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24 August 1985

Dear Friends in SA,

This started out to be another issue of ESSAY, our Central Office newsletter, but has ended up being a miscellany of various items. Since we're going in soon for a bulk mailing permit with our special non-profit status, maybe we can get the Essay out more frequently. And if you and your group will send in the news about yourselves and your groups, we'll be sharing these as they come in with the Fellowship.

We had wanted to include sharing of members in our Seattle get-together, but ran into delays. However, we've included the tape order form from Warm Beach so you can place your own orders. The Warm Beach address is at the bottom of the form; write them, not the Box 300 address.

We have included some member comments on the Seattle get-together, however. It was a marvelous demonstration of God's grace and love in our midst! We're looking forward to Oklahoma City first weekend in December with great anticipation!

Forms and hotel registration cards for Oklahoma City are enclosed. Notice how reasonable registration and lodging are. So start saving up for the air fare. And remember that most airlines have "supersaver" fares, which are the lowest discount air fares, rivalling even the People's Express airline. Ask your travel agent or airline what the very lowest fares are; you'll be surprised. Supersaver fares require a month's advance registration and have restrictions. However, they're so popular, most are sold out two months in advance, so it's wise to make your supersaver reservation two or three months in advance.

We've made known the needs here before, but for the first time are reporting facts and figures, as appear on the Central Office Summary sheet for 1984. You'll see from this why I've written the enclosed piece entitled, "Can We Do What's Never Been Done?" This is my hope and prayer and vision; see if you agree. This will set the stage for the changes that must come about if we are to become united and responsible as one Fellowship.

The Literature List answers a long-standing request from many members. It includes the three standard items of SA literature and other pieces that have been evolving over time. The need for "Publicity and the Twelfth Step" has come from many groups and individuals asking for my opinion; take it as just that. I've revised "Sobriety and the Subconscious" based on member inputs; it is now "Sobriety and the Self," enclosed.

The Suggested Meeting Format enclosed with the 15 April mailing is enclosed again, with four lines deleted. We've discovered in some meetings that when "sober" members are asked to respond to "newcomers" we can descend into a group therapy type of interaction which is contrary to the best 12-Step tradition. Members with 31 days sobriety are telling those with 29 days what it's all about. That's an exaggeration, of course, but you get the point. Give our egos an inch and they'll take a mile! We've found it seems to work better to delete the lines crossed out, as you'll see on the new enclosed format. Using the time-tested AA format of always speaking in the "I" and not the "you" and not

giving direct advice seems to work best in the long run. Again, please give us your feedback as you have been doing. It's interesting that all those using the new format who have reported on it say it has been a positive step in the right direction. Some say it has turned their whole group around.

The call is going out for stories again, from SA members with one year or more of continuous uninterrupted sexual sobriety according to our statement of sobriety. Perhaps groups could discuss this and submit accordingly. Typewritten, double-spaced preferred. Let your group be the first screening process. Remember, we don't want First Step inventories or sexalogs. We want recovery stories with total sobriety and progressive victory over lust and healing in relation with others: What it used to be like in general terms, What happened; that is, How did you get and stay sober? and what your life is like now.

The Central Office could sure use a xerox machine, even a small one with no frills. *duddy*
There are so many times, with some 8000 pieces of mail handled last year, for example, when a letter or receipt must be copied. It means going a couple of miles each time. The convenience would be unbelievable!

I've been asked to tell my story (not speak for SA) at a psychosomatic clinic in West Germany, and it looks like I'll be traveling there mid-October. Also, it'll give me a chance to meet with the SA members (and S-Anon) there. I sure need your prayers for this trip! For "the knowledge of His will and the power to carry that out."

If you want to remain on this SA mailing list or want to be put on the list, please fill out the enclosed form and send it back. Nan is trying to update the files, and we don't want to be sending all kinds of stuff to those no longer interested. Plus, this might be a good way of carrying out the suggestion made in Seattle that each active member give \$2.00/month (\$24/year) to help put the Central Office expenses into the black so we can be fully self-supporting in our world service work.

Give us your inputs.

See you in Oklahoma City!



P.S. Please see to it that all those in your group who might like to read this newsletter and the enclosed material get a chance to do so, as you would want if the situation were reversed.



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Member Comments on the Seattle Convention

The tapes of the Sunday morning session revealed some personal comments on the get-together. Randy S. of Marina del Rey, CA dug up some of these nuggets and transcribed them for us. It might help in such future sessions to have those speaking identify themselves not only by name but also by city or group. Too hard to identify them on tape.

Harvey: "I got a feeling of the fellowship here, and for me it's really important because I'm such an isolated person. And for me to feel fellowship is really difficult because I avoid closeness. I've never had closeness without attaching sex to it, so I can't really touch people or feel towards people...but now I feel I'm not alone."

John: "God has given me more awareness of myself, and connecting with these people is just another important part of my growth. I already know now that I'm probably going to be receiving gifts from this conference for some time in the future. What I've received from here is a little better understanding of my Higher Power, and I get that from the love I receive from each of you. I've never loved myself. I've received unconditional love from each one, and that teaches me a little more about my God. There are a lot of things I'm taking away from here: faith and hope."

Greg: "I have picked up a lot of renewed hope and faith in God. This is a very spiritual experience...I feel that whole person that I've never felt."

Dale: "I really sense the feeling of unity and togetherness in this conference....I saw happiness and joy."

Jean: "I've never felt more at home. I've never seen myself more clearly than I did this weekend. I saw prayers answered and I saw principles worked and I saw healing, recovery, strength, and unity."

Jesse: "The thing I loved so about the conference was the deep sense of fellowship I felt. It helped deepen and enrich my own program to see the dedication and love for sexual sobriety on the part of the new people as well as the older ones."

Steve: "One of the things I really appreciated was I noticed a lot of people were getting past the pain and getting into their program. I was impressed with the people we had there and the honesty and the wanting to get well and get rid of this illness and how it's affected their lives. It was a very spiritual retreat—a lot of God love going through and moving through people. I feel we're still struggling to discover our full identity, but as each of these conferences comes up, it's neat to see such a growing group consciousness across the nation; that it's governed and directed by God as we understand him."

Bill: "It meant a lot to me in terms of the sharing—being close, feeling close, and seeing everybody from different places all over the U.S. Some of the topics were very interesting. What really impressed me was the two priests I ran into. Talking and sharing with them was the high point for me. The feeling I went away with was contentment, satisfaction—real closeness. I didn't want to leave because of that warm closeness."

I'd like to add my own reflections on what Seattle meant for me. I feel it was a great breakthrough for me and for us as a whole. I came to Seattle in fear and left with faith that God is surely in SA. I went there knowing the huge problems we face in our groups, as individuals, and internationally; I came away knowing once again God had supplied abundantly more than we could ask or think. I went there knowing those problems could blow us to smithereens and left seeing they had brought us closer together. We came as isolates, never more conscious of that deadly isolation which is the hallmark of our malady. We left in a bond of unity greater than what we've ever known before.

The high point for me was Saturday afternoon when we got to the very heart of our program and gave away to each other and God the "top plate" surrender impossibility we were holding onto at that moment. Each one around the circle sent away that besetting wrong on the top of his or her consciousness. And we knew we were getting to the deep "nitty gritty." The honesty was intense and real. There was revelation of the self at depth. We became vulnerable to each other. We opened ourselves to one another. We each led with our weakness. And, I'm convinced, God honored this. As we closed the meeting, standing, embracing one another in that circle and saying the Lord's Prayer together—eyes open looking at each other—there was an effusion of glory I've never felt before in any SA meeting or any other type of meeting, for that matter. I thought any more and we'd start going up right through the ceiling!

How can that happen when we're so defective? The grace of God, that's how. I have a sneaking hunch He has something in store for us we can't even dream of.

And we saw another breakthrough. We came to Seattle rather grim, it seemed to me. But during one meeting—I forget which one—we broke through into hearty laughter. The heaviness was gone. Personally, I don't think we'll ever be the same. I know I won't. We can finally laugh at ourselves! And why not? Sobriety works!! Thank God!

I'm looking forward to Oklahoma City like I've never looked forward to any SA get-together before!

(Roy)

Can We Do What's Never Been Done?

Enclosed with this newsletter is a summary of the current financial situation here at the Central Office. Although our financial needs have been aired before in various newsletters since 1981, this is the first time we've provided the financial history. SA Central Office expenses are not fully supported by the fellowship. We have run short each year, and in the last few years it's been several thousand dollars short each year. And we're growing! Expenses are increasing every year. I've been glad to be able to make up the difference from my own pocket, but now that we're beginning to "come to" as a responsible Fellowship, it is not in our best interests for me to continue doing this. Indeed, I will no longer be able to do this financially. Plus, it is cheating the Fellowship of coming to maturity.

When Dear Abby hit with that unexpected column in June of 1981, there was a sudden avalanche of inquirers—some 3000 of them. There were only three of us sober at that time, with no one else to share the expenses connected with dealing with those inquirers. But I was overjoyed to use the mails and telephone and travel to "find my people"—those who identified and wanted sobriety. What a joy to be able to give productively for what I had been looking, longing, and working for since 1975! You couldn't have pulled me back with a team of horses!

As people responded from all over the country and beyond, there was no thought of insisting on 7th Tradition responsibility; they were all inquirers and newcomers! That's how my role and monetary support of the Central Office operation began; I simply started carrying the message through the great opportunity God had set before me with the means Iris and I had.

This continued, and the Simi "garage shop" operation came into being as the central "switchboard" for all those would-be members without groups. The first groups around the country were all formed about the same time through this process of hooking people up with one another through P O Box 300 and our telephone. This process is still going on, though groups are now also being formed through a variety of other means at an accelerating rate.

For me, the 12th Step and 7th Tradition seem to go together. Others can't do my own 12th Step work for me; I have to do it myself. Just as others can't do my growing up for me; I have to do it myself. And since part of my 12th Step work is carrying the message to others, I want to be responsible. I don't want others to have to carry my share. When I put something back into the world instead of taking like I used to, I am blessed. The measure I give of my means and myself is truly the measure I get back—and more!

During the Seattle get-together, the suggestion was made and unanimously approved that each active SA member give two dollars per month (\$24/year) to help support the expenses of running the Central Office. This was a magnificent gesture of trust, unity, and support. I was overwhelmed. We believe that this would pay for our non-sexaholic secretary and other expenses, such as phone, printing, postage, literature to inquirers and others, etc., and take us out of the red. (No member of SA, myself included, has ever received one cent or any remuneration of any kind; all work is on a voluntary basis. Looking into the future, however, we can see how as with AA, "our service centers may (have to) employ special workers." Tradition Eight. "Twelfth Step work is never paid for, but those who labor in service for us are worthy of their hire." 12 & 12 page 11.) However, since each group is autonomous, there is no way such a resolution can ever be implemented from this office. I'm leaving it up to you and yours.

My hope and prayer is that we will not have to resort to playing the finance game to support our national 12th Step work. Only one-third of all AA groups in the U.S. contribute anything to the expenses of the General Service Office in New York; the deficit is made up through profits from literature sales. I hope we can so be one in spirit and work that this will not be true of us and each of us can share in the very special blessing of being "a small part of a great whole."

"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity," our First Tradition reads. And we're beginning to discover this very thing! Is there any way words can describe what we felt in Seattle after we each one gave away the "top plate" of our besetting wrong, embraced one another in that circle, and said the Lord's Prayer together as we were partakers together of transcendent life? Yes, our own individual personal recovery does depend on our being welded together as one. Through our sexaholism, through our defects, through our surrender to God, through our victories, through our taking the actions of love for one another, and, when we have these, then working together in carrying the message—our message—to those who are still suffering.

Please help try to figure out how we can have more of what we so joyously discovered is ours in Seattle. Not only is it the deepest joy of our experience, we must have it to survive! The vacuum left when we unplug from all the substitute connections can only be filled with love for one another.

And can we join together, even in the most materialistic aspect of our common work and lives in supporting our world service function? Can we take it out of the materialistic realm so it too will be a part of our spiritual program? I'm looking to you for the answers. I don't have any. How can we do this in our own unique way—from the inside out—perhaps in a way that's never been done before?

1984 SA Central Office Summary

EXPENSES

Salary(one non-sexaholic secretary).....	\$ 7,803.36
Printing.....	\$ 7,755.56
Telephone.....	\$ 816.42
Postage.....	\$ 490.85
Supplies & Misc.....	\$ 1,953.52
Total expenses.....	\$18,819.71

INCOME

Gross literature sales (not profit from sales).....	\$10,036.59
Individual & group donations.....	\$ 740.99
Total income.....	\$10,777.58

DEFICIT

Total 1984 Deficit.....	\$ 8,042.13
Special 1984 contributions to eliminate deficit (Roy).....	\$10,437.22
SA end-of-year balance.....	\$ 2,395.09

LITERATURE

Number of pieces of mail handled in 1984.....	approx 7,900
Number of SA manuals sold or given away to date.....	2,600
Number of SA brochures sold or given away to date...	18,300

GROUPS AND MEMBERS

Estimated number of groups worldwide.....	300
Estimated number of members worldwide.....	3,000 or more