

Essay®

P. O. Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222

March 1996

I Found A God That I Could Turn My Life Over To

[The following is an extract of a talk taped on November 3, 1995 at an SA conference in Minnie Water, Australia. The tape was sent to us by an SA member there. Ed.]

My name is Patrick, and I'm a sexaholic. I've been sexually sober for 28 days, nine months and two years, by the grace of God. And I never thought I'd ever be able to be sexually sober in my life. I was totally powerless over sex, over lust. My life was incredibly out of control, and today I can smile; today I'm happy. I never thought that day would come. I waited a long time for it [laughter], a long, long time, and I paid a price for this fellowship, which was the highest price that I could ever be expected to pay.

My addiction drove me to a lot of shock treatment, mental homes, psychiatric wards, alcoholic hospitals, counselors, priests, psychiatrists, anyone and everyone. I was totally out of control from about 1958 to 1993--that's a long time. What progressed with me was the addiction, which was something I could not handle--living a Jekyll and Hyde existence all that time. I started picking up alcohol to find relief, to get off this thing that was going on in my head and in my body all the time. I had to go to dreary old pubs and drink myself insensible because in that I could blot out and enter fantasy, but once I did that I became even more vulnerable to the sex problem, and I'd finish up in the most unusual places, to say the least [laughter]. It's like telling somebody

else's story tonight. I had this problem of masturbating and going into toilets and masturbating myself and other men. I didn't go much further than that, I can be honest with you. I was totally obsessed once the clock started in my body and it would start as often as every day I just had to obey that inner clock. There was no way of me stopping it. I was totally out of control. And that went on for a long time.

At 25, I put myself into a monastery, hoping that it would stop, hoping that this grand gesture, giving myself to God, would cure it. That God would become my all in all and I would lose myself in this wonderful thing. I was successful for seven years. I didn't have a lustful thought, to my
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Call for Member Stories

Our last and only previous issue of Member Stories came out in 1989, over six years ago. In the intervening years, our fledgling fellowship has grown in numbers, sobriety, and recovery. Our sobriety definition has been challenged and resoundingly reaffirmed. While some of the members from that time are no longer seen in the rooms of SA, shaky newcomers they sponsored now step forward confidently to take their place. For some of us, the incredible journey is just beginning.

Men and women with a wide spectrum of sexaholic symptoms, coming from a diversity of walks of life and from different parts of the world, are now part of our fellowship. Singles are discovering a life they never thought possible, and marrieds are beginning to discover the incredible reality of what marriage and family can be. Those from same-sex backgrounds are discovering freedom from lust, and more women are discovering release from the addiction and relational misconnection. God is doing for us

what we could not do for ourselves!

The story of our recovery continues to be rewritten. We're still in the process of discovering,
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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.]

- March 8 - 10, 1996, 2nd German -Speaking SA Women's Retreat.** From the U.S., contact Helene, at 011-49-7533-7861.
- March 9, 1996, SA Area Conference, Milwaukee/Racine, WI.** Contact Jim O., at 414-637-7806,
or Phil S. at 414-632-3035.
- March 22 - 24, 1996, SA UK Convention, Theme: The True Connection.** For information, from the U.S., call
011-44-171-586-2770.
- March 23, 1996, SA and S-Anon Midwest Regional Spring Conference, Detroit, MI.** Theme: It Works When You Work It!
Contact Steve (SA) at 810-463-9622 or Debbie (S-Anon) at 810-228-9241.
- April 12 - 14, 1996. Spring Retreat, Wichita, KS, Theme: We Stand Together.** Contact Daniel P., at 913-299-9010.
- April 20, 1996, Cleveland Area All Day Marathon, Theme: Managing Our Unmanageability.**
Contact Bonnie D., 216-428-8835
- April 26 - 28, 1996, Pacific Northwest Spring Retreat, Kwomais Camp, Surrey, B.C. Canada,**
Theme: Celebrate Recovery. Contact Tony V., at 604-538-9184
- May 3 - 5, 1996, 2nd Australian SA Conference, Yackandandah, VIC.** Contact Chris E., at 011-61-3-7613280
or SA Melbourne at 011-61-3-95066719.
- May, 1996, SA/S-Anon One Day Conference, Nashville, TN.** Contact Nat or Jeane B. , at 615-883-1943.
- June 7 - 9. 1996, German-speaking SA Convention, Essen, Germany.** Contact Derk at 011-49-201-712577
or Ineke at 011-31-316-332820
- July 12 - 14, 1996, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Chicago, IL.** (See below)
- October 4 - 6, 1996. Southern California Unity Conference.** Theme: Recovery through Discovery.
Contact John B., at 310-282-0774 or Ted at 310-454-1516.
- January 11 - 13, 1997, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Oklahoma City, OK.** Theme: Recovery Continues.
Contact Dave T., (SA) at 405-353-4710 or Gene J., (S-Anon) at 405-751-3832.

July 1996 Conference Announcement

July 12 - 14, 1996, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Chicago, IL. Theme: Willing to Go to Any Length.
Contact SA Hotline, 708-790-6269, or S-Anon Hotline, 708-545-7110.
Leave your phone # for a return call.

Essay Editorial Guidelines

The *Essay* editorial function is answerable to the fellowship as a whole. Just as our SA group meetings follow guidelines designed to keep meetings on track, the following guidelines apply to the *Essay*.

* Articles from SA members and SA groups or intergroups are invited, although no payment is made, and material is not returned.

* The Central Office provides *Essay* editor with copies of letters and other materials of potential use in the newsletter.

* Submissions, selected by the editor, are subject to correction of spelling and grammar (*The Chicago Manual of Style* is the standard) and may be condensed to accommodate space limitations. Selections may be edited for style and clarity.

* The principles of SA's Twelve Traditions guide editorial philosophy.

* Articles are not intended to serve as statements of SA policy, nor does publication imply endorsement by either SA or the *Essay*.

* SA's sobriety definition is not debated, since it distinguishes SA from other sex addiction fellowships. *Essay* is not a forum for non-SA sobriety and non-SA principles.

* The *Essay* is not a fund-raising mechanism, although from time to time SA's needs may be made known.

* General Guidelines for Submissions: Where possible, articles submitted for publication should be typed and double-spaced. If articles are submitted on disk, check with Central Office for software compatibility. Send articles to the SA Central Office, attention of the *Essay* editor. When an article speaks for a group or intergroup, it should have the prior approval of that group or intergroup. Articles should observe common standards of friendliness and good taste. Discussions involving therapy or religion are discouraged.

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knowledge or act out or anything. It was an incredible experience for seven years. I was emotional at times because I'm an emotional person, but after the seven years, I picked a drink up. There was no reason why I shouldn't. I didn't think I was an alcoholic. Within a couple of weeks my personality changed. I started getting resentful, fearful, guilty. My sex problem came back in an incredible way, and I was moved from place to place, always in disgrace, always a failure, always crying my eyes out, begging God to take it away and he wouldn't, afraid to go to post a letter, because I'd be looking around,

afraid to get on a bus because I'd be sitting next to a man and our knees would touch, afraid to go to a cinema.

I wouldn't know what to do. I lost the ability to relate to another human being, except on the sexual level. I'd get days off once a week and I'd go to the city and I wouldn't know what to do with myself. Nine o'clock in the morning I'd be there and I wouldn't know what to do. The day would stretch ahead and I'd go from toilet to toilet to toilet to toilet until ten o'clock at night, and then I'd come home.

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Special Mailing!

This issue of the *Essay* is being sent to everyone on the SA mailing list, as an exception to the usual practice of sending to subscribers only. It was decided that it is in the best interest of the Fellowship that the largest possible number of members be made aware of the historic changes in the SA service structure (see page 13 for a detailed report) and have a chance to respond to the Literature Committee's "Call for Member Stories" (front page). In addition, we hope to generate interest in the newsletter and encourage subscriptions.

FROM THE EDITOR

*More and more regions and countries are putting out their own SA newsletters. In order to maintain an International Central Office archive and to share them with the whole fellowship, we ask that you put the Central Office on your newsletter mailing list. We will also forward a copy of your newsletter to the *Essay* editor. Depending on space available, articles of general interest may, with your permission, be reproduced in the *Essay*.*

FROM THE EDITOR'S WIFE:

Take it from me. . . many members would be interested in a regular column on "building healthy relationships" in recovery. These could be stories on recovery within the marriage or dating/getting married in recovery. We would be more than happy to initiate such a column . . . all we need are your stories!

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Please God.' And I'd go out and catch the bus or the tram and I'd go into the city and the first place I'd go would be a toilet.

I had no ability to do anything else. That went on for years and years and years and I was in and out of alcoholic hospitals. I could not deny the inner urge. Many times I'd be in my house, in my room where I was living, and the clock would start, tick, tick, inside me, and I knew what it was and I'd walk up and down and say 'Please God, take it away,' and I'd walk up and down and walk up and down and up and down, and I'd put my coat on and sneak out the back way and go down to the local toilet. I was totally out of control.

The other part of it was that my relations with people were almost non-existent. I didn't have the ability of loving anyone. I resented everybody because everybody seemed to have their life in order and I didn't have my life in order. Everybody was successful in relationships and no one wanted a relationship with me, because I was neurotic. So I was angry, resentful, fearful, guilty. It was hell. It was absolute hell. It went on for about twenty-five years.

I tried AA. I was twice in two years in an AA hospital for seven weeks each time, and I'd come out and drink straight away. And I'd find myself in some licentious part of whatever city I was in, there till midnight. I'd say I was going to an AA meeting and I'd just go to the door and I'd be afraid to go in and I'd walk out and go out on the beat and then come home. It was a very, very bad life. I was really seeking love. I was really seeking connection with another human being, because I couldn't make that connection. I prayed like a saint and I

acted like a sinner, and I cried out to God a million million times 'Please help me, please help me,' and he wouldn't. I'd say, 'Well you can strap it, if that's the way you want it. You're a great God for the academics and the professors and all those that have got everything, you're a great God. But for this poor bugger you don't give a hoot.'

It says in the Bible that to those who have got will be given more and those who have less the little they have will be taken away from them. And I said 'That's what I am. I've got nothing and you're taking everything I have so you know what you can do with it.' And then I'd creep back into chapels and say 'Look, I'm sorry I said that. Please forgive me, I'm sorry.' I had nowhere else to go. And I fought with God tooth and nail like Jonah and the angel, I fought with him. 'What good is your dying on the cross for me? It's not helping me now. What's the good of it all?'

That's where I was. I'd been living a double life, trying to hold my act together. My superior said to me once, 'The only witness you've given us in 35 years is you've gotten up next morning and started again.' That wasn't too bad; I accepted that. Then eventually they told me that in 35, 36 years I hadn't succeeded in one job, and the skids went from underneath me totally because I'd been struggling for all those years. Apparently it had all been worthless. I'd failed. I'd failed at life. I was 57 then, and I used to stand in the back of the communion line, hoping I could empty the chalice because there would be more wine in it for me. That was as low as I got. By that time I'd lost hope.

And then I fell into an AA room one night half drunk and from that I got into another hospital, and then I

stopped again. Then I started drinking again and finally got into AA in 1983, for the second time, and I started to get well. I started to come out of this dark tunnel that I had been in all my life and I started to meet people. When the meeting was over and they started to talk to each other over a cup of coffee, I had to bolt out. I was scared stiff of being trapped in a corner. They wanted to know about me and I had a guilty secret. It wasn't just alcohol. So I stayed sober for about three or four years and then I had a slip, and then I stayed sober again and then I had another slip. Then I tried suicide and they got me into hospital just in time. Another time I drank enough alcohol in 15 minutes to get a level of 3.1, and they put me in hospital and pumped me out and said I wouldn't live, it was too much, that the brain was soaked. And I came out of that, thank God. And I still drank again later on.

I was still going to AA meetings. Sometimes I'd be on a high, sometimes I wouldn't, but I couldn't tell my great problem. My great problem was I was a sexaholic, I was controlled by lust, that I was leading a shadow life. I used to go to pubs and drink soft drinks, ginger ale, from one dirty old pub to the next, didn't have the courage to pick up the alcohol, because I knew what would happen. And yet, I wanted to. Went to [another S- fellowship] and found I could join in the group, but nobody talked about sobriety, and I wanted sobriety more than anything in the world. I wanted to stop what I was doing, because what I was doing had destroyed my life. So I didn't stay in that group because nobody gave me a way of not doing what I was doing.

Eventually Paul and John [and I] got together and started an SA meeting. We'd sit in the streets in Richmond in Melbourne on benches with a book in

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the names and numbers of contact people in my area? When I receive this new information, I will arrange to go to meetings "on the outside" and maybe share my experiences with the members of the group(s). It would be nice to be able to find a sponsor also since I do not have the support of my two prison groups anymore, except through the mail.

As I get more and more familiar with Sexaholics Anonymous and how the organization works, I would certainly offer to help in any way possible. I could correspond with other inmates or former inmates around the country, or I could offer my time to the organization for whatever needs it may have. All you have to do is let me know what you need and I will do it.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for all of your support during my incarceration. I took me a couple of months after we started our group(s) to finally get sober, but once I did, I felt so much better, and I will *never* let this great feeling that I have now slip away from me. I guess that I should say that I *pray* that I never lose this good feeling that I have now. I have learned to respect women because I have learned to respect myself. God Bless You All.
Michael D., Moreno Valley, CA

Jim P. of North Hollywood, CA died on January 18, 1996, after having lived for over three years in a new and joyous life of sobriety and freedom. His final words were, "It's OK, I'm sober." Those who knew him, loved him and will miss him, but we know he's gone to a better place. Peter D.

NEW GROUPS

Mt. Clemens, MI
Kings Beach, CA
Rock Springs, WY
Marshalltown, IA
Dover, NJ
Arlington Heights, IL
Tempe, AZ
Springfield, VA
Centreville, VA

Spiritual Fornication

When I used to nourish lust thoughts, there was something going on inside me we might call spiritual fornication. Within my spirit I was shutting God out in rebellion, perverting the reality of the lust object to suit my sick need, (splitting myself to create and then imagine that inner partner), and then having sex with her, which was really having sex with myself. My soul is fornicating whenever it turns from God as Source of life to the substitute (Augustine).

I'm discovering that the same is true with resentment thoughts and those negative judgements against people, where I select the actors, write the script, and direct the action so they come out looking bad. When I nourish these, I'm also having intercourse with myself, the only difference being that sex is not involved. The instant I start nourishing that thought against that person, I've shut God out. I'm creating something that doesn't exist. It's all in my mind and thus "spiritual," a closed-loop within the self. It's as though I'm trying to nourish the self on the self by projecting wrong onto the other person. I'm actually fornicating with my created image of that person, relishing getting into him or her and messing with them.

This is just another technique to shut God out of my consciousness. When that happens, the ego is all alone, totally isolated, the same as in lust. The real high is the total isolation from reality and from God into the self. The naked self plays with the self in a cycle feeding on itself under the guise of something happening "out there," in or with another person, which isn't true at all; it's really happening within me. I'm arranging it in my mind so it seems like it's all "out there" somewhere, in the other person.

What I am seeing increasingly today--and many of us seem to be going through this resentment phase in SA now--is that I must still be carrying my own guilt. For me to make the other person continually wrong means I'm projecting my wrong onto that person, which means that *my* guilt is not resolved. So I take my salvation into my own hands everytime I do this. I reject God and I'm on my own every time I'm playing that negative tape and that person comes out guilty or wrong, (The dialogue is scripted so that always happens.) And when the person may truly have wronged us to begin with, we have the perfect excuse to commit spiritual fornication.

Ours is the ego disease par excellence, no doubt about it. For through such an exercise we are in essence pure gods. The human spirit, without benefit of drugs, sex, food, or any other kind of stimulation, is rising up against God and is becoming its own god. When man shuts God out, he becomes the one and only god. So for the time while I'm doing this, there's a feeling of omnipotence and control, because when I'm writing the script and directing the actors on the stage to make them come out wrong, I'm in control. And I think the part of my life
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that's out of control is refusing to see my own wrong and surrender to the Wrong-Bearer. The scenario is written so the other person is wrong; so, in effect, I transfer my sin and guilt onto him or her. The great control is that I make them the sinner so I come out clean. Whereas the key is that I have to acknowledge that *I* am a sinner.

Today I could feel the isolation and spiritual fornication beginning. It's a poisonous feeling. You're having that imaginary conversation with the one who's crossed you, and you're relishing putting them down. You're all alone, you've shut God's presence out, and the inside of you turns dark and negative. And it's scary. And when you've been out of the dark and in the light for so long then go back into it, you know there's a drastic change of state, that it's different. I used to live in that darkness all the time. When you live in the light and then go into the darkness, you feel it; it gets your attention sooner as sobriety and recovery progress.

What gives me release now is this: I *feel* the darkness and poison and the destructive effect within me--the spiritual fornication, the dwelling on the self, the creating an object for resentment by splitting the self, the perversion of the reality of that person, the driving of the self into the self in that terrible isolation and darkness. If I can see *my* wrong and let God bear that instead of me, that's the best way out of it for me today.

[This inventory was written some years ago, and does not bear an exact date. Roy K.]

One Sober Gift

My name is Dave and I'm a sexaholic. In discussing Working Paper #1 ("Practical Guidelines for Group Recovery") with my group and with other sober members, I kept coming back to the most positive experience in my early sobriety, which represents for me a model of what a group should be. I would like to share it with the fellowship. I believe this was a gift directly from God to me.

To give you a little background, I went to Cleveland in October of 1985, at their invitation, to attend an SA Marathon meeting. It was my first marathon and I was a little over two months sober after having a slip. The marathon consisted of four lead meetings. It was the first time I had ever heard the term "lead" and I didn't know what that was. I found out very soon as I heard Tom give his lead. He spoke for almost an hour from the heart with a gut-level honesty the likes of which I had never heard before. He simply told his story in the form of what it was like, what happened, and what it was like now. There was no doubt that God was extremely important in his recovery. There was no doubt of the love and excitement he had for God, the program of SA and its Twelve Steps. Tom's lead was followed by comments from the floor. As each person stood out of respect for SA and the Lead, I heard more of the heart-felt, gut-level honesty Tom had. The joy of recovery rang out and if there was any doubt that SA was my home, it was eradicated. I wanted what they had so badly I was bound and determined to do whatever it took. I truly felt like I was shot into recovery as if from a cannon. The SA who came with me felt the same way and while driving back to Rochester, we couldn't stop talking about all we had heard and seen. Our excitement carried us through the four-and-a-half-hour trip

as though it was only an hour. I later found out that giving a lead is the way a great many of the AA meetings are in Cleveland--a format that goes way back. The format was only new to me. I shall never forget that experience. From that day on I could never get enough... (It sounds a little like how I just used to be in my life.)

Back home, on the bulletin board of the AA rehab where SA used to meet, there was a flyer advertising a new AA meeting called Newburgh, which described itself as a lead meeting. My excitement rose because I knew what that was, and it was the only one of its kind in the Rochester area. I couldn't wait to go there. It met on Thursdays at 8.30 p.m. and ended around 10:00. It was the same length as our SA meeting.

I will try to describe what I saw there. First, as I entered the door of the large church hall (filled with blue smoke) my hand was shaken by about a dozen people, all of whom told me their name and wanted to know mine. Mind you, I am not an alcoholic but I felt so welcomed there I cannot describe the feeling. I found out that they were all home group members and arrived there an hour early to set up and get ready for the meeting. By the time I got there, the coffee was made, chairs were set up, the lead table was all ready and I noticed small groups of people in twos and threes scattered round. Almost all of the members of these groups had a copy of the AA Big Book in hand and it appeared as though some of the conversations were a little intense as they pointed to passages in their Big Books. I found out later they were helping each other one or two on one and I never saw any of these gatherings without an AA Big Book close by. Sponsorship was a must, and it was men for men and women for women.

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Something really got my attention. I began to notice how the people in the home group were dressed--men with jackets and ties, women with fresh dresses. This was a carry back to the early days of AA in Akron and Cleveland where the men wore sober suits and the ladies wore fresh dresses. But the thing that really blew my mind was that the home group members were very young, averaging about 20 or 21 years of age. They were very serious about recovery and not afraid to mention and talk about God. They also adhered to AA's singleness of purpose. This meant that you could only be a member of the home group if you were an alcoholic but everyone was welcome to the open meeting. I respected that and did not comment on the lead but was able to soak up all the recovery that filled the room during the meeting.

The meeting format was exactly the same as Tom's lead in Cleveland (even to the 50/50 raffle) and each lead I heard had a wonderful, strong sober message. I found out they would only invite people to lead who had such a message, and with a minimum of one year of sobriety. The money they made from the raffle went to buy Big Books by the case, and they gave the books away to anyone who needed one and could not afford to pay, especially to those in prisons and rehabs.

When the formal part of the meetings ended, people stayed and talked. They were not in a hurry to run out and those little groups appeared again here and there. When all was cleaned up and swept, most of the home group members went out for coffee. If someone was having a problem, they would bring him/her along to the restaurant and, with Big Books in hand, would work with them trying to help find the point of unsunder.

If home group members did not

show up for a meeting, they would be confronted and asked to be responsible to do their job. If they were missing for a time, a group would go and search them out, even at their home if necessary, because of their concern and love for them.

I went every week. I would not miss the Newburgh meeting for the world. Although I could not become an official member, I got there early and helped set up. I stayed late and talked with them, helped tear down and went out with them for coffee. I made and decorated cakes for their anniversary meetings and went to their anniversary dinner every year where they had an open podium for anyone to speak (and I did). I wanted what they had and they gave it to me. I wanted to give something back in some way and they let me. If I missed a meeting, someone noticed and mentioned that they missed me. They even told me they would come to my house too if I got off the beaten path or lost my sexual sobriety (I told them I was a sexaholic). I felt their unconditional love.

I bought my Big Book and read the first hundred and sixty-four pages, two per day, as they recommended. They invited me to go with them on a Men's Spiritual Weekend to Conesus Lake. There each attendee got a turn to sit on the "hot seat" and presented two character defects which were bothersome. Since they knew each other so well, if they didn't like the defects you selected, they would pick two and proceed to show how these defects manifested themselves and how they hurt others. Again, with Big Book in hand they collectively presented the solution. After that you could present one character asset and they proceeded to affirm how that asset showed itself in your life and how much God loved you.

I didn't think they knew me very well since I was more than twice their

age and also a sexaholic, but I was wrong. When my turn came, they saw right through me and took my inventory well, asset and all. On Sunday morning, Third Step Andy, as he was called, asked me if I wanted to take my Third Step by the Big Book. Andy S. was only 16 years old. I went with him to the lake shore and after reading passages from Chapter 5, he told me to read the Third Step Prayer silently and to think about making a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand Him. If I decided to do so, he asked me to kneel down with him and say the prayer aloud. As I did that, he did too, and the tears were streaming down my face.

I could write much more about this experience than space allows. I just can't figure how these young kids got all this love and wisdom to share. They simply hadn't lived long enough, in my opinion. I took several SA people to this meeting the night before the 1988 Rochester SA International Convention began and, like me, what they saw and heard was hard to believe and wonderfully sober.

It is my belief that the strength of the Newburgh Group came from the commitment of its members to the program of AA, the love and caring that resulted for its members, the excitement about God and the generosity with their time, most of which happened outside the meeting. With this kind of attitude, the meetings had to be strong and sobriety was the rule, not the exception. The meetings spoke clearly of the need of God and the 12 Steps according to the Big Book to stay sober. Testimony of the lead and comments afterward gave validity to the unfailing power of the AA program to those who were willing to work for it. I can't help but think that SA could benefit from this powerful example.

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I bring the rich Newburgh experience to my SA home group. Some members are attracted to it, while others seem to be afraid of the commitment and the changes needed to get it. I can only speak for myself. I came to SA with nothing but a history of lust and acting out. Anything I have now I received from another drunk who spent his time with me. He got it from another who got it from another, etc., all the way back to the humble beginnings of SA in Simi Valley and the original Newburgh meeting in Newburgh Heights, Cleveland (which has been meeting now for close to 40 years and which supported the Rochester Newburgh in its infancy). All I'm asked to do is to give, give, give, as others gave to me. The promise is that I will stay sober and receive riches beyond my wildest dreams. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for this precious sober experience and for the privilege of being able to pass it on.

(We invite your comments, individually or from group discussion, regarding the "Newburgh Experience." Have you found a group like this helpful in your own life in recovery? Do you find the picture attractive? Do you find, in your sobriety, that what happens before and after the meeting is just as important as the meeting itself?)

How do you make your groups attractive to newcomers? How do you, as a group, practice an attractive sobriety? How can we in SA communicate to the newcomer the excitement of being sober?

LEADERSHIP IN A.A.: EVER A VITAL NEED

[Some members have asked that this article by Bill W. be reprinted in the light of the historic events in Phoenix. For more about Phoenix, see article on page 13.]

No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and A.A. can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we A.A.'s sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without much personal leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times, we are quite as apt to demand that A.A.'s leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgement, morals, and inspiration; big doers, prime examples to all, and PRACTICALLY infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles of hoped-for excellence. In A.A., certainly, no leader is faceless, and neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately, our Society is blessed with any amount of REAL leadership--the active people of today and the potential leaders of tomorrow, as each new generation of able members swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our

leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." In effect, we are saying to them, "Act for us, but don't boss us."

A leader in A.A. service is therefore a man (or a woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgement of his own--well, he really isn't a leader at all.

Good leadership originates plans, policies and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has or can obtain sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

A politico is an individual who is forever trying to "get the people what they want." A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and WHEN NOT to do this. He recognizes that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and

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something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm, using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition's sake. It never can be "Let's have it our way or no way at all." This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying, "No, we don't like it." No real reasons are given. This won't do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then, too, a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and the more humble are quite mistaken.

These points are practical illustrations of the kinds of careful discrimination and soul-searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

Another qualification for leadership is give-and-take, the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us all-or-nothing drunks. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by a **SERIES OF IMPROVING COMPROMISES**. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are

situations for keen timing and careful discrimination as to which course to take.

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.

Then there are those whom we like to call our "destructive" critics. They power-drive, they are politikers, they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttlebutt to gain their ends--all for the good of A.A., of course! But in A.A., we have at learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending very much on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen carefully to what they say. Sometimes, they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half-truth, or no truth at all can prove equally unpleasant to us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they have got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we had better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong. If it is nonsense, we can ignore it. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen, and we can try to forget the whole business. There are few better means of self-survey and of

developing genuine patience than the workouts these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members afford us. This is always a large order, and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.

Now we come to the all-important attribute of VISION. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy, because we A.A.'s are constantly telling ourselves, "One day at a time." But that valuable principle usually refers to our mental and emotional lives and means chiefly that we are not foolishly to repine over the past nor wishfully to daydream about the future.

As individuals and as a fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a fatuous idea of Providence. God's real Providence has endowed us human beings with a considerable capability for insight, and He evidently expects us to use it. Therefore, we must distinguish between wishful fantasy about a happy tomorrow and the present use of our powers of thoughtful estimate. This can spell the difference between future progress and unforeseen woe.

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence, an essential virtue if ever there was one. Of course, we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part, but that is better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this, we derive a tentative idea or policy. Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our

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idea or policy might work. Then we ask how our policies and ideas might apply under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on--experimentally when that is possible. Later we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is working out.

At about this stage, we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks fine and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless, we ought to ponder carefully what its long-term effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction both of A.A. groups and of the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and willingness to contribute. On many such problems, often, we must try to think months and years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of A.A.'s Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago, for example, we slowly evolved an idea about A.A. being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about outside gifts. Then still more trouble

developed. Consequently, we began to devise a policy of "no outside gifts." We began to suspect that large sums of this kind would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally, we saw that for the long pull, outside money could really ruin us. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy crystallized firmly into an A.A. tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long-term safety.

We went through the same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But finally, the vision came that many such breaks eventually could raise havoc among us. So it went: first a tentative idea, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction--a vision for tomorrow.

Such is our process of estimating the future, and responsible world leadership must be proficient in this vital activity. It is an essential ability, especially in our trustees. Most of them, in my view, should be chosen on the basis that they have already demonstrated an aptness for foresight in their own business or professional careers.

We shall be in continual need of these same attributes--tolerance, responsibility, flexibility, and vision--among our leaders of A.A. services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be the same whatever the size of the operation.

Maybe this seems like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of A.A. member. But it really is not so. We simply are recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight. And it is quite unlikely that

a fine banker could be a great musical performer. So when we talk about A.A. leadership, we only declare that we ought to select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find.

While this article was first thought of in connection with our world service leadership, it is possible that some of its suggestions can be useful to anyone who takes an active part in our Society.

This is true particularly in the area of Twelfth Step work, in which nearly all of us are actively engaged. Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example--these qualities of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

We thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in all of its affairs.

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Help Wanted

The SA Literature Committee is looking for a member with expertise in *electronic conferencing* to connect committee members... Someone with knowledge of internet connections and software, on-line services such as AOL and CompuServe, and the newly developed hardware/software to make voice calls via internet. If you are that member, please contact the Central Office.

Box 300

March 1996

P. O. 111910
Nashville, TN 37222

SA Fellowship "Comes of Age" at Phoenix Conference

Sexaholics Anonymous observed a major milestone in the convocation of the first Oversight Assembly on Friday, January 12, 1996. In attendance, were SA members with at least three years of sobriety, elected, or drawn, from the eight geographical regions: Northwest, Southwest, North-Midwest, South-Midwest, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, and International. Mike B., chair of the Service Structure Committee, provided the guiding hand in opening the meeting and providing continuity to this historic event.

The SA fellowship was launched by nine men and women who met together July 26, 1981 in Simi Valley, CA to adapt the AA program for their lust/sex addiction and formulate SA's definition of sexual sobriety. During the first year or two, decisions affecting SA as a whole were made by a ten-man board, members of which had signed SA's Articles of Association. At the December 1984 conference in Phoenix, AZ, the second unanimous vote was recorded on SA's definition of sobriety. The Central Office function was initially served in the converted garage of one of the ten board members in Simi Valley. As the workload increased, that member asked for fellowship help at the December 1983 conference in Simi Valley.

Directed by the Bozeman, MT, Conference business meeting June 6, 1987, the first Central Office Oversight Committee (COOC) was formed and plans set in motion to

move the office to commercial quarters. (The Oversight Committee also served the interim function of making day-to-day decisions and acting as the Advisory Committee.) Another committee was also formed after Bozeman to offer to the fellowship an SA National Group Conscience Procedure for "discerning the fellowship-wide group conscience." This would eventually be called the International Group Conscience Committee, or IGC. In 1990 -91, the IGC oversaw the most extensive "sense of the fellowship" ever taken on the issue of SA sobriety, which was resoundingly reaffirmed.

At the July 1991 conference in Chicago, the Service Structure Study Committee was formed, which has led to formulation of the existing structure implemented in Phoenix January 12, 1996.

Simply put, it embodies the fundamental notion of having an Oversight Assembly, consisting of representatives of the aforementioned regions, representing the groups in making decisions affecting SA as a whole. The Oversight Committee, like a trustee board, would be elected from the Assembly, with the qualification that members have five years of sobriety.

The Assembly passed several motions at its Friday afternoon meeting. First, all delegates who came to represent their region, or an area within the regions, formally elected or not, were

recognized as members of the first Oversight Assembly and were approved to serve a six month interim term. This was to allow time for elections to take place so that all duly elected delegates can gather in July in Chicago. Second, officers elected were Sylvia J., Oklahoma City, chair, and Jessica S., secretary. The Assembly then elected the members of the first Oversight Committee: Sylvia J., Paul G., Katherine D., Bill P., and Barry W. The Chair is Sylvia J.; Co-chair, Paul G.; secretary, Katherine D.; Bill P., Chair of the Central Office Management Committee (the successor to the COOC).

The COOC met for the final time and officially turned over all open business items to the Oversight Assembly. All existing committees were asked to remain in place. Following the AA model, a member of the Oversight Committee volunteered to act as liaison for each standing committee. Intergroups and Loners, Barry; Paul, SA Corrections Committee (SACC); Bill, COMC and By Laws; Katherine, Literature. This liaison will be tried on a six month basis and reevaluated at the Chicago Meeting.

New committees appointed include Finance, Bob R., Internet and Nominations, Barry W. SA members interested in serving on any of these committees are urged to contact Central Office. There is much work to be done.

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The Finance Committee is charged with the responsibility of the budget and the wise allocation of SA funds. The Nominations Committee will oversee the process of finding and selecting non-sexaholic candidates for the four slots on the Oversight Committee. The experience of AA suggests that non-sexaholic trustees would be able to speak about SA at a public level, to the media, and represent SA in legal and financial matters.

Thus, all of us are poised to serve the fellowship and to seek the greatest possible participation in matters affecting SA as a whole. It is an exciting time to be sober in SA!

Yours in love and service,

Katherine D. & Jessica S.
Recording Secretaries,
Oversight Committee and
Oversight Assembly

SACC NEWS

The Oversight Assembly wishes to express its deep and heartfelt gratitude to Marsha F. Her tireless efforts on behalf of the SA Corrections Committee have been successful and worthwhile. Marsha energetically discharged her duties and helped preside over a surge in requests for literature from "the inside." We thank you for service well done.

The Oversight Assembly announces the next chair of the SACC has stepped forward to volunteer. He is Steve O. Steve is from New Jersey and comes to the SACC with 8 years experience working with prisoners. We wish him the best and urge support from the fellowship for this effort.

Call for Nominations for Non-Sexaholic Trustees

The new service committee structure calls for four non-sexaholic trustees, or "Overseers," who will serve with the five elected sexaholic members who together will constitute the Oversight Committee. This procedure follows closely the example of the AA General Service Board comprising both alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees. These non-sexaholic trustees are elected for a five-year term and shall be individuals who can contribute sound and mature judgement, wisdom, and discernment, with a clear grasp and appreciation of the Twelve Step recovery process. While not in our disease, they shall have a clear understanding of and commitment to SA's sobriety definition. SA needs individuals who are sensitive to a vision of God's future leading of SA and the underlying aspects of SA's calling.

The Oversight Assembly has set up a Nominating Committee to review nominations and recommend non-sexaholic trustees first to the Oversight Committee and then to the fellowship, through the Oversight Assembly.

Non-sexaholic trustees will be responsible for attending three meetings of the Oversight Committee yearly (two, at the International Conferences, and one in Nashville). Expenses for these meetings will be budgeted by the Finance Committee. They will participate and vote during periodic telephone conferences. Their experience and insight from their respective professions will provide guidance and a broader perspective in decisions made by the Oversight Committee.

Members of the fellowship, groups, or Intergroups, wishing to nominate someone as a non-sexaholic trustee should send the nominee's background sheet, or professional resume to the Central Office, along with the nominee's answers to the following questions. The nominating committee will begin inviting selected nominees to Nashville for interviews. They hope to present one or more candidates for approval by the National Oversight Assembly at its business meeting in Chicago in July.

Questions to be answered by prospective non-sexaholic trustees:

1. Are you a member of any of the sex addiction fellowships? Are you sex, lust, or relationship addicted?
2. Briefly describe your recent occupational history. Your education.
3. How do you understand sexual addiction?
4. How familiar are you with SA? The other S-fellowships?
5. What is your opinion of SA's definition of sexual sobriety? SA's concept of lust?

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6. What do you think is SA's place in the sex addiction recovery movement?
7. How do you relate the Twelve Step program and therapy/medicine?
8. What are your feelings about the relation of the Higher Power to this fellowship? In your personal life?
9. Why are you interested in being an Oversight Committee member? What would you like to see happen on the Oversight Committee, and in SA? How would you like to relate to the Committee and SA?
10. Are you willing to be interviewed and to attend SA functions? Are you able? ~~~~~~~~~

Donations for the Fourth Quarter -- 1995

Akron, OH	\$ 25.00	Long Island Intgrp, NY	468.67	Somerville, MA	270.00
Albuquerque, NM	8.50	Los Angeles, CA	100.50	St. Charles, IL	30.00
Alhambra, CA	95.85	Menlo Park, CA	108.50	Steubenville, OH	50.00
Arlington Heights, IL	105.00	Milwaukee, WI	289.95	Toronto, ON, Canada	50.00
Asheville, NC	100.00	Montreal, PQ, Canada	142.18	Trinity, IL	80.00
Atlanta, GA	296.50	Nashville Intergroup	100.00	Tucson, AZ	120.00
Augusta, GA	1.75	Nashville, TN	322.37	Vancouver, WA	23.00
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Chicago, IL	77.00	NY Metro Intergroup	40.00	Yonkers, NY	9.08
Chino, CA	100.00	Oklahoma Intergroup	1000.00		
Chula Vista, CA	20.00	Omaha, NE	156.75	Group Total	\$ 12,686.79
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Cleveland, OH	132.00	Pasadena, CA	204.00	Individual Total	6,029.60
Crystal City, VA	369.00	Payson, UT	50.00		
Crystal Lake, IL	200.00	Pleasanton, CA	30.00	Grand Total	\$ 18,716.39
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Davao, Philippines	4.35	Portland, OR	92.50		
Daytona Beach, FL	54.50	Puget Sound Intergroup	6.50		
Elk Grove Village, IL	219.00	Quad Cities, IA	50.00		
Elmhurst, IL	46.00	Rochester Intergroup	100.00		
Encinitas, CA	35.00	Rochester, NY	258.78		
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The Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or Sexaholics Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sexaholic who still suffers.
6. A SA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sexaholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

1. Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon AA unity. 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. 3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. 4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole. 5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. 6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual purpose. 7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. 8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers. 9. AA, as such, ought never be organized but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films. 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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SEXAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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_____	\$ 8.00	14 onzas	Sexólicos Anónimos
_____	\$.30	1 onza	Folleto de SA (SA brochure)
_____	\$ 2.00	4 onzas	Descubriendo los principios
_____	\$.50	1 onza	Notas sobre los comienzos de SA
_____	\$.25	1 onza	Algunas opiniones, médicas y personales, sobre la abstinencia sexual masculina
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Para pedidos procedentes de fuera de los EE.UU. habrá que añadir 3 dólares si es correo normal y 5 dólares si es aéreo.

Por favor, añada 4 dólares si desea que el envío se efectúe por UPS, correo urgente, al día siguiente, o entrega de primera clase.

Se recuerda a los miembros de países del área sistema métrico decimal que un libra (453 gramos con 5) se divide en 16 onzas (28 gramos con 3495)