

# ISO OUTREACH

[Ed Note: This month's outreach column is devoted to the **OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT....** by Joel D.

**F**irst, let me start by saying "thank you" to Frank B. for his past work in the Outreach Committee. He's passionate about outreach and recovery and continues to be a role model for me as well as a mentor. Thank you, Frank, for passing on the torch to me. I hope to continue the tradition of "carrying the message" to the sex addict who is still suffering and has yet to discover that there is a way out.

During last year's convention in Tucson, one of the issues that came up at the Outreach Committee meeting, was outreach to women. The wonderful surprise of this year's committee is the strong presence of three women from the North Pacific Region: Marty K., Mary Joy S., and Rosalind W. With these women regularly attending SAA meetings, becoming delegates, and participating in the Outreach Committee, outreach to female sex addicts can be addressed in the committee.

With the passing of the website guidelines, local SAA websites are another useful outreach tool. With the vast use of the internet, especially for reasons of recovery, there may be an SAA meeting starting in Alaska. Tom B. has been sponsoring a member there via e-mail and phone, and this member may start an SAA meeting there as part of his Twelfth Step. A meeting in Eugene, Oregon is looking to "sponsoring" this meeting by providing literature or anything else this new meeting may need to get it started. Stay tuned for more news, hopefully from Alaska.

Carrying the message in small towns was addressed with

many ideas. These included sharing experience, strength, and hope with non-program people. (There is an AA pamphlet which addresses this). Also, the posting of SAA meetings in local Alano clubs referring to pages 68-69 in the Big Book of AA which addresses sex issues at non-SAA meetings. Then set up contact lines with time and location of meetings. We should develop rapport with agencies and make certain there are sufficient brochures and other program materials available, and have an established SAA meeting sponsor at every new meeting.

Lastly, at this year's convention, the issue of doing gay men's outreach was addressed in a workshop, and it is hoped we can create a brochure for the gay male newcomer, similar to the Women's Pamphlet of SAA.

There's more work to be done, to say the least, but I know there are members out there who are doing outreach locally. That said, I would like to solicit the fellowship as a whole about ideas for outreach that the committee can work on for a project. Please submit your ideas to the ISO and they will forward that information to me. One idea I'm getting underway is an Outreach Committee Newsletter. This newsletter will help us stay in touch with the focus of outreach as well as informing each other of some of the work we're doing across the country. Be on the look out for this newsletter. This article is also my accountability for this project: now the whole fellowship knows about it. My part? Suit up and show up.

Joel D.

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I never saw in myself a poet. I still don't, most of the time. But this is how I am learning to create and finding joy in my creation. I choose to share it with you so you might share in my joy.  
Craig

## New Eyes

~\*~\*~

Like a butterfly  
Opening its wings  
For the first time  
Showing us the beauty  
Inherent in its form

I open my eyes  
Looking on those around  
Seeing the same faces  
In different colors  
A blend of emotions  
A mix of passions  
A joy in feelings

Stretching its wings  
Strengthening in the breeze  
Experimenting with new freedoms  
Letting go...  
Floating and Flapping  
Navigating to new heights

Not knowing where I'm going  
Flying to these new sights  
Finally understanding the Love  
In the eyes of those around  
Shining in my own as well

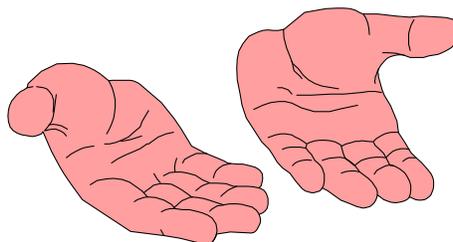
I open my eyes  
I embrace my change  
I smile at the butterfly  
Giving of its colors  
A promise of what I might be

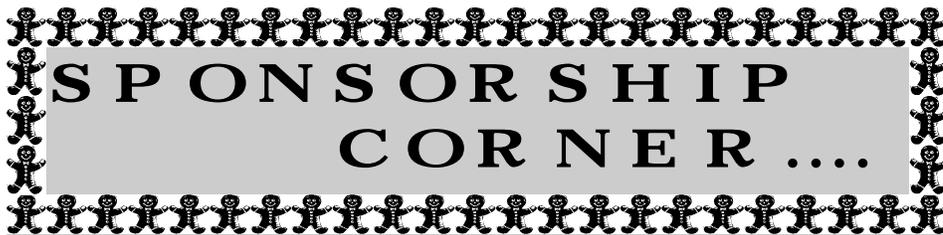
The world around  
Looks different today  
Each person, Each blade  
Different in shade  
With reasons why  
They choose to stay

To grow or to remain  
Behind a mask of normal  
Accepting the pain  
Knowing its a choice  
Finding my voice  
Wanting to offer  
A path away...

Seen with new eyes.

May you find your path.  
Craig





## SPONSORSHIP CORNER ....

### SPONSORING AROUND THE DEFENSES

**R**ecently one of my sponsees approached me about his resistance to working Step Four. He had entered the program about two years ago after a very painful work-related confrontation about his addiction. While he did not lose everything, the extent of his acting out and the nearly tragic results from getting caught were enough to bring him running into the program. He embraced meetings, abstinence and the SAA way of life. Among the many meetings he attended was a Step Workshop where he worked on Step One for over a year. He had excellent support from people in his life. Yet he "can't seem to bring himself" to work any farther and doesn't know what to do. He is stuck in his recovery.

Perhaps others have gone through this; I did. After a marital crisis I started going to meetings, worked Steps One, Two and Three heartily, and soon experienced the lifting of my addictive urges--all in my first few months in the program. Then I got comfortable and couldn't seem to move beyond Step Three. Three years later another big crisis got me moving again on Step work. Looking back, I see that my addictive defenses kept me stuck for those three years.

Psychological defenses are an important part of addiction and recovery (and all of life for that matter) yet we don't often discuss them in SAA. We sometimes talk about denial, but addiction specialists tell us that there are **three other defenses that are also pronounced in**

**addicts--projection, minimization and rationalization.** We will not discuss them in this article, though we could in the future if people desire it.

For our purposes let it be enough to say a few general things about these defenses:

1. Everyone has them and uses them (as well as many others), though in addicted people these four are most prominent and used rigidly;
2. We use them unconsciously (i.e., automatically) so we do not control them;
3. We continue to use them even when we recognize that we are using them; and,
4. We use them in all areas of our lives--in our thinking yes, and also in our emotions, spirituality and behaviors.

**T**his means a number of things for recovery. The defenses will always be there. They will protect the addiction. They will keep us from working the Steps effectively because they protect us from spiritual and emotional honesty (pain) even when we are trying to be mentally honest. They will become less effective in the face of a crisis. They will become more flexible over time as we work the Steps. If we lose momentum in our Step work, we will get stuck; the defenses will again become rigid and it will take another crisis for us to restart effective Step work.

I told my sponsee that what happened is that he has lost touch with his powerlessness on the emotional and spiritual levels. I said that the next crisis will get him unstuck so that he can resume Step work. That is not what he wanted to hear, though there does not seem to be

much else that is going to help him. (Remember, we do not control our defenses.) Fortunately, the next crisis does not have to be as life shaking as the one that got him into the program. It could be as simple as the next argument with his wife or children, a very difficult day at work or a brush with his addiction that doesn't even lead to acting out. Or, as with my story, it could be a very big crisis that causes a lot of pain.

What to do as a sponsor? When a newcomer arrives and appears to be developing some clean time (a sign of progress in working the first three Steps), we can encourage the sponsee to get to work on a Step Four ASAP. While the person may make a less than thorough effort, it will be continued movement and will keep the defenses from becoming too rigid. We really don't have the luxury of taking the Steps at a nice leisurely pace, nor of doing long textbook exercises that touch only the intellect.

With someone who is already stuck, we can support the sponsee by challenging the emotional and spiritual denial so that they become less rigid. The Higher Power will provide the crisis that helps get the sponsee unstuck. (In fact, between the time I first wrote this column and now, the HP did help this sponsee experience another crisis.) When the crisis occurs, we can stand ready to point to appropriate Step resources. As long as the sponsee stays with the program there is hope that the crisis will not be too dangerous.

This is one way to help sponsees whose defenses get them stuck. Are there sponsors who would be willing to tell what you do to help them? Will some of the people who have had this problem share what your sponsors suggested you do?

Please send correspondence, questions, or feedback to:  
Sponsorship Corner  
PBR - ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949



## BOARD MEETINGS!

“An omelet, a cracked heart omelet, that would be good...”

I got your spam Robert. I don't know why they use that term for junk mail, I LOVE Spam!! I guess I'm on the wrong side of the food tracks (as usual).

I should have gotten this to you right after the Convention, but all (and I mean ALL) my computers went haywire Anyway here it is. It's from my journal:

5/24/01

ISO Convention, Houston TX Whew!! What a day (yesterday). I showed up at the opening Board Meeting ready to: Take care of business; Kick butt; Wow them with my panache and personal style!!! **Then reality reared its ugly little head.**

The Board Meeting. started out with personal check-ins. Once again, just like it does every time we do this, my heart got cracked and I realized (again) why we're really here.

This time it, it only took two check-ins to ruin me. One "Boarder" (that's what I call us Board Members) who's been thru a year of hell was sharing about his experiences and he started to cry. Then I started to cry. Then another "Boarder" started to cry. Then, as usual I had a moment of self-consciousness (because, after all it is all about ME! Isn't it?..). I was almost embarrassed by my story. By my recovery. I felt like a fraud. But, thankfully, that passed and what took its place, as we went around the room, was this feeling of intense love and a bond of ????? I don't know *what* with these people. The depths that our addictions have taken us and the Herculean effort we have made to recover.

As the check-in continued, I had this image of me in my disease. And for the first time (I think) in my recovery, I had compassion for the person who acted out. I saw my addict-self, not as some evil creature bent on destroying, but this poor, scared kid that was trying to cope in the only way he knew how. Of course, dragging my inner child, my conscience, my dignity, my sense of right and wrong and the rest of the mental committee along with it on our ride to hell, but somehow I understood that there wasn't anyone or thing to blame. It just was.

And once again, all my preconceived notions of the "business" of re-

covery went out the window, and my heart cracked (with the gentle sound an egg make on the side of the bowl) and every person in that room and whatever that spirit is that seems to grow apparent in the rooms we inhabit when we gather together got inside me, and I was different than I was when I walked into that meeting, so ready to "kick butt".

Like I said in MY check in: That it is such an honor to witness your recov-

ery. A lot of the time I can't see my progress, but I see yours and that tells me that I must be progressing too. I walked in here pretty defended. And now you've gone and broken my shell, and I don't know what to do with all this cracked heart. Perhaps we can make a cracked heart omelette. Yes, a Cracked Heart Omlette, that would be good!

Peter B.

## When Step Two Finally Comes Around

I think I've finally taken step 2. I've been white knuckling it for most of the last 23 months when the obsession has come up. I went through the motions and I really did pray, but didn't always make a decision to stay in the outer circle. It took me a year to get through my first step because I kept going through sponsors.

Now, I'm on my fourth step. I got through the 5th in the Gentle Path, but I'm working on a four column inventory with my sponsor. However until yesterday, I never really believed God would be there for me in a pinch. I didn't believe he'd keep me abstinent even though he's been there at other times when I've needed Him. I had been on vacation for a week, going in and out of my middle circles since my water skiing accident (a couple bruised ribs have I). Then a neighbor moved out and forgot to cancel their newspaper and I was powerless to not look through for the lingerie ads. I doubled up on my meetings and my writing and step-work. Then I went to an all-day event in my other program and got the message that it's only me who can keep me abstinent. I have to want it. I have to make a decision (step 3).

Yesterday, the Intergroup meeting ended early and I had too much time to kill before the meeting. I wanted to act out, but made a decision to find a restaurant and read my big book. I drove past billboards with my sun visor down. I left a message with a couple people and showed up at the Sushi place my sponsor and I had eaten at before. Well, after ordering and sitting down, a new sponsee called from my other program. Then one of the guys I'd left a message for called to see if he could join me. Then another guy just showed up

out of the blue. The radio played the song from my sponsor's voicemail. It was like God was going out of his way to let me know I wasn't alone and that he was there for me, once I made a decision.

I went to the meeting, fellow-shipped, and then played a board game with that same guy who just showed up, out of the blue as before. He showed up again as I was leaving and asked if I wanted to play a board game. He'd been on the other side of the restaurant. After that, I drove home safely, made a decision not to masturbate and didn't, though I'd seen some images that morning in the paper. It worked. This morning I went to work on my 4th step again rather than getting the paper.

I've been struggling with my 4th step because I'm also working in another workbook to help me deal with my childhood issues and it has felt like it was too much for me to handle all at once. But now I have faith, just like I did last week skiing across the wakes with several bruised ribs. "O.K. Father, I'm going right." "O.K. Father I'm going left." I didn't wipe out when I did that.

Ben from L.A.

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“It is with narrow souled people as with narrow-necked bottles; the less they have in it, the more noise they make in pouring it out.”

Pope

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# I-N-T-I-M-A-C-Y

Andrew M.

Today, I will feel proud of my ability to take risks in order to enlarge my life. I am learning to feel proud for the risks I am beginning to take. The biggest risk I face is intimacy. I grew up without involvement of either of my parents in my life. I wanted to be close to people, but I didn't know how. I had many opportunities to connect with life around me, but it was totally foreign. I didn't know how to reach out for help or that I could. Fear gripped me all my life and I avoided meaningful relationships. I used sex as a means to mask my pain and frustration. I lived a life of unfulfilled fantasy rationalizing that this was acceptable living. I did not value God, others or myself. Sex was my highest priority.

One year ago, two years into in recovery for me, I shared a painful sexual abuse experience during my childhood with my wife and it left me vulnerable and afraid. She asked me, "What in the world are you afraid of?" I frankly didn't know. I learned shortly thereafter that I am afraid of intimacy - of being known. I challenged myself to know more about this topic. I wanted to research what others believe, know, and understand about intimacy. The topic for a Dallas SAA meeting (fall 2000) was intimacy and there was very meaningful discussion. I offer the following definitions from that meeting and input from other sources (ref. May 16, Answers in the Heart). Intimacy is:

- More than sex
- In to me I see
- The sex addict's conundrum
- Grace, the result of letting go and trusting God and self
- The ability to relate appropriately to the circumstances at hand
- Participating fully in whatever it is we are doing
- Giving myself wholeheartedly to the present

- Opening ourselves to all of our emotions, to joy, to reality
- Opening ourselves to life
- The desire and willingness to be known and to know others
- The polar opposite of withdrawal and isolation
- Freedom of expression in all emotions, including anger
- Connection with ourselves and others to the very depth of our being
- Marked by close acquaintance, closeness
- Essential, innermost
- Full disclosure of ourselves, a lack of hiding anything
- Deep sharing and communion with another as lives are shared
- Unconditionally exposing yourself without trying to cover it up
- The ability to give and receive fully with enjoyment
- A safe and comfortable place where one feels the freedom to share themselves

As I have learned in the time since this initial research, **the primary component of intimacy for me is honesty** and the **primary impediment to intimacy for me is resentment**. Recovery is where I have learned about honesty - not just the things I've done wrong, but also the good in life, the strength of healthy behavior through recovery the benefits of meaningful relationships and the love of God. Recovery is also helping me become aware of my resentments so I can understand them, deal with them and let go of them so they no longer will be impediments to my relationships. I am grateful to be seeing this clearly so I can build intimacy into my life. I want intimacy in my life and the light of God's love is shining in the right places today so that I can accept who I am, where I am, how I am and what I have. These are all blessings and it is seeing these in a simple way that helps me accept them. I am learning how to live in reality, in honesty and in intimacy.

Andrew M.

THE STASH -  
 Cunning  
 Baffling  
 Powerful  
 by jeff h.

The alcoholic stash is a bottle of his drug of choice, hidden away somewhere, just in case. For a smoker it might be half pack of cigarettes in a coat pocket of a coat that's never worn. For a sex addict the classic stash is some form of pornography hidden in a closet, car trunk, office desk or wherever the addict is sure it won't be found by someone. Often it is found because addicts usually have a very poor judgement of the level of risk they take. The finding of the stash often creates a healing crisis that ultimately serves the addict's recovery.

Even if we don't get caught, a sponsor or other group member will eventually ask us if we have a stash. We wonder how they knew. Then we are encouraged to get rid of the stash. Eventually we do get rid of the stash, if our program is to be at all successful. Usually, there is some intellectual gamesmanship that gets played first. Common arguments are, "As long as I am not using the material, why do I have to throw it away?" "The stuff is available anywhere, the whole world is a stash, how is the stuff I have any different from what is on many store shelves just a few blocks from my house?" The question to ask is "Do you have a stash, or does it have you?" If you can't seem to find the strength to get rid of your stash it has you under its control, not the other way round. How can you be in recovery, with your life turned over to a higher power, if you are still a slave to your stash?

In our denial, we think that the stash is harmless if we don't use it. The problem is we are using it all the time even if we never see or touch it. The stash is a bargain with our own devil. Symbolically the stash says to our addict self that if things ever get bad, or we really need our drug of choice, its ready and waiting. The addict remains dependent on the stash, even when its not used. The addict does not have to face life completely cold turkey as long as the

*(Continued on page 8)*

The Stash — Cunning - Baffling - Powerful

(Continued from page 7)

stash is there. This is not just a semantic or intellectual argument. Holding on to a stash allows us to pretend to be facing life without using our drug of choice, while it is ready and waiting to be used at a moments notice if recovery does not work out.

We are basically not putting our lives into the care of God, as we understand God. We are putting our lives into God's care, but conditionally. The condition is if things get too bad, I get to use again, and it's always there. The addict does not have to trust the program, his God, or himself. The stash is our real higher power.

The physical act of irretrievably tossing out our stash forces us to face our powerlessness, and dependency. Physical action is walking the walk, not just talking the talk. When it's gone, we have cut our safety line back to addiction and have to trust in a power greater than ourselves to keep us sane. It does not matter that it is possible to replace the stash. Symbolically we are saying to ourselves and our higher power that we no longer want the stash in our lives. And we are not just saying it, we are doing something definite about it. Spirit always notices when we take action in support of our spiritual growth. When spirit notices, we automatically receive the spiritual help and support we need to follow through with our actions.

I have recently come to understand how there are many forms that the stash takes. A cable TV channel that has soft-core pornography late at night can be a stash. It's not physically there like a magazine or video tape so it doesn't seem like a stash. But all we have to do is wait for a pornographic movie to run, it will be there eventually. And the search for our favorite kind of pornography is part of the ritual. It keeps us hunting for our drug of choice, not focused on recovery. Even a scrambled cable channel we are not paying for can deliver enough of a sexual image to be a stash.

The Internet is a stash when we keep a list of Internet address in the "favorites" list or have them memorized. Recently I met a new SAA member whose drug of choice was acting out with people he met in chat rooms on the internet. He had a long list of contacts, nation wide, in his machine. When he got into recovery he deleted everything off the ma-

chine, and was very proud of doing that (and rightly so). Later he admitted that he had copied all the "best" Internet addresses onto a piece of paper. The list was his stash. After being confronted by his therapist, and his home group, he destroyed the list. That act sent him into a grieving process that took some time to recover from. It also forced him to count on recovery completely. It took courage, and strong commitment to recovery. Do you have that kind of strength?

A person can be a stash. I remember that early on in my recovery I stopped all my active affairs when I got caught and my life bottomed out. I could see and understand the damage the affairs did to my family, and myself. Unfortunately, I continued to have what I now call dry affairs. These were relationships that were not consummated affairs, but they had all the romance, fantasy, obsession and addictive pull of consummated (wet) affairs. I met these women for lunch, took walks with them, had intimate conversations, everything but physical sex. The sex tension and intrigue was very strong and a powerful pull for my addict. In fact the dry affairs were worse for my marriage and my sobriety than the wet affairs but I could not see it. Dry affairs are deniable. My wife knew something was wrong, that my attention and energy was going elsewhere, but I was solid in my denial. It took a series of upsets and confrontations to finally break the cycle and end the dry affairs. Then years later I realized that I still had stash women in my life. These were women whom I knew at work, with whom I had a legitimate connection, but something more was going on in my head. These were people with weak boundaries, needy, whom I befriended. In the back of my mind, I knew it would not take much to kindle more than friendship if I needed it. The person was my stash. This was much less than a dry affair, but it kept me stuck for a long time, and fed into a level of dishonesty and denial about my relationships with women. Today I am very careful about this.

I have a card box of mailing addresses and phone numbers of all my friends and business associates. In that box were also women with whom I have had affairs. I used to run across their names in the box looking for someone else, and remember those days. Even after many years of sobriety, tossing those cards in the trash was hard to do. The addresses and phone numbers were long ago obsolete because the women had moved, and in some cases married and changed their names. It didn't matter. It was a physical souvenir of my acting out past. As stashes go, I would argue that this was a mild form. My experience is we start with the worst of our addiction issues and continue to clean up less and less significant messes as we continue to grow along spiritual lines. In the beginning I could not have understood how a few obsolete phone numbers buried in a card box could matter in my recovery. Now I know.

**Take a moment now, quiet your mind, and think about all the subtle forms of stashes you might still have in your life. What do those things mean symbolically? How do these things (people) keep your addict alive and powerful in your life? What do you obsess about? Are these things worth it?**

Yours in Recovery  
Jeff H. Minneapolis MN  
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### Lifeline Partners !!

Recently Leo H., ISO Treasurer, sent to the SAA Fellowship, a request for help. This in the face of adding staff to the ISO Office to better serve the needs of a growing Fellowship and the issues of outreach and service.

The faithful volunteer who has given thousands of hours these last six years doing all the work of the SAA Web-site, will turn those duties over to the ISO Office. Also, the office will assume the duties of PBR layout, heretofore done by the PBR Editor.

The next Issue will carry more about these changes, and the coming needs. Meanwhile, become a faithful contributing member of Lifeline Partners !!

Recovery Through Diversity  
Don G.

For years our 12 Noon Thursday Sexual Addiction Group remained quite small, just an average of three or four men. Then, about two years ago, for what seemed like unexplainable reasons, it began to grow. Now we had 5 or 6, and it was a group of both men and women. As the months continued to pass, more newcomers entered our doors; men, women, gay, bi, straight, blue collar, professional, young, and senior. Now we average between ten and twelve.

Being an "old timer," (nine years) in the group, I felt some fear and uncertainty. What would become of the easy familiarity in the group, between the four or five men who had known each other for years? We would have to pay more attention to how to properly run a meeting, and let everyone have an opportunity to

speak.

More months passed, and the newcomers became more seasoned in their recovery. Now the atmosphere of the meetings was becoming more honest and vital! Now I, "the old-timer," was again learning more about my recovery. Others, who had been attending for years, also became quieter, and listened.

I am convinced this diversity has been and is a very helpful and healthy dynamic for 12-Step Recovery Groups. As a male, I still feel the need for "women's only" groups in our metro area of 1.5 million. I realize it still is scary for a woman to enter and be in a room of mostly males. However, I know now that a really diverse group of gratefully recovering addicts is very helpful to my recovery.

I know now also that what has hap-

pened in the last two years or so was made possible first by our Higher Power's wanting it that way; and second, by "old-timers" like myself allowing, yielding our wills to his, and not insisting on being in control of meetings.

It is my hope and prayer that other 12-Step Groups for Sex Addicts will also be open to the wondrous experience and freedom of changes in the diversity of their groups. Believe me, it is an experience, which can significantly change lives and enhance recovery.

Don G.

Columbus, Ohio

[Ed note: Don says he and his family are moving to the Portland Area. Make them welcome when they arrive.]

**PRISON OUTREACH: MAKING MORE CONNECTIONS  
TO WOMEN PRISONERS**

As I reported in the last PBR, Prison Outreach started getting back on track at "Sharing the Promises," the May 2001 convention. I'm still working out the details concerning our regional coordinators in one or two regions but basically everything is running smoothly.

One of the areas where I have been very happy to see some growth was in the area of outreach to women prisoners. It's long been my goal to have men writing to men prisoners and women writing to women prisoners, but because of the shortage of women volunteers this has remained just a dream.

That started changing at the last convention. A woman in the fellowship stepped up to be the prison outreach coordinator for women throughout the country, so now when we hear from a woman from anywhere, the letter gets forwarded to this particular coordinator.

And to make things better

still, I have begun receiving e-mail from a woman who is extremely enthusiastic about SAA prison outreach to women. Her enthusiasm comes through the computer so strongly that I can just about touch it.

So what I want is to keep our new volunteers busy. Of course, I'm always looking for **more** volunteers to write to prisoners, so if you have some time and are interested, contact me at:

Mike L., Prison Outreach Chair

ISO of SAA

PO Box 70949

Houston, TX 77270 - or e-mail me at:  
mike.l@puertorico.com

If you're a woman prisoner and you are looking for some contact and support from a woman the outside, it is available for you now. Write to the above address; we'll take it from there.

Mike L.

# The Winds of Change

Recently members have proposed changing the name of the SAA newsletter. The reasons for these proposals mostly center on a perceived inappropriateness in the name "Plain Brown Rapper," with its pun on "Wrapper" playing on the idea of pornography being wrapped this way when mailed.

To summarize the opinions expressed in favor of this change, it is felt that just as we as addicts outgrow old behaviors in our recovery, so the fellowship of SAA has outgrown the implications of the little joke that provides our newsletter

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# JUST LOOKING...

by Rob P.



My earliest sexual experiences were with pornography when I was nine years old.

I remember the first time I masturbated was a complete accident, I didn't even know what I was doing.

I was never abused physically when I was growing up, but I was surrounded by sick, addicted adults and because I never knew what I'd get when I went to them, I learned to keep everything inside, all my questions, fears and pain.

By the time I was in junior high school, when the hormones were raging and boys and girls discovered each other sexually, I was so full of shame and fear and the sexual urge got so addictive that I couldn't handle approaching girls I liked. For the next 20 years, the pattern was the same, no matter how much I wanted someone, I couldn't let go enough to give it a chance. I watched one girl after another slip by and I felt like all I could do was watch it happen.

I'd heard from the women in my family that sex was bad and dirty, that women only did it because men wanted to, and that men were the cause of their problems, just because they were men.

Implied in all of this when I heard them talk was, "You'll be different, I know you will." Because of what I heard from these really sick wounded women, I thought I was inferior just because I was a man, and I had no right to get angry since I was just lucky in the first place that women would even put up with me.

I shut down sexually when it came to "real people" and turned more and more to pornographic images and my fantasy world of perfect, beautiful people and women who loved sex.

I got into the program in my early 20s, suicidal because my life was a complete wreck from acting out.

The last 8-1/2 years have been long and hard, joy, accomplishment,

big setbacks, great friends, betrayal, disappointment, but it's always been an upward movement even though I often couldn't see it at the time.

One of the biggest recurring patterns was still meeting someone and becoming attracted to them but getting so lost in my head with fear, insecurity and expectations that I couldn't do anything but watch them slip by. It led to frustrating, humiliating (I felt at the time) experiences when I'd actually be able to talk to one of them. I'd get physically sick, and be so frustrated and scared I couldn't stand it.

I saw two really close friends through the entire dating process with girls they ended up marrying, and I felt so much pain and depression and desperation that I still don't know how I made it. If it hadn't been for my meetings and my Higher Power, I wouldn't have.

I obsessed about not being able to approach girls so much that it filled my whole world, and I was angry and full of self-pity, and felt lonely and inferior and didn't understand why I couldn't have love.

I had my first relationship when I was almost 30. It only lasted for about five months, and it was really dysfunctional, but it was a relationship. She was the second girl I'd ever kissed, and the first girl I made love with.

In our physical relationship, I found out just how much damage the addiction had done to my sexuality. I couldn't relate to physical touch when it came to sex. All I'd ever known was looking and when it came to touch in the context of sexuality. I was at a loss, I didn't know how to relate to it. Our relationship ended really painfully for both of us, and in the year or so after we broke up, I

started going to strip clubs and got into pornography again. I retreated into my "fantasy image" world, where everything began and ended with looking at the perfect body, catching and holding onto the perfect image.

I got so I couldn't remember touch in the context of sexuality, I blocked it out because the high of images was what I knew best.

I lost a job and had to move back home and after a couple of months I met a girl who is smart, talented and loving. She's also physically attractive, and because I didn't get a good look at her body until after I'd had some time to talk with her, I didn't fall into obsession with the physical.

I've been withdrawn and shut down my whole life, especially when it comes to women, and it's been really hard to open up to her. We're not having sex because of her spiritual tradition, and for me it's another sign of my Higher Power doing for me what I can't do for myself because it's probably saved our relationship and I never would have had the discipline to make that kind of decision on my own.

I still don't know what to do with touch. But I'm able often to tell my girlfriend how attractive she is, and how much I desire her along with telling her I love her. It's a miracle that I can even feel those things. And I know that with the help of my Higher Power and my program I'll be able to get where I want to be and I won't have to settle for images. Thanks for letting me share.

Rob P.

+++++

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**A Letter From the Islands...**  
**Relying on the source**  
**of infinite Love and Power**  
**Karen A.**

Dear Plain Brown Rapper,

**W**hen I first was told I was a sex addict, I had been married for a year to one of a pair of serial killers who preyed on prostitutes. No one could get convicted because one would not testify against the other and one had turned his life around by attending other twelve step fellowships [AA and NA]. It was time to realize how sick I was.

A psychologist in the program insisted I attend meetings and also remember all of my conversations with my molester. At this point, I could only get help for my child, through the victim/witness assistance program since I was classed as a perpetrator. By this time, I had lost custody of my other child to her molester father because my own father had testified against me in court. My first step was to realize how powerless I really was over the fate of my children, since I had not been doing a good job of protecting them myself.

My second step was to admit there was a truly loving power; imminent and transcendent, that could take care of my children better than I could, and guide me to a truly better life.

My third step came with two years free of alcohol. Knowing that I could not help my husband rob dope houses or convenience stores to fuel his habit, but instead, rely on that tiny voice, softer than a whisper, that told me there was a legitimate way to do things and that I must let go of the old ways.

My fourth step was all about remembering these conversations which led me to keep my first sexual experiences so deeply hidden. The wordings were: "If you tell anybody what we did, I'll tell them you are lying and they'll believe me." And,

"When you can't get the feeling [orgasm] because I'm not around, use the dog." And, "When you miss me, you can shoplift, or smoke or use snuff, or alcohol, like I showed you."

My mother was so distraught over the loss of intimacy between us, and my delinquent behavior. I believe this was her main reason for suicide. [My molester had been named after my mother].

I shared my fifth step with the wrong people under the wrong circumstances. I was abandoned, or abused. I set myself up for this, but have learned that no matter how bad, shamed or low I feel, recovery is taking place, and I will be stronger and of more value to others by not perpetrating and showing others that under fire, I can still act like a lady.

Step six came for me when trying to get away with marginal behavior and this lasted about three to four years. Humiliating situations resulted which concluded in my attitude improvement.

Carrying this better approach into each new situation guided me through step seven, and I saw more and more promise in the responses of those who I dealt with.

Step eight showed me that so long as I am actively working this program, I do not have to [physically] die to make amends. Some are sicker than others and may even need the program more than I do, but once I have carried the message of recovery and offered what I am able to, I cannot carry the burden of another's inventory. [Which I was doing all along]

This made step nine a delight instead of a chore, or a fearsome and overwhelming obligation. Forgiveness has not occurred in every relationship, and I wonder how I can make amends to my mother, who, although sick herself, did go to extraordinary lengths to protect me. I do not go to extraordinary lengths to protect my 2 children today because I learned to rely on that source of infinite love and power.

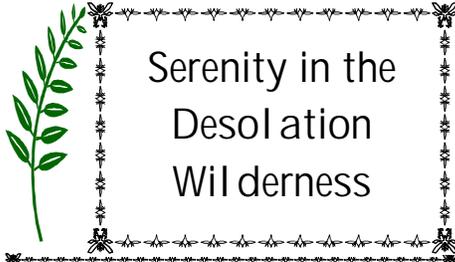
I know that just because I/you care about you/me, we are not

duty-bound to engage in sex with each other. We can actually promote the twelve traditions and twelve concepts instead!

God, please empower us to make this a better place for everyone to live.

Love,  
Karen A.

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**Serenity in the**  
**Desolation**  
**Wilderness**

A couple of weeks ago, members of the San Francisco Inter Group sponsored a camping trip in the Sierra Nevada mountains. The trip was to provide a wilderness setting for recovery and to raise money for the 2002 San Francisco convention. During a hike in the Desolation Wilderness area, I spent some alone time taking in the beauty of the place.

Sitting on the exposed root of a hemlock tree, in the Desolation Wilderness.

Just enough shade for comfort.

Boulders strewn down the ridge from the rocky heights above.

Water trickling through the sunny rocks to the darker shade below.

The serenity here cannot help but envelop me, in spite of the pain I feel in my heart.

Oh! But could I shut my eyes and meditate on the whispering water sounds.

But my eyes remain open, and take in the play of light on the brightly colored wild flowers that are also getting sustenance from this spot

Big, black ants bolting to and fro on the granite. Seemingly lost like my soul when I don't ground it in God's will. Lord, creator and sustainer of life: whenever I begin to bolt to and fro in this world, I pray that you remind me of this place and bring my spirit back to it, in peace.

B.B. - San Francisco

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**Winds of Change - from pg 9...**

*(Continued from page 9)*  
 with its title. Besides making light of behaviors which can be deadly serious in consequence, it also implicitly excludes members whose acting out behaviors were different than these particular behaviors. The view has also been expressed, in conjunction with this, that the newsletter's brown color is not effective in attracting new readers, and that it would be helpful to

present our newsletter in a brighter, more inviting color scheme. However, we do not consider it right to make changes of this sort without getting a sense of what the members at large really feel. We cannot assume that the opinions we have described necessarily represent a fellowship-wide opinion. And if they do reflect your views, we need help in deciding on the details of the changes we make. That's why we are now asking you for feedback. What do you think? Do you

agree that the title of this newsletter should change? Or do you prefer the current title? If you do agree, can you propose a possible new title or titles for the newsletter? There are several ways you can let us know your views. You can write the PBR at [PBR address] or e-mail your ideas to [pbr@saa-recovery.org](mailto:pbr@saa-recovery.org). If you have contact information for your region's representative to the Literature Committee, you can contact him or her. If you don't, you can write or e-mail the ISO Office [see above] to receive contact information. We look forward to hearing from you  
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