FROM THE WEB...Bob D.

Season's Greetings!

Hope you're having a happy and safe holidays. Best wishes from all of us at SAA and from the staff of the web page.

Has your group got a function that you'd like to publicize to the entire world? Are you having a social event, speaker meeting, or workshop that you think others would be interested in attending? Well, you could buy a full page advertisement in the New York Times. But if you can't afford that, think about promoting your event on the SAA web page. The **member functions** area of the web page lists your description of upcoming events as long as they're SAA sponsored.

Recently I received feedback from a group that had posted one of the first announcements:

"Thank you for posting the announcement for our fall retreat in your members area. The event went very well, and we had some participation from out of state thanks in part to your announcement. Thanks again."

So before you call the New York Times, check out

www.saa-recovery.org/functions.htm

There are some restrictions, but the rules are all spelled out on-line.

Speaking of the holidays, if you're looking for a last minute gift for another SAA'er, don't forget the On-line Store. You can buy your friend books and SAA literature 24 hours a day 7 days a week. (Sorry if I'm sounding too commercial, but this Santa stuff sort of rubs off.)

Do have merry and sober holidays and write me, Bob D., with your comments and suggestions at webmaster@saa-recovery.org.

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"MICHELLE'S STORY..."

[Editor's note: You'll see why it is appropriate to print Michelle's letter on this page along with Bob D's Web column...

It has been edited.]

To the Editor of PBR and all of the SAA Fellowship:

After living a life of hell, including surviving 10 years of incest which began when I was 4 or 5; incredible promiscuity (most of it one-night stands type) for the next 18 or so years; 9 hospitalizations for PTSD, Major Depression, Panic and Borderline Personality Disorders, and multiple suicide attempts, the last of which almost did me in; I had a lightbulb go off over my head last week while I was in individual therapy.

In July of 1993, I was converted and joined the [ ] church. This move changed my life for the better in such a way that I sometimes thought that I was beyond the grasp of the adversary, since I was living so righteously. I also decided to live the doctrine, which meant changing almost all of my pre-[conversion] behavior, including promiscuity (chronic masturbation, pornography, bisexuality), swearing, drinking, smoking, etc, etc.

I lived almost completely celibate for over 6 years (with a few slips with masturbation), served an 18 month full-time mission, did pretty much everything "right". In that period, I also began to feel forgiveness for my abuser, and told him so. We actually became friends again.

About two years ago, after successfully completing sexual abuse survivor's therapy several years before, and living virtually problem-free for several years, I started to have chronic panic attacks, revisited depression, and started to lose any confidence in myself. I also started to masturbate again, progressively more and more. I talked with my [religious leader] about it several times, listened to his counsel and encouragement, and had periods of abstinence. But they never lasted. (When I read Dennis' "A Drive in the Country") from a recent issue of the PBR, I could have sworn he was telling my story.) When I was first hospitalized again last September, I started smoking again. Within a month I started drinking again. Now I'm cussing like before. And I've also visited adult bookstores for the first time, and have gotten deeper into pornography than before.

Back to my lightbulb. My therapist was trying to encourage me and give me hope. Then something that she said hit me like a ton of bricks! **She said, "Your [abuser] had a sexual addiction."** My body and mind [seemed to] separate, just like during the abuse. That hit home. **For the first time in my life, I realized that I had a sexual addiction.** I wasn't crazy. I was almost giddy with relief that I finally had a "diagnosis" that really explained what was wrong with me. All the other problems stem back to the sexual addiction. Unfortunately, since my realization a week ago, I still feel absolutely out of control.

Two days ago, I discovered SAA via the Internet. I did research for meetings, and then "bumped into" the PBR. I have read all the issues I can get from the website in two days. I still feel like I have little or no control over my acting out, but for the first time in a long time, I have my conscience back. A little. In closing, I want to thank all of the SAA Fellowship, and especially the PBR contributors. Your experience, strength and hope have given me hope. For those of you who pray, please send a petition in my behalf. I sure could use it; I feel very alone. Thank you for letting me share.

Michelle D.

ISO OUTREACH

(Each month, the ISO Office answers hundreds of pleas for help. They come in postal mail, through e-mail, and over the phone. This space is dedicated to sharing some of them)

"The miracle of a new life"

"Dear ISO:

I have received a copy of the request for members to become Lifeline Partners, and I wish to participate. There is no way that I could ever repay the program for the ever expanding miracle of my new life, but there is a way that I can benefit the ongoing activities of ISO. I am enclosing a check for $1,200 to cover the cost of my pledge in 1999 to commit $100 per month to the Lifeline Partners campaign. As a practical matter is there a way I can get a receipt to allow me to present it to my accountant for a tax deduction? I really do appreciate what the program has done for me and am very pleased that I can help in this small way.

Sincerely,

An SAA Member"

[Editor's note: Does the above letter sort of take your breath away? And nearly draw a tear? How precious is recovery, and passing it to another!!! Read on...]

As a result of the Focus Groups held during the 1999 ISO Convention in Los Angeles, four SAA members volunteered to serve on the Fund Raising Committee, a committee that had not been active since 1995. The letter printed above is but one example of the fruit this commmittee is bearing.

At the end of May, the number of active LifeLine Partners Program participants had dwindled to 20. Their contributions for the first five months of the year totaled $2,972.00. The Fund Raising Committee has revitalized this program by bringing it back to the attention of the membership, many of whom did not even know of its existence. Since the convention, the number of active LifeLine Partners has increased to 43. Their contributions during the last five months totaled $4,745.00. Please consider joining this approximately 1% of the SAA Fellowship who have pledged monthly support of the ISO.

The Fund Raising Committee is also close to having located the twelve "Founding Members" who are needed to provide $2,000 each in order to establish the initial investment required to create the "Outreach Endowment Fund." This fund is a vehicle through which SAA members can perpetuate outreach by making substantial anonymous gifts of $2,500 or more or by remembering the fellowship in their wills. The money or stock donated will remain untouched in perpetuity, with 80% of the fund's earnings being distributed annually to the ISO for outreach purposes while 20% of the earnings will be retained and added to the principal amount.

After the first of the year, the Fund Raising Committee will be concentrating on raising the money needed for the production of public service announcement videos to be used for local and national television outreach. The goal is to raise $15,000 by the 2000 ISO Convention. Watch for details about your opportunity to bring this vision to reality.

To learn more about any of these programs or about all of them, please contact the ISO Office at 800-477-8191 or at info@saa-recovery.org.

Thanks,

Jerry B.

UNITED KINGDOM 4TH ANNUAL RECOVERY DAY MAR. 11, 2000

Hi there,

You might like to publish the fact that SAA UK will be holding its fourth annual recovery day and convention on **Saturday 11th March 2000**, at:

The Friendship Centre
Bloomsbury Baptist Church
235 Shaftesbury Avenue
London W1, England.

We are very interested to hear from anybody with a few years' SAA experience who knows that they will be travelling in the UK at that time, who might be interested in either giving a chair or running a workshop. (Chairs will run for between 20 & 30 minutes; workshops run for about an hour.) We need to know fairly soon (mid January at the latest) of anybody who wants to contribute. The quickest way to make contact is with William J. by e-mail on willj@ukonline.co.uk <mailto:willj@ukonline.co.uk>.

Alternatively you can write to us at **The London Intergroup, BCM Box 1457, London WC1N 3XX**.

It's a bet that many of us would like to be at that Recovery Day! Here's hoping that there may be some from any other part of the world who would be able to be with all of you at this most important time.

Whoever comes, and whatever happens, the PBR will be awaiting the story!!!

Robert S., Editor

ONLINE MEETINGS AND SOME THOUGHTS ON THE TRADITIONS....

Bruce B.

One of the coolest things about this medium is that the meetings can be a safe place for everyone. I've been contacted (via email) by a counselor asking if it would be okay for a juvenile, who is clearly a sex addict, to attend. He was afraid to send the person to a face to face (F2F) meeting, but since the person could remain in his/her own home, under a parent's supervision (at least physically) this looked like a workable solution. I agreed, provided the person met the 3rd tradition. I don't know if that person attends our meetings, and I don't need to know.

I got a similar request from a woman in AA whose son identified as a sex addict at 14. She asked if she should tell him not to speak with others privately during or outside of the meetings. I asked her if she would have gotten sober if she was only able to connect to other alcoholics as part of a group during meetings, denied any informal or one-on-one fellowship outside of the meetings. She agreed that she would never have gotten sober under those circumstances, and her son attended our meeting for several months. He may still attend, but under a different name - again, no need for me to know.

Another group who benefits from the anonymity of online meetings is women who fear to say what they need to say about their acting out behavior in a room full of men. In our meetings, people choose their own user-names, and some people may never share if they are a man **or** a woman. Some women have used unisex names because they are afraid that they will be propositioned, but often after several meetings, they see that it is a safe place and feel comfortable disclosing their gender.

People who would be immediately recognizable at a F2F meeting can attend our meetings without fear that their anonymity will be broken - no one knows what they look like so no one knows who they are.

We have also had people from several different countries attend our meetings. These seem to be mostly Americans working abroad who discover SAA via the internet, but then who have no local SAA meeting to attend. Figuring the time difference from some of these places shows me that these people are serious about (or desperate for) recovery. We also have people who come to our meetings from parts of the US where our fellowship has not yet reached. In some of these cases, especially if they have other 12 step experience, after a few online meetings they are comfortable going on to start a meeting in their own area. **We also have folks who have local meetings, but who are afraid to attend them.** Again, after attending some of our meetings, they usually begin attending F2F meetings regularly. Although I don't give advice, I often share that for me, F2F meetings and F2F sponsors, have been far more beneficial than online. Still, I find online meetings a good supplement to my F2F meetings, especially in times of trouble.

An added bonus to those of us who have been to a few SAA national conventions is, I sometimes run into old friends from other cities at online meetings. Just after the convention this year I brought a really neat topic for the online meeting that I had heard presented at the national convention. As the meeting unfolded, the guy who had given the presentation on this topic in LA turned up at the meeting - it was great!

Although online meetings are similar to F2F meetings, there are some technical differences that affect the way we carry out the traditions.

Here are a few examples:

Although anyone can come into the meeting "room", as soon as they do, they are contacted privately (a separate window that only the chair and the newcomer can see) and asked if they have a desire to stop their compulsive sexual behavior. They are not given the power to speak in the main room unless they meet the 3rd tradition. Sometimes these turn into long conversations about what exactly is meant by desire, etc., but generally it is either "yes" or "no." If it is no, the chair asks the person to leave - that the meeting is only open to people who have such a desire. If they don't leave (or if they never respond to the chair), the chair has an obligation (from group conscience) to kick the person out of the meeting. This is simple to do in this environment - one might say too easy.

This leads to a discussion of the 2nd tradition. Any old-timer who starts a new meeting will be "in charge" for the first few months, but since this particular meeting tends to have a pretty steady flow of people with no 12 step experience and no idea what is appropriate, the chair needs to wa k a fine line between guiding newcomers and controlling the meeting. Although the "readings" (including the traditions) make clear what is appropriate in the meeting, often people come late, or don't pay any attention to the readings. Someone new may try to give advice, or ask questions, or speak out of turn (one person at a time is recognized by the chair as having "the floor") or tell us all exactly what we need to believe to get to heaven, or exactly what he likes to do with prostitutes, etc. The chair has to be a bit creative to get the newcomer's attention, yet avoid telling him what to do. I tend to send a message in another color like "Bruce encourages Bob to share what it is like in a general way - no details please." Although I've never seen it happen, an online chair could take away someone's ability to speak if he/she became too explicit.

Our group has had two group consciences to discuss issues like who our representative at the convention should be, what additional readings we wanted to use (beyond the steps and traditions), whether we wanted to remain a closed meeting (sex addicts only), the meeting chair's respons bilities, and how we wanted to handle the 7th tradition.

The group decided that instead of trying to send money to a treasurer, and having him/her buy literature to mail to newcomers and make contributions to the ISO, we would keep it simple and send our individual contr butions to ISO. The logistics of trying to contr bute to the many commercial servers that "host" the meetings also added to the complexity of the problem.

Tradition 10 (SAA has no opinion on outside issues) raised some difficult issues because of the close relationship many of us have with the fo ks in the online SLAA meetings. Since the SLAA meeting begins just after our meeting on Mondays, several members attend both meetings. When a newcomer arrives at our meeting late (as often happens), the temptation is great to let him know about the SLAA meeting following . However, in keeping with this tradition, we wait until our meeting is over to do this. The difficult part is that several times when someone realizes that the meeting is already half over, he just leaves. That's where I remind myself that he has his own Higher Power who is much better equipped than I am to take care of him.

Tradition 12 came into play when the group affirmed my original decision to make all group members equal in the meetings. It would be easy for the chair to have ultimate control and give lesser technical powers to others in the meeting, but this would have created two classes of sex addicts. Labeling two classes of sex addicts has always seemed antithetical to the 12th tradition. In fact, all group members have the ability to kick someone out or give someone full access, but the group conscience determined that (generally) only the chair will take either of these actions.

If you would like to attend an online meeting, check out the SAA homepage

<www.saa-recovery.org>

for more information.

In peace, Bruce B.

POET'S PAGE

Ghosts
There are haunted places,
filled with ghosts.
The haze of cigarette smoke,
the uncomfortable glances with the living.
When we are sick of being in our own skins,
we call on them for cold comfort.
Dark places with the smell of disinfectant,
to wash away the sins of the world.
They shuffle and shift in the darkness,
repetitious electronic voices,
muffled behind unlocked doors,
living flesh on screens in living color illusion,
Addictive. Wanton. Oblivious.
There are haunted places,
they pull me from the light,
from myself-from the real.
Bill A.

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I wrote this for the love of my life, my wife of 32 years, Faith.

4Faith2
by Bill R.

If I were ever,
I am now content;
Lucky in love
and lasting
as an empty tomb.
How could I wake
to such a Faith
each day
And not believe in grace,
And the forgiveness
in a kiss
without a thorn.
But I would bear a crown of thorns
If you were my recompense.

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Karrie sends her first PBR Submissions....

I am one of few females in SAA. I have been faithfully reading the PBR for over a year and realize that the majority of the readers and contr butors are men. Because of that, I'd like acknowledge that the following poem is based on my own personal experience as a woman. I don't want indivduals that read this to assume this is how all women feel about men. The background of this poem is referring to an individual that lives in [ ] that used to be my co-sponsor whom I haven't heard from in 9 months.
Thank you.
Karrie

++++++++++++++++++

I miss you [ ],
Cause you are a million miles away.
In reality, it's only thousands
But you draw further and further every day.

The anger inside me
Hurts me through and through.
What went wrong? I ask myself
Is there something I did or didn't do?

It's amazing to think about
The impact you had on me.
I helped you, you helped me - - -
We worked towards sobriety, don't you see?

Did I do something wrong?
Is it something I said?
You can't imagine the thoughts
Going on in my head.

I don't understand it
I feel that I've been used
Once again a friendship
Is gone and I feel abused.

Do you even think about me?
How about now and then?
The way I feel today
Gives me more anger toward men!!

Continual fears of abandonment
Won't let me open my heart
For the shield I put up around me
Is truly a work of art.

Day by day, night by night,
I become more confused and mad.
The trust I have in others
Is so little, , ,it's really sad.

What will it finally take
To get you out of my head.
So the anger will leave me
and I no longer lie awake in bed.

My head tells my heart
To shut up and go to sleep.
As I shut off the light
I wonder if I'll have a friend, ever to keep.

Karrie

May 15, 1999

The following also by Karrie G.

Rest does not come easy
and dreams, still they
haunt me.

Yet I go on, little by little.
Sometimes forward,
sometimes back.

There is a power that keeps
me going.
Identifiable? I think not.

But whatever it is,
all I ask is for help to take off the mask

WE'RE SORRY... SORT OF - FOR USING PART OF THE "POETRY PAGE" FOR OTHER PURPOSES. WE MAKE AN AMEND.....

Just a few comments on some ISO Board activities and other related items...

Board meetings seem to be more subdued than they used to be. Maybe it's because some of us aren't there anymore.

The recent meeting minutes reflect the diligence with which the Fellowship business is being conducted. We'll probably have a year end financial in the next issue. You've noticed in Jerry's column the work on fund raising and Lifeline Partners.

Although the subject of "outside literature" may roil the waters some, there is one that will be available. I was informed at this writing that the video, "Addicted to Sex" is now on hand. No price set but it will be affordable. The LitCom and Board both approved its sale. Some of our brave members helped create it. There will be more information to follow.

There is still conversation at the Board level about "translations". This work continues with the Literature Committee.

Among future items to be addressed is that of an "Online Group Guide". See Bruce's related article on page 4 if you haven't already been there.

Also to be considered is that of a "Webmaster Back-up". Bob D. may need some help along the way!

Then the "Self-Definition Statement" for the website needs addressing.

The matter of Tradition violation by the PBR has been settled.

Thanks Board Members; a job well done!!

"One More Time"

By Roger D.

One more time I will act out
One more time I will go to the adult bookstore
One more time I will masturbate
One more time I want to touch someone sexually
One more time I want to be with a younger man
One more time I will have my fix
One more time then I'll stop
One more time then I will change
One more time it will not throw me off my process
One more time can't hurt
One more time this will be quick and over with
One more time then I'll start a new month "clean"
One more time I want to see who's in there
One more time I might know someone
One more time I might get caught
One more time I am filled with shame
One more time I numb out
One more time I dissociate
One more time I become quiet
One more time I isolate
One more time I stay away from calling a friend
One more time I do recovery alone
One more time I feel vulnerable
One more time
One more time I am frustrated with myself
One more time I beat myself up with negative messages
One more time I feel hopeless
One more time I stay away from serenity
One more time I stay away from sobriety
One more time I hurt myself emotionally
One more time I lose myself spiritually
One more time I risk myself physically
One more time is negotiable
One more time is a LIE!
There is no more ONE MORE TIME!

"My mission is to awaken the silent world by listening to the soul's cry"

"From the Inside"...

⇒ Kristopher D., his letter and "THE MONSTER"
⇒ A.D.A.-COFFIELD... A NOTE OF THANKS...
⇒ R.S. sends "A Victim's View"....

Dear PBR,

Thanks ever soooo much for putting on your mailing list. I've already read this issue twice and it is starting to make the rounds here in the Barrack.

….I'm now living in the sexual offender program barrack but will not be able to start the classes until November. But I'm here and I talked to the program director about starting an SAA group here; any 12 step would help… I'm hoping…

Anyway, I wanted to write back soon so that maybe you might print my Halloween story in your next issue. First, a few words on what' happening in my recovery.

I'm seeing now that my daily meditations need to become more than just trying to be at peace with the world. Instead I must learn to confront myself as the raging storm that I am. [I've been slowly attempting this but have backed off when the pain of doing so became severe]. In doing so, it should *not surprise* me that I am filled with such despair that killing myself, at times, seems a much easier rout.

This work with myself is hard; I work to free my heart and soul in hopes that some day I will be able to embrace life feeling love [not sex] and kindness. I also long to see some of the enlightenments described to me as all of life rising and falling, born and expiring like breath, knowing that nothing can belong to me, and thus putting an end to my suffering.

"STIFLE THE MONSTER"

"The monster, addiction, feeds on my resentments, anger, fear, guilt, and pride. It relishes and draws its power from them. Overcoming the monster takes something else, something outside my self-centeredness which is that deep balckness there those pious feelings are born to forever haunt my suffering addict.

I must quell this lust for revenge and dampen its fury, squelch what makes me afraid, stamp out my shame, and smash my ego! All of these feelings only hide the truth and nurture the darkness in which the monster dwells. I must seek the freeing light of the Great Spirit. Only God's love will help me rid myself of the ebony shadows that provide a place for the monster to live. Only through "letting go and letting God" will I have this chance.

Beware my friend if you think the monster is now in check. The monster has just had its eyes closed, pretending to be beaten, blinded by this new-found light, and is becoming meaner and nastier with every day this its ally, darkness, is held back with enlightenment. But we can keep the monster at bay by continuing to dowse ourselves in God's illumination on a daily basis. Walk in the radiant path of your Higher Power, live in the truth, and stifle the monster."

Until we can correspond again, I'll be waiting with love.

Peace to you all.

Kristopher D.

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"ADA-Coffield"

Dear PBR,

I read a subscription of the PBR my friend had and it's good to know others have as much pain as I do. Reading the PBR is helping me in my recovery.

I attend SAA on my Unit. Recovery into the normal realm is tough but I will make it back. I'd like to get a subscription to the PBR. If you'd like to print this, that's fine with me.[use initials only]

A.D.A. Coffield

[Ed note: Jerry B. at home office put you on the mailing list]

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Dear PBR,

Enclosed is a poem I wrote as a part of a "victims letter". I wish to share it with the Fellowship. I have been active in SAA here since the second month at Mt Pleasant. This is [my view of] the story of one of my victims.

(Continued on page 7)

"Enclosed is a letter I wish I could write to my son. It was his daughter that I offended. I wish... It may be a message to someone out there." Douglas

[EDITOR'S NOTE: THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE HAS BEEN EDITED. WE HOPE THE MESSAGE DOUGLAS INTENDED HAS STILL BEEN CONVEYED]

These are sensitive thoughts of my offense, and the connection with this little girl.

I search for those feelings that were connected to my offending. The feelings that were a part of the connection with that little girl I held in my arms. That connection that became so strong.

She always wanted to be in my arms. Wanted to be picked up and held. Wrapped her arms around my neck as though she would never let go. Saying I love you granpa, as she ran her hands over my face and beard. She would rub her face into my neck and beard. At first I would put her down as her sister and brother wanted to be held as well. What was it? I loved my grandchildren as I loved my own children. I had a way with children as though I understood them. I have a sensitivity that connects easily with emotional needs of people, especially children. She was a connection. Her sensitivity and her love was safe. I had nothing to fear from her.

At first she was a bit of a pest. Always wanting to be in my arms, always wanting to snuggle. Soon, slowly, I began to soften, her arms around my neck hanging on so tight. I began to notice feelings that were never there with me before. She reached down into my inner core and touched something lost long ago. Something frozen deep inside. Trust, yes trust. She would not hurt me. She was safe. She loved me and cared about me in her own trusting child like way, abandoned way, She needed me, constantly needed me. Needed to be held and cuddled. We both did.

And God help me I needed her. More to the point, the little boy inside me, needed her. What was that connection, between my little boy and this little girl? What had she touched, inside me, that was so sensitive, that was so vulnerable, that became so powerful. Somewhere, sometime, back there in my childhood, there was a lost, lonely little boy. Feelings are there now of rejection, of not being allowed. Allowed??? Allowed what? Just not being allowed to be. Somebody, anybody. You're no good , you're not worth my time. Stay right there, I thought I told you not to move, did you move an inch. Consideration, you're not worth consideration, stay away from me. That's alright honey come to me you sweet little boy, Ugh get away from me. Get away from me.

I don't need them. I will run away. No I can't run away I have to stay. But I don't want to stay. They don't want me. They don't love me. They hate me.. Because I'm no good. I'm always doing something wrong. I wish I could just go away and hide. I am so alone. Why am I here? Why don't I just die. I'm afraid. I don't want to die.

The problem with this connection between my little boy and this little girl was that my little boy was deep inside a grown man. These needs of long ago, needs for love and caring, to be accepted, trusted, allowed and needed, were entrenched, and twisted as a consideration for love, in my sexuality. Somehow the only way I could love anyone was sexually. So this connection became a sexual connection. A profound connection, in a way no one had ever reached before. My response, sexual response, to her was a jolt.

At first I did not allow it even though there was a powerful wall between me and my wife, sexually. But it soon became hard to ignore. It was not her fault. She was not aware of what my response was.. The response I had with this little girl was different from anything I had had experienced before.

I search for those feelings. Do they carry answers to what happened? I don't know. I'm told that I really need to seek out these feelings and deal with them. Until I do they will be tough to handle. But I realize that ultimately I have to take respons bility for what I've done. And I have to deal with this "deviant part of me" for the rest of my life. Those feelings, the feelings of my little boy, are a part of me. They are somehow connected with my sexuality. This is what's behind my "deviancy". Understanding it helps me to understand why I did the offending. What it was that was so powerful.

"People consider a man like me rotten. ...no good. Someone who should be put away for good."

It is not easy. It is painful. But it is necessary. And it has its rewards. I find an acceptance for myself that was not there before. Also, my connection with God. I know he is there for me. And I need Him. Every day I need to connect with Him.

I know there was a time when I would have called this garbage. I had a tough time alluding to it. So I can understand not accepting it.

People consider a man like me rotten. A man with a character defect that is no good. Someone who should be put away for good. No longer acceptable to society. I know some who accept prison life, will not try "recovery" because they believe they will offend again. They will not risk the outside. They believe they are worthless, and accept it. The power of this "connection" may be beyond recovery for some of them. It's a sad thought. I get the feeling there must be an answer. It's a tragedy.

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(Continued from page 6)

Sincerely,
R.S.

"FROM THE INSIDE", CONTINUED

"A Victim's View"

I'm a young boy,
Who wants to be loved.
My big, brown eyes
Can show you love,
And the deep hurts.

Look into my eyes,
Can you see
The sadness,
The fear, the pain,
Of a boy so confused.

Once I found a home
Where I could say "I love you",
Get a hug just for th ejoy of it,
Where I fed on joy and happiness.

Then one day my world changed.
I was pushed away.
No one wanted me to go with them,
What now was wrong with me?

Was I bad?
My heart is broken!
My tears wet my pillow,
My night fears tear me apart.

I am a little unimportant boy,
Abused, they say,
I say I am dirty,
One who only knows bad.

Why are they waking me up?
Why are the cops here?
Was I so bad?
Are they taking me away?

Oh, God who will love me?
Where can I feel safe?
Does Jesus love me anymore?
I am so scared!

"The more brilliant a person is, the more ingenious are his/her reasons for [acting out], for why he/she does *not* have to be totally abstinent, and for why he/she considers the "A" organizations as worthless".

from: Addictive Thinking
by: Abraham J. Twerski, MD
Hazelden Publishers, 1990

"MY SOBER SPONSOR"

by JOHN H.

Dear Robert,

Here is something I wrote that you could maybe use for the PBR. I am working on getting people around here psyched up to do some writing. We will see.

In love and service,

John H.

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I was at a meeting a few weeks ago and I heard a guy sharing about his recent relapse into inner circle behavior. He then talked about some issues he was having with his sponsees. Sponsees? While he is in relapse? I managed to control myself during the meeting and not scream out my opinion on the dismal situation. Grateful that I held my tongue, I thought about my own sponsor.

My sponsor, Tom, has been working with me for about four years. I didn't pick him. It was more like he picked me. I obviously needed help. We were sitting in a coffee shop before a meeting. I had known Tom for a few years. We were discussing how I didn't have a sponsor and how I was continuing to act out. Though I didn't say it, I felt like there wasn't anybody around who really understood sobriety. There was no one around who saw things the way I did.

At that time I had been hanging around another sex recovery fellowship for a few years, taking it seriously from time to time, but quite confused about what it meant to be sober. I was never able to put together any time. I would act out, come talk about it at a meeting, listen to other people talk about their relapses, feel momentarily better for having vented, and then soon go back into the behaviors: anonymous sex, phone sex, strip shows, pornography, etc. I think there was an unspoken agreement at these meetings that we could continue to act out from time to time, and still get better. I now know that acting out less often is not recovery. That belief was just one of the many rationalizations that kept me stuck in the cycle of addiction. I suppose acting out less might reduce the occurrence of certain kinds of consequences, but it will not give me the more meaningful benefits of real recovery.

About four and a half years ago when I found SAA, I was introduced to this idea of "continuous sobriety", the notion that it was possible stay sober instead of continually get sober. I was coming to understand and accept that without sobriety, there would be no recovery. My acting out behaviors (the inner circle) had to stop. Of course, stopping those behaviors would only be the beginning, but that had to be the foundation.

I had been in SAA for about six months at the time of this coffee shop meeting. As I said, I knew Tom a little. He is straight and I am gay, but this never presented any difficulty. We had been in another "S" fellowship, and we had started in SAA at the same time.

The thing that bugged me about Tom was this sense I had that he just didn't get it. He didn't see things right. He was wrong about some stuff. I took his inventory. There was just one problem with all this thinking: Tom was staying sober and I was not. I had been overlooking that one point. And for a sex addict in his addiction, it's really the only point.

So as we sat there in the coffee shop talking about how I was struggling, Tom said to me,"you know, John, I would be willing to sponsor you." At that moment I somehow had enough of a chink in my armor, enough misery, that I was able to accept his offer.

Despite all the things I knew about the 12 steps, how many times I had read the Big Book, how many meetings I had attended, how much therapy I had done, and how much I had analyzed my childhood, I was not making it in SAA. And the funny thing is that in that moment when I was able to start admitting how defeated I was, I began to get better. It was a first step.

I stayed sober from my inner circle behaviors for over a year. In February of 1997 I had one more relapse, and I hope it was my last. I have now been sober over two years, one day at a time.

Tom had something very important that I did not have. I think that when they say we have to carry the message, they are not talking about information alone. As it says in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, "we can't give away something we haven't got." In my experience, there is no substitute for continuous sobriety. I am grateful that it was available.

John H.
San Francisco, California

STEP 12 REVISITED

by DAVE R.

The 12th step and the 12th tradition are important parts of my recovery. As I progress over time, I'm finding that these require work. "Working step 12" is something that requires thought, planning, and effort for execution. For example, here in my town, the newspaper has a list of support group meetings. That list is a hard one to get into. It took us a number of attempts before our group was listed. Then, when we added another meeting night, it took an additional number of attempts to get that new meeting listed. Recently, where we were meeting closed and we had to move. It looks like it will take another bunch of tries before our new meeting place is listed.

Getting the word out to those who still suffer is vital to our meeting. We have an open meeting and "12 step" newcomers into the full meeting. I have noticed that the meetings which "12 step" somebody new on a regular basis are the meetings which thrive. We had a small Tuesday noon group that met for a number of years with the same number of people. As long as that group "12 stepped" a new person every 4 to 6 weeks, the group stayed at the same number. When we didn't, the group dwindled away. The same thing happened to the Saturday meeting over on the east side of town. For a while, it was getting new members. Then, over time, it stopped getting new people and wasn't trying to get the word out about it's existence. It slowly dwindled away to nothing.

What I have noticed is that our group seems to have a different energy to it after we have told our stories to a new person. I don't know what it is, but I progress in my recovery when I get to tell my story. Even if the new person does not come back, our group has new life to it. There is something about telling our stories.

At the same time, we offer safety to the new person. The bit about anonymity is important to keeping the place safe for new people. Some of us don't have problems with others knowing our name, address, etc. Many of us do. I remember when I first walked in, I was terrified about telling about myself. The anonymity is important to keeping the place safe. That safety is important for old timers as well. There are people who come into the group who are not safe. I am glad that I can keep the boundary that "we meet only in group". Anonymity

From: "The Miracle of Recovery", by Sharon Wegscheider~Cruse. Health Communications, 1989

- Crisis tells us it's time to change our minds and sometimes our beliefs.
- Serenity is not freedom from the storm but calm within the storm.
- I know I will never be as lonely in my new grief as I was in my old unhappiness.
- Fear is really "control madness" - the panic that sets in when one is not in control.
- Recovery is making order out of chaos and then making changes.

HOLa !!

Join us in The Desert for the

SAA 13th Annual International Convention

May 26-29,2000

The Fellowship has been planning this convention since the summer of 1998. After winning the bid in LA, 20 people bacame involved, donating time and money. **They're enthused about this SAA gathering!!!**

Fund Raising

Successful to date! Over $1500 so far. Another workshop by Pat C. and another professional is scheduled for February. Your attendance is invited! More details later on this.

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AND YOU CAN ALSO HELP BY:

-Writing a donation check.
-Take a second group collection.
-Have a fund-raising activity.
  -Buy a T-Shirt [or **3** !] One of each color!!!!
-Prayer - That the Will of our Higher Power might be done through this convention gath ering! And for the work of the convention commitee.
-Register early - Line up your roommates and make travel arrangements.

NOTE:
Portions of this column have been deleted for Web Site publicaiton for reasons of anonymity

We're Excited ! !

-Partial Program-

- Friday nite walk-in buffet - socialize !
- Banquet-Saturday nite with Pat C. Keynote speaker
- Sunday AM-Hike?-maybe.
- Sunday afternoon the Talent Show [sign up!]
- Sunday late PM-Picnic and play time.

Workshops and presentations are being planned for all days.

NOTE;
PORTIONS OF THIS COLUMN HAVE BEEN DELETED FOR WEB SITE PUBLICATION

FOR REASONS OF ANONYMITY

"Personal recovery depends on SAA Unity". This first convention of the new millennium deserves your participation!!! What can you do?

* Do Register now! Be here.
* Eighth Tradition says we all as delegates should provide direction to the ISO Board. Each group must be represented, eh?!
* Volunteer to present a workshop; share your ESH! The "Call to Presenters" has gone out. Get one from your group. Or write us.
* Talent Show participation. Let the energy recovered from your addiction shine in a new way.

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More Notes

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"We're excited about the **HOTEL!**
A gorgeous outdoor courtyard, newly renovated. Convention **Rates** will be extended backward and forward of convention dates.

Convention Costs.....

Because of the ISO Board-mandated pricing structure, fees for Year 2000 will be a little higher. If the gathering is financially successful, excess funds will be used to help finance the publishing of the "SAA Big Book", and to help fund the production of Public Service Announcements as directed by last years delegates."

ALL DETAILS TO FOLLOW!!!

Ottawa: "Alive and Well"...

Report on recent SAA Workshop "Developing the Tools of Recovery"

Hello. My name is Gord M. and I've been a regular member of SAA for about nine years now here in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. This past weekend we held our second annual workshop, which turned out to be a wonderful success for those in attendance. As part of my own recovery, I took it upon myself to write-up the experience to share with those in our groups who could not make the Saturday workshop, and sending it along to you, in case it might be something useful for the PBR.

Thanks and have a good day.

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SAA is alive and well in Ottawa, Canada. This past weekend the two groups in our city came together for our second annual one-day SAA Workshop - this year entitled 'Developing Tools of Recovery'.

The day started with a discussion topic on the relationship between Sobriety and Recovery. We chose this topic because we have found that it is often difficult for many of our members to attain sustained periods of sobriety. This has proven discouraging for many. In fact, some at the workshop stated that they find the groups weekly ritual of awarding chips as shame producing. By focussing on Recovery, we took a more holistic view of our lives and the many gifts that working the program has brought us.

"....started with the topic on the relationship between Sobriety and Recovery. Used model of the Three Circles."

The first exercise of the day was for individuals to identify specific behaviours that could serve as warning signs for on-coming acting out activity. (This was referred to as *BUTS* – Building Up To Sex). We started with the model of the 'Three Circles' referring to the outer circle as our ideal (the White circle), the inner circle as those behaviors we absolutely wanted to avoid (the Black circle), and the middle circle as a grey area in between the two (the Grey circle). It was in this Grey circle that we focused most of our attention. In each circle we listed our behaviours, both sexual and non-sexual that we associated with the three areas. Working within the Grey circle, we discovered that some behaviours were closer to the Black circle than others. The image of varying shades of grey, from whitish to blackish, enabled us to differentiate between early warning signs and late warning signs. Differentiating between sexual and non-sexual behaviours led many of us to the discovery that most of our warning signs were to be found in our non-sexual behaviours, thoughts and feelings.

After a speaker session, we ended the exercise part of the day by writing (or re-writing) our contracts. The new contracts were divided into four sections : 1) Sexual Behaviours which I do not wish to engage in 2) My warning signs (BUTS), Sexual and Non-sexual 3) When I observe *Buts*, I will do the following… 4) A healthy lifestyle for me includes…

This contract approach allowed each of us to be able to clearly identify specific behaviour, sexual and non-sexual, which could mean that we were on the path to acting out. Furthermore, it helped us to spell out in detail the best course of action to follow when we observed the warning signs in ourselves. For example, in writing up my own contract, I assigned a severity index from one to ten to each behaviour. My new contract now specifies that if during the week, I reach a total of six or more, I will take certain steps, such as calling my sponsor. This enables me to clearly identify and evaluate certain behaviours, feelings, and thoughts, and treat them both individually and collectively as potential warning signs. However, for me, the best part of the contract was where I wrote out what a healthy lifestyle means for me. It helped me to focus on the simple and joyful things in my life that are slowly and increasingly moving me from shame to grace.

All of us enjoyed the day together. We had a wonderful pot-luck feast, drank too much coffee, laughed, cried, and were deeply grateful for the fellowship and the program.

Lovingly yours,

Gord M.

P.S. I might also add that in the Tuesday group, of which I am a member, we also have a couple of American members who make the 1 1/2 to 2 hour one way trip most weeks to be with us from upper New York state. One of them has an annual BBQ for both Ottawa groups every summer. We normally have a sharing meeting, a great feast, play volleyball etc, and just plain hang out for about eight hours together. For us Canadians it feels marvelous to cross the border and spend a whole day together in what is really an international experience. I have always meant to write to you about this event, but have never gotten around to it. The experience somehow seems to strengthen our bond with the entire fellowship.

NOT MUCH FROM ISO BOARD OR LITCOM BUT

By the time you get to read this, the Literature Committee will have met [early Dec] and deliberated on a great number of issues. The PBR and the PBR Oversight Committee are among them.

Also, the Women's Pamphlet will get a review before next convention.

The "Large Book" is being worked on. Its progress will be reported on.

Jeff, LitCom Chair, has presented the first draft of the LitCom Handbook. Looks great, will get some study and input.

The book, "Shame To Grace", approved by the Literature Committee in 1994, has never been conference approved. It is being reviewed for possible submission to the conference.

There is an announcement coming soon on a new recovery tool approved by the Literature Committee and the ISO Board. Next PBR.

Among the rest of the items on the agenda are the Sponsorship Pamphlet, Guide to the 12 Steps, Internet Pamphlet, Questions and Answers on Sex Addiction, Our Addiction, The Problem, and The Abstinence Statement. The latter drew some critical comments before, during, and after presentation to the delegates last convention.

There will be a discussion on statements on Felonious Behaviors, 2 to be exact.l

Last but certainly not least is the issue of TRANSLATIONS! And the coordination processes pertaining thereto. The issue of Spanish translations has drawn some severe criticism because of the distribution of a proposed piece. Still a long way to go here. Just because we're in recovery doesn't mean we're free of conflict, especially over items critical to the recovery of all of us!!

Remember your Trusted Servants!

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Lest we forget...

Most of us have been forced, by the power of our addictions, to look to a Power greater than ourselves to even take the first step toward recovery. This Power has been manifested via each person in our Fellowship; in our home groups, our Intergroups, and through all the created resources we have at our disposal. These resources are in the form of literature, audio tapes, and soon, video tapes. All of the former produced through the experience of those gone before. These are available to you; they will help your recovery; you will pay for them; the ISO Foundation makes a profit on the sale of them. Let's keep the cycle moving so even more of us will benefit.!!!!

"STEP NINE"

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[Ed Note: The writer of this piece wishes to be anonymous. Who is this person whose writing speaks to where recovery begins? Tradition 12 seems to be at work here. No glory sought, just a humble, and introspective, approach to recovery! With a message we might ponder, even use to good advan-

Step nine is the step I have feared ever since I started my sexual recovery 10 years ago. Why? Well, some of my behaviors have hurt others, victimized them. I have cruised for and touched many without permission and with blatant sexual intent. Most of the touching has been in the form of "brushing" but as my sickness and blatant disregard for others progressed, I descended into molestation just short of fondling. Many of my victims may have been oblivious or only a little irritated or uncomfortable. Some were scared and probably scarred for life. The gravity of my behaviors has made it hard to share about them even in SAA meetings. I have been afraid someone would approach me and preach or condemn me. Or that I would be turned in to the police.

Now I come to step 9 and it asks me to make amends to those who I've harmed. One of the things that baffles me and has left me paralyzed, is that I'm not sure how to make amends to my victims. Is it enough to stop acting out or do I need to find them and apologize. Wouldn't that put me at risk of being arrested or sued? Do I have to go this far in order to ensure my long term recovery? I have put masturbation to fantasies of minors or students or ex-students in my inner circle. Should I add anything that demeans or victimizes? I've allowed myself to masturbate to some abusive fantasies in sobriety and it doesn't seem to lead me back out there to cruising and sta king, at least so far. But is it festering in my mind waiting to rear its head later?

I would consider putting these types of fantasies in my inner circle as a sort of indirect amends. I have donated money to Boys Town and Covenant House to help abused and homeless children. Should I start doing that again? It looks like I have more questions than answers. But these are the tough questions, the ones I would like to forget about or just stuff down into my subconscious. Yet step nine suggests that I examine them and be willing to take some constructive, maybe painful action to repair the damage I've done.

One purpose of step nine is to repair relationships. Our acting out and other character defects have damaged our relationships with those whom we love and are trusted to serve. As a teacher I realize now that I often created an atmosphere of uncomfortable tension and pressured students to complete assignments without giving them adequate time to absorb knowledge. I realize now how demoralizing this can be because I work for boss who often treats employees poorly, rarely trusting that we are doing anything productive or able to use our time productively. I was also hostile, sarcastic, condescending, and impatient at times. I understand now that having my basic dignity violated by my father and now my boss (I still have some spiritual work to do here, so be patient. God isn't finished with me yet) was extremely damaging to my self esteem and ability to deal with life on life's terms. In my addiction I have done the same to others, and it is now time to stop this cycle and take responsibility for my actions, past and present. That's what working step nine means to me.

Step 9 also states "except when it would injure them or others". To approach a victim, write a letter or call would be ill-advised if doing so would cause further injury to them. For example, what would an anonymous victim think (feel) if a stranger approaches them to make amends and tells them about something they may not have been aware of in the first place? It's hard for me to see how I could benefit my victims by locating them, contacting them and apologizing. Maybe I'm just rationalizing. I know the court said I am required to pay the therapy bills of my student victim if she should ask. Maybe that's an idea I should pursue. Maybe I could reassure them that it was nothing they did; that I was solely to blame; that they were indeed innocent victims; that I am sorry and wish I had never done it. These things are all true, and I believe the very spirit of step nine is that I really get in touch with what I've done to them and truly gain a desire to right these wrongs. I still have a long way to go in this area.

I wish also I could honestly say that it'll never happen again. But with two years and two months of abstinence I still cannot say I have completely lost my attraction to girls and young women. I'll be a sex addict and prone to acting out behaviors for the rest of my life. As amends to myself and all who I've harmed, it is my respons bility to continue to do the things that have allowed me to stay sober. And to do my very best to humbly walk in the grace of God.

Step 9 also talks about "others". Who are these other people that my efforts at amends should not hurt? I've heard some in SAA say that includes me, but from all my reading of AA books and literature it's pretty clear that we are not to include ourselves in this exemption. It says that we are to do the right thing no matter what harm comes to us. AA's Big Book gives an example of a man who confessed in front of a whole church congregation of his transgressions with his former business partner. This surely could have ruined him again (at least financially and legally) but he felt it better to publicly confess his sins and thereby clear the name of his former business partner, than to harbor guilt and shame and perhaps drink again.

Other amends I need to consider are to my wife and 21/2 year old girl. I slipped into the binge which led to me abusing a student on the same day I found out my wife was pregnant. My court hearing was pending throughout most of my wife's pregnancy, so my wife was filled with dread and confusion as she carried our baby. In addition, I slipped again after our baby was born and acted out for 3 months of her life, even cruising the internet for pornography while I was babysitting her.

I have only barely begun the amends process to my wife and baby. I still have a lot of reflection to do and personal changes to make to make a dent in the damage I have done there. Continuous abstinence is, however, the foundation upon which I can make amends to them.

I am also in the process of writing an anonymous amends letter to Covenant House, a center for abused and homeless children. My sponsor suggested I do this as a way of reassuring abused children there that it's not there fault. They were innocent victims. We have also agreed that I making a regular donation to Covenant House which might also be in the spirit of step 9. I still have a lot of things to do and spiritual changes to make as I continue to work step 9. I am truly grateful for the chance to begin.

After doing this writing, talking to my sponsor, and searching my soul again after over 2 years of abstinence, it is becoming clearer to me that there are in fact some concrete actions I can take to make up and in some cases even repair the damage I have done in my active sex addiction.

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For you who have been regular readers of the PBR, you will recall Ronald's 1998 Holiday greetings printed in the Feb/Mar-99 issue. As we told you then, these greetings are done from scratch. Even the envelope appeared to have been hand-made. The other inside page of the card said, "Wishing you Happiness, Joy, Love and Laughter...At Christmas and Forever After", with a bow tied beneath. Thanks Ronald, we are blessed! You are a talent indeed!

LifeLine Partners - No better place for your Special Holiday Gift

Have you already read the letter, "The Miracle of a New Life", on page 3, in the "ISO OUTREACH" column? What a response to finding the tools of recovery!!

For all you in the fellowship, perhaps you, too, have something special to be thankful for, and would like to find a way to show your thanks. Yes?

How fortunate! You, too, can do just what that writer did; you can send your special tax-deductible gift to the ISO Office.

As you know, there are many outreach projects "in the mill"; Public Service Announcements, the Big Book printing, and more. Your gift will make it happen!

May you be blessed for it!!!

Now!! You can order materials and make donations, using your VISA, MC, Discovery or AMEX !!!!

WILL YOU PLEASE? Remember the needs of the SAA Fellowship at the international level? This newsletter was provided for you by those doing their own Step Twelve and Tradition Five work. And by one full time/one half time, paid staff member. There are important programs of outreach, many of which are represented in this publication. Outreach of all kinds, prison and all other. Materials are provided free to those who cannot afford them; i.e., prisoners. It costs dollars to maintain the central facility through which our efforts are maintained. For you who downloaded this, or have received it via "snail mail", we hope you will strongly consider sending your periodic contributions to the ISO office. ***YOU*** are the answer to total Outreach!