues to be a solid one, welcoming beginners and keeping us all focused on the importance of the first three Steps. The Chicago area just held a very successful day long conference entitled 'A Celebration of Sobriety.' It was hosted and organized by some of the suburban SA groups, and was well attended and a great opportunity to celebrate and share. . . . This meeting, which focuses on the first three steps, has recently grown to an average of 12-15 members. It is great to see new faces, as well as the witness of those who keep coming back." **B.T.**

**Kittannig, PA:** "Although we have been in existence for a relatively short time, it was our feeling that we assist you in this small way to carry the message to sexaholics who still suffer in accordance with Tradition Five and Step Twelve. May God continue to bless you in your work of reaching out to others." **W.B.**

**South Bend, IN:** "There is now a real live South Bend group. We have a core of about five members, all committed to SA sobriety, and we seem to be growing slowly but steadily. Needless to say, I'm delighted." **J.P.**

**Germany:** "Greetings from our tenth SA Convention in Germany." (See the beautiful card copied in this issue.)

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:** "We are very proud because our group is going well. We have a lot of difficulties, but we have a lot of courage too, to fight. We are growing. Thank God! Usually in our meetings we have nine or ten persons. Six of these come frequently, the others came once and disappeared! But we think we are very slowly discovering the way of our recovery...*We respect with severity the rules of SA* and our principle wish is with our sobriety. We have difficulties. We want to share with you our happiness. Next 27th we will make our first anniversary (birthday)!!... Sure you will be happy with our news, we say good-by, and a lot of sobriety in all areas of our lives. God bless us." **L.H.**

**Tamuning, Guam:** "Greetings from Guam! I haven't been home a week and we've already had our first SA meeting! Praise God! When He works, He works! I got back here at 2:00 a.m. on 23 October and we had our first meeting (two of us) October 29th with another meeting scheduled for 1 November. Also, there are several other potential members. Pass on the good news!" **D.P.**

**Chanute, KS:** "Just wanted you to know we had a good conference (mid-states) at Wichita. Good strong feeling of unity. I got my two-year chip (two years and eight weeks)." **R.T.**

**Davenport, IA:** "Our Quad City group has experienced some growth in numbers, but more importantly our members are continuing to grow in recovery and spirituality. Our experience suggests that recovery grows from cumulative impact of small victories. Each act of surrender strengthens us for the next test. Each day of sobriety makes evident that God is indeed doing for us what we could not and cannot do for ourselves. We are grateful to those who have traveled this path ahead of us, pointing the way for us." **G.L.**

**Nashville, TN:** "The box of ESSAYs arrived just in time for our 'Balance in Recovery' conference. Thanks. We had hoped for 80 attendants from both SA and S-Anon if all went well. In fact, we ended up with 111 total from six different states: **TN, KY, NC, GA, AL, CA.** In fact, we were

thrilled. Perhaps the best part, other than simply to feel the power of recovery and our higher power at work, was that the organizers were able to merely enjoy the conference along with everyone else. 'Keep It Simple' saved us." **D.M.**

**Milwaukee, WI:** "Just a note to let you know that SA is alive and well in Milwaukee. It seems that an initial growth spurt has leveled off for us and we've certainly had our share of individual struggles. But we're definitely here for the long haul, have a solid recovery base, and are helping many (especially me!) who suffer from our common disease, and after all is said and done, isn't that the point of it all! Thanks for everything. We couldn't do it alone." **D.B.**

**Cuyahoga Falls, OH:** "By the way, our group (Akron, OH) is growing in membership, and more importantly, recovery week by week. We are now looking at adding a second weekly group. This is great! I am now in my 15th month of sobriety/recovery and feeling very grateful. No more secrets, no more adding toxic shame, no more hiding, no more running. Hello serenity, hello self-worth, hello life!! I thank God for all of you." **J.T.**

**San Angelo, TX:** "San Angelo has SA meetings again. The group has five or six people. Two therapists in town have brochures and are knowledgeable about sex addiction. Hopefully we can keep going. Pray for us . . . I celebrated two years on 11/1/90." **A.A.**

**Idaho Falls, ID:** "Our Tuesday meeting has been going for about two years now. We just recently started the Saturday meeting. We have about 14 to 18 members." **C.D.**

**Erie, PA:** "The Touchstones group has experienced growth in recent months to where we have 12-14 active members and 8-10 in attendance regularly at meetings. We are thankful for a fellowship that provides us each an opportunity to be open, honest, and recovering people as we strive for sobriety and serenity." **C.S.**

**Cliftwood Beach, NJ:** "... I find the bickering hard to believe, like little kids rebelling against their father for unapparent reasons. Enjoy a New Year sober. I'd be overjoyed to leave this world sexually sober with malice towards none." **R.M.**

**Galveston, TX:** "Greetings from the Optional group of Galveston, TX: Eight members (one woman). Five solid regulars." **C.D.**

**Memphis, TN:** "Hello from Memphis home of Elvis. With a bit of effort and much prayer, a small group of us sexaholics have formed a 12-Step SA fellowship. After eight weeks of trying, we now have really started and our group conscience says we should advise you. Larry H. was instrumental in helping form this group and he has been in touch with y'all. We will be adhering very closely to the SA format. We find it well focused. Thank you for that. Currently our meetings last one hour and are attended by two to five persons on a select, qualified basis. This will open up slowly as we gain more sobriety and definition to our fledgling group." **T.V.**

**Asheville, NC:** "After three and one-half years of waiting, surrendering, praying, and driving *long* distances to other cities for meetings, the Asheville, NC has grown suddenly and quickly. Our first meeting was this past June. God provided a miracle that evening in that an SA recovering member from **California** with 18 months sobriety just happened to be passing through town that evening. He shared his story at a speaker meeting. Since then we have grown to a meeting with average attendance of eight and lately at times ten. Lengths of sobriety are beginning to stretch into two months or more for some of our newcomers. We are beginning to look at the need for other meetings during the week. Several folk are driving long distances, one an hour and one-half trip one-way, to the meeting. I am grateful for the phone network through SA Central Office so that those of us who travel and who don't have meetings available can stay in touch with others. Thanks for the many prayers and words of loving wisdom from so many throughout the larger SA community for our work in **Asheville**. God bless." **W.S.**

## GROUP CHANGES AFFILIATION

[The following is from a letter dated January 21, 1991 from the **Boulder, CO** Monday Nite Meeting. They expressed the wish that "any or all of this letter be published in *Essay*."]

"Our meeting has been deliberating for the past three months whether to continue its affiliation with Sexaholics Anonymous, or whether to change to one which is more like the kind of recovery which we have found through our experiences with the 12 Step, 12 Tradition process. . . . We realized that we needed to 'accept the things which we cannot change' and gradually saw that our individual recoveries could better be served by affiliating with a fellowship which is more like what our beliefs have become over the years. . . . we determined that we were most like Sex Addict Anonymous. . . . 75% voted in favor of the change, 8% against, and 17% abstained. . . this is being viewed as the 'conscience' of the group. . . . We hereby give notice of withdrawing our affiliation with Sexaholics Anonymous. . . ."

## FEEDBACK CORNER

[A member in Germany shares his concerns about length of sobriety required for voting in SA business meetings.]

"I felt the hurt of not being allowed to vote when I was sober for less than 30 days. . . . The 30-day rule should be read in this way before any votes are made:

'Only those members may vote who are sexually sober for 30 days or more, according to the definition of SA. We understand that some members feel hurt by this. We ask those members with less than 30 days of sobriety to understand that our common welfare comes first, and before the welfare of the individual.'

"We should act with understanding and love for those members who are sober for less than 30 days. They need it; maybe they need it more than we do. And we should explain the reason. This will decrease the amount of anger and resentment during business meetings (at least I hope so)."  
**Reinhold**

## MEMBER NEWS

### There Are No Specific Guarantees

If we surrender, truly surrender, our will and our lives to the care of God as we understand Him, there are no specific guarantees. True surrender is unconditional—not dependent upon any particular outcome. For example, if I surrender in order to save my marriage and my marriage fails, do I then withdraw? If I surrender sexual fantasy and acting upon that fantasy in order to achieve a joyous and free “sexual life” or the perfect relationship, I have not surrendered unconditionally. I have a reservation—my own quietly held reservation that someday, just someday, I’ll be able to truly enjoy lust.

I can no longer contract with God as I tried to do as a child. “If I am good and do thus and such, God (of my childish understanding) will reward me in the manner that *I* choose.” My addiction flourished under the influence of my repeated attempts at self-reward when I thought that the God of my childhood should, but did not, reward me.

Are there any guarantees? Only one. If I surrender and attend to the Twelve Steps, I shall have a spiritual awakening as *the* result. The Twelfth Step states that my awakening is “the,” not “a,” result of the Steps.

Some of us have come to the Fellowship to save our marriage, job, or home, or to avoid institutions, jails, or death. I was told that I must stop doing what I was doing if I was to trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. My pain and fear were great enough, and I could not conceive of or afford any alternative. I stayed and tried to stop. I listened (sometimes) and asked myself, “What happened to his job?”; “Did it ‘work’ for him?”; “How is her marriage working?”; and so forth.

A troubled enquirer, I sought specific guarantees and the proper method of contracting with God for them. I knew what I willed for myself; my question was how to attain it. Separated from others by my differing attitudes towards personal will and God’s will, I was tenuously connected by my common experience with addiction to people who had something I wanted. I heard that how it was for me was how it had been for them.

In time, by the Grace of God, came that quiet moment when I ran out of questions and first believed in the possibility of a new way of life. A

quiet moment of Connection grew out of others sharing their experiences, strengths, and hopes at the simplest level. When I heard what had happened to others and saw how they were today, a spark of light penetrated my addiction's defenses—when least expected and for the least predictable reason. No promotion, no specific guarantees, no contracts, just the promise of a spiritual awakening to a new way of life. **John A., Baltimore**

“Coming out of my SA meeting last night, I felt like I never wanted to go back. I get this feeling again and again there. A spirit of temporizing, playing around with lust and masturbation. ‘But not to orgasm, mind you.’ Of course . . . . (Yet there was one in the meeting who set his clock back for going to the kind of flesh flurry he used to go to!) This group is a closed system, all to itself. I feel like I have to get inside that closed system. And I so want to be one with a fellowship! I picked up the spirit of that meeting in a dream last night and found myself with the same attitude: ‘It’ll be okay if I have sex or ejaculate; I’m only doing it in a dream.’ I don’t want to go back to that meeting because I have to be one in spirit with a group, and I don’t want to be one with that spirit! If I put all of my own feelings (call them prejudices) down, if I let my barriers down to be part of instead of apart from, I’ll be infected with the spirit that’s loose there. What can I do?” **Anonymous**

**Lansing, KS:** “I am a 40 year old male who is incarcerated because of indecent liberties with a child. I knew I was sick but could not find help. When she told, I was forced to find help as I had so long needed. I have thanked her often for telling. I found SA in **Kansas City** and the first night after hearing the Problem and the Solution, I knew that’s where I belonged. I found a therapist who was well acquainted with sexual addiction and one of the first things she asked was if I had heard of SA. I was proud to tell her I was already going three nights each week. She told me it was an excellent group. I was driving 55 miles one way, but it was well worth it. I have been sexually sober since December 4, 1989 and am proud of it. Masturbation was a big addiction that I didn’t think could ever be stopped, but through SA I have been happily away from it. I know my complete honesty with myself and others has been a great help but I also know my Higher Power has carried me through the tough times. Thank you so much



for being there in KC. I can't believe the total honesty of the people involved and I sure miss them." **J.D.**

**Kailua Kona, HI:** "Aloha. I have found an entrance into a vast part of myself through the fellowship of SA. Problems that have been hidden behind shame and denial are not as impossible as I thought to deal with, with the help from SA. There are only a few of us over here, and they all left some 50 days ago. But with a few books and meeting package I have stayed with the help from my sponsor in California and friends at his meetings sexually sober for 67 days to date *by God's Grace!* I never thought I could do it and now I *know* I can't. Surrendering the first thought and exercising my free will to guide my following thoughts has taken some of the wind out of the sails of my addictions. Alone on a rock in the middle of the Pacific. Recovery is working my life." **B.C.**

**Albuquerque, NM:** "Just a thank you for my recovery and my pregnancy conceived in *sobriety* with my *husband!* This would have never happened without SA." **B.K.**

**Bemidji, MN:** "I'm writing for several reasons. I am thankful and in awe of my sobriety date which dates to June 7, 1990. I am in awe, I say, and grateful because my reality seemed to be that acting out and lustful thinking seemed to be as inevitable as night following day. Today, thanks to the program *with* its necessary and fruitful sobriety statement and the fellowship, my prayers do lead to reprieve by the power of God." **D.W.**

**Tarime, Africa:** "The three months leave in Portland area attending three meetings per week and the Baltimore conference seemed to have brought about a spiritual awakening, for which I am very grateful after four years nine months in the program. Thank you all who have contributed to this awakening." **J.H.**

**Wichita, KS:** "When I came into SA, I needed the tough definition. I still do. It agrees with my values and beliefs. I was a homosexual ever since I can remember, and I hated it. It opposed my standards. My life was unmanageable. I started seeking help at the age of 19 years. I'm 40 now. I need SA. They say there will always be SA. Thank God. They say it'll all work out. . . . I'm getting wonderful results from the program." **M.B.**



**San Francisco, CA:** "I have been a member of [another sex addiction fellowship] for awhile and have had a hard time following the program. For the last year I have been reading my copy of the *Sexaholics Anonymous* 'white book' and I've finally realized what was missing from my program! The definition of my bottom-line behavior. I need the fellowship of SA to help me stop acting out on all sexual lust levels." **E.**

**Lansing, KS:** "Thank you very much to the SA office in CA and for our prison coordinator. Together you have put me back on the right path. You all have done a great job. I will take the knowledge I have learned on with me as I go on parole in Iowa. I am looking forward to joining a group in Iowa. Thank you again for all you are doing for people who need help in this day and age. I wish I knew of the organization while I was on the streets before coming to prison. God bless you all." **M.T.**

**Notre Dame, IN:** "Through the grace of God, the program, and the fellowship in program, I am currently sober eight days. What a miracle." **S.R.**

**Hudson, NY:** "I have been a member of the SA fellowship since January 12, 1989. I am a pornography addict and, with the exception of a couple slips over the last nearly two years, am able to say that God, through SA, is giving me victory one day at a time! This has been a life saver for me. As a minister in an evangelical church, I stood to lose everything if I didn't get help. I owe my all to God and His provision to sex addicts like me through SA." **P.J.**

**Lafayette, OR:** "Last week I celebrated two years of sobriety and told the group that I don't feel 'better than' anyone else in the group. I'm just as powerless and defenseless against lust (of myself) today as I was the first day I walked into the program. I'm in the program not because I'm achieving sobriety, but because I am powerless. Sometimes I feel totally and absolutely powerless (to the extreme) because, in fact, I am powerless. When I came into the program my problem was not my mother, father, sister, brother, etc. It was 'me'; and that is still true today. And so it goes...It leads me to share my favorable reactions to some of the things you said in the last ESSAY and the two separate sheets 'Where Do We Go from Here?' After what I said above, I've come to believe after two years

of sobriety that a *Power greater than myself* returns me to Sanity. . . .”  
**D.L.**

**Cottonwood, ID:** “I have read the October edition of ESSAY and it is wonderful to hear of the successful recovery from sexually self-destructive thinking and behavior through the fellowship of Sexaholics Anonymous. Praise God! It was my sexually ‘stinking’ thinking and behavior in which I acted upon, thus I became a perpetrator to my victim. I want this fellowship to understand the real trauma I have inflicted to my victim’s life and the seriousness in which I pursue to repair the damage. Fornication, adultery, drunkenness, and other so called pleasures, which God condemns, was a burden and stunted my ability to be obedient to the laws of God and man. My heart was convicted until I honestly confessed all the garbage in me to God through Jesus Christ, and the members of the fellowship in SA. I now have the responsibility to carry the message to others who suffer and show a willingness for change and continuous recovery. The victory is ours if we want it badly enough and are willing to change.” **T.B.**

**Pleasant Grove, UT:** “I have been struggling with my addiction for years now. My addiction led me to abusing my daughter and I spent two years in prison. I have had nine months once before. I am currently experiencing some serenity and am the chairman of a Saturday morning group. There is not a lot of sobriety in Utah county. Sale Lake County has a large group and a lot of support. I like to keep in touch with them and go to their Monday newcomer’s group about once a month. I pray that my higher power will guide me and I know that he will as I learn step by step through all twelve to surrender. I have a control problem and am wanting to learn to share the responsibilities with the whole group. I have been reading in the SA book the guidelines and we are not following them exactly. I would like any additional guidance you can give me. We do have another group on Wednesdays, but sobriety seems to come hard in a little valley which seems so afraid of all addictions. I don’t feel that I am just rationalizing, but it is easy for me, as it is with all of us, to do.” **D.G.**

**Atlanta, GA:** “I just had my fourth birthday November 19!” **C.D.**

**North Hollywood, CA:** "Recently I celebrated two years of sobriety. So much has changed in my life over those two years. Perhaps the greatest gift I now enjoy is a wonderful sense of well-being. With an attitude of gratitude I will continue to do what is necessary to preserve this fragile gift of sobriety.

"One essential element in leading a sober life is a regular attendance at meetings. I go to meetings because I must, not because I want to meet people or because I have nothing better to do. Often I have to sacrifice other activities and interests in order to get to a meeting and therefore I want that hour and a half to be as productive as possible.

"I may not be alone if I say that quite often I leave a meeting feeling angered and frustrated at the lack of sobriety, denial and avoidance of the core issues. The meeting guidelines on pages 188 and 189 of *Sexaholics Anonymous* if fully implemented would keep us on the right track, namely, honesty, openness and surrender of lust in all its forms.

"So often at meetings we hear about work, home, car, spouse, children, employers, finances etc., etc., and lust is recognized only as an afterthought. I'm at that meeting solely because of my problem with lust and I am empowered when I surrender it. The power of my addiction is manifest in its ability to make other issues seem more important thereby keeping the primary problem hidden. We are only as sick as our secrets. A secret lust is a powerful poisonous force. 'But as soon as I bring it to the light, exposing it to another recovering sexaholic, the power it has over me is broken. Light kills lust.' (p. 160) If we must allude to people, places and things then let us do so briefly, focusing on uncovering and surrendering lust, all the lust and only the lust. Save the other issues plus the philosophies, theories and strategies for therapy.

"I always feel a sense of relief when I hear my own experiences and struggles coming from another's mouth. When it comes to my turn to share I might refer to their comments and my personal identification with them. For the most part this is how we respond to the sharing of another. But what happens when a newcomer or chronic slipper with no sobriety, who cannot tell fact from fiction or reality from fantasy is speaking with the addiction's voice and because his denial system is so firmly in place he thinks he is 'working the program'? There was a time when the line between right and wrong, health and sickness, addiction and sobriety was so blurred that I was never sure which side I was on. Unfortunately my best intentions were of little help. Only when my skewed thoughts, beliefs

and attitudes were challenged over and over again did the clouds begin to clear and some semblance of reality begin to take shape. So often at meetings a person may be way out in left field all the while thinking they are on base and the group offers no direction. I would suggest that when we witness someone straying away that we respond to their blindness but do so using 'I' statements. 'I once thought as you do but then later I discovered that...' So many of our brothers and sisters stay lost because nobody takes the initiative to retrieve them. Simply saying 'keep coming back' can be an affirmation of a person's addiction and does him more harm than good.

"Might I also refer newcomers and chronic slippers to page 185 of our big book: 'Without sobriety we have nothing to offer anyone.' By all means share your lusts but be conscious of the time. Be short on talking and long on listening.

"I hope and pray that despite our growing pains, SA will continue to move forward. I feel optimistic about our future. Our success will depend on our implementation of the Twelve Steps on a daily basis and the implementation of the first three each time we are assailed by lust. We are besieged by a powerful, malevolent oppressor, lust, which seeks only our destruction, spiritual, emotional and physical. But there is One whose power infinitely exceeds the power of lust. May we turn to Him as children in our powerlessness and unmanageability." **J.O.**

**Canberra, Australia:** "I came to SA in desperation some seven months ago a confused and lonely person. Through SA, I have received gifts I did not know existed. For the first time in years I've felt child-like joy. I speak of something I forgot from childhood, something that defies description, something that makes the late-night lights of a distant off-track city shimmer with eternity. Thank you." **S.O.**

## **CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE**

"When I was first introduced to SA several years ago, our group followed the literature, procedure, and sobriety definition as it stands in the white manual. I followed that wholeheartedly and, at times, even painfully. The result has been a long time sobriety.

"I now live in an area where there has been for some time an unprecedented opposition to our sobriety definition as I learned it and by adherence to which I have maintained my sobriety in communion with the other SA units throughout our country.

"I have become aware and alarmed that some of the basic handouts printed in the name of our SA area are at variance with the standard national copyrighted material and are indeed adulterated documents.

"For some time there has been belligerence and militant opposition to our original sobriety definition as it stands using the machinery of the local intergroup and group representatives sympathetic to their views, they were able to alter the definition by adding the phraseology 'committed relationship' after the word *marriage*.

"This would allow for liaisons not envisioned by the original definition and would ascribe authentic sobriety to a cohabitation of either orientation and elevate that cohabitation to be on the same par with marriage.

"This then became explained as the 'area sobriety definition' with much disparagement heaped upon the national definition as: 'unenlightened, medieval, insensitive, too Catholic and homophobic.'

"Under such a perception, the area intergroup went a step further and, on its own, subtracted the word *marriage* from our standard definition and replaced that word with *committed relationship*. In the ensuing mutual monologues, marriage was severely criticized and denigrated and included as only one option and variable under the umbrella of 'committed relationship.'

"When such variance was made known to Central Office, the office made it quite clear to the group it had no authority to alter the literature and definition. Countering Central Office's pleas with rebuff, the local group representatives began a battle to extend its views all across the nation, by means of an 'International Group Conscience.'

"Members of this IGC assemble without Central Office approval and apparently support the adulterated sobriety definition espoused by one area of our country. It appears that these representatives thoroughly believe that they represent the views of every member of their constituency. I believe that they are much mistaken and deluded and have embarked upon endeavors that violate a very cardinal principle of SA that bids us not to engage in public controversies or political maneuverings.

"This controversy takes on the proportions of a malestrom or hurricane when the few intergroup representatives arrogate to themselves the power

to withhold contributions collected in the local meetings from being forwarded to Simi Valley. The portion normally sent to Central Office is now channelled to the ersatz 'International Group Conscience' which is bent upon bulldozing all of us into their camp and browbeat the rest of us who will not go along with that.

"Meanwhile, the controversy rages behind the scenes. Many of us who desperately need the fellowship for our daily survival find ourselves in an SA that little resembles the one we once joined and within whose embrace we grew into meaningful sobriety. Fellowship becomes fragmented; trust disintegrates. Loyalty to the original principles of SA now brings a subtle ostracism which seems to me to be the very opposite of what an SA group provides its members in support, encouragement, acceptance, and real sobriety.

"Sooner or later, the inevitable calamitous cataclysm of reformation or confederate secession will come. Each side struggles to maintain either ideals or accommodations and as in their historical prototypes unbreachable battlements rise to divide us. Emotional scars long out live both battles and surrenders and all become bruised.

"Present tension syphons strength and energy which would be better spent in our efforts to assist each other and to stay sober....

"I prefer not to send my real name and location because of the repercussions it will bring, but I hope you print it to encourage those of us who do not go along with this rebellion." **Anonymous**

## **S-ANON INTERNATIONAL FAMILY GROUPS**

“It was brought to our attention that in the last issue of ESSAY there was a letter from the S-Anon group in Oklahoma City stating that, ‘to our knowledge, S-Anon International Family Groups has no publication of its own.’ For future inquiries and information, we want to let you know that we do have a newsletter. It is published quarterly and the subscription price is \$10.00 per year. It is available through our office at S-Anon International Family Groups, P.O. Box 5117, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413. This is currently our best method of keeping S-Anon members involved and aware of what is going on in S-Anon.”

**European SA Convention.** The tenth European SA convention was held **October 19-21** in Germany. Many of the attendees signed the beautiful card that was sent to the States (enclosed). Thank you, all our brothers and sisters in Europe, for this blessed gesture of love and solidarity! Sorry we couldn't reproduce your gift in color.

**Invitation to the German SA Convention.** Dear SA Freinds . . . we are happy to be able to invite you to the German-speaking SA Convention on **April 12-14, 1991** in the Youth Hostel in Worms. The Youth Hostel is in downtown Worms, opposite the Cathedral. Each room has a bathroom. The cost for the whole weekend (bed and 3 meals) is DM 62 (approx. \$42). The main meals can be vegetarian, if desired. We regret that there are no price reductions for friends who cannot stay the whole weekend. SA Group Freiburg, PLK 172642 E, 7800 Freiburg. [The announced reservation cut-off date was Feb. 28, after which reservations could not be guaranteed.]

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