

ESSAY

SA, POB 300
Simi Valley, CA 93062
20 May 1984

Dear Friends in SA,

This news letter is going out to all groups on file at the General Service Office here in Simi Valley. It is also being sent to individual members who represent groups or potential groups for information as well as to individual SA members. This is an "action requested" newsletter; that is, it would be very helpful if you and/or your group respond to what I'm calling our first SA inventory.

Those persons receiving this letter for the whole group are asked to make it available to all members in the group. Also, active remote members handled as leads should be sent copies where appropriate.

As you know, the Fourth Step is a "searching and fearless moral inventory" made by the individual working the Steps to expose and work on the wrongs in his life. Sometimes groups make group inventories based on how they measure up to the Twelve Traditions. This is what I'm suggesting we do now, only at the level of the whole Fellowship.

I want us to know the truth about ourselves. At this time of new and rapid growth I think it important that we "stop, look, and listen" to the reality of what we are—both the good and the not-so-good, the successes and failures. If we all participate honestly in this thing it can also be a way of binding us closer together. Thus, I'll list several items I'd like you to respond to in writing. Groups can figure out how they want to do this to get a true representation of how members respond to these items. Individual members should be allowed to respond privately. Perhaps one business meeting can be set aside to pass out pieces of paper to all members for them to comment on each of the items, uninfluenced by the opinions of others.

I. SA Inventory

1. You. How are you doing? Are you sober? According to the SA concept of sexual sobriety? How long? Are you comfortable with it? If you'd care to, we'd love to have you write something about where you're at or what's been happening in you in the Program. What's it like on the inside? Can you share honestly at depth in meetings? How's your relation with others? Your marriage? Progressive victory over lust?

2. Your Group. How's your group doing? Any sober members? How long?

What is the quality of recovery in your group? Is there a growing base of sexual sobriety and spiritual growth? Is recovery there? Is God there?

Is your group using the SA literature? How?

What meeting formats are you using? How are they working out? Any suggestions?

Enclose a copy of yours if you feel it might be helpful or if you want to share it.

Is the AA literature being used? How?

Do you have any Step Study meetings? Using AA's Big Book? Twelve and Twelve? The SA book?

Is any other literature being used?

Has your group followed through on all its leads received from GSO? Please report on what has happened with your leads.

3. First Step Inventory. What's been your experience with the First Step inventory, if any? Pros and cons. (We've added a caution at the end of this section in the most recent printing of the booklet to the effect that a First Step Inventory should never take the place of the person's First Step experience—acknowledgement at depth of one's powerlessness over lust and the unmanageability of one's emotional life.)

4. Literature. What's your feeling about the SA brochure and booklet? Be specific. If you wish, you may write detailed comments or mark up a copy and send it to me at the above address, but only those who've read the whole thing, please.

By the way, for those who don't know, the SA material has been bound and printed in booklet form (122 pages). Available for \$5.00 from the General Service Office at the above address. (Make checks payable to SA GSO.)

5. Seventh Tradition. What's your feeling about having your SA group help support SA world services as AA does? In AA, groups are encouraged to contribute regularly a portion of what's left over from passing the hat after all group expenses are met. The operation here at GSO is not yet fully self-supporting as our Seventh Tradition would have us be. For example, the actual dollar cost of getting this newsletter out will run about \$200 when actual expenses are added up. The SA phone bill runs over \$100/month. Our office help (non-sexaholic) has been running as much as \$150/week (at \$5.00/hour). (Of course, no one else is paid anything; all other work is voluntary.) \$700/month is probably an average figure for total expenses. Do you want your group to help support this effort?

6. The Work at GSO. It's time to report on the work at the General Service Office. Since June 1981, we have responded to about 6500 inquiries from the public, have written hundreds of letters to SA members near and far, trying to help them get and stay sober and start their own groups. All correspondence received is filed in steel file cabinets and kept confidential. Member and group files are updated daily and correspondence filed. Leads to all areas other than California and foreign are sent out to responsible groups or individuals. Contact with the various media is maintained in a professional courteous manner, even though we've granted no interviews. Information is constantly being sent to agencies and institutions. There is much contact maintained with loner members in prison or in isolated areas which involves considerable letter writing on a personal level, often enclosing free literature. Hundreds of phone calls are made to members and non-members alike (we subscribe to MCI for lowest possible long-distance rates). The SA literature has been prepared, edited, and printed here. We've sent out thousands of pieces of literature since 1979.

II. Concerning the December 1983 get-together:

Let's look at the positive side: First, the get-together helped get the SA booklet into being; and it has so far proven to be much-needed and helpful to many. Somehow, getting it together and bound, even in the form that it is, puts SA into a position it didn't have before. It seems to be kind of a catalyst, making new things happen. This aspect of it is slowly becoming apparent from the increasing demand for it and comments from members new and old.

Secondly, various groups around the country and Canada are sharing the responsibility of handling leads from inquirers. This hasn't worked out 100% (many inquirers have had to write their third letter wondering why they haven't been contacted) but it is working out; we do have some groups now that are eager to take the load for their areas and beyond.

The December 1983 get-together has helped us see that we are still in the process of being born. SA, though "on the books" since 1979, is still in its infancy; we have not yet "come of age" in the sense that AA "came of age" in 1955. Our sobriety is still shaky and being tested. We're not ready for instant full-blown organization; we're still learning in many areas; we're not out of the woods yet.

The December 1983 get-together was apparently an important learning experience and we have learned much from it, both what to do and what not to do.

III. Concerning Publicity:

Recently one or more members granted interviews with the press, which were published in a local newspaper but then picked up by other papers in the chain and by the wire services. One member's first name and home address were listed in the newspaper article, and that member has been inundated with inquiries. This kind of situation creates the problem of not only responding quickly and responsibly to each inquirer but also the problem of follow-up for those who come back and say they want in. The roster of SA members and groups changes daily; to try and duplicate the central files for every member or group would be impossible. It is only logical to have one central office handle all inquiries and responses and follow-up at the national and international levels.

Our national policy on interviews with the media is still what it has been since 1981—we are not granting any. Twelfth Step work is not giving United Press International the go-ahead on SA; we can do that any time. Twelfth Step work is carrying the message of what we are, where we are, and leaving the results up to God. In this day of instant media communications, what is done in a corner may affect the entire membership of SA. Hence, such matters are better left to the General Service Office, as it is responsive to the larger group conscience over time. Otherwise, SA's right hand won't know what its left hand is doing. We'll be giving conflicting messages to the world out there. And those in true need will ultimately be the losers. Bill W's wisdom is to the point here: the good can be the enemy of the best. Our "save-the-world" complex can be dangerous.

As we get our own house in order, with some solid long-term sexual and emotional sobriety under our belts all around the country and more responsible groups to help carry the load and support the financial needs arising from national publicity, we'll be in a better position to select and control such publicity instead of being at its mercy. This was the key to AA's policy and practice. Let's make haste slowly and make sure we have

something lasting to give—our own sobriety, unity, resources, and the grace of God.

The Numbers Game

This brings up the issue of numbers. I must confess that in the past I've probably been SA's worst offender at being tempted by the numbers game. At times I let myself be seduced into believing numbers were the key to success. As though SA was a secular entity where externals were the measure of the man. If SA is anything worthwhile, it is a spiritual entity, where everything flows from the inside out. Numbers mean very little; quality is everything. And what is the quality of the message we're carrying today? Remember that the only message you and I can carry is the truth, not what we know or say but the truth of who we are. Who am I today? Who are you?

IV. Group Inventory

Perhaps now is the time for us not only to take an SA inventory, but for us to take our group inventories, based on the Twelve Traditions. How does my group rate when evaluated against the Twelve Traditions? Is our main purpose to carry the message of what we are to the sexaholic who still suffers? If we aren't sexually sober we have no message to carry other than the message of our illness.

Is the 12 Step program in our group? Is there an impulse to carry the message, or is the group ingrown? Is there unity? Are we observing the tradition of non-affiliation? Etc.

V. New Groups

Are you listed with GSO? If not, please provide us with the name, address and phone number of the group contact person for our GSO mailing list. Do you know of any groups not listed? A list of cities having SA groups or groups on the verge of getting started that we know of is appended to this letter.

VI. Salt Lake City Get-Together

The Salt Lake City, Utah groups are holding a combined get-together June 1-3 in Salt Lake City and are inviting all other SA members and any S-Anon spouses to join them in a retreat of meetings and fellowship. There will be both closed and open SA meetings and a couple of combined SA/S-Anon meetings. For motel reservations and particulars call Steve or Lydia Mc at 801/268-3074 or Chris at 801/359-0265. Airport pickup arrangements have already been made.

VII. For Those Having a Hard Time With Sobriety

Most SA groups experience a common dilemma: Many walk through the doors, but few achieve lasting sexual sobriety. This matter is constantly on our hearts, and we should seek God individually and collectively in this matter.

We are suggesting that each one of us, including those who can't get or stay sober, start praying for one other member who can't stay sober. Every time we are in defeat or in the pits, let's pray for that other member, perhaps the one we dislike the most or the one having the hardest time of it. This is one practical way of working the Twelfth Step. And let's each group pray for one other group that is having a hard time of it; perhaps a new or neighboring group. I also ask for your prayers—that I may have the knowledge of

His will and the power to carry that out.

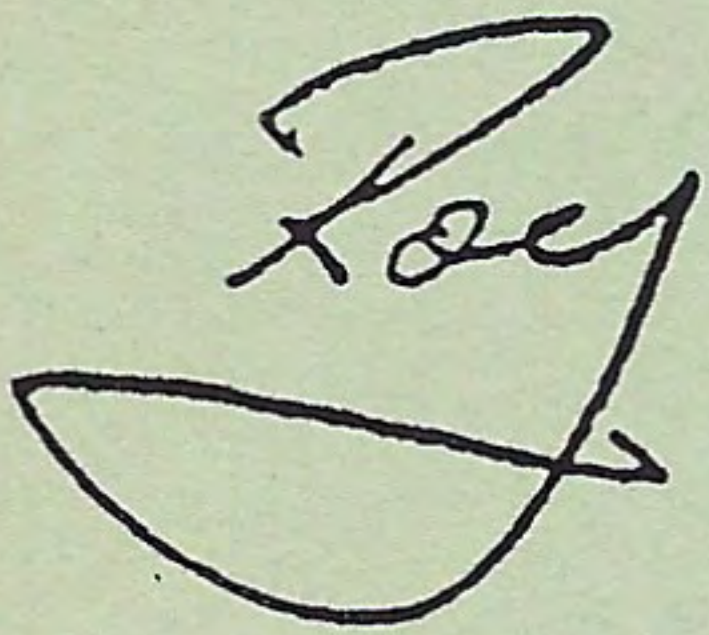
VIII. Personal

I've been rediscovering the second half of the First Step lately. My emotional life is unmanageable. But just as my admission of powerlessness over lust is the key to my sexual sobriety, so my admission of powerlessness over my emotions is the key to my emotional sobriety. What a liberating force this dual admission of powerlessness can be when I turn it over to God and get the strength to function that I otherwise do not have! Thank God, what a gift!

IX. Send In Your Experience, Strength, and Hope

We're asking sober SA members to send in personal articles telling of their experience, strength, and hope so we can see how people are doing and perhaps share them with others. Let's hear from you!

Yours through the grace of God,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roy". The signature is written in dark ink and is located below the closing "Yours through the grace of God,".