

Essay®

A Quarterly Publication of Sexaholics Anonymous, Incorporated

P. O. Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222

June 1997

The Steps Changed Me; I Had Found the Solution

When I was a small boy of three or four years of age, I was the first to go to bed. I used to hide my head under the pillow and dream about women of beaming beauty. There wasn't anything explicitly sexual, but I fused with them. I remember at that age walking with a two-year old girl and immediately getting a weird feeling of being "connected" to nature and the whole universe -- and being afraid of that small creature.

When I was five, noticing the mother of a friend, I became obsessed with a certain part of a woman's body. At the same age, looking at a neighbor girl standing and relaxing on her balcony, I fell deeply in love with her and stayed obsessed for years.

Although women were always present in my mind, I was afraid of marriage, the "dark" and "boring" family life. I wanted an everlasting courtship, faithful -- but without commitments. The inexhaustible magic effect. But how afraid I was of women. How little I trusted them! I thought it was difficult to find one who was trustworthy, and that the one to marry me could get tired of me, tell my secrets and ridicule me in front of everybody. Irresistible attraction and insurmountable fear. Lust.

I started to collect soft pornography, taking pictures from Fashion and women's magazines. When the sense of sin overwhelmed me, I would throw the whole thing into the garbage, making a firm commitment never to do that again. Only to start all over again next day. Every time I went to confession to

a priest, the recurring sin was sexual desires. And as soon as I had left the confessional, I would fall again. I was powerless over lust!

When I was a teenager, I would walk past the shop windows, trying to get the female shop attendant's attention. I dreamed of one of them falling in love with me. If this happened, I thought, my fears, insecurities, resentments and inadequacies would disappear and I would be born into a new and marvelous world, far away from the reality I hated so much.

I spent hours at the swimming pool. I walked the beaches alone, staring at the sunbathing women. It was my way of getting drunk-- the visual "drink," the lust "drunk." At the same time I was so shy I didn't dare to talk to them!

When I was 18, I started masturbating. So far I had avoided doing that out of fear. My father had told me that masturbation led to loss of intelligence. (I often ejaculated just looking at a girl.) My first physical contact with a woman (an extension of masturbation) was around the same time. From then on I was obsessed with experiencing again the magic effect of those first experiences, but the depression after orgasm was greater and the effect less.

Cruising was my favorite acting out activity. I didn't want the responsibilities that an established relationship entailed. I wanted to be free, without any bonds. Bourgeois courtship and marriage gave me the creeps. I spent so many hours on the street,
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Share With Us

Do you have any experience in recovery from addiction to lust? Are you willing to share your strength and hope with the fellowship? If so, please send your recovery articles to the *Essay*. We'd like to hear from you. Remember, the *Essay* depends entirely on the SA fellowship for recovery stories. If you have questions regarding content and format, read our "Guidelines for Submissions" on page 3.

Here are some suggested topics for articles:

- Have you had a particularly significant experience in working a Step?
- Did something good or powerful happen to you at a meeting, retreat, marathon, or conference?
- Did SA literature show you something you didn't realize before?
- Tell us about your progressive victory over lust.

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Using the Tools
Progressive Victory
Commitment to Service

Calendar Of Events

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

June 13 - 15, 1997, SA Summer Retreat, Lattendales, English Lake District, by SA UK.

Theme: Hope for Freedom. Contact Nicholas S. at 1 768-893379.

July 11 - 13, 1997, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Theme: The Promises. Contact Francis H. - SA - 306/543-5999, or S-Anon, Carla, at 306/949-2417.

August 23 - 24, 1997, SA Summer Convention, Peace Cottage, Ammerdown Centre, Somerset, by SA UK.

Theme: There Is A Solution. Contact Brent at 44 (0)1373 81 2249.

September 12 - 14, 1997, SA/S-Anon Retreat, Calgary, AB, Canada. Theme: The Road of Happy Destiny --

Keep on Trudging. Contact Jamie S./SA, or Claire S./S-Anon, at 403/256-0503.

September 13, 1997, SA Autumn Workshop, Wexford, PA, sponsored by Pittsburgh SA.

Theme: What Is My Lust Trying to Fulfill? Contact Tri States SA at 412/224-0877.

September 26 - 28, 1997, SA/S-Anon Southern California Unity Conference, Orange, CA.

Theme: Working With Others. Contact Gary W. at 909/865-1645.

October 10 - 12, 1997, SA Fall Retreat, The Stronghold, Oregon, IL, sponsored by Chicago IG.

Theme: Trudging the Road of Happy Destiny. Contact Allan A. at 847/705-5777.

October 11, 1997, All Day Marathon, Cleveland, OH. Contact Larry N. at 216/766-8476.

October 24 - 26, 1997, AS/S-Anon Fall Conference, Hochstenbach, Germany.

Theme: Gib Dich ganz in die Hand Gottes wie Du Ihm Versteht (Abandon yourself to God as you Understand God. Contact Germany, Helmut at 02361/33 911. USA, Ed G. 503/655-0641.

1998 International Conference Announcement

January 16 - 18, 1998, SA/S-Anon International Conference, Daytona Beach, FL.

Theme: Our Primary Purpose, To Carry the Message to Those Who Still Suffer.

Contacts SA: Allan B. at 904/767-2322, George F. at 904/277-4041,
or Jeff B. at 904/532-5118.

Contacts S-Anon: Betty R. at 904/676-0367 or Mary Lee F. at 904/277-4041.

If you have suggestions regarding Conference topics or speakers, please call
Daytona Beach IG at 904/255-0001.

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.

Share With Us

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- Has the Higher Power brought you victory over resentments?
- How has your relationship with the Higher Power grown?
- How have you grown through difficulties in recovery?
- What has sponsoring and being sponsored meant to you?
- Tell us about 12th Step opportunities you have had.
- How are the Twelve Promises (AA p.83-84) coming true for you?
- What has your SA recovery allowed you to do that you could not do before?
- Tell us about your experience in sexual abstinence with your spouse, giving up relationships, or sober dating?
- Have you any humorous stories from your trudge on the Road of Happy Destiny?

Group and Intergroup Submissions

(If the article speaks for a group or intergroup, it should have the prior approval of that group or intergroup.)

- Tell us about the history of your group or intergroup, or SA in your area. What was it like getting that first meeting started? How did the fellowship grow? Did another group or area help you get started? Tell us what you used to be like, what happened, and what you are like now?

- Tell us about a time when a loving God spoke through your group conscience (Tradition Two), even (or especially) if preceded by struggle.
- How has your group used the Twelve Traditions to improve your group? Tell us about the effects of group inventories you have taken.
- Has your group learned any important or tough lessons?
- Any humorous stories from your group or intergroup?
- Tell us about the growth of "after-meeting" fellowship among SA members.
- How has your 12th Step outreach fared?
- Does your group have the new SA pamphlet "Practical Guidelines for Group Recovery"? How has it helped your group?
- Submit articles to the SA International Central Office earmarked for the *Essay* by any of the following means:

Mail: P.O. Box 111910
Nashville, TN 37222 U.S.A.
Fax: (615) 331-6901
E-mail: saico@sa.org

**Your Experience
Strength And Hope
Here**

**Deadline For Sept. 1997
Essay Is
August 1, 1997**

The Solution

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on buses, in the subway, in the libraries, looking for women!

Little by little the addiction gave me less pleasure and more frustration. I took comfort in drinking and overeating. In AA, I could see that my real Higher Power was lust and after getting tired of flirting with three women at the same time, and a serious misunderstanding with another which showed me how unmanageable my life was, I started my sexual sobriety, working the 12 Steps of recovery.

I got in touch with a program for sex and love addiction, and for five months I was the only member in my city. At first, although acknowledging some problems in the sexual area, I firmly believed that my problem was romance. I rationalized it by telling myself that since I wasn't having affairs with a different woman every day, I couldn't possibly be a sex addict. But God and my survival instincts made me see I had to stop masturbating, to abstain from any sexual relationships. At the time I didn't have a clear idea if I should exclude sex in marriage or in a committed relationship, my only commitment being to lust. I also gave up the idea that a princess would come out of the blue and turn my reality and my life into bliss and everlasting happiness. No dating for a year and a half helped me a lot, in both the sex and romance departments.

My fear of acting out helped me avoid occasions that could lead to a slip. I worked the Steps with a strong AA sponsor who used to tell me that if the Steps were worked according to the AA Big Book, I didn't need a specific program for sex addiction. I doubted this, but I was too afraid to take any chances. In AA, I had learned that I couldn't allow any alcohol image to lodge in my mind. Sooner or later it would lead me to the bottle. This way, I

gave up. I surrendered any image related to lust and asked for help from my Higher Power.

Thinking that a year without dates was a "wasted" year, I plunged into working the Steps as hard as I could. At last, turning sex and romance -- my two varieties of lust -- over to my Higher Power, I was able to work the Third Step in all of my programs. Lust detox allowed me to recover my childhood memories and to put what I was unearthing into a thorough and searching Fourth Step. While I was writing my resentments, fears and character defects, I began to understand that I wasn't perfect, and to accept that others weren't either. The Fifth Step took the deep shame I had always felt away from me. The Steps were changing me. I had found the solution.

We set up a 12 Step program for sex addiction, but our sobriety definitions were very different from those of SA. It folded after two years. I felt drawn closer and closer to SA. I reached a peak when I turned two-and-a-half years of sobriety. An SA visitor from another country explained to me that marriage was more important than I realized; little by little I started to see it had a spiritual dimension. I asked God for guidance. In the end I saw that I felt closer to God and got more freedom from lust when my bottom line was according to the SA sobriety definition.

In the summer of 1993, I met somebody who helped me to live better the principles of the Steps. But during this transition, so good for me, problems piled up. My fourth year of sobriety became the worst. I was alone, a loner in the city where I live. Once in a while I found sex addicts, but they were sex addicts who hadn't hit bottom, who hadn't lost the hope of "controlling and enjoying" lust, who wanted to learn how to drink "safely." I got used to being a loner. I had peritonitis and was about to die. I don't know how much my hospitalization, anesthetics, being

in a physical state where I could barely pray, and not having enough energy to turn my lust over to God, influenced the situation. I had some overwhelming legal problems, and my Third Step was losing strength, getting weaker and weaker. Lust was creeping back and taking over my soul. But God helped me and I stayed sober.

First he sent me an addict from New Jersey, an Hispanic who came to my country on vacation in the first days of July 1995. After three days of talking to him and sharing my temptations, I felt I was back on the firm ground I had walked in my first three years of sobriety. He stayed for 10 days and he was a blessing sent by God.

After that, I traveled to another European city and I couldn't believe what I saw. From a languishing SA group that had dwelt in the problem, a sober, strong group had grown with lots of members and five meetings a week. They lived in the solution. They worked the Steps. They looked happy. I was astonished. I wrote an inventory of my lust during my years of sobriety and asked the members with more than a year of sobriety to listen to it and give me some kind of feedback. They were very hard on my flirting with lust during my fourth year. One member asked me: "Are you done or do you need more?" I didn't like these words. How they hurt!!! I thought they were being unfair to me. Afterwards I could see it wasn't like that. They were confronting my ego, my lust. And to confront lust you have to have a strong vocabulary. They suggested several things: "Call us as many times as you need. Don't care about the money."

I committed myself to call at least once a week. But if I needed it, I was willing to call much more, three or even seven times a week. They insisted that if I wanted to attract people, I had to become "attractive" spiritually. To do that I needed to be permanently

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in touch with other recovering sex addicts, as much as I needed, no matter how far away from my country they were. I remembered the words of the oldtimer from the USA I had met in 1993: "You need another recovering sexaholic to get current with on a daily basis."

I started to tell God in my prayers, "Lord, if you want me to set up an SA group, please, give me the strength and the willingness." "Thy will, not mine, be done." And people started to ask for help. Today we are several committed members. If this were my work, I would tremble to think what might happen, asking myself when everybody else was going to leave the program. But just as I am powerless over lust, I cannot organize a group based on spiritual principles, let alone make people live spiritual principles and recover. It's the work of the One who has given me what I was looking for in lust.

Today, to stay sober, I try to stay in touch with other sexaholics. If I can, on a daily basis -- over the phone or one-on-one-- I share my temptations and they share theirs. Most of the time no feedback is necessary and I try not to give any unless it's strictly necessary. The bottom line is acknowledging I'm powerless over lust, turning my life over to God and sharing my temptations on a daily basis.

For me, the real battle is the one over my temptations and desire to look. I avoid "looking at" women in the street - more difficult in summer! But if my eyes go away I start praying for the woman whose image captured my eyes, turn my eyes away and say: "Lord, may I find in you what I'm looking for in that person." Instead of contacting the image created by my lust, I make the right Connection and I contact God. I thank Him for that opportunity to connect with Him. It is He that my lust was really looking for. But what my

lust found were substitutes that gave me no lasting, no deep satisfaction, but left me anxious, in pain and with the same void.

The more I work the program, the more lust loses strength. Every time I surrender a temptation, a thought, lust backs out. For me the key is in the Steps and in union with God and others. To turn my life and my will over to God. To identify and acknowledge my resentments, fears and character defects in order to surrender them, asking God to remove them, and finding a peace I never dreamt of every time I do it, restoring my relationships with others and giving instead of taking -- I'm just at the beginning and everything is so different! Although I have received a lot, I have no strength to walk ahead, but I ask for strength of the One who is infinitely more powerful than my lust and my ego, even when I don't feel like asking or praying.

Group News

Over the weekend of April 25-27, the third Australian SA Conference was held in Yackandandah, Victoria. With 24 members attending from various parts of Australia, this was the largest conference so far, and we are growing slowly in numbers and sobriety. The theme of the conference was "We Are Responsible." S-Anon was represented for the first time with Australia's lone S-Anon member. Three members gave First Step presentations. Some of the meetings were taped. At the business meeting, the Australian Intergroup was formally begun. We now have a national phone service with the number listed in all capital city phone books. A Loners Committee was also formed and a scholarship fund created to assist members to attend conferences and retreats.

Following are some comments from members who attended the conference in Yackandandah:

"At the conference and following it, God revealed a bunch of stuff to me. I could see that although I was attending SA for more than two-and-a-half years, I was still a dry drunk. I was not working the program and was taking in lust through different inlets. I also saw the degree of abuse in my relationship with my wife. My ego was like an inflated hot air balloon and I could see the fear, anxiety and selfishness. It was a triple whammy. After I got back I shared with a few people about the extent of my bankruptcy.

"I shared in our SA meeting that I was coming to the meetings as an obligation and that my heart was not really in it. What a difference it brought to the whole atmosphere! When I took that first step to be honest, others also began to get honest. I have been listening to the SA tapes. I have been making amends to my wife about some of the stuff that I had done to her. In one of the tapes the speaker said that intimacy is when I can let my guts hang out. When I started to do that with my wife, she became more loving and I am beginning to understand what true intimacy is all about.

"I had been trying to understand the 12 Steps with my head and now I can see the futility of trying to understand a spiritual program that way. I am beginning to see so many of my character defects. Until the conference, I did not see that I had so much fear inside me. I have started sharing about my fear and that has helped a lot. I am starting from scratch in my recovery and that feels good." J.M.

"The conference gave me a new perspective on sobriety. I now realize that it's not enough for me to stay sober for the sake of not going back "out

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there." The conference showed me that recovery brings precious gifts and gave me a positive rather than a negative impetus to work the program. I am starting to count my 'lust free days,' the sort of days that I need to realize the gifts." S.M.

(Australian Conference report submitted by P.H.)

Impressions of OKC

[The Oklahoma City Jan 97 SA Convention] was my second convention in the States -- the first was of another S-fellowship. What impressed me about this one was the substantial number of members with five to ten years of solid sobriety. There was a very strong emphasis on the solution rather than the problem. It was also great to see so many people from different ethnic and religious groups. It was a great reminder that this disease is no respecter of persons.

If the truth be known, the convention left me feeling rather flat. The high spot for me was an ordinary SA meeting downtown on the following day. Here I saw the fellowship in action. No hype, no frills, no convention buzz, just 25 ordinary people trying to stay sober. My heart opened for the first time in seven days. They say that the soul moves at the speed of a camel. I guess it had just taken that long for it to arrive at Oklahoma City. N.S., UK.

"A New Beginning"

Around 40 SAs and S-Anons from the U.K., Ireland, the USA, Austria and Luxembourg gathered at a retreat house atop London's Mill Hill for "A New Beginning" over the weekend of March 21-23. SAUK's national phone line was launched (44-7000-725463, which will spell SA LINE on UK dialling pads). Tapes of this and previous UK events are now available from Martin at Recovery Enterprises, at 44-7000-560752. Address: The Mail Office, P.O. Box 131, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 2YR. UK. I. R.

Greetings from Guam

Greetings from the Guam SA Group. We're alive and well -- three regular members, with perhaps a fourth. Some slips, but the growth and recovery are amazing! Thank God for SA! D.P.

New Groups

Columbia, SC
E. Bethany, NY (Buffalo)
Fargo, ND
Mid Hudson Valley, NY
Westlake Village, CA
Yorba Linda, CA

Cairns, Australia
Calgary, "No Other Option" AB,
Canada, 3rd meeting
Cornwall, PEI, Canada

Feedback Corner

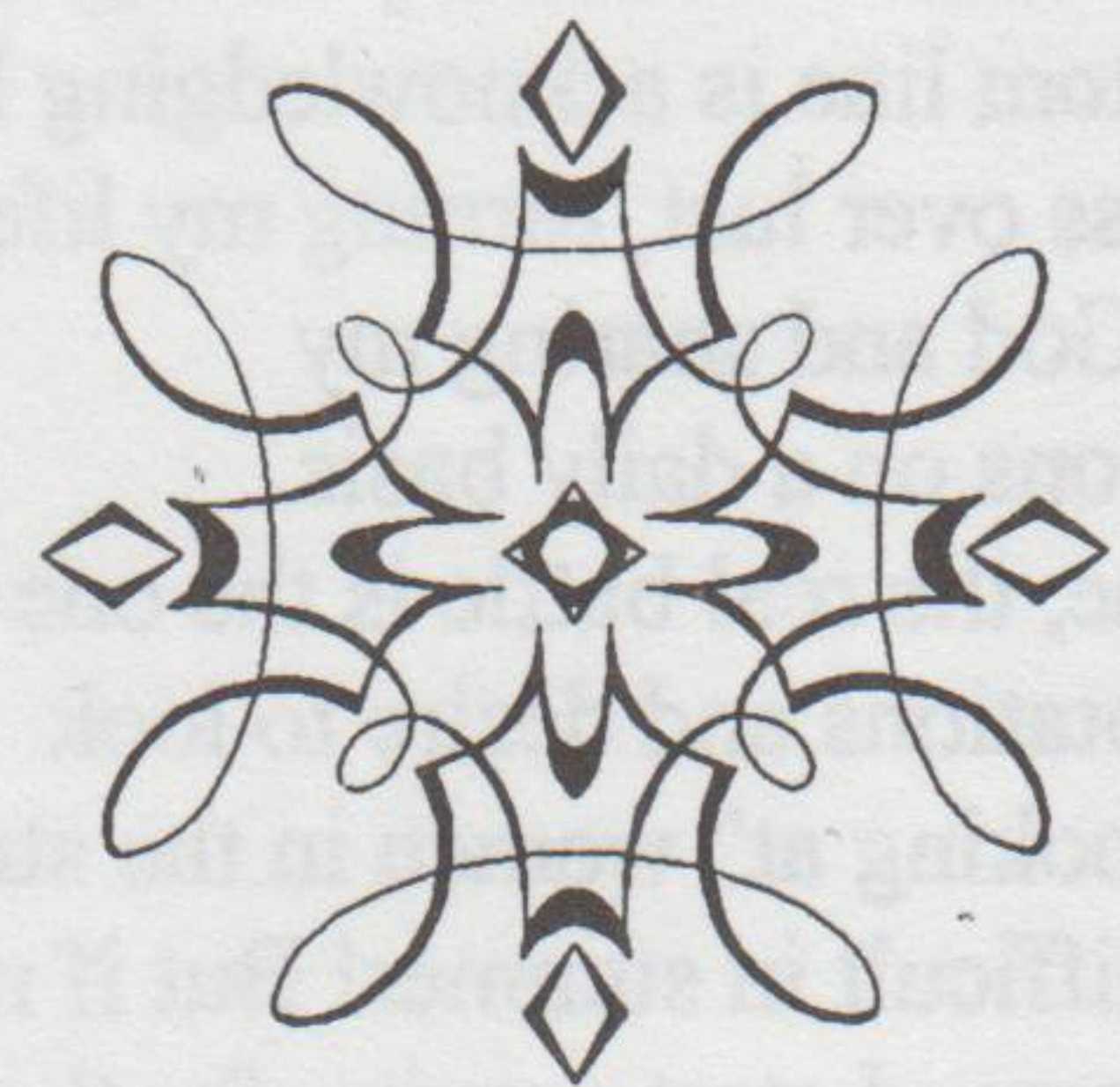
As requested in the March 1997 issue of the *Essay*, below are some ideas for increasing the distribution of the *Essay*.

Have *Essay* subscription forms on the literature table at meetings, retreats and conferences.

Receive the money for subscriptions at meetings, retreats and conferences and sent a list of subscriptions to the International Central Office.

If members don't want the *Essay* sent to their home address, enable them to use the group or intergroup postal address. That way subscriptions can be addressed to "Curly Joe," "Truckie Norm," or "Big John."

Have back issues of the *Essay* for sale on literature tables. P.H.



Member Sharing

Using The Tools

My family and I took a vacation recently. In preparation I called motels and found one near our vacation area that was affordable.

When I spoke with the motel owner I told her that I would be with my wife, who was in her ninth month of pregnancy, and three children all under the age of 11, and that we needed a safe area. She assured me it was, and I felt secure that I had provided well for my family's comfort. We planned to spend four nights at this motel.

The first day of the trip was both exhilarating and exhausting. As my sponsor had promised, I felt a sense of imbalance as evening approached. I was glad that I had arranged beforehand to attend an 8 p.m. AA meeting near the motel. I needed recharging and a reconnection. As I drove down the highway, I could almost taste the How it Works and the Promises.

I turned off the highway and proceeded down the street to the motel. I instantly knew that I had entered the red light district of this small city. My mood did not just change, but rather my whole being was transformed. I had not been on one of these strips for a long time. And here were my wife and kids all in the car, all looking for the motel, all seeing my inner shame exhibited on the street. What was inside of me had become that which we saw in the external world. I was devastated, scared, and seemed transported back to the time before the surrender of the First Step. I felt caught with my hand in the cookie jar. I looked at the red light establishments and I lusted.

But not for long. I could feel the

penetrating ray of my lust shooting from the back of my skull, and I did what my sponsor had taught me to do. I prayed, "God, whatever I seek to find in those places, may I please find it in You." After the prayer I resolved to stay but one night in this motel (which was located in the middle of the district, surrounded by pornography), to call my sponsor, and to make that AA meeting.

But first I had to let the shame out of my system. When we reached the motel and had unpacked I turned to my wife and said, "This is not a good place for me." She replied that it was not a good place for any of us. She agreed that we should stay the night, as we were exhausted, and leave the next day.

I tried to reach my sponsor but found the phone would not allow me to use my calling card. I then proceeded to the AA meeting. The drive had less of a pull on me at this point, but I was still very much aware of the lights and enticements. I resolved to talk about what was happening to me and my family at the AA meeting, but I felt somewhat reluctant as I did not know how it would be received. After all, this was not an SA meeting.

The theme of the meeting was letting God run the show. I asked God to speak for me and then spoke about my lust addiction as it related to Steps 4 and 5. As I spoke I felt the alcoholics acknowledge my predicament. Their soft laughter communicated volumes about their understanding. I spoke of working on lust through Steps 6 and 7, and their nods communicated volumes about their empathy. And when I spoke of making a living amends to my wife through abstinence from all pornography utilizing Steps 8 and 9, their quietness communicated

volumes about their love. I found my reconnection with God in the eyes of sober drunks for whom the 12 Steps are a tangible reality, perhaps the only reality. (I believe I now have the means to talk about lust, food, media, alcohol, etc, at all 12 Step meetings. I just need to relate them to the God-given 12 original Steps of recovery.)

When I drove back to the motel, the porno places, the flashing lights, the enticements, all had disappeared. I did not see them anymore. They did not pull me anymore. The penetrating ray of lust was shut down. There was no more shame. There was no more misconnection. I felt reunited again with my God and looked forward to my time with my family.

In the motel room, we locked the door and put on the chain. I ate my dinner, and read stories to my children. I was again calm and serene. In this room the storm had subsided. I got on my knees and thanked God for a sober day, asking God to keep me sober that night. I slept a guilt-free sleep, and arranged for a new motel first thing in the morning, after my prayers. S.W.

Progressive Victory Over Lust

Two years into the program and growing more and more cocky about my power over myself, during my first major crisis I slipped into my old patterns. Caught by the trance leading up to masturbation, I ended two years of what I would now call abstinence. In the carelessness brought on by thinking I was in control, I acted out. I was more conscious of two years I had spent

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without acting out than of the SA program that made sobriety possible. A week with no meetings, without a call to my sponsor, was inviting a relapse, and it happened.

Each day of abstinence had brought a dwindling of my shame at choosing my lust pleasures. I was really thinking I had stopped acting out because I had told myself I would never do it again. I acted out without even thinking about it, not even noticing how I had lied to myself.

My relapse was born in the false belief I was impervious to temptations of lust. Only two years of sober time and I was wondering if I needed the program any more. The rituals of my acting out were just below the surface waiting to claim me. Sobriety was inviting me to be consciously aware of all the ways that the tease of those rituals could still exercise power over me and I was not noticing. I was in denial.

The recovery of the four years since that slip, working the program, has brought a difference. Now every time a temptation rears its ugly head, I am aware of the need for victory over lust. No longer am I wondering how many victories I need before I have the final victory. Now I know that each victory can only speak for itself. No victory is the final victory until we are eight days in the grave and there is no life left in us.

I see victory over lust in the victories I am having now. I am grateful that lust is not my every thought because I am aware of how terrible life was when my freedom was lost to the trance of lust. Each temptation is now set to rest in the surrender to the Higher Power. The God of my sober life tells me if I

would love him, to keep his commandments. Each victory makes the choice a little easier because evil no longer holds as powerful an attraction for me as before. Each victory is an act of love for God when I am choosing God over what once ruled my soul. This is how our program becomes a Spiritual Program.

As I replace patterns of my life that once chained me to lust with new patterns of the program, I realize that final sobriety belongs to heaven when I will see God as God, and all the allurements of life will have been put in their proper places. I am not surprised that I can be tempted in this world of mine. I am chilled by the realization of how powerful those temptations can still be, but in surrender I am content in the realization that no temptation will ever be stronger than the help of my Higher Power. The victory over lust that my Higher Power gives me is my daily newfound sobriety. God does not ask me to trust in myself. Trusting him will keep the progressive victory over lust coming. J.M.

I Could Not Attain Sobriety on my Own

I write this to express my gratitude to my Higher Power and SA for the gift of sexual sobriety. It has been a goal all my life but I could not attain it on my own, no matter how I tried. God knows how hard I tried! I grew up in an alcoholic home with a lot of violence. My father was an alcoholic who never got into recovery. My mother was a devout Irish Catholic who taught us children to be loving, decent and above all, to be chaste. I could not live up to that and consequently, I was prey to a lot of shame and guilt as I grew up.

I was in the fog all through puberty. I would hide in the upstairs back room to get away from the violence and I got into the habit of lustful fantasies, desires which led to masturbation once and sometimes twice a week. Each time this happened, I was filled with guilt and shame and self-loathing. I would go to another city to confession as I was too ashamed to go to the local priest who knew me. Then in a short time, I would repeat the process and this would reinforce my low self-esteem. I did not lose my belief in God but I thought God did not love me because of my repeated failure. I followed an older brother into religious life, but even then I did not stop acting out but would go to confession and promise not to masturbate ever again. I took to drinking to kill the pain and quickly became an alcoholic. Finally, in 1982, I went for treatment and I had a lot of denial and a few slips, but I always admitted the slips at meetings.

Finally, on retirement at the age of 70, I went to a therapy center and the group confronted me about my depression and anger and low self-esteem and finally, about masturbation. They recommended I go for help and sent me to SA. When I got here, the SAs told me I was addicted to lust and that I was not a bad person, but sick. Wow, what a relief! Why it never dawned on me that for me lust was an addiction and that I was powerless is a mystery. I indeed believe it is an addiction and though I had some denial about my alcoholism, I had no denial that I am a sexaholic. I have to avoid lust totally. For me, it is a mental obsession and if I allow my mind to dwell on lust, I am lost and back into acting out, slavery and sadness. I learned in philosophy that

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nothing comes into the mind except first through the senses. So I have to keep a close guard on my mind and imagination and my senses -- especially the senses of sight and sound. Pornography and lust are no farther away from me than the touch of a button! I have come to know a power greater than myself in restoring me to sanity. I am okay and serene so long as I don't take that first drink. If I do I am lost again and back into the addiction that is patient and always waiting for me.

I am in my second year of sobriety and I can hardly believe all the good changes that are happening to me. I thank SA, my sponsor, the 12 Steps and the fellowship. I am free and do not have to live in self-loathing, slavery and sadness -- truly, beyond my wildest dreams. A lot of other good things are happening too. A lot less negative thinking, isolating and self-centeredness.

SA has made a believer out of me. I believe if I continue to work the program, I will get better and better and maybe God can use me to help another suffering sexaholic into recovery. Thank you God and SA.

D.O.

Commitment to Service

Service is important, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it is usually more difficult to relapse when giving service than when not. However, "service" is not a sure fire "cure" for relapse, but it certainly helps.

Another equally important reason for service is the opportunity to give back what had been given to me over the years. Let's face it, if there weren't any service, there probably

wouldn't be an SA International Central Office, or Intergroup. On a local level, if no one is giving service, there probably won't be a meeting secretary or a core group of members to carry the meeting through the "lean" times. And if there are no officers, there probably won't be a meeting there for long. And if the meeting goes dark, where do I go for support? Lust is far too cunning, baffling and powerful for me to tangle with on my own. In fact, every time I try to deal with lust on my own, my attempts are doomed to failure.

That's how important the fellowship is. Without the fellowship, there probably would be no recovery. And without service, there probably wouldn't be fellowship. I'm not negating God in this equation. It's been my personal experience that God usually works through people and circumstances. Take away the people and there's no reason for the circumstance -- a meeting. Without the meeting and the fellowship, how will God communicate his message to you?

Service provides a means for the continuation of the fellowship, as well as the organization. Somebody has to be there to greet the newcomer, open the door, get the meeting started, put the chairs away afterwards, collect the money, buy literature, produce meeting schedules, conduct and participate in business meetings, chair conferences, respond to mail, answer the phone, and hundreds of other things we now take for granted.

Service is also a way to get blessed. By giving, we receive. I don't understand it. I just acknowledge it. This is another one of those 12 Step paradoxes that crop up all over the place. M.S.

Examining my Motives for Starting an SA Meeting

In the wake of the new focus on book study meetings a few years ago, I wanted to start such a meeting Thursday night, a night when there were no meetings in my metropolitan area. Admittedly, I wanted it near where I lived as well, but other SA members did live in the vicinity. I approached the church that I attended and was given permission to use a classroom for the meeting.

I announced the meeting, provided maps and eagerly awaited the attendees. A total of six attended the first meeting, at which we affirmed my vision for it to be a book study meeting. The meeting never had that many attendees again.

At least one out of every four Thursdays, I was alone with my literature, the treasury, and the key to the room. Had I been in an area where there were no other meetings available, I would have seen the need to stick it out. But there was obviously nothing attractive about this meeting aside from the book-study format. After nine months, the meeting folded.

Only recently has it struck me why this meeting did not succeed -- I made this my meeting, my legacy. While I have known meetings that others started primarily out of geographic convenience, I also started it because I wanted it to be great. I promoted it. I did not trust anyone else to help me because I wanted the praise for the meeting to be mine. I was the secretary, treasurer and literature person. I almost envisioned myself receiving the "SA Meeting of the Year" award, as if there were one!

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I placed my personality way before principles. Since I kept the responsibility for the meeting to myself, ultimately I was left with myself.

I haven't started any meetings since, but others have done so in my area. They sought out others who wished to commit to a meeting that filled a geographic or time-of-day need, and began them together. The "founder" then sought to give away his position and share the load. These have begun evolving into solid SA meetings as a result.

I thank my Higher Power for humbling me and allowing me to share with you this lesson in humility I had to learn in order to become, as a fellow member puts it, "just another bozo on the bus." P.T.

The Hardest Lesson is Surrender

I know the discouragement and self-doubt of sitting in a meeting room by myself over and over again and waiting for someone to come. Then when they came, I spent years being discouraged at the people who didn't stay. In our early days in Bozeman, one other member who had often been the only other person in the meeting, said, "Why aren't people staying?" I was finally able to laugh and ask him back, "Why would a person be crazy enough to walk into a meeting with us two lunatics and want what we have?" It takes time to have enough to offer people to stay.

The slowest and hardest lesson to learn is surrender. We don't do the work. God does the work. And God does the work as quickly as we let him. Bill W. of AA, in the first three months after his spiritual experience, said to his wife, Lois,

that the program wasn't working. She said to him, "On the contrary, Bill, it is working. This is the first time you've been sober for 90 days."

On an oldtimer tape I have, a guy said that in his first four years from 1935 to 1939, when the Big Book came out, there were only three people with over a year's sobriety in New York -- the guy speaking, Bill W., and Hank P., who left AA after the book came out. Imagine Bill's agony of working for four years with drunks and having so little external to show for it. But Bill stayed sober. And his pain certainly must have been a big help in inspiring him as he was writing the book.

On the other end of the New York-Akron axis, Dr. Bob was able to get a group started and was a part of keeping it going as long as he lived. It spun off the Cleveland group and there were 5,000 who went through the hospital helped by Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatious. Do you think Bill was able to avoid a lot of soul-searching about that one? But Bill kept on.

I've worked with hundreds of people. Only a few of them are sober. But in the last five years most of the people I've worked with closely are sober. I don't know what's going on. All I know is that I have to keep reaching out so I can stay sober today. J.L.

Donations for the First Quarter

Akron, OH-	\$ 117.25	Greeley, CO	20.00	Slidell, LA	15.00
Alhambra, CA	66.00	Greenwich, CT	200.00	Somerville, MA	120.00
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Asheville, NC	120.50	Madrid, Spain	20.00	Steubenville, OH	28.00
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Aurora, IL	25.00	Milwaukee, WI	79.00	Timonium, MD	35.00
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Columbus, OH	140.00	Philadelphia, PA	14.00		
Corona, CA	22.00	Pittsburgh Conference	40.00	Group Total	13,954.03
Crystal City, VA	808.11	Pleasanton, CA	35.00		
Crystal Lake, IL	75.00	Portland, OR	516.56	Individual Total	1,105.51
Dallas, TX	80.00	Rapid City, SD	33.50		
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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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	8.50	Zone 8	2001 + miles
Over 5 lb up to 10 lb	6.50	Zones 1 - 3	0 - 250 miles
	7.50	Zone 4	250 - 650 miles
	8.50	Zone 5	651 - 1200 miles
	9.50	Zone 6	1201 - 1700 miles
	10.50	Zone 7	1701 - 2000 miles
	11.50	Zone 8	2001 + miles
Over 10 lb up to 15 lb	7.50	Zones 1 - 3	0 - 250 miles
	8.50	Zone 4	251 - 651 miles
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