

# SSAY

Jan 1985

POB 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062

## **The Phoenix Convention**

First off, Rick and Jeannette want to "thank everybody for making it possible." And we want to thank you, Rick and Jeannette, and all the anonymous ones we don't have names for who helped put it together and made it work. And we thank God for helping us all!

Some have offered to write a more detailed account of what transpired during our get-together. I was too caught up in it all to take notes; here are a few highlights that stick in my mind.

Dr. Patrick Carnes had some interesting things to say about the addiction. (I'm told the tapes of his talk did not come out due to a recorder malfunction.) As I remember, his estimate was that something like eight percent of the U.S. population is in the sex addict category.

He had some very nice things to say about us. He thought we were "the best organized" of any of the Twelve Step programs dealing with sex addiction (if he only knew!). I think from the context of his remark he may have meant we were the most widespread. He also said, "No one can ever say the SA concept of sexual sobriety is muddy," referring to the ambivalence in other quarters. (This seemed to go along with what happened in the business meeting when we first discussed and then revalidated our statement on sexual sobriety.)

Another thing he said which stuck in my mind was the need for groups to get together more, just as we were then doing in Phoenix, and on a smaller, more local scale. After the Phoenix weekend, we'll attest to that! And that's what's beginning to happen!

There were closed SA meetings Friday evening and Saturday morning, where we heard a number of stories. It seems sobriety still doesn't come easy for most of us; we're still pioneering this thing and having to rediscover the principles of the Twelve Steps the hard way. Most groups are very slow getting off the ground and staying airborne with a growing core of truly sober members. If yours is an exception, let us know what's happening and why. We seem to be learning that the priority is getting our own house in order first—wherever we are, whoever we are. Then we launch out into action, carrying the message of our own recovery to others in need. The amazing thing is that people want sobriety! And there's real long-term sobriety developing, along with positive sobriety. (Some long-term slips, too.)

The Saturday afternoon business meeting was called and led by Steve M. and dealt with various items brought up from the floor. Progress on the First Step inventory debate was discussed; and we're still waiting for group and member comments to stop coming in before we make them available. There haven't been many but they have trickled in.

Various other issues were discussed informally, but the thing that stuck with me was how the meeting ended on a beautiful note of solidarity on our statement of sobriety. By



what appeared to be a unanimous show of hands, a resolution was passed suggesting to all groups in the Western Region that the statement from page 4 of the SA booklet, "What Is a Sexaholic and What is Sexual Sobriety," be read in every meeting. What we were all so grateful to God for was the spirit of love and oneness that developed in that meeting.

By the time the Sunday morning session was over, we were drawn together in the strongest and deepest bond we've experienced collectively yet, it appeared to me. Already, as a result, plans are underway for smaller-scale get-togethers in Kansas City (they've already met and we hope to include a report with this mailing), Philadelphia (January 11th), and California (January 27th).

The best way to describe the convention is to hear what others have said or written about it:

**Rick G. of Phoenix** reports that the woman in charge of all the arrangements and staff of the Ramada Inn said, "We've never had a convention held here where we felt so much love radiating out of the group. Please come back." She indicated this feeling came from the whole staff, from those who clean up the rooms to those in management.

Rick reports some general comments of others:

"I felt the love and closeness of God even more so than in our own meetings."

"It's very important for old and new members alike to attend these."

"You don't know what you missed out on."

"You can bet I won't miss the next one!"

**Tom M of Vancouver.** "Many things were revealed at the conference, a couple of which are the importance of sobriety as defined in SA and that for me I need a lengthy period of sobriety or celibacy so I can get a proper perspective on my sexuality....More significantly I am growing in God's light, and for that I am truly grateful for this fellowship."

**Kendall S of Calgary.**

"It's been a long day since I left you this morning. But for some reason I feel compelled to write to you all.

"I have never experienced such a sense of loving and caring as I felt from you all at this convention. At last I am again at one with God, and I got that from you. How can such a miraculous gift occur so instantaneously?

"Roy stated it so well when he said that something greater than you or I is occurring. God has seen fit to reveal His presence to us and through us....At this convention we were one. The love and joy and serenity were astounding.

"I thank each of you from the bottom of my heart for what you have given me. You have given me back my life. I learned love from each of you. I learned to love God again. From each of you I learned something different, and now that I'm putting it all together, I see answers to questions I had years ago....

"I came ... ready and willing to be taught. You taught me that love and intimacy and physical contact without lust are possible. By your faith and trust in God you taught me to love and trust God. I thank you all so very much. I feel so much love for each and every one of you. I had to give some of it back. I find love is addicting too, but how much more wholesome and beautiful love feels than lust....

"Thank you for your experience, strength, and hope."

**Jim E of Minneapolis.** "The whole conference was a gift. I left deepened in my gratitude and commitment to the program. A sobering sense of responsibility to the program and the application that has developed and is developing in the fellowship. I understand the sobriety definition more now...."

**John B of Monterey Park, CA.**

"As a result of attending the Phoenix convention, I have the feeling that SA is viable and growing and a firm conviction that it has a legitimate place among the family of 12-step fellowships.

"Any kind of addict who wants to recover must give up the right to use the addiction as a means of coping with life and emotions. They say that is because the Grace of God cannot enter to begin the healing process until the addictive behavior is surrendered. The addict must be told this from the very beginning.

"No other 12-step program, to my knowledge, takes this necessary stand regarding the sexual behavior of compulsive persons. It appears that in its early days AA took a stand on sexual conduct, but no longer does. Thus, AA cannot tell sex addicts within its ranks the one thing that is essential to their success with the 12-step program. They may have in fact collected a large number of persons on dry drunks practicing a sexual sickness that prevents them from grasping and benefitting from the spiritual part of the AA program.

"Drinking alcohol and sexual acting out appear to be commonly associated. Because individuals with such backgrounds frequently find their way into AA, it may be possible for an AA meeting to become largely a sea of sexual sickness to great depths of denial. Thus it is unlikely that sex addicts can find the direction, monitoring, and support that they need for recovery within the AA fellowship. I have observed the same problem in Emotional Health Anonymous. No doubt it exists in other 12-step fellowships as well. SA is the only one of the 12-step fellowships that I know about that deals frontally with the problem of destructive sexual behavior and thereby points the way to recovery from it."

**Bruce J. of Saskatoon.**

"Having been a practicing Sexaholic for many years, I finally came into the program as a loner in March 1984. I attended my first SA in Bozeman, MT, in August, and we held our first SA meeting back home in Saskatoon, September 11, 1984.



"I knew from the beginning that the SA program was tailor-made for me. Others in our small group have also experienced liberating power through the SA literature and meetings. But it took Phoenix to give the program the outer validation I needed. The steps, the SA book, the Essays and other letters and literature told me "what" I belonged to, but the Convention told me "who" I belonged to. The program told me what I needed to do to be sexually sober. The Convention gave me joy in doing it.

"I had no idea who I would meet at Phoenix. Phoenix is 1750 miles from where I live. It was a costly trip for a fellow who had lost as much as I had because of my addiction. However, it was 25 degrees below zero when I left Saskatoon, and it would be 68 degrees above when I arrived in Phoenix, so I figured the trip couldn't be all bad. I took a chance and went for it.

"It was one of the best risks I have ever taken. I met person after person who increased my confidence and heightened my ecstasy. I met person after person who had been battling lust for years but was now at one stage or another in the process of gaining the victory. No wonder the waitresses at the Saturday night banquet said they wished the banquet would go on till midnight; we created so much happiness and made them feel so good. Some of the long-time lusters were surprised to discover that they could give beautiful young women such pleasure without playing sexual games with them.

"The desire to eliminate lust was the common denominator: homosexuals, lesbians, former prostitutes, womanizers and nymphomaniacs, all loving one another and supporting one another in the search for a lust-free life. An astonishing array of victims on their way to becoming victors. The richness of the event lay in our great diversity. Our personal histories were so diverse. But we had one important thing in common—the need to find freedom from our addiction to lust. Because of this common need, comradeship sprang up immediately and deepened rapidly.

"Some of you may have experienced this SA kinship before. I never had. I find it is having a lasting effect upon me. It is enabling my growth toward sexual sobriety. Some people at Phoenix I came to know very well. With them in my mind I can never be lonely in my search for sexual freedom. But beyond the few with whom I established an abiding tie, there remains the memory of a sea of nameless people moving about quietly or boisterously, happily or tearfully, some jubilant and some fearful but most of them on the edge of a great hope. Named or nameless, they are now my companions in the search, and life can never be the same again. Because of their presence, I believe I will never again be the hopeless victim of the addiction to lust.

"Thank you!

"Thanks to all of you for removing so much of the loneliness that is the inevitable accompaniment of addiction of any kind.

"It was not all joy; there was much pain and brokenheartedness evident. But then I too am among the brokenhearted. I needed the fellowship and the comfort of your tears as well as your laughter.



### "Practical Pointers from Phoenix"

- 1) I learned that in place of telling a woman she is beautiful, it is safer for me and more helpful to her if I draw attention to some of her less obvious strengths.
- 2) I learned that I must cease the alternating connection, seeing a woman friend in one moment as a person with whom I can share strength, and in the next as an "it," an object with a potential to give me impersonal pleasure.
- 3) I learned that it is a good thing to have an intelligent and notable person like Patrick Carnes so sympathetic to our program and so willing to make personal sacrifices in order to help us."

### **Convention Attendance**

[All the comments available at printing time.]

Some eighteen states and Canada were represented. Here's the breakdown we got from Phoenix of the 107 total:

Arizona 30, California 6, Canada 5, Colorado 4, Indiana 1, Kansas 1, Maryland 1, Michigan 2, Minnesota 4, Missouri 2, Montana 3, New Mexico 2, New York 1, Ohio 1, Oklahoma 6, Oregon 1, Texas 2, Utah 9, Washington 2. [Incomplete data]

**Convention Tapes.** Some have been inquiring about tapes of the Phoenix convention meetings. Apparently, tapes of the Carnes talk did not come out due to equipment malfunction. We understand the only other meeting taped was the Sunday morning session. Contact Barbara T. for copies. Barbara says that if you supply two tapes, she'll run a copy for you—her way of doing some Twelfth Step work. Thank you, Barbara!

Barbara T., 1785 W. 500 N. #35, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, 801/364-2354.

### **Next Western Regional Convention**

The next Western Regional Convention—open to the whole fellowship, of course—is being hosted by the Seattle, Portland, Eugene, Vancouver, and Victoria groups and is slated for June 7, 8, and 9. Lee H. of Seattle tells us the most likely site will be Camp Huston near the town of Goldbar, WA, about sixty miles from Seattle (members will be bussed in from the airport). One of the attractive features of this location—besides its rustic mountain setting—is the price. Depending on the level of accommodations desired, it will be from \$40 to \$55 per person for the entire weekend, including six meals and sleeping accommodations (ranging from barren to standard). The camp is next to a State Park in the Cascade Mountains. Final details will be forthcoming.

### **Items For Your Comment**

Seven pieces have been included with this newsletter for your perusal. Make whatever use of them you can, and if you care to, please comment.

☆ **Sexual Detox.** This piece is being considered for possible inclusion in the SA booklet at some later date, perhaps under Step One. I've been throwing it out for comments and input.

☆ **Another Look at Lust.** This is a specimen of what grows out of my work on the Tenth

Step. I include it as a sample of what I have to do to stay sober, comfortable, and free. Does anybody identify?

- ☆ **The Resentment-Lust Connection.** (Previously titled The Lust Connection.) Another sample of my action on the Tenth Step for your use and comment. Note the last line. I really believe that! That's what this kind of action does for me.
- ☆ **Some Suggested Book and Program Evaluation Guidelines.** (Previously titled "An Open Letter.") This piece was in gestation for quite some time but finally got written 8 November 1984. It speaks for itself. Please note what it says in the third paragraph if you wish to respond.
- ☆ **Sobriety and the Sea of Relativism.** This piece was first written in March of 1982 and then recently revised somewhat. Thought you might be interested.

Note: In considering the above pieces, keep in mind the potential for inclusion in SA literature, whether the existing SA booklet or some future work; and give me your thoughts on the matter. Don't wait too long if you want to comment however; tempus fugit.

"**The Book Is Born.**" (AA Grapevine article written by Bill W. in 1945 in AA's tenth year.) I include this piece for its historical value and insights into the process of what AA went through in the early formative years. The last paragraph is very interesting, especially as it bears on how we go about our dialog on various issues. Wisdom born of hard experience.

"So it seems clear that sound policy can be made only by rubbing the conservatives and the promoters together. Their discussions, if free from personal ambitions and resentment (underlining mine), can be depended upon to produce the right answers. For us, there is no other way."

Didn't the Saturday business meeting in Phoenix prove this point? It began with some highly charged feelings, but when it was over three hours later, there was a marvelous oneness and solidarity and strength.

"**Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need**" (Pages 39-43 of the 1981-82 edition of The AA Service Manual.) I hope everyone will study this article by Bill W. Some practical savvy born of long-term AA experience.

### **Request for Stories**

We need stories from regular SA members with uninterrupted sobriety of one year or more according to our SA concept of sexual sobriety. This means no sexual experience with the self or others other than the spouse and progressive victory over lust for at least one year.

- ☆ Get the word out to all who qualify, especially the "oldtimers." If at all possible, please submit your stories typewritten, double-spaced, and submit two xerox copies (retain your original). Send to the SA office at P O B 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062.

We're thinking about publishing some in a collection or with the SA literature, and we're anxious to see what we have now that we're older and have more recovery under our



belts.

Remember not to confuse your story with your First Step inventory. The idea is not only "What it was like," so the sexaholics out there can identify, but recovery—physical, spiritual, emotional, and conjugal.

Let's get sober stories from the whole spectrum; consider the following three broad categories:

1. Stories that represent the varieties of our sexaholism: male, female, single, married, homosexual, masturbation, prostitution, relationships, etc.
2. Stories that tell how members got sober and stay sober.
3. Stories that go beyond sexual sobriety into aspects of recovery and healing in victory over defects, relationships with spouse, family, and others, and increasing personal serenity, emotional sobriety, and improving our "conscious contact with God."

We should not merely be giving people more of what they already have—a description of what we did in the disease. If we're still that close to our disease, maybe we shouldn't be writing our story.

### Some Thoughts on Stories

Let me use you as a sounding board on this subject.

Look at the stories in the OA and AA Big Books. For the most part, they seem weighted mostly to "What it used to be like" and "What happened." "What it's like now" is sometimes but a word or two. What is the overall effect of this over time as the fellowship grows? Does this not tend to lock in the literature—the program as written—and limit it to the confines of that stage of experience? Do not the stories tend to freeze the concept of recovery to mere abstinence from food or alcohol? Individual members may be experiencing spiritual, emotional, and conjugal growth beyond that point—as indeed the 12 & 12 encourages—but the world and ongoing members don't see much of this in the stories. In the case of OA, the stories are the book. Thus the stories become the definitive statement of the OA and AA programs for the world, newcomers, and members alike.

Look at the changes in stories in the second edition of the Big Book of AA: only eight stories are retained from the first edition and thirty new ones added. In the current third edition, seventeen stories are carried over from the second edition and thirteen new ones added. The stated purpose for this was "to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately, and thereby to reach more alcoholics." (page xii) The story section headings reflect this: "Pioneers of AA," "They Stopped in Time," and "They Lost Nearly All." The intent was to represent various elements in the membership, so that more alcoholics would identify and want in. The second and third editions thus merely added new categories of people, not levels of experience and growth. This is fine for newcomers, but what about members, for whom "This book has become the basic text..."? (AA Big Book page xi.)

The question is, Should the "basic text" of Sexaholics Anonymous stay at entry level? How do we grow beyond the level of the original set of stories without having a continuing revelation of program in the lives of those in whom God is working? How do



we grow deeper, as we apparently must with our malady, without the model of deepening personal and conjugal experience to pull us forward?

Look at how more is being revealed to us in the odyssey of our continuing Discovery: Since only July of 1981, see how much we've been learning about our malady, sexaholism; how much more about the meaning of sexual sobriety; more about how to get sober (or not get sober); more about our basic human natures; increasingly about the role of our defects in the malady and in recovery; how much more about positive sobriety; so much more about rediscovering the meaning of marriage, conjugal sobriety, and single sobriety. We're just beginning to see that sexual sobriety is just the beginning.

Thus it would appear that our SA stories should reflect our growing SA experience and not unwittingly help freeze the program in writing at some arbitrary and premature level. How can we best learn from the experiences of those programs which have gone before us? And how can we best learn from our own dynamic experience? That's the question.

There's an interesting article from the January 1958 issue of the AA Grapevine, which is a reprint of an older letter Bill W. wrote titled "The Next Frontier—Emotional Sobriety."

"I think that many oldsters who have put our AA 'Booze Cure' to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance...in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God."

We don't even seem to be able to get the "Lust Cure" without improving "our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God." (I'm beginning to see why I should be grateful to be a recovering sexaholic; what beautiful fringe benefits!)

The question is whether we should find some way of publishing our stories that will serve the growing, more-being-revealed situation and not lock ourselves into entry-level experience in the literature. In a sense, are we not moving rather rapidly in our continuing Discovery? Dare we lock ourselves into some premature early-stage level? We may not want to give newcomers "Stories II" or "Stories III", but then again, why not let them make the choice as to their own "entry level"—what pulls them into the program and on to recovery, healing, and spiritual and relational growth?

☆ This is your opportunity for inputs on this crucial matter. (Sober members only, please.)

### **The SA Statement on Sexual Sobriety**

Jesse L has raised the question of going back to the previous wording of our sobriety statement on page 4 of the SA booklet. The revised statement currently reads:

"Thus, for the sexaholic, any form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive. We also see that lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust."



The objection is that this loses the explicit description of what sobriety is for the single and married which the previous wording had, which read as follows:

"Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse. Any form of lust, sex with one's self, or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from lust and sex of any kind."

One reason for changing the original wording was that it implied that any lust in the single person meant he or she was not sober. For the married person it seemed to state only that lust was destructive. We now see from our experience that victory over lust is progressive as we continue in sobriety. I tried to close this loophole in the current wording. Also, I was wondering whether it was wise to indicate two classes of sexaholics, as though they were intrinsically different, when, in fact, there seems to be no real difference between single and married when we're talking about sobriety. Single, married, man, woman, homosexual—there seems to be no difference when we're talking about sobriety.

The current wording does seem to lose the clarity of the original, and there seems to be a growing need to state clearly and unequivocally what sexual sobriety is in both cases.

Combining both old and new wordings together with a little rewriting produces the following:

Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse or none at all. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. We also see that lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust. Any form of lust, sex with one's self, or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive.

I've added the words "or none at all" in the case of the married to reflect our growing discovery that sex in marriage is optional and periods of abstinence can play an important part in recovery. Also, that there's no intrinsic difference in sobriety between single and married.

[Compare also our Statement of Principle, pp. 120-121.]

However, I still have second thoughts about whether we in fact want to differentiate between married and unmarried. Seems to me what we're really saying is, "Thus, for the sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse or none at all."

☆ This is your chance for feedback on this important subject. What do you think? (Comments only from sober members, please.) Since the mood seems to be to get the SA booklet out in finalized form, your timely inputs are requested.

### **SA Literature Suggestion**

Jesse L. has made the suggestion that the writing and revision effort on the SA booklet should be frozen where it is, with the exception of going back to the original wording of the statement on sobriety and including the First Step Inventory. The First Step Inventory question is now in the process of waiting for the national group conscience to make itself heard, but this may be a good time to look at freezing the SA book.





"Deny the impulse to make it perfect, and go with the 90%," he says. In other words, he feels there should be a cutoff point so I don't keep feeding back into the book more mature experience that may weaken the book's effectiveness for newcomers. He then made a strong case for my coming out with a sequel with a suggested title to the effect, Beyond Sexual Sobriety, following the theme set forth in my Sunday morning talk at Phoenix. Feel free to comment on this.

### **Miscellany**

**SA Office Telephone.** The SA office phone is now being answered during working hours. Nan, our non-sexaholic secretary, will be picking up the calls, unless she's out getting the mail, etc. You can leave any messages with her without fear of jeopardizing your anonymity. She has proven her trustworthiness and confidentiality. The number here is 818/704-9854. We ask only that you do NOT give this number out to the media; treat it as you would your own number.

**Women Volunteers.** We need names of women, especially single, who are willing and able to be contacts/remote sponsors for women newcomers without groups.

**Prison Volunteers.** We need names of men, especially those who have been involved with types of acting out that prisoners might identify with, as contacts, correspondents, and remote sponsors for loner male members in prison.

**S-Anon.** The S-Anon people (spouses and friends of sexaholics) ask that any potential S-Anon members who need/want contact with S-Anon in your area be directed to the S-Anon central office: S-Anon, 2303 N. 14th Street, Suite 279, Phoenix, AZ 85008. S-Anon is growing too; Phoenix demonstrated that!

**Input for Future Conventions.** If you have any suggestions/comments regarding the previous get-togethers that might benefit future conventions, now's the time to make them known to those doing the planning.

**Does Every Group Have a Meeting Guide?.** The SA Meeting Guide (8/84 revision), still in preliminary form, is a 20-page booklet containing: Suggestions for New SA Groups, Meetings—How They Work, Suggested Meeting Formats, various readings used in meetings, etc.



The Meeting Guide distills the essence of some of our hard experience learned to date and is meant to be what its name implies, a guide. We're looking for group opinions and constructive comments. Price is \$3.00 each, including postage. You can order them from Nan, as with the other literature.

**Action Reminder.** Since this is such a lengthy newsletter, I thought I'd flag items suggesting your response with some sort of symbol in the margin ☆ . **Please make this newsletter available to all SA members.**

**We thank God** again for helping us in every way, especially in granting us the gift of sobriety, forgiving one another, and loving one another—the greatest gift. May we find the grace to give that love to each other and the needy who still suffer during this New Year.



**Please** take time to help us update our group info. Send us your group info and contact persons and info on any groups we may not know about in your or other areas.