



News from the Web...

By: Bob D.

Hi!

My name is Bob D. and I'm in charge of the SAA Web site, <http://www.saa-recovery.org>, if you haven't had a chance to check it out. The ISO of SAA Board started the web site almost 3 years ago. The first month 75 people came to visit; in December we had 14,372 visitors. Not bad at all!

When we started the Web site we viewed it primarily as an outreach method to attract new members. It seems to work pretty well for that. I've stopped counting the number of newcomers that say, "Heard about you on the web." Yet I think people are beginning to realize the possibilities of the Web site as a resource for the membership. The on-line version of the Plain Brown Rapper is a great example.

The Plain Brown Rapper used to only be printed and distributed by regular mail. We sent out a few hundred copies. A few months ago we started additional distribution electronically via the Web page. Here are the statistics on people who have read [i.e. downloaded] the entire paper since we started last August:

Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
273	578	668	4443	795

I'm still not sure what happened back in November, over four thousand people got a copy of the PBR!

However you look at the stats, we're reaching a lot more people electronically than we have in print. If you are on-line you can get a copy at our web site. Print it out and bring copies to a meeting —It's FREE !!

"When you give a lesson in meanness to a critter, or a person, don't be surprised if they learn their lesson."

"Don't get mad at somebody who knows more'n you do. It ain't their fault."

From: Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On!
by: Texas Bix Bender 1992

"REACH OUT CALLS..."

Bruce B. lends some wisdom in "reaching out" to others in the Fellowship. He outlines actions which will be supportive of the individual, yet protective of his own boundaries, sobriety and well-being. Affirming, yet honest.

Here is something that you might put in the PBR next time submissions run low. I wrote it in September when someone asked me for help in dealing with reach-out calls.

In peace, Bruce B.

Reach-out Calls: What to say?

1. Begin by working the first 3 steps myself

Step 1- I am powerless over this person's future behavior

- I am powerless over this person's feelings about me

- I am powerless over this person's feelings about himself/herself

Step 2 - Only God can bring peace to either of us

Step 3 - Pray for God's guidance and peace about the outcome of the call

2. I really listen to the person, even if he/she rambles for long periods

- I stay focused and present. (Unless I am harming myself)

- I need to be honest about how much time I have to give.)

3. I point to the steps, but use examples from my own life. "When I ran into a situation like that it helped to realize that no matter what I did I couldn't change how that person felt about me - I was powerless over their feelings."

4. I point to program tools, but again, I stick to "I" statements such as, "When I come head to head with my addiction I lose every time. That is why I have boundaries. I have a boundary about going onto the web unless I have a specific non-addictive purpose, and when I finish my search/work I get off the web."

5. I share my experience, strength and

hope - how I have done similar things in the past, and how I avoid them today.

6. I am as affirming as I can be, and remain HONEST. I find something about them or their program that I admire or love and tell them about it. It can be as simple as, "I admire your courage to pick up the phone and make a call when you are in so much pain - courage like that makes me proud to be in the same program with you." Or, "I've seen you reach out to newcomers with such gentleness - I really love that about you."

7. I remind them that today's problems will not last forever. I ask them if there is any reason to make a long term decision at this instant; that my experience is that healthy long term decisions are best made after careful thought and prayer.

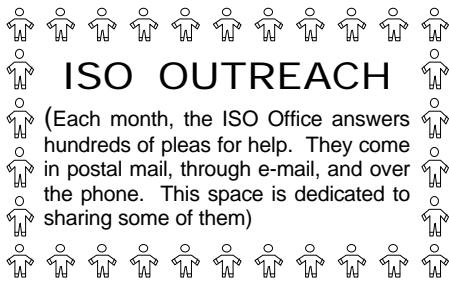
8. I ask them to focus on what choice they can make right now that would move them closer to peace and serenity; eat something healthy? Take a bath? Take a walk? Come over for a hug? Take a nap/go to sleep? Pray?

9. I offer to pray with them (for knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out, for peace, for willingness to do the next right thing, etc.)

10. I remind them that no matter what they have done, thought, or felt, I still love and accept them exactly as they are; that I don't think less of them just because they made a poor choice. (Provided I do feel this way - again honesty counts.)

Take what you like and leave the rest.

Bruce



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)



Here is a letter from a man who found SAA and sobriety after viewing the website and then calling the ISO Office.

Jerry B.

It was a Monday afternoon, MLK day, and I had just acted out. I didn't know the term "acting out" yet, but I knew I needed help. I drove home and did a yahoo search for sexual addiction. I found the SAA web page and was glad it existed. I sent an E-mail asking for help and after a few messages back and forth, I was at my first SAA meeting that Thursday--my third day of sexual sobriety (I've been sober in AA for 14 years).

I knew I was in the right place as soon as I got there. When I got the opportunity to speak I spilled my guts. It was such a relief to have finally found a solution to my problem. I found the people sincere, helpful, and honest. Now I'm attending meetings regularly with the support of my loving wife and help of a sponsor.

If it weren't for the SAA web page and the help of the ISO office, I might not have found SAA. A month or so before I came to SAA I remember being in the middle of an acting out episode and thinking, "I'm going to be like this for the rest of my life." I'm learning very quickly that this program really works.

It's my hope that we can carry the message to the multitudes, many currently in other 12 step programs, who are suffering and don't know we exist. In this day and age it's hard not to bump into information about AA. Maybe soon the stigma of sexual addiction can be lifted and those who want help can get it. Until then, the Web is a great platform sharing the message.

Bill A

331 words

The Promises?

by: Jim H.

Have you ever sat in a meeting while someone was reading the promises and wondered if and when they would come true for you. Well, I have. Too many times. Therefore, I've decided to write this piece for the PBR to answer this fleeting question.

Promise #1-- St. we will be amazed before we are half way through." Am I amazed at my recovery, at my new-found ability to stay abstinent? It depends on the day, my mood, my attitude at the time. If I haven't had enough sleep, or drank too much caffeine, or have a headache, I might answer in the negative. However, if I sit down and reflect about how much I have struggled and for how many years, I have to acknowledge that it's pretty amazing that I haven't acted out in so long. I remember getting 10 days and slipping, getting 20, 30, 3 months and 6 months and slipping. Many of those times I was baffled and angry, feeling like I'd been blind sided by the addiction and that my best efforts were to no avail. Now, I certainly don't work a perfect program, but it seems to be working one day at a time. Maybe I am amazed.

Promise #2 & 3-- "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." Nothing could be more important than the freedom from addictive craving and obsession which I now enjoy. This in itself doesn't guarantee happiness but it at least makes it possible. Yet, I am still vulnerable to a slip or a binge. We don't graduate in this program and we need to be wary of ever present triggers, both internal and external. The freedom for me is that it's gotten easier to protect myself. I know what I need to do and a lot of the time I am willing to do it. As a result, today I don't have to peek through the blinds in fear that a detective has come to my house to question or arrest me. Today I don't have to pervert my natural talents by using my creativity to dream up ways to victimize people without getting caught. Today I don't have to make up lies about where I am, where I've been and where I'm going. And today I don't have to experience that terrible dissonance that comes with the efforts of living a double life. Have all these new freedoms made me happier? Of course they have!! Nevertheless, I'm still unhappy too much of the

time. That's why I need to continue to practice these principles, uncover my defects of character, and try to rightly relate myself to God as I understand Him.

Promise #4 & 5-- "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." With over 17 months of continuous abstinence (that's days, nights, and weekends!), I have to admit that this promise is really bearing fruit in my recovery. I have the 12 steps to thank for this promise coming true for me because they teach me that my past is a powerful tool, in God's hands, with which I can help another human being. The still-suffering newcomer, as well as the struggling sex addict who keeps coming back, can begin to see his addiction in a new light once he has the benefit of my story. I can help him discard his denial and defensiveness because he will often find it easier to listen to someone who shares his experience with shame and powerlessness. Do I still harbor any regrets about my past? Of course I do. This is a program which emphasizes spiritual progress. I still regret losing my teaching credential and a \$45,000 per 8 months of work salary. I now struggle to make \$25,000 for a full year of work. I am grateful, however, that I am no longer in such a stressful and trigger-laden environment every day. Even though consequences aren't fun, they have humbled me enough to perhaps allow a little of God's grace to enter. Do I regret victimizing others? Yes I do and I think it's clear that I still have a lot of work to do in the area of Steps 8 and 9 and making amends to those who have suffered as a result of my acting out.

Jim H.

LOOK AT THIS !

>AN "800" NUMBER !
>BUY/DONATE WITH
CREDIT CARD!

A long time coming !! The ISO Board and Staff has never given up on it. Now you can call:

1-800-477-8191

[See Office hours, Page 12]

for information, to place an order, or to make a contribution. You can use Visa, Master Card, Discovery, and American Express. And, bank debit cards of the same name.

ALSO, Bob D. is setting up the Web-Site to do the same. **Card number security is assured!**

From the Inside...

[Ed comment: We are happy to receive letters, poetry and articles for the PBR from prisoners. They offer hope to the entire Fellowship. Thanks to you all!]

A change however...

We ARE going to withhold, at least for the time being, the printing of any names or addresses of prisoners, even though permission to print has been given.

We know the sincerity of those working programs on the inside. And the desire of all to receive letters of ESH from others on the outside. There are concerns though, that must be answered before we continue this practice. We regret this action at this time.]

Dear PBR,

In the October PBR on page 4, Bill H. writes: "I am continually... amazed at how easy it is for me to gradually stop doing the things I need to do to keep my recovery going."

No kidding. That must be universal; it should be in **LARGE BOLD TYPE!**

He quotes Sirach: "The day of prosperity makes one forget adversity; the day of adversity makes one forget prosperity." Worth contemplation; take a moment.

Sincerely, Jim Z.

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Bruce W's edited letter. Sent with permission by a P.O. Worker....
TO ALL RECOVERY ADDICTS,

I come to you not only as a sex addict but...as a sex offender. I am awaiting appeal.

It took me three times to be in jail to realize that this program works. My HP opened my eyes to work more vigorously and to be honest....

The two steps that God has me working on most are 8 and 9.

It was hard for me to make a list of all prostitutes I've slept with, what I have done to children I've brought into this world, and how I've let down my stepchildren. A son I've not seen in 22 years.

I give thanks to all SAA groups that support the jail and prison programs, and the Houston Intergroup that donates reading material. I thank the Chaplain for allowing us a chapel to meet in. We are made fun of and laughed at as we come to these meetings. But I keep coming back because it is helping my recovery.

I want to thank each volunteer who comes to the jail. And our officers for keeping things "smooth". Without them there would be no order. Thanks to the PBR, and last the most important, the whole body of SAA.

Thanks from behind the walls.

Bruce W.

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ROGER S. , from Iowa

My life in recovery has also been touched by a suicide. More than two years ago, a friend of a friend put me in touch with a man with whom I began some outreach by mail. Like me, "Sid" had a sexual addiction that had taken him across the line to criminal behavior. He had never been caught but had experienced some close calls. He was beginning to "come out of hiding", seek help, and break the cycle of abuse, but only tentatively.

In my letters I tried to help him see the choices he had, with the most important consideration being that he do whatever he felt was necessary to avoid ever again causing harm to another human being. Loss of reputation, of employment, of his marriage, and even of his freedom, I told him, might unavoidable but better than the alternative - another victim. And even though I had lost all those things, I was the happiest I had been in my life - having regained my sanity and my soul

Three months later "Sid" took his own life. I was shocked and saddened. I wondered if I [played] a part in this choice he had made. Did I say the wrong thing? Should I have kept writing to him even when he didn't answer? Did I waste my time or my compassion on him? The biggest question: "Why?" these were questions I couldn't answer.

My friend, who had also had some influence in "Sid's" life, helped me to put some things into perspective. I didn't "save his life" but I did listen to him. I understood him and I showed him that I

cared. That was worth something, not just to him but to others in his life.

My friend told me of a lesson he had to learn. His spirituality called him and required him to pursue justice - making things right in his world. But often, despite his efforts, he despaired of seeing anything righted. He found he had to divorce himself from the results. What was important, and really all that was required, was that he be engaged in the process. It was kind of like lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness.

His advice to himself and to me was this: "Pursue justice, be a positive influence in our world. But detach from what 'we' want. Surrender and trust. We have no control of the outcome."

So how should we, as people in recovery, respond to the suicides and the attempted suicides among us? Aren't our sex addictions often characterized by self-destructiveness, a sort of soul-suicide? They are us and we are they. Shall we beat ourselves up with "what ifs"? I have found that it is healthy for me to ask myself all the questions. It is part of the process of grief. But in the end I need to do what I know to do and that can be summed up in two words - to love. I will continue to love the suicides in life and in death. They are my brothers, my sisters. They are me.

Mother Teresa said, "It is not necessary that we do great deeds but that we show great love". Great love can face down demons, tear down prison walls, melt away masks and self-defenses. But it won't if I don't show this love. Love is never without fruit because even if it doesn't change others I am so much the better for having shown it.

"Sid", I light a candle in your name. I love you, Brother.

Roger S.

PS I celebrate nearly 9 years in SAA - all in prison. Thanks for all your ESH over the years through the PBR.

Ed note: Roger asked if he could copy the "old" issues of the PBR that the prison group had kept over the years, now that the ISO position is such that it can be copied. He says they have done this with the newer issues with good results. The Editor, Robert S., now sticks his neck out as a true addict and says: "Go ahead and copy them for the benefit of those who see them". Don't sell them for profit though, ok?

Roger also volunteers for work on the Literature Committee. He is co-chair of the in-prison SAA group and is willing and able to bring submissions to their attention for brainstorming and feedback.

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More "From the Inside", pages 6-8



POET'S PAGE



[Stuart is a first time contributor to the PBR. He is on "the inside". He has a long time to serve. His sponsor suggested he submit this poetry. We are happy to oblige.

FROM SHAME TO GRACE

When the light is on I can see better
what I try to read or write.

The frown is a squint left over from when the light is off.
Can I hear, in the headphone radio, evidence of the frown
left from trying to hear approval for my efforts in high school biology that my mother thought weren't worth the ~A" the teacher awarded or the college recital performed with no family in the audience because it was the wrong instrument.

The holes in my soul seem impossible to fill
Mountains of shoulds, oughts, and musts
can never void the abyss
left by the absence of
that's fine, good jobs, and terrifics.

Friends and colleagues were always real adults doing real jobs
competent, equals, among peers.
My job was just a token attempt, always lacking
the polish, the resonance,
that any child could do as well or so it seemed
because the authority,
the approval given always responded
as if a child had indeed done it --
and never well enough.

All the book learning is fine,
but it only serves to fill the blanks
on an exam paper or in talk.
The test of life, measured by the emotions in
fires of
self disgust, reveals scores of childlike fear and
insecurity.

Tiptoeing through life
Pizzicato
Choosing the faces to show
the emotions to allow
Safe feelings, approved Pastoral, Major keys
Real living, truth,
the pain, humanity? -- not me!
Reality might not be neat and tidy
the rough edges might cut
a kerf across the ideal that
distorts the protected image,
desired, dishonest.

Fake
Does it show as much as it feels?
Must be like trying to mute a Piccolo.

A choice, a karma

Just for self, or exposed?
There is no individual.

Who am I fooling?
Mostly only myself.
Let's be real -- myself and I.

What is it I can really do?
I'm good at lying.
Can I perform?
Can I teach?
Can I set an example?

I do perform -- is the performance
one I like -- a choice I want to attach
my name to?

I do teach -- is the lesson the
one I want to pass to the
students -- some I am not even
aware are learning?

I do set an example
often a very poor one.
I desire
I crave
Do I need?
Why; do I think I'm abandoned
forgotten
ignored
rejected?

I must be greedy
I do feel needy
The soaring Brahms
drives rhythmically
My should watches, wishes, dreams,
but limps, trips, stumbles.

No way can I measure up --
so far from perfection.

The letter, the spirit the
reality is the failure.

Poetry
gives freedom to expression of emotion
Is the thought portrayed
meaning is in the mind of the reader
Can it even be possible to communicate the
idea
every mind will have its own color connotations
Is it still valid to try
What is communication?
What is perfection?

Feeling stupid is giving
license to imperfection
Claiming stupid feeling is
inferiority taking power.

Stuart D.

MORE FROM BILL R.

The title makes this self explanatory.

Amends

I put on my past transgressions like a winter coat
buttoned fast against the cold to keep me warm.
I see how winds have torn your hair.
I feel the chill as ice melts in your eyes.
Is there no safe place for me?
Some refuge from this home that does such harm?
I trim my beard and let my hair grow long.
I wear my shroud of indecision.
Still the mirror traps me in a smile.
What does it mean?
What does it mean?
Are there no metaphors to mend
the broken love that lies upon the floor?
Can I bear this sorrow for a while?
I used to dance with you and sing.
I wished for you a child's world never ending.
I see instead the pain that I have brought.
I see instead the price I never paid.
How can I tell you now how hard I fought?
My heart is broken with your kiss.
How can this spirit still be so unbending?
I put on my past transgressions like a winter coat
buttoned fast against the cold to keep me warm.
I walk down streets to winter's icy blast
of memory that plays me like a pawn.
And yet I pray it cannot last.
A spring will come.
Tell me spring must come.

FROM GEORGE S...

"During much of my life, I felt that I would be better dead. Constantly, I wished I could go to sleep and never wake up. What I really felt was that my life was..."

"Useless"

Life is useless, dying comes too slow.
Life without meaning is all that I know.
This penetrating fear crushes all of my desires
To continue on the path that living requires.

I've hated my time in this Godless world
With all the madness. It has to stop.
I never considered my deeds as rape,
They were feeble effort to experience escape.

Why do these feelings persist in my soul?
Why can't I cover that gaping ugly hole?
When will I learn that living really hurts?
Perhaps only when I finally mix with the dirt.

Just keep on looking. My eyes reveal
All the hate and resentment I constantly feel.
Yes. I know all the craziness filling my head
Cannot be erased until I'm finally dead.
[I hate this last line...]



MORE FROM... THE INSIDE.....

Tony writes from Minnesota and comments on his recovery from looking at the life of Bill W. ..

My name is Tony and I'm a sex addict. I live and go to 2 SAA groups in Minneapolis, MN. I quit drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes in 1980. I have been going to SAA since 1985. My boundaries are NO pornography, writing porn, Playboy and strippers.... The story of Bill W. is helpful for my SAA recovery and I hope it is for yours too.

[Ed comments: He refers to the books, "Bill W." and "Pass It On".]

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Excerpts from a long, long missive from **Carroll "Sonny" W...**

[Nov '98] Dear PBR,

I just received the PBR with the article. [his] SAA is going strong inside this facility. Thank you for printing it.

We are still trying to find a group [outside] that might be willing to be our outside sponsors. It would be helpful and also allow us to have evening meetings. Like we do in AA. It would give us a lot of help and encouragement.

I wish each end every one of you all the best that God can give. Hopefully someday soon we may meet in our new new walk towards destiny, one day at a time.

God Bless and Thanks.

Carroll W. [Sonny]

[Ed note: Carroll wrote the "Old Brass Rail" some years ago, and has enclosed a very long submission written in 1997. Can't include it now].

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William [Bill] S. writes... [The letter is excerpted, ED]

Dear PBR,

I am in prison now because of rape. I was a rapist. I had served over 13 years of my sentence and made parole in Nov. '94. Nine months later I was arrested on a parole warrant. Several months later violated and went back to prison. I

had not done anything but my past all but insured that I had to be relocked up.

[Referring to a tv show involving women who had been raped, and the questions asked...] "How do you get your sexuality back?" Reply, "Like a necklace, one bead at a time".

Another question: "How could a person rape another?"

Bill responds: The questions touched me; my sexuality had been linked to masturbation, pornography, fantasy and violence for as long as I have had it.

And further: I did not see myself as a person, nor any of my victims. Their bodies simply replaced my hand and the pictures. I struggled for a long time with why I did what I did. After much therapy I came to understand that I did it because I wanted to. It was the easy, softer way.

His advice: For anyone who is raped, "REPORT IT". Your attacker will only continue until he/she is stopped.

Thanks for letting me share.

Your Brother in Recovery,

Bill

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From former writer, Jerry A.

Hello,

Thank you for your note and for acknowledgment of my article... and for the "word count" [it was long..Ed].

....Sadly, most SAA's in prison don't have a meeting. We get that via the PBR and contacts who write [I have 2 regular contacts]

Sincerely, Jerry

[Jerry is submitting to the "Large Book" he says...]

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"CIRCULAR PROBLEM SOLVING"

Around and around a little dog ran; when exhausted it slumped and fell. No matter how fast the little dog ran it could never catch up with its tail

Around and around the little boy ran; in circles he ran till he fell. He ran until he became a number locked up in a prison cell.

Around and around the cell he paced,
but always one step behind
the answer to all the pain he felt
inside his tortured mind.

Around and around the parolee ran
in his sham and games a-fakin';
he smiled at the world as he raced along
with a heart full of sorrow and breaking.

Around and around an old man walked;
that was ll he wanted to do.
This habit was formed in his early years
until it was all he knew.

Around and around the black hearse went
with a coffin locked to the floor.
Inside lay the man who had circled himself;
he will circle himself no more.

Around and around in circles
has never been know to bring gain
and circular problem solving
will keep us encircled with pain.

Written 9-7-98 by Ron B.
[Sent in by a Prison Outreach Coordinator]

NEED A LITTLE HUMOR? EVEN "SHAGGY DOG"

HUMOR?? Here's a few "Tom Swifties"...from a member of the SAA Fellowship, no less. Don't hold it against David B....

"I can't believe I ate the whole pineapple!" Tom said, **dolefully**.

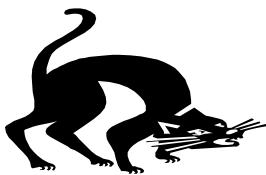
"That's the last time I'll ever pet a lion," Tom said, **offhandedly**.

"I won't let a flat tire get me down," Tom said, **without despair**.

"I keep banging my head on things," Tom said, **bashfully**.

"That's the third electric shock I've gotten this week!" Tom said, **revolted**.

AAAGHHHH !!!



FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

by
Joel B

I don't get cavities very often -- in fact my first one happened when I was almost 30. And for a few days before, I acted pretty much like a child would -- my fear increased and I acted in accordance with the fear. Then last year at this time, I took a routine physical at work and they found an elevated liver enzyme level. So I made an appointment with an internist and during those two intervening weeks -- my imagination got the better of me and I began assuming the worst -- that I had hepatitis B or C. Even though the fears didn't make any sense (since I was never a drug user nor had a transfusion since 1957), that didn't stop me from reacting irrationally. I guess for me (and possibly for others), the unknown causes me to react in irrational ways.

My natural way to deal with the unknown should be to get additional information but instead I often would rather just 'go with the irrational flow' and imagine the worst. Not only is this not physically healthy nor mentally healthy, but it also potentially provides me with reason to 'escape' and in the worst case, escape leads me to acting out behaviors.

Last year, I did not have to wait two full weeks in fear (+ another week after the tests), to determine I was negative on hepatitis (and three more months to find out my levels were back to normal). In fact, after a day or two, a good friend from Orlando called. She happens to be a nurse and works for the drug distributor of the most popular drug used to treat Hepatitis C and after listening to me, assured me that I did not have it. (That was no coincidence of course that she called, I believe).

Anyhow, I can not always search out for the information to alleviate my fears. I also have to realize that when certain fearful and unknown situations happen to me, they often happen to others as well and even if they didn't, I am not the first person to be going through it.

So dealing with fears and the unknown for me is much like the process of working on my addiction. First and foremost, I need to confront them directly and immediately AND WITH OTHERS. Holding things to myself, whether they be fears or past behaviors only lead to negative consequences. Secondly, I must remember that either what I am fearful of

has already happened and I just don't know what the results are yet (like what is going on in my body) or that I have no influence on what is going or the outcome. In either case, I need to quickly "... accept the things I can not change...". Thirdly, I am constantly exposed to good and bad experiences and influences. They come in cycles and they aren't all good or all bad. Sometimes, what seems to be negative can in fact be a major positive when I look back on it later in my life. So I should not try very often (if at all) to 'swim upstream against a strong current'.

Luckily, I am sometimes blessed with the opportunity to anticipate those situations that are newly developing and will produce a significant element of unknown and fear. It is during those situations I can prepare myself ahead of time -- to set up a game plan. For example, increase my daily involvement with recovery, go to one or more additional meetings (as I will be doing in three hours), spend additional time with my support network of my sponsor, my good sex addict friend, etc. And mostly, talk and network however difficult it may be.

Finally, I have to remember to place the events in perspective. Not anything, even a death of a loved one (which is not the case thank G-d this time), is so overwhelming that my whole life and activities need to be 'shut down'. I need to give appropriate time (and respect) for any major stressful event in my life but then move on to other things that require my time and attention as well.

"Stressful and fearful? I would not be human if I didn't admit that I have no clue what is going on....."

So what is about to happen that I anticipate? Friday in the Wall Street Journal and then yesterday in the Houston paper, articles talked about what is likely to be a major merger between the company I work for (the #1 oil company) and the 4th largest oil company. The formal announcement is supposed to occur tomorrow. Assuming the merger is approved, major organizational changes could occur (even if they are engulfed into us). It is also possible

(while not likely at this time) that I could be laid off (and I would not be the first to have to go through this!).

Stressful and fearful? I would not be human if I didn't admit that I have no clue what is going on and that it will probably get even more confusing tomorrow when we all return to work. But I don't have act out or even get into 'middle circle behavior' over this. I know what is likely to happen if I don't plan ahead and deal with how I know I will likely react -- so I go into action! Go, meet, talk, lay out those fears no matter how silly they are and then let things go on concurrently. No matter how good or bad things are -- even if I get laid off (worst case scenario) -- I have a life to live to it's fullest potential in the meantime -- both my professional life and my social life. In fact, just talking about it here was a great start!

Joel

-OLD WAYS-

—NEW WAYS—

by: Rich W. ...

How I might choose to
Respond
to Confrontation
These are the **Old Ways**, which did not work...

Ignore my confronter,
resist and lie
run away fearful
or stonewall deny.
Be defensive, justify my actions, blame others.
After careful [errant] analysis of the motivations
of my confronter,
counter-attack, retaliate.
As last resort, skillfully dehumanize my confronter.

Here are the **New Ways**, which do...

Be open, take time, try to understand the complaint,
have faith in the process of listening to my confronter.
At least accept the possibility of a valid complaint
by searching diligently for my part,
looking for evidence of my flaws at work.
Ask for help or advice and agree to the truth.
Be humble, empathetic, willing to change,
make amends.
Negotiate with willingness to comply where appropriate
and, oh yes, don't forget to thank my confronter.

FEELINGS FEARS AND TRUST

by Rima B.

It's downright embarrassing how little it takes to send me reeling, to make me shake.

One moment I'm full of peace and calm. The next, my mind is racing on about a million things gone wrong and how I really don't belong in the world of those who trust, who find their way without lust for things which aren't good for them and make an effort to contend with their fears, no matter how strong, in a way which isn't wrong, that doesn't end up hurting their soul, the very thing that is my goal.

But to do this, as I must, there is no other way but TRUST, despite the fact that fear exists, and my weakness does persist.

In my heart, my faith is TRUE, turn to God, that's what to do, and say some prayers to get the help to deal with what it is I felt without tearing myself apart, but instead feel in my heart the Grace God's love can bestow and the peace that I can know by remembering that I'm HIS child, and no matter how nuts, no matter how wild my thoughts can make me feel inside It's in HIS love I can abide.

Rima B

INNER CONVERSION

Louis D...

Learning to live with the process of life -

Learning the challenge of change -

Old patterns of behavior soon become uncomfortable, hard to deal with - unnecessary.

Inner conversion is the healing process that brings wisdom, comfort, and graduation to life's most challenging endeavors.

Louis D.

ONE MORE FROM INSIDE... A NEWCOMER TO SAA... Michael P.

[Editor's note: This letter and 3 attached poems are reflective of some extreme pain, extreme early abuse, and extreme gratitude to SAA and his sponsor in a neighboring state. This missive is more explicit than can be printed at this time, even with his permission to use all text and name and address. It is essentially a "first step story". We wish he had a group inside to share it with. This is why Prison Outreach is so needful!]

Dear PBR,

My name is Michael P. and I am finally able to admit I am a sex addict. I am almost 56 and have only been sexually sober since February 1, 1999. As of tonight, I have 28 days of total and complete sexual sobriety.

Yes, I know I am but a baby, that I have a life-time battle ahead of me that will probably be all uphill.

Twenty-eight days ago I took that first tottering step, and I'd like to thank SAA, SA and my wonderful, loving sponsor, "", in "", for standing beside me through some severe tribulations, and helping me reach this point.

It was not long ago that I didn't even realize that I was a sex addict. Then I was arrested, tried, convicted - again! I knew I had a problem with sex, but I wasn't an addict. I was just "kinky", with a high sex drive.

One day I ran across a list of 12 questions for self-assessment. "D..." if I didn't have to answer "yes" to every one except #6. I immediately wrote for more information. Now I know. I am a sex addict.

[Here is where the family story, his childhood, personal adult story are given...]

After the last episode I ran away from "home" again. The third time. This time I lied about my age and joined the Marines. Little changed; the pattern was set, the die cast.

I was kicked out of the service because of sex. I held and lost dozens of jobs, destroyed 5 marriages and many relationships.

I visited adult-video arcades and [acted out], sometimes a dozen times per night.

I molested my adopted daughter when she was 12, my adopted daughter from age 7.

The only programs here are AA/NA but nothing to assist the sex addict, or sex offenders at all.

I correspond regularly with my spon-

sor, but am still [acting out].

I requested in Dec-98 that the medical department help with medication. It doesn't seem to "stop" anything but reduces the cravings.

Perhaps this is "cheating" but it [helps]. I'm not proud of my weakness at having to resort to chemical help, but I am grateful....

My last poem says thanks to my sponsor, my mentor, my friend, " ". I Love You, " ".

Sincerely,
An addict in recovery,

Michael

[Ed: Michael's last poem might well appear in a subsequent issue. If you'd like to write to him, or any other prisoner who might need it, contact: Prison Outreach, ISO Office, P.O. Box 70949, Houston TX 77270, or c/o Mike L., P.O. Box 27544, Houston, TX 77227-7544.]

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HEY GROUPS! SUIT UP, IT'S TIME !!!!

The PBR received the listing of SAA GROUPS that are CURRENTLY REGISTERED ! Some of you are NOT, I say, NOT there ! Groups that WE KNOW are still meeting. It is TIME TO LOOK FOR THE FORM. No, not the one most of us sex addicts looked for in past days, WE MEAN THE REGISTRATION FORM !! You can't send a delegate, nor vote at the convention til you do !!!

Don't mean to chew the cabbage twice, but....

You saw the darkly bordered column on the previous page. We hope so.

Because of problems arising from groups not being registered over recent years, the ISO Board adopted a policy of requiring **ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS for all groups**. Primarily the problems are two.

1. Member groups have not been "zealous" in keeping their meeting information current with the ISO office. Some of that information is over two years old. This makes it hard to refer someone who is seeking help.
2. ISO By-laws require member groups follow the 12 steps and 12 traditions of SAA, rather than a modification or adaption of those from SAA or from other sources.

There was a form sent to each group in August and again in December of 1998. Your group, if you still get any mail at all, got one, in fact, two. Some have chosen NOT to return a completed form.

If you do not register, you will **not**:

- Be eligible to send delegates to the annual ISO Delegate meeting.
- Be on the PBR mailing list
- Be on the list to receive other mail
- Be listed in the SAA Directory
- Be given the opportunity to be listed on the SAA Web-site.

After registering THIS YEAR, future registrations may be made by phone or e-mail.

You're too important to be left out. Tradition 5 says we need to be visible so as to "reach out". Be there for someone who needs you !!

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For those just getting the PBR, maybe by the web: You may be interested in starting a new group. It just takes two. Call the new 800 number [p.12] to see how easy it is!

An Appeal...

We are getting closer to another annual convention. I hope that a number of you are planning to go. But even if you are not, I appeal to you for support.

No I am not asking for financial support. I believe that the money will be there and that money is a small thing. No, I appeal to you to consider who can step up to help the whole fellowship. We need people. People who have proven their ability to work with others; People who have shown that they

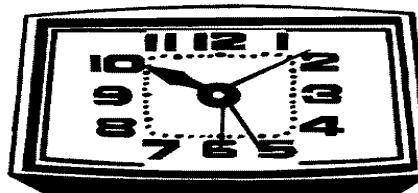
know how to listen to their higher power and act in the right way; People who can bring others together even when they disagree and still hold the fellowship together; People who have the skills of communication and coordination of other volunteers.

For example, this last year, we have not had anyone on the Literature Committee who would bring the viewpoints of the eastern region. The representative from the Northern Tier has been out sick many times this year and there was no backup person. The representatives from the south central region and the intermountain region are leaving their posts this year. We need you to step up to help.

No, you do not need to go to the convention to be part of this effort. If you would like to help but can't make it to the convention, please just contact your regional board representative and tell them of your interest and of your background in the program. (It would help if you had a computer and electronic mail as then we can communicate much faster.) Sponsors: If you see someone in your groups who can help us on an international level, please encourage them to consider volunteering.

Together, we can make literature and make the proper decisions for our fellowship. Together, we have a strength that none of us have alone. I encourage you to step up to help.

Dave R



Bruce B. again...

"NATIONAL CONFERENCES..."

What can wedo....?
A minority view?

Maybe... Read on

I just need make my position clear to the fellowship, and then I can let it go. Unless I can do that, I feel like I'm not doing my part - like my silence would be harmful to the fellowship. That's what my gut tells me, and it seems to mesh with my understanding of Concept V; in Concept V individuals with minority opinions are encouraged to speak out.

I'm sad. I feel powerless over the fate of the joint COSA/SAA conferences that have meant so much to me in my personal recovery and the recovery of my marriage.

I came into the program 1/30/93, and attended my first national conference in Louisville, KY that same year. It was overwhelming. Hundreds of SAAs and COSAs from all over the country coming together to celebrate a year of growth and share experience, strength & hope with one another. I had been to many meetings, and I thought a conference would just be like a big meeting - I was wrong. Not only did I get to hear stories from husband/wife teams, I was able to see in the discussion seminars how healthy couples, with the same disease my wife & I have, interacted. Aside from the couples, I heard perspectives I had never heard before. I was able to see the disease of codependency much more clearly than ever, and how rampant it was running in my own SAA meetings (not to mention, myself!)

I left that conference full of shame from acting out during it, but in the months that passed, my memories of the conference grew back into hope. My wife, Ruth, had also had an eye-opening experience at the conference, and we felt loved at the heart of a huge, caring family. We also got involved in an RCA group, but although helpful, it was nothing like the power of the SAA & COSA fellowships coming together for that conference. After that, we determined that we would allocate our vacation time and financial resources to being sure that we attended our conferences every year. Of course, just because we decided it didn't mean it happened; we missed the next year (Phoenix). Since then we have been at all of them (Ann Arbor, Minneapolis, Houston and Hampton.). No conference has been perfect,

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

but the time and money were well worth it every time. The coming together of the fellowships allowed me to learn and interact with many different perspectives and personalities - wisdom and perspectives that I have not found at SAA or COSA (or RCA) meetings alone. There

"Each year we look forward to seeing out brothers and sisters in recovery - both SAA's and COSA's..."

is a powerful sense of community and family.

Each year we look forward to seeing our brothers and sisters in recovery - both the SAAs and the COSAs. Ruth and I have learned as much from people in one fellowship as from those in the other. I may have a slightly different perspective because a few years in, we came to realize that both of us qualify for both fellowships. But I digress....

Last year, some members of the Indiana SAA/COSA conference planning committee apparently made some poor choices. The board, with the delegates, dealt with the situation in a fair and gentle manner, and I saw a lot of people working their programs. I was glad I was there, and proud to be part of the process. As an unfortunate, and somewhat surprising, side effect, several people on the board felt that COSA & SAA should no longer hold their conferences jointly.

There was a lot more to the decision and discussions, but there was difficulty in agreeing on where the conference should be held (SAA had the support in LA, but COSA didn't). And the idea that SAA was stunting COSA growth by allowing them to lean on us - classic enabling, one might say. The two traditions quoted most often were:

- Tradition 7, Each SAA group should be self supporting, declining outside contributions, and,
- Tradition 6, An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Based on all I knew (and know now), separating the finances and holding the conferences in separate cities was logical, based on time constraints and the above factors. Clearly, given time, a balance can be struck, and the fellowships can work together in mutual respect, like any healthy married couple

does. For this year the time had run out.

However, the group conscience I heard when agreement finally came was that although the conferences would be separate, each presenter or speaker had the right to open their event to members of COSA. Ruth and I tried to look at this positively - we can go to two confer-

ences and (maybe) get twice the recovery. It might be interesting for one year anyway.

I really liked what the COSA board chair said at last years conference conclusion. She spoke about how, for many SAAs and COSAs, a time of separation and detachment is necessary until each person can stand on his/her own as healthy individuals. Then, many come back together as equals, and move forward in healthy relationships. That is what I had anticipated for our fellowships.

Here is what I have seen since:
 -an SAA Conference brochure that makes it clear the COSA's are not welcome
 -a COSA conference in Chicago where it is clear SAA's are not welcome
 -news of a possible COSA conference bid from Minneapolis in 2000 where SAA's will not be welcome.

SAA and COSA clearly need different meetings, but to me, conventions are not meetings; frankly they are growth filled vacations. They are a chance for us to gather as a family. If you want to see the fellowships come together again in 2000, please speak out. Contact your regional board representative and let him/her know how you feel. Get the details of last year's discussion from your delegate - I'm bound to have missed some things. Please take an interest! Don't let this special experience die. We are creative people - we can make it work.

Bruce B.

INTERGROUP COMMITTEE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

My name is Rob V., a sex addict from Michigan and I am the board member for the Great Lakes Region.

Last year at the Convention in Virginia, I signed up to be a part of the Intergroup Committee. The Intergroup Committee has bee inactive for several years. My intention is to ask for your help to get this committee active. My belief is that the Intergroups can strengthen SAA as a whole. So, where do we need your help?

I would like to ask each registered Intergroup to get a volunteer that can serve on this committee. Our first objective will be to develop a communication link among the various Intergroups. To facilitate the communication, I am asking for the volunteer to send me an address, an email address, and a phone number to my attention ASAP. I will then set up a conference call so that we can begin to communicate with each other. The conference call will be held on either April 17 or April 24th depending on everyone's availability. The goal of the first conference call will be the sharing of the successes that various Intergroups have had and the frustrations of inactive Intergroups. During the conference call, we can also discuss future projects or ways to better communicate with each other.

I am excited about jump starting this committee so that we can better reach the sex addict that does not know of this awesome program-SAA. I do need your help, and boy has this recovery program taught me that I must ask for help to stay sober.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon. If you are interested in representing your intergroup on the phone conference or would like to discuss any other matters, please feel free to call Jerry B. at the ISO office at 713-869-4902 or email me at vrmichigan@aol.com.

Rob V.

FROM EVERY POINT ON THE COMPASS....We still need:::::

YOUR experience, strength and hope. In the form of::::

ARTICLES --- STORIES --- POEMS --- LETTERS ---

-THE PBR IS THE INSTRUMENT OF THE SAA FELLOWSHIP-

SEND YOUR IDEAS & OPINIONS, YOUR LETTERS & E-MAILS

"HALF MEASURES..." By Chris C.

[Reprinted with permission from the "Indiana Check-in"]

At the meetings I used to attend, there was a man named Jack who had been in AA a long time. Whenever Jack recognized that he was trying to avoid the work of recovery from his sex addiction, he would quote an AA old timer he knew. The guy used to say, "Most of us are just looking for an acceptable level of misery; we don't really want what the program has to offer." Jack was honest enough to say that he stopped working the program when he went a few days without acting out. He didn't want to do the work that would lead to the fruits of sexual sobriety; instead, he just wanted to feel a little "less bad."

I have to wonder about looking for an acceptable level of misery when I hear things people say in some of the meetings in this area. These included half measures like:

- people with years in the program only managing a few weeks or months of clean time and admitting they white-knuckle it to get that far
- people collecting tokens for years in the program rather than for years of abstinence from sexual acting out
- people who sponsor others but who don't have sponsors themselves or have never worked past Step Three.

One other common misconception here is the confusion of **therapy issues** with **recovery issues**.

Therapy issues are: building self-esteem, making "choices" about acting out, exploring childhood abuse or dysfunctional families. **Religion issues** are often included here. These are: studying the Bible, having more faith, going to church more, getting saved.

Recovery issues are: abstaining from acting out, admitting powerlessness, developing a deeper spirituality, having the compulsion to act out lifted, developing healthy sexuality, doing Step work, sponsorship, carrying the message or becoming more honest, open-minded and willing.

Since the Big Book [of AA] is approved literature for SAA, let's look at what it teaches us about recovery and see where we might apply it. The program tells us that sobriety equals abstinence plus on-going spiritual growth. Abstinence from compulsive sexual behavior may seem impossible at first; then as we focus on Step 1 and immerse ourselves in the life of the program, it just begins to happen. And the program goes farther, promising that if we work the Steps diligently, our addiction will be lifted. In other words, if we work the Steps to get us into "fit spiritual condition" then the obsessive thinking about sex and the compulsive sexual behavior will stop. The urge to act out is gone! Our Higher Powers do this for us without our fighting the addiction [see Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 84-85]. AA also suggests five key recovery behaviors; pray, call your sponsor, go to meetings, work the Steps and read program literature. These are the basic activities that are the foundation of spiri-

tual growth.

If we do these, we can count on our Higher Powers doing the rest. It is clear, however, that **abstinence from acting out is NOT optional**.

Then there is the confusion of 12 Step recovery with therapy or religion. Sometimes it is difficult to make distinctions because they overlap; still it is very important to see the differences. Therapy is about gaining insight into our problems, mustering resources [including willpower] to change our behaviors and/or situations around us, with the ultimate goal of having more control over our lives. In recovery, experience shows that neither insight nor our own actions stop addictive behavior and that the goal is surrendering control of our lives to our Higher powers. Religion is about increasing the quantity of faith, growing in a particular religion-defined relationship with God, and often [attempt] throwing a number of obstacles [including willpower] between one's self and addiction or behavior that is considered sinful. In recovery, we focus on the quality of faith [particularly honesty], finding a self-defined HP that is effective helping one recover, and facing our addiction directly [Step 1] while developing a spiritual way of life [Steps 2 through 12]. Both therapy and religion are good and important for life' however, they aren't the right tools for bringing about recovery from sex addiction. For those who doubt this, look around at meetings; see if it is not true that the longest clean time and deepest serenity belong to those who focus on 12 Step recovery and let their religion and therapy act in supporting roles.

Working this program leads to recovery - full-fledged, abstinence-based, serene recovery; nothing else works as well. Just as Jack knew he had to choose between getting a little less miserable or going through the work of recovery, so too does each one of us have to make a choice - the program is truly all or nothing. The misery of addiction is not a necessary component of life. The "half-measures" listed above are signs of a little less misery, not recovery. I encourage my brothers and sisters in SAA to be satisfied with nothing less than the full fruits of recovery from our common addiction.

Chris C.

STEPS 4 AND 5

Perhaps it is appropriate that Steps 4 and 5 follow the previous article by Chris C. It would seem that although Steps 1 through 3 are the mental processes that are at work as we give our lives over to the care of our Higher Powers, it is the "self" that begins to unravel the complexities of body, mind and spirit, and all the

thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are at the root of what we call "inventory". The FEARLESS, MORAL INVENTORY.

As I worked my own Step 4 the first time, which was during my first 6 months of being in the SAA program, I doubt seriously that there was any eye-opening revelation beyond the superficial characteristics which I rather knew I had possessed all my life. The good points, which were few, were also those I accepted as having by "luck", fortunate by birth to have.

Then followed immediately my Step 5, given to a person recommended by my counselor. As I have stated before, it was a structured, stilted, superficial presentation. Like perhaps I was giving a talk about someone who wasn't really there. There was no depth. Because there was no depth to the SEARCH done in Step 4.

I'm going on 10 years in the program and have gone back several times to these Steps as well as all the others. Each time I took the trip back I was able to bring forth some added knowledge about myself, and some added wisdom as to the defects which required my Higher Power to take care of them. But it's not as if my HP could do much with them if I hadn't seen them myself.

It really IS the constancy of process that discovers these new "possessions". Some of these have been eating my lunch for years, some have been hidden behind the shame of not measuring up. I didn't discover all of these in group meetings, in fact very few.

I reckon that's what Chris was talking about when he pointed to those entities and processes that SUPPORT our Step and Group work.

And there is Experience, Strength, and Hope to be found in places other than a single workbook, a single group, a singular approach to awareness. Some of these places of awakening are even those which, if accepted by SAA as a whole, would be contrary to one or more of the Traditions.

I would suppose just as my early trauma compounded itself to exponentially increase my addictive propensities over time, so is it that little by little, each recovery step I take compounds itself to exponentially improve my character defects. When I read stories of recovery, it it like being in my group, hearing them.

In my first 60 years my mind was so narrow that nothing could get in or out. And it was always "made up". There was fear in opening it, what would I find? It was easier to stay in denial than to believe that something just might be different from what I believed. Narcissism really is comfortable. For me. Not friends or family. Friends could leave, children can't, employees sometimes couldn't. Those as sick as I wouldn't, we were having too much fun!

For those who have not yet worked Steps 4 and 5, it is truly a great big, fearful process. If you do it like I did, you'll miss a lot the first time. When you come back to do them over, assuming you have gone through the others in order, it will be more revealing than you can believe. There will be less fear, less denial, more awareness, and more desire to do it again. You'll also feel more like you deserve those "good" things you find out about yourself... And you DO !!

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[Staffed]	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
[Phone calls taken in Person]	
M-T-W-F	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Thurs	2:00 PM - 6:00 PM

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At Large	None	None
PBR Editor/Member		Robert S.



"KEYSTONES TO FREEDOM"

THEME FOR THE TWELFTH ANNUAL

SAA CONVENTION

Friday-May 28

Open Newcomer Meeting
 Convention Opening Celebration
 Keynote Speaker
 Evening Workshops

Sat - May 29

Workshops:
 "First Awareness"
 "Looking Inward"
 Banquet and Keynote Speaker
 Dance and other Entertainments

Sunday-May 30

Workshops
 "Finding Connection and Fellowship"
 Noon Chili Fest and Entertainment Workshops
 "Breaking Free into Grace"
 "Power to Transform our Lives"
 Variety Show

Mon - May 31

Open Meting:
 Where to Next?
 Brunch/Speaker Closing Ceremony
OTHER CONVENTION AMENITIES
 24 hour room for meditation
 24 hour marathon meetings
 Hospitality Suite
 T-Shirt-Gift-Book Shop
 Specialty workshops and meetings

MAY 28th thru 31st, 1999

The Red Lion Hotel
 100 West Glenoaks Blvd.
 Glendale CA 91202

DELEGATE CONFERENCE

SAA members appointed by their home groups as delegates to the business conference need to be onsite beginning early Friday morning through Saturday afternoon. Delegates must register for this portion separately through SAA's International Service Office. If your group has not received the official documents from the ISO office, make contact by using the phone or e-mail [on left of this page]

Hotel

Make your reservations before May 7th!!
 Single/Double rate: \$80.00 per night
 818-956-5466

Air Discounts

5% [OR 10% on 60 day advance purchase]
 American Airlines 800-433-7300

—OR CALL—**Travel Agent**

Airline-Hotel-Auto Rent "Justin" 800-304-5100

—NOTE—

When making reservations, be sure to mention Keystones to Freedom !!

ALSO NOTE:

If you need more information or a registration blank, contact the ISO office as at left.

When you register early by mail, you'll receive a registration packet with both a personal phone contact and a coded-access Internet Web Page where we'll post the latest convention information and address any special needs you make known to us.

Register Early and Save !	By Mar 30th	By Apr 30th	At the Door
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SAA MEMBERS ONLY

FULL 4 DAY PLAN	you	\$90	\$100
FRI-SAT-SUN PLAN	are	\$75	\$85
FRI-SAT PLAN	too	\$57	\$67
SUN-MON PLAN	late	\$58	\$68
SUNDAY ONLY	for	\$43	\$53
	this		
YOUR INVITED GUEST	bar-		
SAT BANQUET - DANCE	gain	\$32	\$42
SUN CHILI FEST - SHOW	!!!!	\$18	\$28

Donations needed for Scholarships - Some Scholarships are available. Ask.

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, yes only one, 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! Thanks !!