
Essay

December 1991

Post Office Box 300
Simi Valley, California 93062

Thank You

I would like to thank the members of SA for the opportunity I had recently to bridge the gap between the membership at large and the Central Office. I was invited to attend the conference held in Anaheim, CA on October 4, 5 and 6 and not only met some of the people I have talked to personally in the past but, during the one-on-one conversations, I was able to learn so much that will help me deal with future inquiries to the Central Office. Just being there helped me to accomplish a lot of Central Office "work"—finding members who had never thought to notify the Central Office about being added to the mailing list and answering questions from members who had been meaning to call, but somehow had never found the time.

To those members I spoke to personally, I want to thank each and every one of you for helping to instill within me a renewed dedication to the job I hold. I look forward to being able to attend future conferences and meet more of you. Again, thank you.—**Pat, Central Office**

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

January 10, 11 and 12, 1992 — San Diego International Convention. "Carry the MesSage." The San Diego Marriott Mission Valley. Conference cost: \$65.00 after December 1, 1991. Mail checks to: Carry the MesSage Conference, P.O. Box 881101, San Diego, CA 92108.

April 3, 4 and 5, 1992 — Sixth Annual Tucson SA/S-Anon Couples Retreat. Contact: Burt S. and Jennifer S., 3052 Palomino Park Loop, Tucson, AZ 85712. (602) 326-4980.

May 2, 3 and 4, 1992 — Wichita Retreat. Host: Wichita SA.

May 15, 16 and 17, 1992 — European SA/S-Anon Convention. Place: Maria-Laach, Germany, between Cologne (Koln) and Aachen. Call Helmut at 011-49-2361-33911.

July 1992 — Vancouver International Convention.

October 1, 2 and 3, 1992 — Wichita, Kansas Retreat. Spiritual Life Center in Wichita, KS. Host: Tulsa SA.

NOTES FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

Renewed Appeal for Donations

The Central Office gratefully acknowledges the contributions recently received in answer to our request for additional financial support. It seems self-evident that, as a fellowship, SA **must** maintain a central clearinghouse in order to make it possible for sexaholics who still suffer to make contact with local members of the fellowship. [In addition, your financial support allows us to continue the task of reorganizing the service structure of SA, as mandated at the July 1991 conference.] While many members volunteer their time and effort in service work directed at these activities, there **are** expenses connected with maintaining any office, and we are no exception. The Central Office depends on support from all SA groups, and if your group has not recently made a contribution to SA 12th Step work at the national/international level, we again ask that you consider doing so in the near future. Your contributions make this work possible. [See *Box 300* for committee reports.]

Please Provide Group Contact

...speaking of making contact, we would like to be sure that we have a contact name and telephone number for every group, no matter how small, to pass on to inquirers. If you are not absolutely sure that your group is listed, please contact the SA Central Office.

Essay Available Free of Charge

If you know of any members of the fellowship that are not presently receiving *Essay*, who would like to be added to the mailing list, please ask them to contact the Central Office. "There are no dues or fees..." The *Essay* is available without charge to anyone who requests it.

New SA Publication

Discovering the Principles, Our Growing Experience with the Traditions, is our latest piece of SA literature, and will be available from the Central Office for \$2.00. From the Foreword: "These articles reflect the growing experience of Sexaholics Anonymous in matters bearing on the principles and Traditions on which our fellowship is based." Included are:

- *Group Conscience Meetings and the Twelve Traditions*
- *What's a Group Conscience?*
- *Meeting Quality and Use of Non-SA Literature*
- *Publicity and the Twelfth Step*
- *Some Additional Questions and Thoughts on SA and the Media*
- *What Can We Say to Newcomers in Relationships?*

Roy's Germany Tapes

In 1985 and 1988 Roy K. was asked to give seminars at the Walther Lechler Psychosomatic Klinik in Bad Herrenalb, Germany. He told his story and discussed the program of recovery to mixed audiences of persons in various Twelve Step programs, including SA. From time to time, SA members have asked if these tapes would ever be made available, as they are in Europe. After testing the tapes out on the Literature Committee and other members, it was decided to make them available to any who might want them. The original talks, including the German translation, are now available from the Central Office. Each set of six cassettes (six for 1985 and six for 1988) is nine (\$9) dollars. An edited transcript of the English only should also be available later this year.

THIRD QUARTER 1991

Correspondence and Letters Received by Central Office (July through September 1991)

	<i>Calls</i>	<i>Letters</i>
July	311	477
August	340	282
September	310	388
<i>Total Qtr.</i>	961	1148

Literature Disbursed

<i>Sexaholics Anonymous</i>	1161
<i>Recovery Continues</i>	281
<i>Member Stories—1989</i>	207
Meeting Guides	31
Brochures	3864
Roy's 85/88 Seminar Tapes	18

Donations

Individual	\$494.02
Group	\$6,435.53
Total Donations	\$6,929.55

Correction of Second Quarter Donations

Individual	\$1,831.91
Group	\$4,390.27
Total Donations	\$6,222.24

FEEDBACK CORNER

Who's Keeping Us Sober?

I'd like to say something about SA birthday celebrations. I think we're carrying it too far, going the wrong way with it. For example, in a recent regional SA convention, applause, whoops and whistles weren't enough, there were *horns*. Razzmatazz. Is it a popularity contest? Who registers highest on the applause meter? Is this putting principles before personalities or personality before principle? What are we doing? Giving glory to a person for staying sober? Did they really do it? If they did, what am I doing agonizing over steps and God and surrender? What am I doing in SA? I'm still sober today—by the grace of God—and am deeply grateful for every day, month, and year others have. "By all means, let's keep our laughter and joy." But something feels wrong about all this, for us in SA, I mean. Also, hugging is enough of a problem for some of us, why make it standard SA birthday ritual? I've been in meetings where the hugger had years less sobriety than the one getting the chip or no sobriety at all! What kind of sickness is this? Plus, this seems to put the person giving the chip in a superior position! On the constructive side, what would happen if we came up with something more suitable for our own SA situation? What if we acted in truth and used birthdays as an opportunity to somehow thank *God* together for that person's sobriety? What if, instead of giving in to the "star" system or personal glorification, we tried to make it more of a spiritual thing?

More Representation, Please

"I believe it would be quite helpful in there were a section in the *Essay* where delegates from the various parts of the country would give us a short statement about what is going on in their area. I believe it will be very important for the *Essay* to be more representative of the country at large."

GROUP NEWS

Welcome to the Following New Groups

Bowling Green, KY
Chambersburg, PA
Crescent City, CA
Hammond, IN
Midlothian, IL
Pocatello, ID
Salmon, ID
Wrightsville, AR

Ed C.
Michael C.
Steve H.
Jerry S.
Nicholas K.
Dan M.
Tony A.
Walter O.

Albuquerque, NM: "SA is alive in Albuquerque with four meetings per week and about 20 to 30 participating members. A few members have more than two years and several have a year of sexual sobriety. In summer 1990, the four groups and particularly newcomers to all the groups found they did not know who attended the other meetings, where collections went, who ran the phone line, P.O. Box or Central Office contacts. This led to the formation of an intergroup to facilitate communication, to handle collections and pay phone, post office, rent, literature and other expenses, give our local program more organization, and do 12-step or other work. Traditionally this had been done by the few long term members who did the work mainly because no one else would.

"We established meeting format for intergroup, set up tax exempt status and a bank account, elected an intergroup treasurer and literature person and began discussing issues and topics relevant to SA and the traditions. Intergroup officers were to serve for one year and have ideally at least one year of sobriety. My year as intergroup representative is now ending and a new rep is taking my place.

"We have chosen to have our phone line operated as a voice mail system through the phone company so we have a listing in the phone book. This also solves the problem of inappropriate calls coming to member homes. This works fairly well except sometimes we have problems returning calls or responding to the person answering the phone. Anonymity is taken very seriously here. We have no open meetings by group conscience and prefer to do some minor screening before giving out meeting times or locations. Although some people may be scared off by our machine or chosen

procedure, I believe those who really want the program will find us. When starting the service we anticipated about 1 to 3 calls a day but we started receiving 10 or more per day, mostly prank calls. This added expense may force us to close the line. How have other groups handled phone lines and prank calls? Any information on how to reach out to those who need our program without bringing abuse upon ourselves would help our personal program.

"Finally, I'm going to be moving to Northern California and will no longer be an Albuquerque contact person. A new contact will be provided to Central Office soon. God bless our program. It saved my life." J.C.

Caspar, WY: "Our meetings are still small. Usually it's me and someone else. I've been in contact with people around the country, but probably not as much as I should be. We've started to have monthly business meetings, too. It feels good to be sober, and the program works if I put it into action. Thanks again." D.W.

Asheville, NC: "We are all fairly young in recovery, our SA fellowship being just over one year old. And we remain small with just a half dozen regular participants. I would like to add my name to the list of contact people for Asheville. I have been in recovery myself for 9 months and currently serve as treasurer for our group. I appreciate the work you've done and continue to do as well as the support and encouragement I've found in and for my recovery." J.M.

Metuchen, NJ: "This Sunday SA group is an off-shoot from the Wednesday Metuchen group. The Wednesday group has grown to an average of 17 to 20 people while the Sunday group is already averaging 6 to 8 people. A lot of progress in a short time. We started the Sunday group in the middle of March 1991. We are firmly pro-California and Roy K. on the sobriety definition issue. We have been struggling with our sobriety as a group. For myself, I am still counting sobriety in days but I hope, and work towards, the great sobriety I read about from other members in *Essay*. I thank God for discovering SA and for the good people in the fellowship. God Bless." J.K.

Pittsburgh, PA: "When the SA manual was revised we got permission from Central Office to copy the section from the old SA White Book "Characteristics of the Addict" that was left out. We put the pamphlet in the front of every SA manual we sell. We have found this article to be very valuable and don't want the strength it has to get lost. We think it has a lot to give to one's recovery. Our seven groups in the Pittsburgh Tri-State Intergroups are working, thanks to God, our Higher Power." **B.W.**

Rhode Island: "Enclosed please find a contribution from the RI Monday SA group. Currently, meeting attendance ranges from 5 to 9. Several members come from around 50 miles away to attend meetings. In our meetings we read from the White Book. During the reading one person prepares three or four questions based on thoughts that come to him. Then we take ten minutes to write down our answers. During the discussion time those who wish to share their answers with the group. After the meeting those who can, go for coffee." **D.C.**

Florence, AL: "The Florence, Alabama chapter of SA has been in existence for only about eight months and we already have about ten members. We have just had an election of new officers. We strongly believe in the current sobriety definition because it works." **V.W.**

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: "We are delayed in answering our group correspondence. We walk slowly, but we're united in our purpose. Our unique group in Rio de Janeiro has six assiduous members. Others come a couple of times and disappear. Our recovery is slow, but we're united, having always in our mind the desire to be well. We are full of hope. Sometimes we become discouraged, but this emotion disappears in moments. We need your assistance!

"About literature: *Sexaholism, Problem and Solution* is practically translated and typewritten. This small part of the SA program is our Bible, and the Higher Power our unfailing Protector, provides for us continuously in our intent. Even with a lot of difficulties, we are happy. Those who stay practicing the SA program feel better than before. We want to share this with you. Sobriety is our direction and our desire, but it is not easy. Is it possible to send us some brochures talking about sobriety and how to reach it? This will help us. It's very difficult for us to stay sober. Please give us a

help as you always did. Next 27th we will have our 2nd birthday. 27 September 1989 we had our first meeting . . !" G.S.

Laguna, CA: "We have about 7 to 8 regular members at the Laguna Niguel group. The meeting includes a lot of honesty, openness and caring. Much learning and recovery is taking place. We send our best to all involved in the SA program of recovery." R.F.

Syracuse, NY: "Thank you for being there to serve us in our quest for sobriety in the lust/sex area. And thank you for sticking to the principles that enable us to have true sobriety in the strong, traditional sense of the term. Sure, many of us in SA in Syracuse and Binghamton, NY are struggling, but we know what we're struggling to attain, and in the process we are being gifted with a fellowship that provides solid intimacy, a kind of love that is fulfilling and supportive. May we reach ever more people, to share with them what we've received." A.

Barrington, IL: "Thanks for the last order received. We are selling literature and books as fast as we get them. By God's grace, we are surrendering lust and gaining sobriety." **Wed. Night Group**

Redlands, CA: "Our group continues to attract newcomers. It's the older members who don't attend regularly. I can't speak for anyone else, but it's easier for me to go to a meeting where I hear stories of recovery. I have heard it shared a couple of times out here that 'there is no victory over lust.' Well, I don't buy that for a second. I'll say it now just as I've said it many times before—I honestly and truly believe that God and the fellowship can bring about real miracles in our lives. I'll end with my favorite slogan, borne from 3½ years of SA sobriety 'one day at a time—victory over lust!'" S.M.

St. Louis, MO: "In April of 1990, this Wednesday noon group meeting almost died. Only two of us were attending and the church in which we met was locked most Wednesdays. We decided to move the meeting and now we have 10 to 12 every week with about 20 to 25 that come when they can. I received my one year coin in this meeting and hope I will receive my second year coin there. I'm very grateful to have SA in my life. I'm going through a divorce and am glad to have friends in the program to talk to. This too will pass. Thanks for being there." M.M.

"The St. Louis Saturday meeting is 15 to 20 strong. We thank you for all you do. We have one or two newcomers (sometimes four) a week. We are sending a one-time contribution as requested in the *Essay*." **R.H.**

Long Island, NY: "SA is growing on LI. We have 3 strong meetings in Seaford on Monday, Thursday evenings and Saturday morning. Over the last two months, many newcomers have been showing up, bringing our meetings to about 20 members each. Though sobriety is difficult, there are some true miracles here, thanks to the grace of God and a strong fellowship. We are beginning to organize a Long Island intergroup and look forward to the challenges of the future. The program works when we work it." **J.D.**

Davenport, IA: "Our lives have been transformed and immensely enriched by the shared experience and wisdom in the SA 'Big Book.' Thanks to those who had the courage to go forward and point the way out to us. We are trying to support our recoveries by carrying the message to others as much as possible—the more we give it away, the more we seem to gain in healing, recovery and grace. God has brought wonderful people into our lives through the wounds of our sexaholism. His ways are mysterious indeed! Thanks to all of you in the Central Office for the service you provide." **G.L.**

MEMBER NEWS

A Contract For Sobriety

Shortly after I entered SA in August, 1988, some fellow sexaholics mentioned making a 'daily contract' for sobriety. During the first few weeks of sobriety, I hardly needed a contract. I was so scared and miserable that sobriety was my only option. My second marriage was near an end, my acting out would cause me to quickly lose my job and I simply felt hopeless. When the counselor suggested going to SA, simultaneous waves of cold dread and relief flooded over me.

As I learned that my compulsive fantasizing, masturbation, voyeurism, use of pornography, adulterous affairs and continuous sexualizing were a disease shared with others, I rapidly began to feel better. I vividly remember 'surrendering' over and over again to my group, wife and my very new sense of a Higher Power. The 'old' SA Big Book was read and re-read. Using one new paragraph per day of 'Overcoming Lust and Temptation' kept me moving along and developed some healthy habits of surrender and casting out lust.

However, I read nothing about a contract for sobriety. I asked a sexaholic with good recovery what he did. He replied that he read a page or two each day in the AA and SA literature and made a contract with his Higher Power for one more day of sobriety. The next day I began to develop what has become my daily contract.

After experimenting with times, I settled on doing my contract alone and out-loud either in the shower or sitting on a chair outside the front door. Occasionally I forget and have to do it in the car while driving to work or even sitting in my office. Over the last three years the contract has evolved, although the basic pattern has been the same.

I start by saying 'God, I'm checking in.' Then I say the Serenity Prayer and the first three Steps. Next comes the Third Step prayer from page 63 in the AA Big Book. Often I find myself repeating a line from that prayer until I really mean it—'relieve me from the bondage of self' still loosens my chest every morning.

After that comes the actual contract: 'I commit myself to one more day of sexual sobriety. No sex with myself. No sex with any partner other than my wife from now until _____. ' Here I always name the next day. This

reminds me out loud that my sobriety is a gift only for today. Tomorrow will take care of itself.

My contract ends with three explicit acts of surrender. They have changed over the years from a detailed list of ways I am powerless to broad categories of my disease. First, I surrender my right to lust in any form and ask God to remove lust from me today in depth. After admitting I am powerless over people-pleasing, I then surrender my desire to control the behavior or attitudes of others. Finally, I admit I am powerless over women in all their forms and I surrender to God my right to have contact with women today.

My contract for sobriety ends with the Seventh Step prayer from the AA Big Book. It takes only five minutes or less to do it. Having had days when I forget to do my contract, I can say it is the most important five minutes for my sobriety and recovery each day. This conscious contact with God sets the tone for one more good day—a gift for which I am never sufficiently grateful. **Anonymous**

How It's Working

“Some will be willing to term themselves ‘problem drinkers,’ but cannot endure the suggestion that they are in fact mentally ill. They are abetted in this blindness by a world which does not understand the difference between sane drinking and alcoholism.” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 33.)

I believe these words apply more to me, the sexaholic, than to me, the alcoholic. I first heard these words in AA—I realized I was an alcoholic before I knew I was a sexaholic—but in sobriety I found it difficult to believe I was mentally ill. I had to clean up my act all right, but *mentally ill*?

Fortunately, I was not abetted in my blindness by the world at large. When I was ready to quit drinking, I got the help I needed. Thanks largely to 50 years of AA, the alcohol treatment world knows the difference between a sane drinker and an alcoholic.

Before I could begin to mend my life, I was told, I would have to stop drinking. That was the first step. And no one gave me the false hope that I would ever live to drink safely.

With my sexaholism it was different. At first I was reluctantly willing to admit I was a “problem drinker.” I was fantasizing, using pornography and masturbating. I figured I knew everything there was to know about my

sexuality and it was up to me to sort it out. Maybe I needed therapy. I certainly didn't see there were behaviors I would have to quit.

I was abetted in my blindness by a world that didn't understand the difference between garden variety lusting and sexaholism. And I'm not talking about the world at large. Therapists who had helped me in my recovery from alcoholism told me that "masturbation was just letting off steam." Even my church had stopped preaching against such varieties of "nice lust" as soft porn, sex before marriage, etc. Prostitution was legal where I lived. In fact, the only group that made me think about stopping, and introduced me to the radical idea of sexual sobriety, was Sexaholics Anonymous. And as it turned out, SA proved to be the right medicine for me, too.

I identified with SA when I realized that SA is no more interested in forms of acting out than AA cares what kinds of alcohol we drank. To get well, we have to let it all go. Nothing happens until we quit. Lust is my drug, my first drink. Under the spell of lust, I take myself out of the whole context of what is right and wrong. With lust acting as a narcotic inside me, I can't call myself sober. And if I'm drunk on something that won't show in a blood test—if I've lost control of my natural faculties and instincts—what can I call this if not mental illness?

At SA meetings, I was able to admit I was a sexaholic to others who had admitted it. By introducing ourselves as sexaholics at meetings, we are declaring we have both the problem and the solution. As it says in *Sexaholics Anonymous*, "We were free to see and admit what we really were inside because we were finally free from having to act out what we were" (p. 84). We can talk about our mental illness because we have a solution.

Today I'm over four years sexually sober and I know I still have a long way to go in my recovery. (The power of the addiction only became apparent to me in sobriety.) The SA groups I attend regularly are only two and three years old. We have a long way to go before we can carry our message in a world that doesn't understand the difference between lusting like a gentleman and sexaholism. But we know that all forms of lust are toxic for us. We meet by God's grace and we're there for those who want what we have. We grow by taking one step after another, a day at a time. **L.M.**

Intimacy and Celibacy

“. . . I am a high-bottom alcoholic and a low-bottom drunk sexually sober for 14 months. I am eternally grateful . . . to SA, and to God for my new lease on life. I have received many blessings throughout my life, but my sexual sobriety is the most precious. . . .

“I have read lots of literature on sexual addiction and compulsivity. . . . There is in our SA white book a spirituality and a sense of recovery that I simply don’t find anywhere outside of the AA Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve. . . . SA is unique in that we don’t promise a ‘healthy’ relationship or a ‘normal’ sex life. These may come about as a result of recovery, but they are not the goals of the program. Rather, the message I hear in SA and AA is that my surrender to God must be unconditional. If I set up preconceived notions of what recovery should bring me (no matter how praiseworthy or noble the goals) I am very likely placing conditions on my surrender to God. The more determined I am to achieve my goals, the less open I am to God’s will for me. That is not to say I don’t have goals or that I don’t work hard toward them. But I try not to make *my* goals my primary purpose. I try to remain open to letting them go (an often painful process) if an inconsistent Divine will is revealed to me.

“Just such a letting-go process occurred for me with respect to my goal (condition?) of achieving a ‘healthy’ sex life in my marriage and ‘intimacy’ with my wife. For the first two and one-half months of my current sobriety, we were celibate. Then sex was gradually resumed. At first it seemed right. There was no lust. It flowed out of a mutual affection and tenderness. And I was open with my SA group about it (something that I had not been able to do in my first six months or so in the program). But gradually marital sex became compulsive for me. I didn’t even see this happening at first—I was in denial. I became selfish and manipulative around sex, as if I was somehow entitled to it because I was staying sober. And sexual gratification was, for me, a powerful narcotic that numbed my feelings. So much for intimacy. Sex was safer and easier.

“Fortunately, I was not totally out of touch with God. One evening I recognized that I was very uncomfortable emotionally and spiritually. Rather than watching TV, raiding the ice box, or seducing my wife, I sat alone and quietly reflected. As I searched deeper inside myself, I discovered that I was uncomfortable with the way I was using marital sex. I didn’t like being a selfish and manipulative person, and I didn’t like replacing one drug (lust) with another (marital sex). The next day I began writing an inventory

on my marital sex and intimacy issues. I shared with my sponsor, with another married SA member, and at a few meetings. And I prayed. Finally, I made the decision to discuss with my wife the possibility of another period of celibacy. I thought she would be resistant, but she was actually relieved. I had apparently not been so subtle in my selfishness and manipulation.

"Like the guy in that [passage from another book], I had been trying to merge sexuality and intimacy in my marriage, and all I got was compulsive sex and a resentful wife. I may someday experience a healthy sex life—and I hope I do—but it is not a goal of my program today. It is not a condition on my surrender. Sobriety and spiritual growth are more important. If it is ultimately revealed that God's will is for me to be celibate indefinitely, so be it. I have that option today.

"I continue to learn important lessons. For example, I initially thought this period of celibacy would be the answer to all of my fear of intimacy problems. I had it psychoanalyzed: Sex was an easy way for me to avoid being truly intimate, so once sex was no longer an option, my feelings would gush forth in one great orgy of marital intimacy. I was wrong. Over six months of sexual abstinence and I still struggle almost daily with an intense fear of letting my wife know who I really am inside. It is ironic when I look back on it. I am a sexaholic, which, for me, means that sex can very quickly become a compulsive activity and a powerful narcotic. And for me, being a sexaholic also means I have a severely reduced capacity for true intimacy. Nonetheless, there I was, with only a few months of sexual sobriety, trying to merge sexuality and intimacy in a relationship.

"I have also received two important gifts from this period of celibacy. First, I have now experienced that sex is indeed optional. I sort of believed that before, but deep inside there was always this gnawing suspicion that I was different, that I could not last for any considerable period without some sort of sexual release. But I now see that was only my disease talking. Second, I now have an additional message to carry to newcomers. I used to get very uncomfortable when newcomers questioned the SA sobriety definition because I was still having sex. Now I can speak assuredly from personal experience. . . ." **R.K.** (reprinted from July 1988 *Essay*)

Lansing, KS: "Thank you for your program. It is like the lyrics of the song 'Amazing Grace.' SA is what has saved me, but I wish I could have found it sooner. I molested my first child at the age of 21 and am now 41. Usually it has just been touching but the things I did to my step-daughter are horrendous. I always prayed for God to stop that behavior, but I didn't realize how messed up my whole sexual life was until I found SA and found that I needed to stop it all, not just part.

"I am currently in prison. During my sex offenders treatment program I realized that without SA and my sobriety, I would have still been feeding my mind with lust, fantasy, and masturbation, and wouldn't have been as open to the changes I need to make to better my life. I am looking forward to a lots better life when released. I have told several here about my past and most couldn't believe I have done some of the things I told them. The ones closest to me believe it but also believe the changes that SA has made in my life. I started going to AA and NA meetings here to stay involved with a 12-step program and at first was embarassed to share, but because of my honesty and the shame I have, I have been accepted. Lots of the addictive behaviors are the same in all of us, so I am learning from them and they from me.

"The sex offenders program changed hands. The new company is using the 12 steps but very few of the inmates I have talked to like it. I guess that's because maybe they haven't hit the bottom that I have and still don't want to admit that they have a problem. I guess all I can do is show them the changes it has made in my life and can and will in their lives if they work the program.

"The Serenity Prayer has meant a lot to me while incarcerated. There isn't much here that I have control of except my own actions, attitudes and behaviors, and I am trying to change them daily. Another thought I keep in mind is 'If you ever want to see a rainbow, you have to stand a little rain.' The rain is the pain from the shame of my past and being incarcerated, while the rainbow is the changes I am making towards a better life ahead. Thanks to my Higher Power (God) and my SA program. Also thanks to the Kansas City group whose letters have helped to keep me going. One day at a time."
J.D.

Chula Vista, CA: "A counselor let me borrow his copy of *Sexaholics Anonymous*. It has been a real breakthrough for me in understanding my problem and having real hope for a solution. I am a sexaholic struggling

now 5 years for a 'miracle.' I have stormed heaven and psychologists seeking redemption. . . . Only now, today, with your textbook do I see the broader picture and the journey outline. Thank God for you and for SA."
C.D.

Livingston, MT: "With the help and encouragement of the Livingston and Bozeman SA groups and God's grace and love, I have recently celebrated one year of sexual sobriety. I cannot find words to adequately describe the peace and joy I've experienced in being free from the fear, shame and guilt of my addiction, but those of you who have 'gone that way before' know exactly what I'm feeling. My thanks to all who have paved this road of recovery. I give thanks to God often for SA, my group, my sponsor and the loving fellowship I experience in SA." **D.N.**

Eugene, OR: "I have been a member for 4 years this month. Thank you for your work in supporting the fellowship. Please begin sending me a copy of the *Essay*." **M.W.**

REPLACING DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS WITH HEALTHY ONES

The first recollections of my addiction are from the summer of 1961; I would be nine in August and I had just moved to a new subdivision. The only other boy in the neighborhood was four years older than I, and he was pretty lonely, since his parents both worked. We began to spend time with one another, and since he had a house all to himself, most of our time together was spent there. It was in the privacy of his house one day that he introduced me to pornography. The pictures were hidden in his father's dresser drawer and were very tame by today's standards, but they were very compelling to me; my heart raced and I tingled with excitement. When he suggested that we remove our clothes and smoke cigarettes, the pictures took on a whole new dimension. I was hooked from the first viewing and longed for opportunities to get lost in this exciting new experience.

The escape was a welcome relief from my family life. My father had been given an ultimatum by my mother when I was five to quit drinking or risk losing his family. He had begun to slip into periods of deep depression during which he would retreat to his bedroom and not speak to the family for several days. When he did speak, he would rage at my mother and threaten to leave the family. I developed a sixth sense that allowed me to gauge my father's moods the instant I walked into the house. I escaped from the tension and abuse at home by turning to the pleasure that the pictures provided. My friend soon explained how to masturbate to increase the sensations, and I would spend countless hours for the next 24 years trying to achieve the ultimate sensory experience. I knew instinctively that I needed to keep my discovery to myself and I began to live in a secret world protected by my ability to lie and deceive. My life began to revolve around the adrenaline rush of finding a way to feed this insatiable hunger. I dreamed of possessing the objects of my lust, even though I wasn't quite sure what I would do with them when I had them.

Over the years, I required more explicit pornography to maintain or increase the level of excitement. I connected with friends who had porno stashes of their own, who would take me to the R- and X-rated movies that offered the next plateau of excitement. My slow physical development and shame connected with my body prevented me from dating until college, and the pent-up demand for physical contact with a woman was almost overwhelming. My first objective upon entering a relationship was to progress physically as quickly as possible, and when I began having intercourse at age 21, masturbation was still my constant companion. I used it like a medication, when I was restless and wanted to sleep, when I was tired and

wanted energy, when I was happy and deserved a treat, and when I was sad and needed a lift.

As I got older, I decided that what I wanted in a relationship was the ultimate private stash. She needed to be intelligent and personable but most importantly she had to have the right type of body and enjoy sex as much as I did. I married her in 1980 and threw away my porno stash because I didn't think I needed it anymore. After all, we would have sex whenever I wanted it, wouldn't we? At first, I masturbated only when she was having her period; I needed the release, I told myself. As the frequency of sex in our marriage decreased, I began to fill in the dry periods with masturbation. I looked forward to my private time when I could engage in my addiction at my leisure, usually with the R-rated movies on cable.

My behavior started to change in 1982, when I began my search for God. I became aware of how much time I was wasting with my habit. I tried to change, I had cable removed, I started to go back to church, and I tried to cut back on the masturbation which I still kept secret from my wife. I had limited success. I could go for periods of time, but would always fall back on my old behavior and feel completely defeated by it.

The pieces began to fall into place in the spring of 1984, when by accident, I turned on a TV talk show. I realize now that this accident would be one of the many miracles that my God would work in my life. The program dealt with sexual addiction and featured a man sitting behind a screen describing his addictive behavior. He was telling my story. I felt sick; my worst fears were confirmed; I really was a low-life. I stopped masturbating immediately; I assumed that like the alcoholic, I couldn't indulge in my drug any longer. What I didn't know was that I could not do it alone. The next year was a blur that culminated in separation from my wife and near loss of my job. During the stress of these events I had returned to my drug and was convinced that while I needed to stop, I could not.

I learned about SA in July of 1985 through another miracle of God and stopped masturbating one day at a time on July 31, 1985, one week before my first meeting. I came to my first meeting scared, alone, embarrassed, and knowing what I needed and wanted to stop doing. I was completely in the dark about how to go about it. I shared my story and heard others share theirs. The relief was indescribable, but the temptation to masturbate didn't disappear. I needed the Steps, to pray, and to use the telephone when the urge overcame me. As I withdrew from my habit, I learned that every aspect of my life was influenced by my addiction. Slowly, I began to replace the destructive behaviors with healthy ones, as I became aware of them. My sobriety in this program has allowed me to begin to feel my feelings instead of covering them with my drug.

Today, I am a recovering sexaholic and I am reminded daily that I will be for the rest of my life. My addiction is never far from me. It may appear in the form of the flash of some past sexual encounter, but today I have the option of calling upon my God to take this uncomfortable memory away and connect with Him, the source of my life. I am reminded nearly every time I attend a meeting of where I could be today if He had not made Himself known to me. Through the fellowship of this program, I am learning to relate to others and let down the defenses that served me so well in my childhood but have been so destructive in my adult life. I am so grateful to my brothers and sisters in this program who have shared their lives with me that I might be freed from this terrible bondage.

(Reprinted from *Member Stories—1989*, p. 45. *Member Stories—1989* is available from the Central Office for \$6.00.)

RESULTS OF PRAYER

"As the doubter tries the process of prayer, he should begin to add up the results. If he persists, he will almost surely find more serenity, more tolerance, less fear, and less anger. He will acquire a quiet courage, the kind that isn't tension-ridden. He can look at 'failure' and 'success' for what these really are. Problems and calamity will begin to mean his instruction, instead of his destruction. He will feel freer and saner.

"The idea that he may have been hypnotizing himself by autosuggestion will become laughable. His sense of purpose and of direction will increase. His anxieties will commence to fade. His physical health will be likely to improve. Wonderful and unaccountable things will start to happen. Twisted relations in his family and on the outside will improve surprisingly."

(From *As Bill Sees It*, p. 321, Copyright © by the AA Grapevine Inc.; reprinted with permission.)

Box 300

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Post Office Box 300
Simi Valley, California 93062

CENTRAL OFFICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE— WHO, WHAT AND HOW

At the Chicago International SA conference Roy K. announced his departure from running the Central SA office. An ad hoc Central Office Oversight Committee (COOC) was created to provide short-term management of our SA Central Office affairs.

The motions as passed states: "We propose a committee to oversee the Central Office and the *Essay*. This committee would be selected on the basis of volunteers from various regions of the country and international areas (see below) with at least two years of sobriety as SA understands it. The committee would be composed of not more than nine people and not less than seven.

"This committee will be formed at this conference by volunteers giving names to chairperson. It will meet at this conference and designate two members for a period of seven months to be responsible for the finances of the fellowship under the oversight of whatever auditing procedures are now in place.

"This is understood as an interim committee only and it will cease to exist one month after the next international conference."

The COOC met at the Chicago conference. Our first business was to share our name and phone numbers. The representatives from the various areas are: Harry B. (Northwest); Betsy T. (Mid-Atlantic); Sylvia J. (South Mid-West); Jim O. (North Mid-West); David M. (Southeast); James M. (N.E. Atlantic); David B. (Southeast); Larry M. (N.E. Atlantic); Dan N. (Southwest).

The committee then elected Betsy T. as Chair and David M. as Secretary. Harry B. is the COOC *Essay* representative with editor Lawrence M. Our COOC liaison to the General Service Board Task Force, also created at the Chicago Conference,

is Sylvia J. We will also share our minutes with their new chair, Michael B. from Wichita. Jim O. arranges the group phone calls. Jim O. and James M. monitor and report on the Central Office finances. The most active job falls to Dave B. who, since he lives near-by, acts as the continuing contact person with the Central Office staff.

The COOC has met on conference calls six times through October. Our concerns have ranged from fiscal management to support of isolated sexaholics. The Traditions have guided our conversations and our Higher Power is definitely keeping SA alive and healthy.

Some of our specific actions to support and guide the Central Office include the following: Central Office administrator Pat, a non-sexaholic employee, receives inquiries from individuals and groups. Letters and phone calls needing a reply from a sexaholic are sent with a reply envelope to the COOC member responsible for that region.

International mail is sent to the COOC Secretary for assignment. Either a copy of the response or a phone log is kept by the COOC respondent. The Central Office is sent a dated acknowledgement that inquiries have been answered on the copy of the inquiry letter sent by the Central Office. A copy of the response need not be sent unless the writer chooses to do so.

We set a \$1,000 limit on checks needing only one signature. Two signatures are required for larger amounts.

Second Quarter donations were down 50% over the same 1990 and 1989 quarter. We suggested that the *Essay* have a contribution envelope enclosed.

The secretary was authorized to sign SA tax forms and bank resolutions on behalf of the COOC. Arranging a current audit is in process.

We have added a Mail Clerk to Central Office staff: This person picks up and opens the mail daily with Pat, the SA Administrator present. We record every piece of mail which includes money on the ledger which the clerk and the office manager sign. Weekly copies of the ledger are sent to the COOC Chair Betsy T.

The Central Office has a great surplus of printed cover *Sexaholics Anonymous*, *Recovery Continues*, pamphlets and *Member Stories*. We will work to reduce this inventory in the coming months. We will also order new plain cover Big Books or perhaps recover the printed ones.

Other matters of concern to the COOC have included investigating an 1-800 telephone number for the Central Office and ways to involve more sexaholics in the operation of the Central Office as is the case with AA.

At our last meeting, Jim O. asked that we should have good coverage of the COOC in the next *Essay*. As he said, "We are functioning and the Central Office is doing well and is growing." One day at a time the COOC and the four Central Office staff are seeking to carry the message and to ensure that SA is able to help other sexaholics recover.

SERVICE BOARD STUDY UPDATE

A General Service Board Study Committee was formed during the SA Chicago Conference Business Meeting. The Committee is comprised of volunteer members from various regions of the country with at least two years of sexual sobriety. The members include: Bill Z. of Sherman Oaks, CA; Catherine P. of Atlanta, GA; Frank C. of Escondido, CA (alternate); Gordon C. of Washington, DC; Mike B. (Chair) of Wichita, KS; Rich K. of Chicago, IL; Richard D. of Portland, OR (alternate); Richard T. of Chanute, KS (alternate); and Wes B. of Portland, OR. We have been studying the AA 12 concepts and service manual, OA By-Laws, NA By-Laws and CA By-Laws. During our two conference calls we have experienced the willingness to learn from other successful 12-step groups, the humility for what God has wrought in SA, and an openness for what SA might apply in order to provide service in the future. We're planning another conference call as well as a meeting in San Diego prior to the conference. We're seeking His will, not ours. **M.B.**

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Qty.	Cost	Book Title	Description
_____	\$10.00	<i>Sexaholics Anonymous</i>	Title or plain white cover.
_____	\$4.00	<i>SA Meeting Guides</i>	Suggested formats & some crucial SA experience in starting new SA groups.
_____	\$8.00	<i>Recovery Continues</i>	24 articles that deal with various problems & aspects of recovery.
_____	\$6.00	<i>Member Stories—1989</i>	Contains 21 recovery stories.
_____	\$2.00	<i>Discovering the Principles</i>	SA's growing experience with the Traditions

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