

The Plain Brown Rapper

The official newsletter of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 16, Issue 1

January - February 2004



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God is merciful to me even when I am acting out, but then my vision is too clouded for me to see all that He is doing for me.

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Often sorrow and pain are the precursors to wisdom. Experience is Wisdom's teacher.

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Searching For Serenity

By Craig R., Nebraska

Recently I was asked about serenity and meditation. What is it? How do I get it? How do I keep it? How do I practice it? These are good questions and make for an even better spiritual search.

I spent a long time searching for a peaceful serene way of living. I thought it was an end goal for a while. Instead I've found it to be more of a tool, a means along the way to other goals.

I found that before I could have serenity everyday, I had to seriously think about what the idea means to me. I had to define it, write it out, decide how I wanted to be serene. My definitions did not stay static; they evolved over time in the program.

I started with the serenity prayer: grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. I looked up the definition in Merriam Webster's dictionary--quiet, peaceful, placid. If I take that definition too far, I turn into Jell-O, one step lower than a couch potato.

But if I use that definition in the serenity prayer (grant me the peace to accept the things I cannot change, the quiet to accept the things I cannot change, the placidity to accept the things I

cannot change) I can see that control I may want to exercise to change something . . . and I can understand that if I can't change it I don't need to walk the same paths of anger, denial, acting out. For me serenity has become that choice of wisdom to exercise my courage or just let it be and change how I view the problem to begin with.

I heard a friend say he really enjoyed the last little bit of the meetings. Standing in the circle, ending with the group saying the same thing helped him to focus and feel a hint of serenity. I see that as the ultimate feeling of belonging or fellowship, being at peace with yourself while saying the ending words of a meeting. I told him it sounded to me as if he knew subconsciously that was the best place for him to be. Now the challenge is going to be to find more of those kinds of places. I like to describe the idea of finding more of those places as finding what is RIGHT for me.

Today I've found more things being right for me than I started with. Before, I'd use sex to medicate my pain, I'd smoke, I'd get angry and hurt those around me with my pain.

Searching For Serenity Continued

By Craig R., Nebraska

With practice and choices I've changed those actions and that thinking through recognition of things I enjoy.

I enjoy time with my family. I enjoy working with my hands. I enjoy big projects and multi-tasking. By recognizing these I can begin to emphasize them as my gifts, making them bigger every day, until I no longer need just any old excuse to act out. In effect I've found a bit of serenity with every decision to be kind to myself or to another.

How did I get there? I worked my way through a workbook that I've often heard mentioned in SAA. I practiced my recovery. I kept on practicing, thinking, meditating and asking the exact same questions that I asked at the beginning until I found what I wanted.

How do I pray and meditate? For each person it's different. I can't follow a teacher's exact way of meditating. I can suggest what it may result in or appear as. I see my meditations/prayers as a way of focusing all my attention on one thing without outside interruptions. I can use the lessons life has given me to understand all the permutations surrounding this thought, idea, or action.

What are those lessons?

Respect for myself and those around me. Practicing the golden rule I learned in grade school: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. With that rule as a main guide I can understand most problems I bring into my prayers and my meditations by simplifying them to the most basic question: does it hurt someone or does it hurt me? Is it right to do this? Is this what I want done to me?

Does this mean I have to always have a problem in order to meditate or pray? Not in the least. I value some quiet time just to let my brain idle every now and then. I can meditate while walking in a park, working with my hammer on the next log wall landscaping project, resting in bed before sleep. I can empty my mind and just wait for thoughts to come up . . . and if they don't, I have no worries to puzzle out. I can just enjoy that serene moment.

The exact question I was asked was, "Why can't I have serenity everyday? I know that I can but how do I get there? How do I pray and meditate?"

My answers won't necessarily be yours, but they might show you a way. The abbreviated version of how I found my version of serenity every day is--I worked my program, I did the steps and

used them to spur my growth. I kept practicing and visualizing who I wanted to be and how I wanted to act. With those two main ingredients all it takes is time. Yes it hurts while the change is beginning,

after all an oven feels hot to a cake when it is put in the oven . . . but the cake gets used to it and does its growth thing . . . to be pulled out and frosted for dinner! What an analogy! I'm ready to be frosted!

S.A.A.

By Mike, a sex addict

We are here because we need help
 We can't find our way on our own
 SAA give us strength and hope
 So we don't have to fight it alone

It doesn't matter what your burden
 Or how long you've kept it hid
 The only thing that we're here for
 Is what you're doing, not what you did

So welcome to our humble group
 If your first time, or been here before
 You will find acceptance and peace
 Within these four walls and door

We freely give our phone numbers
 And you will hear us freely share
 Our sorrows and our victories
 The secrets too hard to bear

But in this group there is healing
 Encouragement, hope, faith and love
 As we rely on each other and God
 And receive His blessings from above

February 9, 2002

Letter to a Departing Sponsor

By Scotty W.

I didn't want to hear what you had to say, Sponsor. I must be honest. During my most trying and anxious days of this addiction, you stood calmly and patiently next to me. You never gave up on me, not once. Many days, I'd lean on you when I felt I couldn't stand by myself. You have come to represent all that I aspired to be in my own life: a strong, gentle, and always loving influence on those around you. Of your other sponsees, I came to consider _____ and _____ as two of my closest friends during my time in the program.

I've been accused of beginning many of my shares with the words, "My sponsor says . . ." I'm quite proud of you as a person as well as a sponsor, in case I haven't told you before. Through you and the program, I've become more familiar with the thing I needed most in life: love for myself and love for others (in that order, of course!).

I say all this not to make you get weepy (though you may anyway). You have been my Higher Power's greatest human gift, Sponsor, and words can't describe the breadth or depth of my thankfulness at having had you as my sponsor. I understand your need to move

and grow, and I greatly respect your decision to move in directions which lead to greater health.

I'll likely have other sponsors in my life, and I'll be proud to be their sponsee as well. They will each make their contribution to my recovery, and the recovery of those I sponsor. I honor you, and I'll honor them, because I know "the process, not the personalities" is the attitude that takes me in the right direction along the road toward my own personal recovery.

I love you, Sponsor. Always have, and always will. I have been honored to be your sponsee, and I am honored to be your friend.

Signed (as my sponsor taught me), with "Hugs,"

Scotty W.



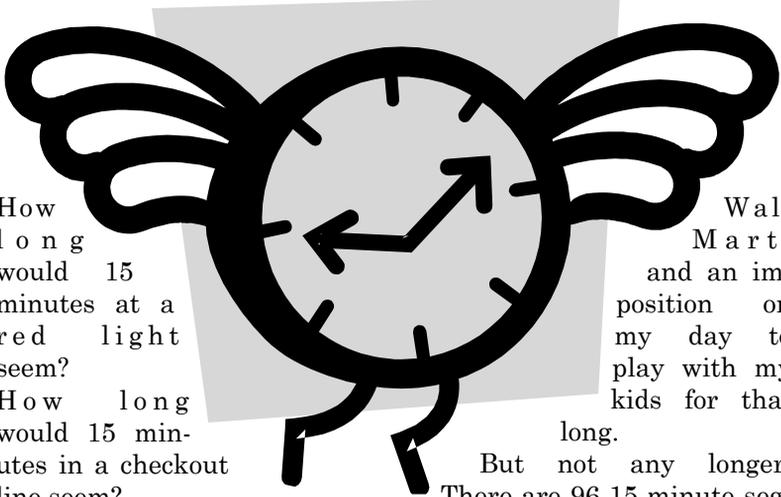
15 Minutes

By Mark J.

How long is 15 minutes? What kind of question is that, you ask? 15 minutes is 15 minutes. So I'll ask the question another way:

Yoga pose. At the end of those 15 minutes it dawned on me how little time that really is. Yet that would be a long lunch break for me, too long to stand in line at

- How long would 15 minutes at a red light seem?
- How long would 15 minutes in a checkout line seem?
- How long would a 15-minute obsession with your addiction seem?
- How long would a 15-minute wait on a callback from your sponsor seem?
- How long would 15 minutes in your addiction seem? Would you be satiated, or would it seem like no time at all had passed?
- How long would a 15-minute play session with your child seem – to you? To your child?



Wal-Mart, and an imposition on my day to play with my kids for that long.

But not any longer. There are 96 15-minute segments in any day, meaning that one 15-minute segment takes up less than two percent of a day. I think I will begin setting aside 15 minutes a day for myself and several 15-minute chunks for my kids each and every day. This will mean that I can concentrate on things that make me truly happy for some small percentage of each and every day.

I feel the rewards will greatly exceed the amount of time invested. By the way this only took 10 minutes to write, so I have 5 minutes left to play!

Last night I spent an incredibly short 15 minutes in a

Musings Punishing God

By Nathan C.

I used to think that if there was a God, then He was mainly concerned with punishing me for my sins. He didn't seem to be going out of his way to help me, that's for sure! Nobody at church seemed to have an answer to my problems.

It was all about sins and how I should avoid committing them. There was very little about what to do when one has already sinned. What to do about that? "Repent" was the only answer I ever got, nothing more.

Nowadays thanks to SAA I have a different view. I believe God is primarily concerned with my well-being. He is kind and merciful. He doesn't want me to suffer, but sometimes my suffering is the only way He can get my attention. When I was acting out I was hurting myself and others but refused to see the obvious truth. If anything, I was convinced that others were hurting me. But I had it all wrong. God, in His mercy, left me to wallow in my own sins until I had had enough. I don't believe that God metes out punishment. Why would He bother? When I do something bad, it simply comes back to me. "What goes around, comes around."

Nowadays I believe that it's not just sins that come back to me. When I do something good, that too comes back in the form of something positive. That's the

key to recovery. By doing good things, good things come back to me; a positive cycle is formed to take the place of the old negative, destructive cycle of addictive behavior. Getting into that positive cycle is the way out of this mess that I got myself into. I'm not God; I'm not all-powerful. I can't make other people be good, and I can't even control myself to be good, but at least I can try to do positive things and to have positive thoughts. Once I'm trying, making an effort, that means I'm serious about turning myself around. I believe that real positive effort is something that pleases God. When God sees me making a real effort, then He in His mercy steps into my life and makes miracles happen.

Yes, I believe in a kind, loving, merciful God, not a harsh or sadistic one. The more I try to be a good (or better) person the more God is pleased with me and the more active He becomes in helping me. But when I fall or backslide into negative thinking, negative actions, etc. God has no reason to punish me, because my negative actions and thoughts bring their own punishment. I start acting out again. Is that God's doing? Of course not.

Yes, sometimes things happen in my life that are not posi-

tive. Things come out of the blue. Illnesses, accidents, unkind people, and the like. But amazingly, since I've been in the program I haven't encountered any misfortune so bad that I would have to act out because of it. I acted out because I was powerless to stop myself, not for any other reason. What a realization! Suddenly it became clear to me! I'm powerless over my addictions, but God can and will release me from them if I really want Him to.

That's the Higher Power at work. And SAA shows the way.

What SAA does for me is that it tells me in no uncertain terms exactly what I need to do to get out of the vicious cycle of negative thinking and negative actions. It shows me the way, step by step, to get back to God's favor, the way to become eligible to feel and perceive His mercy at work in my life. Of course, God is merciful to me even when I am acting out, but then my vision is too clouded for me to see all that He is doing for me. Working the program lifts me out of the morass of my own ignorance and unwillingness to see the truth about myself. "Keep it simple," is one of the things I hear at meetings. The simple truth is that I am an addict and that God can and will keep me from acting out if I work the 12-step program of recovery.

So for me the SAA program

of recovery is about clearing all the unnecessarily complicated and dangerous thoughts out of my head, keeping me focused on staying sober through working the program, and gradually learning how to lead a better, more positive life. The First Step is the foundation. Without the firm conviction that I can't go it alone, whatever structure I might build in the further steps will never be really secure. But once I really truly realize that I'm powerless, that opens up the way to realize that there is a merciful, caring Higher Power who is close to me -- One who knows me better than I know myself. Gradually, step by step, I learn to bow my head to that Power and submit to His will. "Thy will, not mine, be done O Lord." I was convinced for so long that I had everything under control, but then things got so bad that even I had to admit that there was something missing from my life. For me, God is what fills that emptiness. He is always there for me, but sometimes I am not there for Him.

But when I go to meetings and read the literature and work with my sponsor on the 12 Steps to recovery, I am constantly reminded of who I am. My name is Nathan and I'm a sex addict. I'm powerless over my addiction. And that's nothing to be ashamed of! Look at all these other people here in this room. They're all addicts too. None of these people have any power over their addic-

Musings Punishing God Continued

By Nathan C.

tion, so why should I? As opposed to the "other" kind of thinking which cuts me off from the Higher Power and pulls me down into my own personal hell, the kind of thinking engendered by honestly trying to follow my program of recovery is like oxygen to one who is suffocating. It puts me back on my feet.

Of course there is a Higher Power. There has to be, otherwise how would all these addicts be able to stay sober? Even more relevant: how would I be able to stay sober? For me, the greatest miracle is my OWN sobriety. And for that I have God to thank, not myself.

But when I stop going to meetings, stop talking to my sponsor, stop working on the steps, the old thought patterns start to recur. That's my ego at work. For me, ego is what takes me away from God. One wise person once told me that "EGO" is an acronym that stands for Easing God Out. Easing God out of my life. That's what happens automatically when I stop working the program. Why is that? Because when I stop working the program it means that I've begun to think that I have gained some measure of power and control over the addiction. Oh, how mistaken I am!

But God is merciful and He has given me all the tools I need to keep the ego at bay. Where I live there are meetings every day of the week. Yes, it does take

some effort and travel time to get there, but it's always worth it. My sponsor is only a phone call or an email away. What a wonder that I can work the steps with him -- Thank God for that!

So when I look at it all honestly, in the spirit of the First Step, I have to admit that none of this would have been possible without some kind of intervention from outside me. I am a sex addict. I'm an alcoholic, too. I have an addictive personality. Once I'm in the cycle of addictive behavior I can't stop it and even when I get out of the cycle somehow I'm powerless to stop myself from sliding back in. So objectively, my own lasting sobriety and serenity gained from following the 12-Step program (and for me that means going to my home group's meetings and working with my sponsor) is proof positive that my Higher Power is right here with me, all the time.

It's not His fault that sometimes I can't feel His presence. That happens when I'm preoccupied with my own selfish thoughts and desires, anger, greed, complexes, etc. But when I stick with the program, those negative things are miraculously dissolved and positive things take their place. That's God at work, right here, right now.

Becoming Who I Am

By Mike B.

Standing in the rain, as it pours over body and soul
A gentle peace swells from within, making me feel whole
I'll never again let circumstances dictate my mood
Allow negative things that happen, to make me sit and brood

For too long in my life, I have let destructive powers reign
Destroying any joy that I had, replacing it with pain
From this day forward my mind shall not relent nor bend
I shall no longer embrace my fears, nor have them be my friend

As the rain came from heaven, cleansing my mind at last
It seemed I was finally free, from the failures of the past
It washed my mind from the guilt that I'd carried for so long
Healing me from myself, released from the grip that was strong

Soaked to the skin by heaven's flood, I raise my fists in glee
No longer captive to my past, I become what I want to be
So, as I stand and the rain falls, defiant I shed no tears
Becoming who I'm supposed to be, trapped no more by my fears

August 13, 2002



I Remember Jess C.: The Beginning of SAA in New Orleans

By Guy W.

"I'm doing good today but my car had a slip," said Jess C. near the beginning of the Tuesday night SAA meeting. His car was a 1972 Chevelle and, from the looks of it, had succumbed to considerably more than one slip. The year was 1988 and I had been in the program for less than a year. I felt terrible, having acted out the night before. I felt like a failure and didn't like to hear of another's success. Now, fourteen years later, I treasure my memory of that slip.

He later told about his last slip. He had gone cruising for a sex partner. He called it just "cruisin'." He had planned to be gone for about an hour. He went to one of the parks where sex could be found. Twelve hours later he was still there cruisin'; he had not had sex, he had not eaten and he had not slept. While he had fed his addict, he had starved himself. He said that when he returned home he realized that he had been acting out the entire time even though he had not had sex. As far as I know, that was the last slip he ever had.

The concept of feeding his addict and starving himself showed in Jess' physical features. He was about six feet

tall and even at 60 years of age rail thin. He had a moderate complexion and I had the feeling that he would probably tan if he spent much time in the sun, which he didn't. In the summer, he usually wore jeans, a t-shirt and tennis shoes. He had a narrow face and kept his light brown hair in a buzz cut. He also had rather large ears. He greeted with a warm smile and a big hug.

Jess had traveled extensively before coming to New Orleans, spending quite a bit of time on the West Coast. He had not had an easy life. Though hard to imagine today, he was arrested, convicted and sent to prison in Los Angeles in the 1950s for being gay. While that experience did not define him, he did express to me his sense of injustice and hurt in being criminally punished for being himself.

He acted out sexually with men in various locales, including bars and park restrooms. He told me once that, during the peak of his addiction, he felt like he was giving to others only to realize after he got into recovery that this was "stinkin' thinkin'"; his addict was simply degrading him.

Jess got into the AA program long before he got into SAA. Like many AA old-timers, Jess used to quote the Big Book, and cite the

page, by memory. He was totally involved in recovery before he began SAA.

Jess C. was the founding member of SAA in New Orleans. He told some stories about the early days. The first SAA meeting was to be held at his house. He notified certain people and even posted a few bulletins in the French Quarter. Some people brought wine bottles to the meeting, figuring it would enhance the anonymous sex with addicts. Did it stop Jess? No, he held the meeting, complete with wine.

After some false starts, SAA began to gather momentum in New Orleans. When I joined the program, Jess had been in the program for five years. He attended every meeting. He went to coffee after every meeting. And he made newcomers like me feel welcome.

Along with Carl and Mike, Jess was at my first meeting. I soon developed a close relationship with Jess and he helped me in the program. For the first thirty days, my program went well. Then I went out of town and had a slip in my hotel room. I returned to the meeting that Sunday and was asked to read *How It Works*. During the reading, I began to cry and one of the members reached over to take over the reading for me. I held on to it and I remember Jess nodding af-

firmatively. I completed the reading. After the meeting, Jess said there was no way that he was going to let anyone take that reading from me because he could tell that I was getting in touch with some deep-seated pain. He told me that slips in this program were inevitable and that I should work through the feelings and get back on the program. He told me that he had been in the program for five years before he had gotten one year of sobriety. While I didn't realize it at the time, he was doing for me what few had done: telling me he loved me because of, not in spite of, my imperfections. A lifetime of such interactions would not be enough. He became my first sponsor.

Jess was gay and I was sometimes embarrassed when he talked about his sexual preferences. One day I learned that Jess had been admitted to the Veterans administration hospital for tests. I went there to visit him and when I arrived he was talking to another gay member of the program. They were discussing the size of one of the doctors' thumbs. On another occasion, he told me that he and Mike had gone to the French Quarter to "practice the 3-second rule." According to him, Mike practiced on all of the women and he practiced on all of the men. Humor was always present.

Jess had multiple addictions.

I Remember Jess C.: The Beginning of SAA in New Orleans Continued

By Guy W.

When I joined the program, he was a smoker. During my time in the program, he quit smoking, using the twelve steps. Later he identified himself as having a food addiction or, better put, an addiction to not eating. He founded a group dealing with addictive behaviors in general, based upon a book he had read. This meeting was held on Friday night and was open to all people who suffered from addictions no matter how they acted out. He went on a local TV talk show to tell people in New Orleans about this meeting and other meetings in the area that were available to people suffering from addic-

tions. He truly worked the twelfth step.

Jess frequently wrote about addiction and gave me some of his writings. Unfortunately, I seem to have misplaced them. I can say that he had an intuitive understanding of the agony and the rationalization of addiction and was able to communicate that on paper.

Writing this has provoked many happy thoughts in me as well as some sad ones. I fondly recall my interactions with Jess. I am ashamed that I was not there for him when he died. Yet I feel his spirit lives on in SAA in New Orleans. As long as I live, Jess, you will never be forgotten.

Sayings of a Recovering Man

By Ric M.

1. Decisions in life can be troubling. The obvious or richest path may not bring true reward. Involving or surrendering to your Higher Power in these decisions shows wisdom! Be humble in all decisions.
2. How is wisdom gained? Often sorrow and pain are the precursors to wisdom. Experience is Wisdom's teacher. One must also focus on the Higher Power as the source of all wisdom. Ask him for it, and often you will be rewarded with it (often after a hardship).
3. Why do we run away from conflict? Often conflict has been an unresolved source of pain. Addicts are allergic to pain in the beginning. But, after we have faced it many times, we learn to embrace it and resolve it. Resolution brings harmony.

4. Prayer is the true source of strength. E.M. Bounds referred to a man who was so in tune with prayer, he would switch from prayer to conversation with another and back to prayer as if breathing. Should we not strive for the same with our Higher Power (God)?
5. Creativeness is God's seal upon us as his creation. Who better to inspire it than the One who created all things? Inspiration doesn't come from a void. It is a sign of God's love in our lives.
6. When was the last time you watched a sunrise or sunset? There is an awesome beauty within it, as well as peace. Each is markedly different, yet inspiring. Make sure to take time and enjoy this simple gift.
7. Shame is a poison unto itself. Where does shame come from? Feeling inadequate and taking it upon oneself to punish for it. God knows we are inadequate at being perfect. He created us this way. There is a God-shaped hole in us all that only he can fill. Once we fill it with him, we begin to lose shame and its shackles that bind us.
8. Grief can begin to swallow in its many forms. But, it is the agent which cauterizes the deep spiritual wounds. Without it, we stand the chance of unending spiritual bleeding.
9. How should one view the setbacks and stumbling that dot one's life? Often, we see them and ourselves as failures. A famous inventor, when asked about the 1000 times he failed to invent a working project replied, "I have not failed a thousand times. I have but explored 1000 different paths and found they are not the correct ones." The same is true of us as addicts.
10. Desire. How does an addict define it? Often he/she mistakes craving for desire. Desire is that which a person deeply longs to have. Does an addict deeply crave to have addiction and all the suffering that results from it? I say no. What he/she truly desires is the love and peace that comes from a Higher-Power-Shaped hole deep within that they are unable to fill with cheap substitutes.

Little Personal Miracles in Recovery

By Santi L.

It is my hope that most of you will agree with me that Our Higher Power reveals himself to us and communicates with us primarily through personal revelation. This is His most intimate way of developing a personal relationship with us. I'd like to share with you my latest "little personal miracle."

I was conversing and sharing with a man named Sam whom I sponsor today about steps 4-7, which deal with restoring our relationship with ourselves, and after much spiritual discussion I found myself presenting to him his (our) need to be specific in our prayers. Even though prayer should be part of our early recovery, it is critical at this juncture (steps 4-7) that we rely heavily on God for his divine intervention as we recognize our shortcomings and commit to be rid of them. Since everything I have in real wealth (wisdom, experience and commitment to a spiritual life) has been given to me I must admit that I too had to learn the importance of specificity in prayer from someone else.

As I spoke to Sam, I recalled that he has a strained relationship with his eldest son. Therefore I thought I would use the son as an example. I said to Sam, would it not be great to have

your son call you up and say:

1. Dad, I am having some difficulties with biology in school. I have tried to learn these new ideas being presented by my new teacher but I am really struggling. **Could you help me with this?**
2. Dad, I need help with this new girl I really like. I am supposed to take her out to the movies but I am confused with all the choices. I want to show her that I have spiritual beliefs but I do not want to seem like a prude, and lose the chance to romance her. I really like this girl. **What should I do?**
3. Dad, I am so pissed with my so-called buddy Chris I want to strangle him. He really betrayed me by talking about something I had asked him to keep confidential. I thought I had a really good friend, maybe I don't. **How should I proceed?**

I can tell you as a father of a pair of teenagers, nothing would satisfy me more than to have that sort of openness and communication coming from my children. Sam agreed with me. "Yes, it would be fabulous to have that kind of request for help".

Now then, if we who are of this tainted world can rejoice at the hope of one day having that kind of communication with our

children, **then why would Our Higher Power want or expect any less from us, who are His children?**

As I continued speaking with Sam I could see that I was reaching him. I became aware that I did not know where these words were coming from. I have never heard or read those words from anyone else. I had not heard such an analogy, nor do I have the capacity on my own to come up with that type of simple yet powerful communication.

To make a long story short I know that Sam left our meeting convinced that he must work on praying specifically for what he needs.

- If he has difficulties at work, he can pray for the wisdom to make sound business decisions that will help his business flourish while admitting his lack of problem-solving skills.
- If he has a conflict with his son, he can pray for the courage to walk in faith while listening in stillness to the good spirit within and asking for instruction on a daily basis until the relationship is healed.
- If he faces intimacy issues with his wife he can admit his shortcomings in dealing with these matters while asking for God to reshape and reform his thinking about the differences be-

tween sex and intimacy that this world has so distorted.

What does all this have to do with “little miracles”? **Everything!** God gave me this new revelation about praying being in itself a little miracle, personal, intense and precise.

I am convinced that we have a responsibility (if we wish to grow in the spirit of Our Creator) not only to pray specifically for our own personal needs and the needs of others but also to step out in faith, to recognize opportunities to share with others about the awesome power of God and the wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth that come as the result of **working the 12 steps in order**. These opportunities will present themselves, especially when we have our spiritual radar up and not the worldly radar of things (sex, power, money, prestige) that bring us fleeting temporary happiness while depriving us of the chance to grow in eternal ways.

My specific prayer for you is that you will accept the challenges (if needed) contained in this personal story to grow in the likeness of Our Higher Power by doing your spiritual calisthenics (working the steps). Be watchful for the “little miracles” in your life.

May God bless you and keep you,
Santi L.
Charlotte, NC SAA

From the Editor

By Mike L.

Even though I had a kind of secret fascination with the song “Hound Dog” when I was in the first grade, I was never really an overt Elvis fan. I did always feel some affinity for The King since I was born in Memphis, a town closely associated with him. Nevertheless, it was with some trepidation that I allowed a close friend to talk me into watching the overlooked 1998 film *Finding Graceland* a few nights ago. What could a film about a guy named Byron who picks up a hitchhiking Elvis impersonator and carries him across the country possibly have to say to me? Well, plenty, as it turns out. Without going too much into the story of the film, which I highly recommend, by the way, I saw that the Elvis impersonator (or is he?) brought some real magic into Byron’s life, magic that Byron was by no means expecting.

Similarly, when I sat down to review the articles that were submitted for this issue of the PBR, I was not expecting the gifts that I received from them. I’ve been struggling with a couple of matters lately, matters that touch on my standard difficulties around projecting into and trying to control the future, among other things. And it seemed that almost every article and poem in this issue touched on one or another of these issues and helped to give me an answer. I don’t know that I can classify all of these into one single theme, other than to say that they all helped me and in a big, specific way rather than in merely a general way.

I look back into my history with SAA and recall—and in some cases still know—folks like Jess C. whose story Guy W. tells here, folks who helped me when I was new to the program. I recall finally giving up the concept of God that I grew up with and developing a truly loving Higher Power, a Higher Power to whom I can always turn, in the same way that Nathan C. discusses. The deceptive simplicity of Mike’s poem about the SAA fellowship masks his description the great gifts that the program has offered to me over the 12-plus years that I have been a member. I was touched by Scotty’s farewell to his sponsor, recalling having had sponsors like Scotty’s in the past and also recalling trying to be such a sponsor—not always successfully—to men I have known during this time. Santi L.’s article is the perfect segue, telling us about the gifts a good sponsor can give, only this time from the sponsor’s point of view. I read Mike B.’s poem talking about how easily he has given

in to fears over and over again and I recognize him in myself; now if I can only apply Mike's solutions on a regular basis. And Craig R. adopts a prose version of the same issues in his article on serenity. Similarly several of Ric M.'s "Sayings of a Recovering Man" resonated with me and I suspect that at different times, different ones of those sayings will probably resonate with me as well. And finally Mark J.'s article "15 Minutes" reminds me that I can use these small increments of time to either attack my demons or spend time in my outer circle, depending on which is needed at the time. I do have to say that of the issues of the PBR that I have helped to put together in the past year and a half, this is my favorite.

And speaking of segues, this is as good a time as any to mention that even though we have a wonderful batch of articles this issue, our well of new material is running very dry as it has a tendency to do from time to time. If you have an article that you have finished, are working on or possibly one that you would like to work on, there is no better time than the present. You can submit your articles online at pbr@saa-recovery.org, or send them to the ISO office, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. Deadline for the May/June issue is April 1 and ideally I would like them even sooner than that. Please remember to keep the focus of your articles/poems on the solution rather than the problem.

Enjoy this issue of the PBR. I hope you find as much inspiration in it as I did.





ISO News



ISO Literature Committee, ISO Board, & Board Committees

A Letter From The Board Chair

Dear SAA Brothers and Sisters,

While there is a lot of good news in this installment of ISO News there is an area of conflict. As you read through the minutes of two Board meetings and those of a meeting of the Literature Committee, you will find we are again in disagreement over the SAA Book Project.

On January 17, acting on a request from the book authors, the Board decided to return both drafts of the manuscript to them for the purpose of revision, which was to be carried out with the help of a professional editor at the authors' expense. The return of the manuscript was contingent on the Board and the authors being able to negotiate specific deadlines for completing the revision, with penalties attached for not meeting those deadlines.

The Board took this action in consultation with the Chair of the Literature Committee but without consultation of the editors and the full Literature Committee. The Board held a special meeting on January 31 and concluded that it had acted with insufficient information. The Board determined it needed to have direct communication with the editors and the Literature Committee. Because of this, the Board rescinded its decisions to return the manuscripts to the authors for revision and to negotiate the terms for an addendum to its contract with them. In order to gather more information, a second special Board meeting is being scheduled, this one to be attended by the Literature Committee as well as the authors and editors of the SAA Book manuscript.

My experience of all the folks who are involved in this is that we are seeking in the best way we know how to serve the deep interests of our fellowship. At times we are a challenge to each other. Our program of recovery provides us with all the resources we need to be able to develop a group conscience. Our attention is on working toward having a book that will speak both for our fellowship and to the addict who comes to us seeking help.

I invite your prayerful and thoughtful support.

In recovery,

Roger B.

Chair, Board of Trustees



ISO Board Minutes

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., met via teleconference on January 17, 2004. The following is a report of actions taken.

Approved Appointment of Marcus G. and Brad K. to head up the 2004 ISO Office Audit.

Approved Acceptance and ratification of a 2.1% cost of living allowance for the ISO staff effective January 1, 2004.

Approved Authorization for the ISO Office to purchase a laptop computer at a cost not to exceed \$1,400.00.

Approved Recommendation of the proposed 2005 ISO Budget to the 2004 Delegates for approval.

Approved A motion that the Delegate Orientation Booklet be sent to the delegates in its corrected form.

Approved A motion that the 2004 Delegates establish a cap on the amount of money that can be distributed directly from the Outreach Endowment Fund to the ISO Office and that this cap is to be equal to 15% of the previous year's annual operating expenses.

Approved Addition of *Facing The Shadow* to the list of non-SAA literature sold by the ISO Office.

Approved A motion to receive the following reports into the record:

Editors' Report 12/3/03

A draft of Step Three is now up on the site. Suggested revisions have been incorporated into Chapter Two, and new feedback uploaded to the Comments page. Step Four is still in the initial stages.

Three new stories have been added, bringing the total on the site to 38.

It should be emphasized that the text on the left hand sides of the Comments sections includes citations from the drafts, as well

ISO Board Minutes Continued

as indicating new material.

Thanks to all for the helpful input.
Chris D.
Elizabeth S.

Editors' Report 01/05/04

A draft of ten of the Traditions has been submitted by the authors. It is now up on the site. Except for the numbering of the paragraphs, the draft has been put on the site verbatim as it was received. It will be necessary for the Literature Committee to review the material and provide feedback before any editing will take place.

A draft of Step Four is also up. Extensive revisions have been made to Chapters Two and Three, incorporating suggestions from LitCom members and authors.

In service,
Chris D.
Elizabeth S.

Approved A motion to acknowledge receipt of the following letter from the authors' of the SAA Book manuscript, dated January 15, 2004, and enter it into the minutes as a matter of record.

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

We are writing you because collectively you are the champions of the SAA Book project. Also you have final authority over its future. We are concerned about the process that we entered into with the Literature Committee. There are two growing concerns. First while the editors and the authors have made strides, it is in fact going much slower than any of us anticipated. At our current rate we probably will not have a finished manuscript until the spring of 2005 for the Literature Committee to act on. No one is at fault or derelict here. It is a voluntary project and in such cases,

life and work intervenes.

Our second concern is that we went back carefully over the document and have determined that significant new writing is being introduced, as opposed to the editing of existing material, or asking the authors for new material. This was done without our knowledge, or our approval: it came to our attention when we did not recognize writing that had been attributed to the authors. We are concerned because all parties involved, the Board, the Literature Committee, the editors, and the authors had explicitly agreed to a plan how the work should be done.

Before turning in this last manuscript we had thought it would be an excellent step to hire a professional editor to prepare the manuscript. We should have done that before turning it over to the Literature Committee. Such a person in six to eight weeks of concentrated effort can make a very readable draft suitable for the procedures the Literature Committee currently has in place. The consensus at the time was that we had gifted people who could do the work and we would save the money. We had profound misgivings at the time.

We believe that in fact we created challenges for the fellowship in providing a manuscript that was not ready for publication. A regular publisher would have had procedures and staff in house to take the raw draft and prepare it for its final publishing. But, the Literature Committee, as a voluntary organization, requires that submissions be nearly publishable when submitted. By the standards set in the Literature Committee Handbook, the second draft should have been returned to the authors with the instruction to resubmit it when it was more polished. This put the Literature Committee in a difficult position because the Board had already signed a contract with the authors and the fellowship was expecting to see the book published. Proceeding in the fashion we did resulted in unnecessary controversy in something that will have inspired intense discussion any way. Additionally, we did not adequately integrate into the second draft, the feedback we had received from the Literature Committee—especially that which was so painstakingly developed at the New Orleans retreat. Further it cost the fellowship a great deal of additional time. We wish to make amends for our actions [and] for our decisions.

We wish to make amends for missing many deadlines that we have agreed to. These delays have been discouraging for the Board of Trustees, the Literature Committee, and the fellowship at large.

ISO Board Minutes Continued

And these delays have protracted how long the fellowship has had to make do without a basic text.

In our contract we can ask for the manuscript back. We wish to do that now, not with the intent of withdrawing the book. Rather we wish to hire, at our own expense, an experienced editor who will work full time to prepare a manuscript ready for the Literature Committee to work with. In addition, we expect to incorporate the requirements drafted at the New Orleans and Houston Literature Committee retreats. This includes following the outline developed at the Houston retreat, so long as we can have some latitude to make modifications as the manuscript takes shape. We will resubmit the book ready for the Literature Committee to work on it. While this will be expensive for us, we are prepared to do this in order to have something that works for everyone in a much more timely fashion. We have expected too much of ourselves, of the committee and the good people who have worked with us as editors.

We believe the work on the stories can proceed as the Literature Committee had intended. Pat C. wishes also to be involved in that process as well.

We fully expect that this will require an addendum to our contract. We also expect that there will be new deadlines with consequences should these goals not be met – similar to those which typically exist in trade publishing agreements.

We believe we can dramatically reduce time, expense to the fellowship, and effort for members of the Literature Committee. We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Approved The return of both drafts of the SAA Book manuscript to the authors as requested for the purpose of revision, the return being contingent, however, on execution of an addendum to the contract between the ISO of SAA, Inc. and the authors, with a draft of the addendum to be completed as soon as possible but no later than February 13, 2004, and with execution of the addendum to be completed as soon as possible but no later than February 29, 2004, and that the addendum be reviewed by an attorney.

ISO Board Minutes Continued

Approved Authorization for Roger B., with the support of the Board and staff, to negotiate a draft of an addendum to the contract between the ISO of SAA, Inc. and the authors that includes, at a minimum, the following provisions:

- a. The authors will hire, at their own expense, a professional editor to help them prepare a manuscript with which the Literature Committee can work as set out in the Literature Committee Handbook.
- b. The authors will incorporate into the manuscript the requirements drafted at the New Orleans and Houston Literature Committee retreats and will follow the outline developed at the Houston retreat, with the latitude to make modifications they see as improving the text and for which they will be prepared to provide an explanation for the modification.
- c. The Literature Committee will be responsible for selecting and editing the stories that will be used in the book, with involvement by Pat C. as the Literature Committee deems appropriate.
- d. The authors will be responsible to meet specific deadlines.
- e. Specific penalties will be attached to failure to meet specific deadlines.

Approved A motion that the Board as champion remove the SAA Book from the Literature Committee until it is resubmitted and that the Board, through its chair, express to the editors and to the Literature Committee their deep appreciation and gratitude for the work they have performed.

Approved A motion to direct the ISO Office to retrieve all electronic and hard copies of all manuscripts and all copies from the Literature Committee website, also removing access to the site, except for the stories, completing these actions by March 15, 2004.

Approved Authorization for Roger B. to consult with an attorney in regard to establishing milestones and penalties.

The Board's next regular meeting is scheduled to be held by teleconference on March 20, 2004.

ISO Board Minutes Continued

**The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., met via special teleconference on January 31, 2004.
The following is a report of actions taken.**

Approved A special meeting of the Board and to invite the Literature Committee, the editors [of the SAA Book], and the authors [of the SAA Book].

Approved A motion to tentatively schedule the special Board meeting for Sunday, February 8, 2004, at 6:00 p.m., Central Time, if the Literature Committee chair, both authors, both editors, and a quorum of the Board can attend.

Approved Rescinding the Board's actions taken on January 17, 2004, to return both drafts of the manuscript of the SAA Book to the authors and to negotiate an addendum to the contract with the authors.

Approved A motion to acknowledge receipt of Chris D.'s letter.



ISO Literature Committee Minutes

**The ISO Literature Committee met by teleconference
on January 25, 2004.
The following is a report of actions taken.**

Approved: The following statement:

"The Literature Committee condemns the action taken by the Board regarding the SAA book on January 17, 2004. We consider it improper, a violation of our bylaws and our Third and Tenth Concepts of Service, as well as undermining the good faith assumed by the agreement arrived upon in 2002 concerning the 10-point plan for editing the book.

Since the Literature Committee was not informed as to the controversy until after the motion was passed, and since the au-

thors never communicated any of their concerns to the editors before withdrawing the book, contrary to the good will and cooperation required by the plan, we consider any decision made without the editors being given a chance to respond to the charges, or the Literature Committee being given a chance to vote its conscience, to be illegitimate.

If the integrity of the service structure is to be protected from private interests and outside influence, it is vital that the Literature Committee strongly state its opposition to any interference with its responsibility regarding literature. Actions which nullify an agreement that was arrived at with the participation of all of the members of the Literature Committee cannot be taken without the full participation of all the members of the Literature Committee. We deplore the use of secret meetings, which we see as contrary to our principles, and the forcing through of uninformed decisions, without allowing those directly affected by the decision to be heard. These methods contradict the principles of trust, openness, and communication, without which no service body can perform its responsibilities as mandated by our Ninth Tradition.

The Tenth Concept of Service calls for each service responsibility to be matched by an equal service authority. The Board's actions deprive the Literature Committee of this authority. The Third Concept of Service mandates a right of decision for trusted servants. The Board's actions usurp the Literature Committee's right of decision, and in fact deprive the Literature Committee of any say in the discussion surrounding decisions that directly affect the Literature Committee's work.

We therefore do not recognize the Board's actions as valid or binding in regards to the Literature Committee's responsibilities to those we serve.

Approved A motion that the following sentence be added to Article V Section 3 of the by-laws:

The Literature Committee or its representatives appointed to subcommittees for specific tasks shall always be consulted by the Board for advice and input in any business matters relating to ISO publications.

and, for it to be submitted to the delegates of the 2004 convention.

New Book Available!

Acting on a recommendation by the 2003 Delegates, the Board of Trustees voted on January 17 to add *Facing the Shadow*, by Patrick Carnes, Ph.D., to the list of non-SAA literature offered for sale by the ISO Office. The final decision came with the further recommendation of an *ad hoc* committee comprised of two Board members, two Literature Committee members, and an at-large member of the SAA fellowship.

As is the case with all such literature, SAA neither endorses nor opposes the views expressed by the author or the publisher. The book is offered for sale by the ISO simply as a convenience to the fellowship. At meetings, groups are encouraged to display it apart from ISO Approved and Conference Approved literature.

Gerry M., the at-large SAA member who served on the reviewing committee, says of *Facing the Shadow*, "Here is a tool admittedly for the addict in early recovery to work methodically at setting solid foundations for healthy, lasting sobriety. But here too is a text for many among us, individuals and groups, to go back and check on our beginnings in recovery and the progress we have made thus far, and perhaps hone some of the skills earlier scanted."

Facing the Shadow is a workbook of 290 pages that provides with its text ample opportunity for user participation.

The ISO will sell it at its list price of \$19.95 (8.25% tax for Texas). Shipping and handling rates are as follows: Quicker rate for 1 book is \$5.00, for 2 \$7.00, for 3 \$8.50, for 4 or more, \$10.00. Cheaper rate for 1 book is \$2.00, for 2 \$2.50, for 3 \$3.00, for 4 or more, \$4.00. For International orders double the quicker rate price.

ISO Financial News

Because of the length of other sections of the ISO News section, the regular financial report will not be presented in this issue.

We can report that the second half of the year brought strong support from groups and individual members alike. This was followed by an extraordinarily strong January, which enabled the ISO to fully fund all of its reserves. It is safe to say the mid-year crisis is over. All that is needed now is your continued

generosity to provide what is needed to maintain service to the fellowship and the addict who still suffers.

The membership's generosity also made the move of the ISO's office to its new location possible. The move was made in one day on Saturday, January 24. The settling in continues.

A year-end report will be printed in the March-April PBR, along with an update about how the new year is going.



PBR Name Change

Every now and then, discussion arises about changing the name of the ISO newsletter from The Plain Brown Rapper to something else.

Last May the 2003 ISO Delegates voted to venture beyond the discussion stage by passing the following recommendation for the Board's consideration:

"To consider changing the name of our international newsletter, The Plain Brown Rapper, taking suggestions throughout the year, and deciding on a name at next year's Delegate Meeting, using the Delphi technique."

At its meeting in August, the Board voted to accept the delegates' recommendation, thereby setting into motion the following process:

From now until the opening of the 2004 Delegate Meeting, SAA members are invited to submit suggestions for a name for the newsletter. This does not mean the name will be changed. That decision will rest in the hands of the delegates.

"The Plain Brown Rapper" is automatically one of the names submitted. It, along with all other suggestions, will be placed on a list from which each delegate will choose her or his top three choices, with a first choice receiving three points, a second choice receiving two, and a third choice receiving one. The name garnering the most points will become (or remain) the name of the ISO newsletter.

Suggestions can be called into the ISO Office (800-477-8191 or 713-869-4902 outside the U.S. and Canada), e-mailed (info@saa-recovery.org), or sent by postal mail (ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

Suggested names will be printed in the PBR and posted on the ISO website (www.saa-recovery.org) in the order in which they are received. Once a name is printed or posted, it need not be submitted again. There is no limit to the number of different suggestions an individual member can make.

The List thus far is:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1) The Plain Brown Rapper | 10) The Wings Of Grace Flyer |
| 2) The Sunburst | 11) New Life Lighthouse |
| 3) Day by Day | 12) From Shame to Grace |
| 4) The Freedom Ringer | 13) The Outer Circular |
| 5) The Journal Of Spiritual SAAtiety | |
| 6) The Liberty Lighthouse | |
| 7) The Grace Of God Gazette | |
| 8) The New Life Times | |
| 9) Nurture News | |

How to Submit a PBR article

First:

Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say.

Second:

Send your article by e-mail to: PBR@saa-recovery.org

or mail to: ISO
P. O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Third:

Send the **Article Release Form** below. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step 12

Submission deadlines:

Dec. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1

Release Form: I hereby give this newsletter, its successors, assignees, and those acting on its authority permission to copyright and/or publish any articles, poems, other written material, or art work pertaining to my personal story of recovery from addiction and my personal experience with or opinions about the SAA fellowship or program. I understand that additions may be made to my written material and that it may be changed or edited. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity. I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO newsletter from any claim by myself or my successors.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

WITNESS: _____ **DATE:** _____

Mail to: ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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Sex Addicts Anonymous is a twelve-step program of recovery based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from their sexual addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Our fellowship is open to women and men regardless of religion, race, ethnic background, marital status, sexual orientation, or profession. Our members define their own sexual boundaries with the guidance of their sponsors and other group members. We encourage our members to discover and explore what healthy sexuality means to them.

Region

Board Members

Board Alternate

Literature Committee

Lit. Com. Alternate

Great Lakes	Roger B. <i>Chair</i>	Ken S.	Elizabeth S.	Vic K.
Intermountain	Shelley K.	Jeanette W.	Chris D.	Vacant
North Central	Greg B. <i>Secretary</i>	Jim A.	Tim L. <i>Secretary</i>	Thea D.
Northeast	Phil D.	Gary C.	Tony Z.	Tom K.
North Pacific	Mary Joy S.	Tim E.	Jeff W.	Lawrence S.
South Central	Judy N.	Darryl H.	Greg G.	Nate G.
Southeast	Francie E.	Carla P.	Joe T. <i>Chair</i>	Don C.
Southern Pacific	Ed B.	Larry O.	Thom C.	David B.
At Large	Don K. <i>Treasurer</i>		Mike L. <i>(PBR Editor)</i>	