

# The Outer Circle

The Newsletter of the  
International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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**The following actions were approved by  
the Board of Trustees at the  
October 20, 2012 Teleconference**

- Motion approved that the Board authorize the North Central Region delegates to caucus face-to-face in November or December of 2012 to elect a Literature Committee representative and alternate representative.
- 

**The following actions were approved by  
the Board of Trustees at the  
November 17, 2012 Teleconference**

- Change the Policy on Use of Materials Copyrighted by the ISO of SAA, Inc. by changing the following sentence:

*FROM: "The Board delegates to the Director of Operations the authority to grant permission for limited copying or quoting of SAA literature for educational, research, or other non-profit purposes outside the fellowship."*

*TO: "The Board delegates to the Director of Operations the authority to grant permission for limited copying or quoting of SAA literature."*

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**Volunteer Services Needed**

*Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?*

*Not sure where to get started?*

*Contact the ISO!*

or go to [www.saa-iso.org/](http://www.saa-iso.org/)

and select "Volunteer" to fill out a volunteer form.

## Draft Conference Charter—Update

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) is nearing completion of a draft charter to be presented for discussion by the delegates at the upcoming 2013 ISO Conference. The Committee strongly encourages all members of the fellowship to read this document and to discuss it in your local groups and intergroups well in advance of the Conference.

The latest draft of the charter has been posted under Member Services on the ISO service website (<http://saa-iso.org/>) in the Conference Charter Committee section of the Members Services Area. The document includes the purpose of the charter, a statement of the purpose of the Conference, and sections establishing the authority and responsibility of the Conference within the ISO and its relationship to the other components of the ISO. Although not a formal part of the charter, a glossary is appended to clarify terminology used in the charter itself.

Immediate feedback is welcome and encouraged, and it may be sent to the Conference Charter Committee via the ISO email address:

**[info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)**

In addition, your delegates attending the 2013 Conference will have the opportunity to participate in open discussion of the charter. It is anticipated that they will be able to bring forward the opinions and suggestions from the local groups they represent.

The CCC also encourages all interested members to attend one of the teleworkshops planned by the Committee. This will be an opportunity to ask questions, offer suggestions, and give feedback live to member of the CCC.

The dates and times are as follows:

**Saturday, February 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. Central Time**

**Saturday, February 23, 2013 2:00 p.m. Central Time**

**Tuesday, March 5, 2013 7:00 p.m. Central Time**

The call-in number and access code may be obtained from the office at:

**[info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)**

Your input is important. Since the ISO was established and exists to serve the fellowship, input from the fellowship is crucial for ensuring that the needs of the fellowship are being met. The CCC urges you to participate in the process of helping us fine-tune the draft charter.

## ISO Structure Committee Streamlining the ISO Board of Trustees

In the previous issue of *The Outer Circle*, the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) explained how an organizational structure made up of approximately forty areas in place of the current eight regions would give the members of the fellowship a greater voice in shaping the policies and activities of the ISO and in securing the future of SAA. In this issue, the ISO-S will further explain the proposed changes in the composition and election of the Board of Trustees.

First, in order to be clear and precise, it might be beneficial to review a few definitions of terms used in many of our discussions about SAA.

The **SAA program** is defined by the Twelve Steps of SAA. We work the program to get sober and achieve recovery, when we commit to and work the Twelve Steps of SAA.

The **SAA fellowship**, which consists of all of members of SAA, is global and extends to wherever a member of SAA lives or travels. Typically, the fellowship is made up of autonomous groups of addicts, who meet together regularly to share their experience, strength, and hope, as a means of encouraging each other along their recovery journey and providing a place where a newcomer can seek help. Groups that choose to affiliate with the ISO are referred to as **member groups**.

The **International Service Organization (ISO)** is a non-profit corporation established by the fellowship to support the member groups of SAA by serving as a central point of communication and coordination for fellowship activities. The ISO is made up of three primary components – the Conference, the Board of Trustees, and the Literature Committee.

The **ISO Conference** is composed of delegates from throughout the fellowship and functions as the interface between the ISO and the fellowship. The Conference serves as spiritual guardian of international services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA. The Conference serves as the effective voice of the group conscience of the fellowship.

Under the laws of incorporation and the regulations governing non-profit corporations, the **ISO Board of Trustees** is legally responsible for the ISO office and all of the operational and financial details of the corporation. It is important to remember, however, that this responsibility applies only to the corporation and does not extend to the autonomous member groups or intergroups.

The **ISO Literature Committee** has supervisory authority over all SAA

publications and is accountable primarily to the Conference.

### **Proposed changes in Board composition and election:**

To assure that the Board of Trustees is composed of skilled, experienced, and sober members of the fellowship and is able to function efficiently, the ISO-S is working on a proposal that would offer the following changes for consideration by the Conference:

- Reduce the Board size to a maximum of fourteen Trustees.
- Elect all Trustees at large from the fellowship.
- Receive nominations from throughout the fellowship.
- Vet all candidates by means of a Conference Nominating Committee, which will then present candidates for Board vacancies for election by the Conference.

Although many operational details are still being studied and discussed, the underlying goal of these proposed changes is to assure that the ISO Board of Trustees is composed of men and women who have the program experience and business skills needed for the Board to be of maximum service to the ISO and the fellowship. The ISO-S believes that these changes will enhance the capacity of the Board to conduct the business of the ISO efficiently and expeditiously.

The ISO-S anticipates circulating the details all of the proposed changes as widely as possible well in advance of the upcoming 2013 Conference. Every member of the fellowship is encouraged to follow the articles in *The Outer Circle*, to read the detailed proposals as they are posted on the service website, and to send comments and questions to the Committee.

The Director of Operations of the ISO is serving as the focal point of communications for the ISO-S. Comments and questions may be sent to the ISO office by postal mail or emailed to:

**[director@saa-iso.org](mailto:director@saa-iso.org)**

The ISO-S looks forward to receiving feedback from throughout the fellowship.

## ISO Literature Committee Guidelines for submission of entries to be considered for the *SAA Meditation Book*

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship-at-large for possible inclusion in the SAA Meditation Book. The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year.

To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list at the bottom of the page). The quote must be exact and followed by a citation that includes the name of the publication and page number, using the following style: *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 20. Submissions using quotes from other sources will not be considered.

The main body of the entry should be a thought-provoking expansion of the topic or principle expressed in the quotation, ideally including some fresh perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery. What we're looking for is your experience, your strength, your hope, and your voice. ***Please note that we have found that using "I" rather than "we" in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger meditation message.***

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation.

Each entry should be a maximum of 275 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page. Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

Submissions must include your name and contact information and be accompanied by a signed release. By signing the release, the author grants the ISO of SAA, Inc. sole rights to edit, alter, publish, or reject any submission. A blank release form is available in this newsletter or may be obtained from the ISO office or downloaded and printed from the SAA website.

### SAA Approved Literature

<p><i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i>  <i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i>  <i>First Step to Recovery</i>  <i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>  <i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>  <i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>  <i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>  <i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i></p>	<p><i>Abstinence</i>  <i>The Bubble</i>  <i>Writing to Prisoners</i>  <i>Group Guide</i>  <i>Intergroup Guide</i>  <i>Three Circles</i>  <i>Tools of Recovery</i></p>
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## Meditation Book Vision Statement

*(approved by the Literature Committee)*

**“The SAA Meditation Book carries the message of recovery by collecting into one volume diverse voices of the SAA Fellowship to serve as a resource for meditation and prayer for the addict in recovery and the sex addict who still suffers.”**

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## **Send your meditation, contact information, and signed release form to the ISO.**

*(release form is located on the last page of this newsletter)*

Please send a digital copy of your submission (attached as .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, or in the body of the e-mail) to [\*\*meditation@saa-recovery.org\*\*](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org).

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send a release form – one per author – before submissions can be considered.

You can also send your meditation, contact information, and signed release by postal mail to: ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

***If at all possible, please send your submission in digital form. We will, of course, consider all submissions.*** You will be sent a confirmation that your submission has been received.

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## Meditation Writing Tele-Workshops

All those interested in contributing to the Meditation Book are invited to attend one or more tele-workshops. We will go over the guidelines and process for submission; there will be ample time for writing, and time for sharing as well. Please consider joining us for this unique service opportunity!

All workshops are the **4th Sunday of each month**, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time, and last until 6:30 p.m.

January 27  
February 24  
March 24  
April 28

To register, call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191,  
or send an e-mail to:

[\*\*meditation@saa-recovery.org\*\*](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org)

## **Personal Story Submissions for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:**

### **Do you have a personal story to tell?**

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept personal stories for consideration for future editions of the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

### **Guidelines for Submission of a Personal Story**

Stories in the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are an intensely personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers. While there are no absolute requirements for the content of a personal story, the Literature Committee recommends that a story describe:

- What it was like before entering SAA;
- What happened to bring you into SAA;
- What happened within SAA;
- What it is like now with the ongoing experience of SAA recovery.

It is recommended that a story emphasize the experience, strength, and hope found in SAA recovery. It is further recommended that the writer disclose his or her length of sobriety (or abstinence from addictive behaviors).

Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As much as possible, highly explicit descriptions of places, people, or acting out behaviors should be avoided. The best stories provide sobering details of unmanageability contrasted with the hope of recovery from sex addiction.

The preferred format for manuscripts is double-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides in MS Word (or similar). Each submission must be accompanied by a signed release conveying ownership to the ISO of SAA, Inc. The release form is available on the last page of this newsletter or from the ISO office or SAA website ([www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org)).

Submissions and a signed release form may be e-mailed as attachments to the ISO Literature Committee at [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org).

They may also be sent in hard copy by postal mail to the ISO Literature Committee at ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

## IMPORTANT

### **Please carefully read the following before submitting a personal story for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:**

Every story submitted for possible inclusion in the SAA book will be thoroughly reviewed and given in-depth consideration by the ISO Literature Committee, which is deeply grateful to every member who takes the time to write and submit a story.

The ISO of SAA, Inc. and the ISO Literature Committee do not guarantee that any particular story will appear in a future edition of the SAA book. Once submitted with a signed release form (located on the last page of this newsletter), the written story becomes the permanent property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited or modified as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee.

Please also note that, while the ISO Literature Committee will acknowledge the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not communicate further with the author about the suitability of the story or the likelihood of publication in *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

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### **Audio Version of SAA Green Book Now Available for the Visually Impaired**

The National Library Service has recently produced an audio version of our SAA Green Book (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*). This audio book was produced by the government and is not available for sale by or use by the ISO of SAA, Inc. However, those who qualify for eligibility under the government guidelines may receive the SAA audio book from the National Library Service.

The website address for the National Library Service is:

**[www.loc.gov/nls/](http://www.loc.gov/nls/)**

***If you know of someone who could benefit from this service,  
please let them know about this exciting development!***

## You Are Your Authors Group

You are the authors of SAA literature. It rises from your grass roots pens and pencils.

And one piece of recovery literature heading for publication is *The Wisdom of Sponsorship*.

This is an anthology of your experience with sponsorship in SAA — what you have learned by sponsoring other people in this program. So we'd like to put in it your stories, your anecdotes, your words of wisdom, your tricks of the trade, and your watchwords.

Right now we've culled from SAA Newsletter some of the wisdom published there over the years on the subject of sponsorship. Yet, many sponsorship topics have not been covered by articles in the newsletter. Thus, we are asking for your story. For example, what have you learned from sponsoring people in Steps Six and Seven?

The Wisdom of Sponsorship Booklet needs your experience. So just write out in brief paragraph form a telling anecdote or suggestion you've come upon or invented in the craft of sponsorship as you've practiced it.

Remember, in writing it, that there is no right or wrong way to sponsor in SAA. For in SAA we have so many lineages and we have so many ways of approaching and practicing sponsorship. The range of our wisdom is wide. So keep in mind that *The Wisdom of Sponsorship* is not a book of rules and regulations, but a garden of various flowers and fruits for everyone to choose from, pick, and use. You know what they are. The time has come to share them with us all.

So be the author of your own recovery and of those around you.

Send your thoughts on sponsorship to the ISO along with a signed release form to:

**[info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)**

The release form can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

—Dave R.  
The Authors Group

## GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

To enhance our public information/outreach abilities and in response to a recent invitation from the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee, (ISOPcom), we will be sending information along for possible inclusion on the ISO website. This type of outreach has been discussed previously in our Subcommittee and we are grateful for this current opportunity that will allow us to expand our efforts. We look forward to working with the ISOPcom in this endeavor.

Another project that is being worked on is organizing feedback groups. Please stand by for more information in the future about this project. As with this and our other projects, we are seeking volunteers to help out. Please consider service with the GLBT Outreach Subcommittee.

For more information, or to volunteer for GLBT outreach activities, e-mail us at:

**[gibt@saa-recovery.org](mailto:gibt@saa-recovery.org)**

You may also attend our monthly teleconference, which takes place the first Sunday of each month. Contact the ISO Office for call in information.

## Bay Area Giving Thanks Update

As we have done for the past ten years, San Francisco Bay Area SAA held its annual Giving Thanks celebration in a member's home on the second Saturday of November. This tradition has long been an enormously important one for us. Not only have we been able to raise a sizable contribution for our ISO each year, the fellowship side of the event has been tremendous.

We pitch Giving Thanks for the several preceding weeks, which helps to attract great numbers of fellowship members to the event. To stand back and watch the joy on people's faces as they connect very intimately leaves a wonderful impression. The day is an opportunity to gather and connect in ways that aren't usually possible after a meeting or in the local coffee shop, and we all seem to take advantage of that, whether we tend toward the less social side of the spectrum or not.

We love that this has been a clear and effective way to show our support for what our organization and staff do for us and for people like us, and we believe that we are helping to carry out the spirit of Tradition Five by financially supporting the ISO.

Perhaps your own local groups are ready to put on a similar event. The amount of work and planning involved is very reasonable, and just the value of getting members together for a common purpose will make any effort more than worth it.

On the ISO website there are some basic instructions on how to put an event like this together. From the home page, simply click on the "Donate" button at top right, and then click on "Giving Thanks". The link is also here for those of you who can access it directly from this article:

**<http://saa-store.org/7thTradition/GivingThanksEvent/>**

If you would like any further information, feel free to mail us at **REDACTED BY REQUEST**.

Thanks,  
Tim E.

*[ISO Office Note: Since they began in 2003, the Annual Bay Area Giving Thanks events have raised approximately \$175,000.00 for the ISO. We are very grateful for their service and support!]*

## Electronic Formats Available!

### SAA e-Book

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of the SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in downloadable electronic format.

The eBook can be purchased from the ISO office, or online from the SAA Store at [www.saa-store.org/book/](http://www.saa-store.org/book/).

After online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail with a link to download a zip file that contains both the mobi (Kindle) and ePUB (Nook) versions of the book. One of these formats can be read on most e-readers available today.

Special thanks go out to an anonymous member of the fellowship who took the time to create the eBook version. Such generous help from volunteer members enhances the capacity of the ISO to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to sex addicts everywhere.

### mp3 Audio Downloads

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of mp3 format downloads of our convention workshop and speaker recordings.

The files are in mp3 format, which may be played on almost any portable music device or computer.

Currently, the mp3 files are available for convention years 2004 through 2011, and can be purchased from the SAA store at [www.saa-store.org/audio](http://www.saa-store.org/audio).

We will be uploading the remaining past convention years as we get them formatted.

## Women's Outreach Subcommittee

The Women's Outreach Subcommittee (WOSC) currently has fourteen active members. And we are very busy working on items to meet our primary purpose, "Carry the SAA message to the (woman) sex addict who still suffers."

We have several Standing Work Groups that are focused on the following items:

- Women's Outreach List Work Group (A List of 300+ Women available for support world wide)
- Grace Oversight Work Group (Focused on procedure for Members handling the grace email)
- Literature Work Group (Several items in process)
- ISO Convention Work Group
- Annual Women's Retreat Work Group

We also have several ad hoc work groups set up to meet specific goals or needs:

- History of Women's Outreach
- Safety in meetings
- List of women available as speakers
- Conference Committee preparation.

This subcommittee of General Outreach meets the second Saturday of each month at 10am CST. If you are interested in working on this committee, please call the ISO Office at 800-477-8191, or e-mail:

**[grace@saa-recovery.org](mailto:grace@saa-recovery.org)**



## **Seventh Tradition Committee**

### ***LifeLine Partners...***

#### **MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

So you have found some sobriety and you have worked the steps, what now? Of course, go to meetings regularly, stop isolating, and continue working the steps.

Anything else? Avoid self-absorbed behavior, and give back by working the Twelfth Step in some way every day.

If your life (occupied with family, career, and other obligations) is to the point that you just don't have enough time for as much Twelfth Step work as you would like, you can still MAKE A DIFFERENCE by becoming a *LifeLine Partner*.

A regular automatic *LifeLine Partner* contribution will assure that you really can MAKE A DIFFERENCE by providing the ISO of SAA with the funds needed to carry out its mission of aiding groups to carry the SAA message of recovery to still-suffering sex addicts.

Approximately 248 SAA members currently give through *LifeLine Partners*. With an estimated membership of over 13,000 people in SAA, this means that the number of those giving would only need to increase to 10% of our membership for us to easily reach our goal of increasing LifeLine Partner donations to \$20,000/month. Then we could not only continue all of our current ISO outreach activities, but funds would also be available for other ways to carry our message that we cannot currently afford.

Through *LifeLine Partners*, you really can MAKE A DIFFERENCE... and it's a good feeling!

If you are interested in signing up to be a *LifeLine Partner*, just call the ISO Office at 800-477-8191, and they will get you started.

Or, you can sign up online at: <https://saa-recovery.org/LifeLinePartner/>

We thank you for your support!

Seventh Tradition Committee

## ISO Income/Expense Summary

### As of November 30, 2012

	Nov 12	Monthly Avg	Jul-Nov 12
<b>Income</b>			
<b>Sales</b>	14,042.26	16,185.82	80,929.11
<b>Shipping &amp; Handling</b>	1,427.72	1,706.69	8,533.47
<b>Donations</b>	49,918.22	27,514.64	137,573.19
<b>Interest Earned</b>	16.24	21.28	106.41
<b>Other Income</b>	0.00	23.71	118.55
<b>Convention Income</b>	127.00	1,861.87	9,309.37
<b>Delegate Meeting Income</b>	55.00	14.00	70.00
<b>Total Income</b>	65,586.44	47,328.02	236,640.10
<b>Cost of Goods Sold</b>	5,436.18	5,837.48	29,187.38
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>60,150.26</b>	<b>41,490.54</b>	<b>207,452.72</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
<b>Wages</b>	19,299.68	19,087.50	95,437.52
<b>Benefits</b>	2,833.78	3,477.36	17,386.82
<b>Payroll Taxes</b>	1,502.03	1,555.96	7,779.78
<b>Payroll Expenses</b>	18.54	20.09	100.46
<b>Insurance</b>	340.69	340.69	1,703.45
<b>Financial Charges</b>	1,347.91	966.69	4,833.46
<b>Communications</b>	709.24	768.25	3,841.27
<b>Occupancy Expenses</b>	1,215.33	1,283.79	6,418.94
<b>Office Expenses</b>	774.94	871.73	4,358.63
<b>The Outer Circle</b>	1,262.17	1,037.46	5,187.31
<b>Professional Fees</b>	2,350.00	1,091.00	5,455.00
<b>Depreciation</b>	175.00	175.00	875.00
<b>Bad Debts/Refunds</b>	8.28	-13.60	-67.98
<b>Travel-Related Expenses</b>	6,573.11	2,243.81	11,219.05
<b>Board/Committee Expenses</b>	1,238.03	1,335.21	6,676.07
<b>Convention Expenses</b>	1,179.73	1,602.35	8,011.77
<b>Total Expense</b>	40,828.46	35,843.31	179,216.55
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>19,321.80</b>	<b>5,647.23</b>	<b>28,236.17</b>

## Financial Results for November 2012

In the month of November we had a surplus of \$19,321.80. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$20,863.00.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$713.95 for November.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1718.84 for November. Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$1017.75 in November. Our chip sales were below our estimate by \$53.50 in November.

Our total sales for November were below our estimate by \$3,642.74.

Individual donations were above our estimate by \$1,334.98 for November. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$4,063.24 for November. The Phoenix fellowship held its first Giving Thanks Event and raised \$5,300.00 in donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$30,176.18.

Our expenses were above our estimate by \$5,046.46 in November. Most of the increase in expenses was caused by a payment of \$2,070.00 paid to our Meditation book editor which was not budgeted and \$2,963.11 used for the Literature Committee face-to-face meeting that was not budgeted.

Summary of the current six month budget (7/1/2011 to 12/31/2012):

- Sales are below our estimate by \$7,495.89
- Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$22,133.19
- Expenses have exceeded our budget estimate by \$10,499.55
- Net surplus has exceeded our budget estimate by \$20,938.17

Our operational reserve amount is \$131,921.00 and is fully funded. This is the estimated amount necessary to run the office for four months, and is reset each January.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Director of Operations

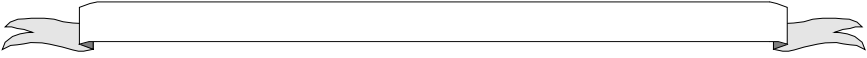
**[director@saa-iso.org](mailto:director@saa-iso.org)**

*[Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of The Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the SAA fellowship as a whole.]*


## From the Editor

by Mike L.

I was reading an article on the internet today about the ten most popular holiday destinations. They were all cities, and as a city boy from way back, I connected to the article immediately. I was amazed to realize that I had been to eight of the ten, although of course not necessarily during the holiday season.



*The topic for the September/October issue ... is "gratitude." Articles on the Ninth and Tenth Steps and Traditions are also invited.*



After I finished admiring the photographs of each of the cities, I started thinking about my connections to each of those cities, and no two of them were alike. Leaving aside nos. 8 and 10, to which I have never been, here is what is left:

9. Have been there three times in the last fifteen years to participate in SAA retreats, with some sightseeing as well.
7. Was there many times in the mid-80s for a long-distance relationship.
6. Passed through there several times on my way to no. 7; since at the time it was one of the few places at the time where the interstate system was still not complete, I had my car worked on there one time as well.
5. Was there once for an SAA convention.
4. Was there once for a men's weekend retreat, which actually took place in the mountains west of the city itself.
3. Spent four and a half months there for my job back in 2005, time that I wouldn't trade for anything.

2. Was first there in 1965, lived there for about three months in 1980, and it is now my regular “recharge my batteries” spot.

1. Was there twice because of the same tourist attraction that put it as no. 1 on the holiday destination list.

Even though I have spent a lot of time in a couple of these locations, and relatively little in others, while still others are in between, nevertheless to this day I have fond memories of all of these places.

How does all of this relate to SAA and my recovery in general? Well, in two ways:

First, it reminds me that my relationship to each person I am blessed to have in my life is a little bit different; some are deeper, some less so, and some relate to a particular activity alone. All of these relationships are still valid nonetheless.

Second, I remember telling a group of folks back around 2002 that one thing I wanted to do in my life was travel more. Yet six of these eight places were places I had already been to before 2002 (and two of those six after 2002 as well), which serves as a reminder that the things I have wanted most in my life I already had; I just hadn't learned to appreciate them or accept their validity.

Now it's time to move on to the topic for the September/October issue: One meeting topic that everybody seems either to love or else to love to hate is “gratitude.” And yet, I don't think we have yet used “gratitude” as a topic for The Outer Circle. So there you have it; it's a pretty open-ended topic, so take it and run with it. Articles on the Ninth and Tenth Steps and Traditions are also invited. Articles will be due by about July 5.

I have had some questions about the May/June topic of “disclosure.” Essentially, it refers to giving a more or less complete disclosure of your sexual history (a First Step in effect) to a spouse or significant other. How did it go, what were the results, would you do it again, and so forth. Those articles will be due by about March 5.

Anyway, that's it for now. I hope you had a great holiday season and I look forward to talking with you again next issue.

## Dear Will

Submitted by SAA Men's Outreach Subcommittee

Dear Will,

I am gay and all of my acting-out behavior involves compulsive sex with men. My sponsor, basing himself on his religious beliefs, considers all same-sex sexual activity to be acting out, and so wants me to remain celibate; he is himself celibate, so he is not asking me to do something that he would not do. As I am concerned that I do not know how to be sexual in a non-compulsive way, I have been working a program of celibacy as well. Accordingly, I have not sought out any dating relationships because they will inevitably lead to sex. However, as more and more states allow same-sex marriage, I wonder if I can start to think along the lines of a relationship that would eventually lead to marriage. My sponsor would oppose any such notions on my part, and I am hesitant to stop working with him merely for the sake of a relationship that may never materialize. What do I do?

Sincerely,  
Possibly Celibate Forever

Dear PCF,

The matter you discuss is complicated, on some levels at least. Will is glad to see that you are considering this option as it becomes more widely available.

You don't mention how long you have been with your sponsor or how long you have been sober. Especially if the answer to the latter question is "less than a year," you can safely refrain from doing anything right now.

However, assuming that you stay with the SAA program, you will eventually accrue more than a year of sobriety, if indeed you haven't already, and you may want to consider this issue again at that time. One part of this issue which is not complicated is that the SAA program does not take a position on same-sex relationships, let alone same-sex marriages, so ultimately this is a decision that you will have to make.

Will is aware of sponsors who are very religious. He even worked with one who was a daily churchgoer. Nonetheless, this particular sponsor was aware that religious teachings were one issue and the teachings of the SAA program were another; he guided his sponsees based solely on the SAA program and not on his religious beliefs, other than when the two coincided. This was a very valuable lesson.

When speaking to your sponsor about your plans, you might mention that

the religious book he most likely references also says to honor the decisions of the government. That's the whole "render unto Caesar" thing; at least that is the way it was explained to Will many long years ago.

Blessings,  
Will

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## Emergency Checklist

by Jim T.

Pilots are trained to use checklists so that in an emergency they can react quickly and accurately. I created this checklist to guide me when I am powerless. I carry this folded checklist with me in a small pouch. The weight of it reminds me that I am a recovering sex addict.

- If you are reading this, you are in the bubble and having a compulsion episode. Right now, you are insane (Step Two).
- You cannot trust yourself, especially your thoughts.
- You are a recovering addict and this episode is to be expected.
- Jim, you created this Checklist when you were sober. Trust the checklist, not your thoughts. Don't think.
- Get up NOW and walk away.
- Put fifty yards between you and the computer.
- You are in danger of acting out.
- Breathe deeply for three minutes concentrating only on your breathing. Try to relax.
- Say aloud, "I am in the bubble and I'm going to be OK."
- The compulsion feeling will go away; wait it out. Start the timer on your phone.
- Call a brother.

## Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace:

*To reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail receives. \*Names have been changed to protect anonymity\**

Dear Grace,

I've been in the program for a little over a year. I've been sober for four and a half months, and I'm on Step Four. I feel that I'm ready to start dating, but my sponsor strongly suggests I wait. Here's the thing: She's in her fifties, and she's been married for twenty-odd something years. She doesn't really get it. I'm twenty-five, and time's a-flying. I want marriage, kids, the whole deal. And I want to start looking now. I have really good sobriety, and I feel I deserve the opportunity to look for someone to share it with. Do I have to listen to her, or can I go find a new sponsor who "gets me" better?

Sincerely,  
Tick-tock

Dear Tick-tock,

Your sponsor is suggesting you wait because she knows we were deep in our ineffective thoughts and behaviors for years before we came into the program. You are seeing in your Fourth Step that the core issues behind your addiction have been with you a long time. We don't suddenly become ready to take on life's big decisions in a few months. Certainly we are not ready to take on decisions that are both life-changing and potentially so close to our addiction.

It is recommended to addicts across the board to wait one year or even two, regardless of the addiction before making any big life changes or starting a new relationship. Until we "clean up the wreckage of our past" in Step Nine, we won't have room in our lives and psyche for the kind of partner who will support and enhance our new lives. One of the Ninth Step Promises (from Alcoholics Anonymous, page 84) states "We will intuitively know how to



handle situations which used to baffle us”.

Marriage and kids are worthy goals. Give yourself time. We attract those like us, so before having a spiritual awakening we are going to attract the same type of person! This can be life threatening to someone who attracts abusive partners. With the help of the Higher Power you are just beginning to get to know, you will be begin to be able to make choices that will enhance your life.

The work done in the program, namely the Steps, are powerful actions and they do change our lives over time. We end up with a life we couldn't imagine we deserved before recovery. This may seem like a lot of work and it is! It's brave and courageous work that is healing, life affirming and well worth it. No matter what decisions you make in recovery remember keep coming back. The program works if you work it, and you're worth it.

In service,  
Grace

*[Grace notes (pun not intended, for any musicians reading this who may be wondering) that in the next Outer Circle we will address the issue of changing sponsors.]*

*Disclaimer: we cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.*  
– SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

# To Have a Friend, One Must Be a Friend

## by Radar

I cannot pick up the phone and call my friends. I cannot hop in the car and drive to my next SAA meeting to be with my friends. I cannot meet with my friends at various places: you know, the meetings between the meetings. Yet, there is a group of friends in our fellowship in Atlanta called the Act with Courage Group that has visited me via U.S. mail going into thirteen years.

I am serving a twenty-year prison sentence for a sex crime.

“Our common welfare should come first”; my personal recovery depends on the unity of our fellowship. All of my friends are interconnected. United We Stand, Divided We Fall. It feels as though we are all working toward the same goal: the recovery of everything our active addiction took away.

Prior to my court appearance, I attended an SAA meeting and expressed how I felt like a stranger. Someone in the group stated, “There are no strangers here, just friends you have not met.”

I took note that the first word in the First Step is “We,” so I recognize that that I’ll always have a friend in the spirit of our fellowship. Also, in the Third Step it reads, “...turn *our* will and *our* lives...,” which tells me life is no longer all about me, but now it’s about all of us, my friends! I must pray for *our* fellowship.

To have a friend, one must be a friend. The spiritual truth that no one can deny is the fact that I will reap what I sow. The friends in our fellowship reached out to me and taught me how to remove the defects of my character that hindered the flow of love. I realize that not one of us is perfect; therefore, I must forgive my friends as my friends forgive me.

My beautiful friends have shared their innermost thoughts and most secretive self; these things have built a solid bridge of love, understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. This is a Power greater than myself. No person is an island unto himself.

God created people and led our paths to cross. God speaks through us all. God commands me to love you as I love myself. My friends have taught me this love and I have a responsibility to pass it on. The Dead Sea in the Middle East is dead because it has no outlet. The water within its boundaries supports no life. The same goes for me; I must allow this love of friendship to flow unto the next person I greet.

I must make mention of my sponsor, who is my best friend second to God. My sponsor has been spiritually standing beside me through every aspect of my life. He has shared his experience, strength, and hope with me. My best friend is a man of wisdom, thanks to the friends who have shared their experience, strength, and hope with him. I want to share with anybody

reading this article that through having a sponsor, I have rediscovered what having a best friend is all about.

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## What SAA Friendship Means to Me by Ed G.

SAA is not just another Twelve-Step program. My addiction is unique, though others may disagree. My addictive stimulus is generated internally rather than externally, *i.e.*, drugs, alcohol, food, smoking; in short, anything physically taken into the body that can become habit forming. However, I'm going out on a limb here and taking literary license; as a sex addict, I do ingest something. I take in by sight and sound the myriad sexual references on TV, movies, magazines, internet, pornographic materials, and day-to-day visualization of what stirs my sexual appetite and can lead me to acting out.

Meeting after meeting, I bare my soul to people I usually only see once a week. And it is not an easy thing to do, considering the sensitivity of the subject matter. Each story I hear is the same, yet different. Every addict has his/her own story; and they are many. What we do have in common is a stigma, which if known by the general public, could turn us into family/community outcasts. My acting out behavior has caused harm, not just to myself, but to family members, friends, and, as just mentioned, to the community because I could make their lives feel less safe.

But because of the uniqueness of the addiction, when I share in our meetings, I get four things in return: understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and unconditional love, something only an SAA friend is uniquely qualified to give. I consider all my SAA companions to be friends in varying degrees. I share a part of my life, be it to my sponsor or to the newest member, that I can't share with any other, and I can go in peace from a meeting with the knowledge that what I said there stays there; with one exception. I may take away a valuable lesson or tool to aid my recovery or perhaps have given someone else that same gift.

My SAA friends are more than that. They are my brothers and sisters traveling on the same road to recovery. I thank them all for their support.

## **Addiction is Powerlessness and Unmanageability**

by Barry M.

Addiction is the inability to stop a destructive behavior. The behavior creates chaos in my life as an addict and in the lives of those around me. I experience this powerlessness and chaos as profound failure and conclude that I am worthless. This belief only fuels the addiction, because it leads to the next belief: since there is no reason to bother with a worthless person, why not use or act out again? I have to break from this belief in order to break the cycle of addiction.

The purpose of the First Step of the Twelve-Step program in Sex Addicts Anonymous is for me, the addict, to admit to powerlessness and unmanageability. This Step is not an inventory of everything I have done wrong. Rather, it is an account of my efforts to stop using or acting out and of the consequences of this inability to stop. When I do it effectively, the First Step breaks through the denial I use to protect the addiction. I deny that I am powerless over my behavior by convincing myself that I can control my behavior or that I can stop using or acting out at any time. I also deny that my life is unmanageable by convincing myself that my behavior is not hurting anybody, that I can fix whatever consequences have arisen, and that I can manage my life on my own.

The purpose of the First Step is to prepare me for the Second and Third steps: the acceptance of a higher power. In the First Step, I admit that the addiction is more powerful than my will; it is already a higher power for me as it exceeds my power to control it or stop it. In the First Step, I also admit to unmanageability, that I can't manage my life on my own and that I need help. Once I admit that the addiction is already a higher power, then I am ready to turn towards a different higher power, one that is more powerful than the addiction and that will return me to sanity.

As an addict in recovery, I must continue working the First Step in order to succeed. Even though I have found a new higher power, one that is greater than the addiction, I must never forget just how powerful the addiction is. I cannot give in to the belief that the addiction is gone or is too weak to worry about any longer. Addictive behaviors can return in an instant and I can experience shock at finding myself exactly where I was when I last used: powerless and in chaos.

One of the great strengths of a Twelve-Step program is that it is a "we" program. When I came into the program feeling alone, scared, and ashamed, I heard the word "we" in the First Step and throughout the Steps: "we admitted we were powerless . . . that our lives had become unmanageable." The addiction is no longer an "I" problem and no longer do

I have to find a solution alone. Everyone in the room has the same problem and has experienced the same powerlessness and unmanageability. Everyone has made some progress over the addiction just by showing up. The success of everyone in the room is everyone else's concern. There was enormous relief in finding that I was not alone and that there were others who shared my problem who would help me.

There are some beautiful paradoxes at the heart of Twelve-Step recovery: Only by accepting powerlessness over our addiction can I find power over my addiction. Only by admitting that we can't stop can I hope to stop. Only by admitting to the chaos I generated in our addiction can I get the help I need to sort it out.

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## **The First Two Traditions Working Together**

by Ken H.

*Tradition One—Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.*

*Tradition Two—For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*

I have long heard that the Steps are how I recover, and the Traditions are how the groups function. While I have always known that the Steps function as a unit, I have, over time, come to believe that the Traditions can and often do work together as well.

In the part of the SAA Green Book devoted to Tradition One it says, "As a fellowship, our commitment is to the common welfare of recovering sex addicts everywhere" (p. 79). I had never thought of it this way, rather considering only the welfare of those I know who are actually in the SAA program.

And yet, I have seen many examples of individuals and groups making a commitment to "recovering sex addicts everywhere." One of the most obvious examples is the work my local intergroup has done in the form of outreach. For many years, the intergroup phone number has been listed in the telephone directory so that those looking for help can call. It has placed brief ads in the sex section of our local tabloid, inviting those who think they may have a problem with sex addiction to get in touch with us. It puts together "welcome packets" that it sends to local therapists or makes available for free at meetings.

These forms of outreach do not suddenly appear, arising out of a vacuum, but rather they are the result of discussions within the intergroup, as it says

on page 79 of the SAA Green Book: “As we listen to each other while drawing on our relationship to a loving God for guidance, an understanding of how to solve issues according to spiritual principles begins to arise within the group.”

The first part of this statement is “As we listen to each other.” The intergroup faithfully uses part of the brief time it sets aside for discussion to make outreach decisions. Sometimes, as a result of these discussions, it has chosen to discontinue certain forms of outreach; it eventually discontinued the tabloid ads, for example, because of cost and effectiveness issues.

The next part of the statement is, “while drawing on our relationship to a loving God for guidance.” So we don’t begin the intergroup meetings with the Serenity Prayer merely as some sort of a formality. We do it to set the tone for the meeting and to remind ourselves that we don’t make these decisions on our own, but that there is a Higher Power guiding us.

The last part of the statement makes reference to how we “solve issues according to spiritual principles.” The most obvious spiritual principles are those contained in the Traditions, although there can be others as well. We utilize the group conscience; even those who may disagree with decisions reached through group conscience normally go along with them. One of the most powerful examples of the trust we place in the group conscience occurs at the annual delegate meetings, where even those on the losing side of an issue still applaud the decision reached by group conscience.

To bring the thought back full circle, I learn about the Traditions through hearing them discussed at business meetings of various sorts. As a result of the spiritual principles embodied in the Traditions, I am better able to serve “recovering sex addicts everywhere.” If somebody is looking for help with a particular issue, and I don’t consider myself an expert on that particular issue, I, rather than offer advice anyway, pass that individual on to somebody who knows more about the issue in question. I don’t let my pride get in the way.

When I sit down and really study the Traditions, I’m amazed at how much information I find that also helps me in my own recovery. I’m happy that the Traditions are there along with the Steps for my recovery.

## Friendship in SAA

by Valorie F.

When I came to SAA, I had no understanding of friendship at all. On one hand, I demanded instant intimacy, sharing far too much about myself with virtual strangers. On the other, I kept everyone at bay, especially anyone I “cared about.” In addition, I thought friends would always get along. I feared confrontation, and honestly still do to a great extent, but thought that friendship meant there wouldn’t be confrontation. And a huge pattern of that fear was running away from a friendship or any relationship if there was any trouble at all.

Through making friends in the program, which for me have been all long-distance friendships, I have learned to value open and honest communications. I have learned that it is okay to struggle and to not always be “positive,” and my friends will still be there. I have learned to share when I feel hurt, without attacking the other person. I have learned the vital part of forgiveness, and allowing others, and myself to be human and make mistakes.

There have been so many benefits of friendship for my recovery. One huge blessing was learning to forgive myself, by seeing my history in others’ histories. Another has been learning to build friendships over time rather than instantly. This process of sharing a little about myself each time we talk has built some amazing friendships. Learning that it is okay to not share some things with some people has been huge for me. I can have levels of friendships—those that are very intimate and know all about me to those who support my recovery struggles without knowing much about each other.

The lessons in friendship have transferred to my family and friendships outside the program. Learning who is safe to share what with, and learning it is okay to not be an open book with unsafe people has been vital for me. I can now be around my family of origin without shutting them out of my life, by being limited in what I share with them. I am so grateful that so many in SAA have reached out to me, or been there when I reached out to them. I am extremely grateful for my friends of all genders who have taught me that I can be friends and not have it be sexual. I love my life today. The steps brought me to a place where I like me, but I could not work through the steps in isolation; it took my friendships with fellow addicts to bring about a spiritual transformation.

I believe there is a *huge* reason for the word “we” instead of “I” in the Twelve Steps. I believe that reason is in part because I have to learn all over again how to be a fellow human being on this journey of life. So, thank you to all who have been part of my journey, so far!

## Step Two

by Roger N.

*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

When I first set foot in the doorways of SAA, I believed that my life could be better. However, the first time I read the Steps, I encountered several stumbling blocks, and the first of those occurred with Step Two. At that time, I didn't have much of an understanding of a Power greater than myself, let alone a use for one.

I had had a very religious upbringing, which was odd in itself since my parents were not at all religious. Even though they dropped us kids off at church each Sunday morning, they didn't attend church themselves, other than on one or two of the big holidays each year. How I managed to become a regular churchgoer, and even on a daily basis during the summers, remains a mystery to me.

All of that changed when I reached the age of twenty. Through some of my own foolish decisions, I permanently lost a career opportunity that I had been anticipating for some years. I believed that God had given me some special talents, and now I figured I would never get a chance to use those talents. I was already good at not taking responsibility for my actions; so, rather than placing the responsibility for this loss where it belonged, I blamed it on God and turned my back on everything I had gained during my upbringing.

Anyway, a lot of the reason for my rebellion against God was that I believed nobody had ever suffered the disappointments that I had. The SAA Green Book puts it succinctly: "We thought that our problems were different, that our situation was unique" (pp. 27-28). As far as I was concerned, I was the first person in the history of the universe ever to lose out on a career opportunity.

I eventually refocused my efforts on my education, which would at least give me a second chance to use those talents that I could no longer use in my lost chosen field. For a while, I put all of my faith in education. I especially enjoyed learning things that "proved" to me that believing in God was a fallacy. For example, I learned that many believers thought the world was going to end in the year 1000, just because of the numbers "flipping over," as we would call it today. I found it impossible to fathom that people would believe such a thing just based on some chance numbers.

I enjoyed having these opportunities to study, even though I didn't end up being able to use my education in the exact ways I had planned. Because of my acting out, I didn't finish all of my degrees and eventually left that particular ivory tower, all the while watching things continue to get worse.



Once I came to SAA, my desire to remain sober led me to stick it out despite my lack of faith and my lack of desire to acquire it again, hoping that I could maintain a life of sobriety without having to give more than lip service to Step Two. I couldn't bypass Step Two altogether; after all, I did have that pesky sponsor who was going to insist that I work a proper Step Two at some point.

As I continued to attend meetings, I listened to others share what God had done in their lives. More important, I started reflecting on how some of the things I had done in my life could have landed me in one of the Big Three: Prison, Hospital, or Morgue. And yet, each time, I dodged the bullet; somebody or something was looking out for me.

Gradually, I stopped focusing on how unique I was and started looking for similarities, especially similarities between myself and the people I heard sharing at meetings. I listened to them talk about how God had taken care of them, and started pondering how God could take care of me, if I would just allow it to happen.

I had to give things up, especially the feeling that I had to be in control in every situation. While giving things up was not always easy, developing the practice of doing so stood me in good stead later on. So, for example, I found that every amends I made didn't have to end with my being patted on the back and being told what a good job I was doing. I could accept a response like, "I really don't want you in my life right now" with some sadness, but without a desire to keep slugging until I got the response I wanted. I knew that others had gotten similar responses from time to time, and I was no longer so unique that I found those responses unacceptable when I received them. I started to learn a bit of empathy.

I did eventually get to use the skills that I had already lost two opportunities to use, and, miraculously enough, I got to use them in SAA, and on a regular basis. It was now clear to me that God did indeed give me those skills for a purpose, and for a much better purpose than I had ever imagined.

Oh, and about all those people I thought were so ignorant for believing that the world would come to an end once the numbers flipped over in the year 1000? Well, our enlightened modern society saw the numbers about to flip over again a thousand years later, and there was a similar fear that the world would come to an end.

Today I am grateful for being given the chance to realize that I could come back to having a belief in a Power greater than myself, even if I did think such a thing was impossible when I first came into SAA. Today I no longer need to be unique.

# The Twelve Traditions—Legacy of Humility

by Jim L

While the Twelve Steps prescribe the actions necessary to travel the path of personal recovery from addiction, the Twelve Traditions provide a remarkable statement of practical principles designed to assure operational integrity of the Fellowship at all levels. By applying these principles, we are able to tap into a legacy of tradition that connects us to our own past, to the historic development of Twelve-Step fellowships spanning more than half a century, and to the solid hope of recovery.

Beginning with a strong assertion of the primary importance of unity, the first three traditions clearly establish that the welfare of the Fellowship rests on the authority of God and the desire of members to stop addictive sexual behavior, the latter being the only requirement for membership. A tone of acceptance is established immediately, leveling the playing field so that anyone and everyone can feel free to enter our rooms in search of recovery. Without acceptance, I would never have darkened the door of an SAA meeting.

After leveling the playing field in the first three, the next four traditions define the governing principles for local groups. The concept of group autonomy is established in Tradition Four -- the only limitation being matters that affect other groups or SAA as a whole – re-emphasizing the primacy of unity and our common welfare. Going farther, to prevent splinter groups with different agendas, a common purpose is then wisely offered in Tradition Five, reflecting in practice one of the stated results of the spiritual awakening articulated in Step Twelve, namely, to carry our message to other sex addicts. The final two in this cluster, Traditions Six and Seven, set the guidelines for social and political independence and financial accountability, clearly establishing the concept of exclusive self-support.

The next four traditions speak to the larger organization—in our case, the ISO of SAA—placing limitations on relationships between the ISO and the outside world. In Tradition Eight we are admonished to remain non-professional, wisely separating us in purpose and scope from the therapeutic community and any institutional church. Governance by the members of the Fellowship is given priority in Tradition Nine as a precaution against the tendency of human institutions to develop bureaucracies and the attendant layers of management and rules.

Tradition Ten reminds us of our singleness of purpose, expanding the principle given in Tradition Five as an additional warning against involvement in matters other than recovery. And we are urged in Tradition Eleven to practice rigorous personal anonymity and to resist the temptation of the modern world to engage in promotion and marketing to stimulate

growth and expansion of the Fellowship. On a personal level, this Tradition reminds me that a miracle of my recovery is that my story and my life could possibly be attractive to another addict who is still suffering and is searching for a way out of destructive behavior. Wow!

Finally, the most poignant of the Traditions—Tradition Twelve—amplifies the principle of anonymity. As asserted by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, the concept of anonymity has immense spiritual significance, provoking us to place principles before personalities and, most importantly, to practice genuine personal humility. Who I was and who I am is of importance only in so far as I am able to experience the spiritual awakening that connects me to God and allows me to establish and sustain relationships with other sex addicts to our mutual benefit and healing.

The Twelve Steps and the legacy of these traditions have taught me that I can succeed in recovery – continually growing in gratitude without growing proud.

Thank you, God, and thank you, SAA!

## Mending My Wall

by Shaun K.

In SAA I have enjoyed a strong, yet temporary recovery. It has lasted a year yet only exists today. My recovery has survived job losses, economic woes, loss of relationships, backslides in spirituality and periods of disgust. It is as easily broken as one "click." This gift is as heavy as the world. It has been granted to me by a higher power, who in part is an unfathomable immensity. It can be given to another in a whisper, and by someone as frail and weak and human as me.

The contradictions of my recovery do not undermine it; they strengthen it. I know in order to claim victory one day at a time, I must surrender on a daily basis. I ask to join the battle for victory over compulsive and destructive addiction and low-moral living in isolation and humiliation, by first admitting defeat. I know that the simple gift of recovery is elusive and therefore must be given away in order for me to keep it. These are not new espousals.

The way in which these tactics work is an individual fight, with a league, or better, a nation of fellows on my side. I am never alone, yet I am solely responsible for my recovery. I can depend on drunkards and social outcasts, and ask them to depend on me. I have been a person to build a wall to keep people out, now I am trying to keep people in.

I believe that I put up a wall one stone at a time until I was completely imprisoned. One essayist in a recovery periodical told the story of an addict's wife. She composed a letter to the husband about her experience. She felt that her husband began collecting stones, then tripping on them, the compiling them into little heaps. These heaps became obstacles, then they became fences, then soon they were walls, which became a prison. It is a brilliant metaphor for how we can excuse certain behaviors, until enough of them become an addiction, or in recovery they can become a relapse.

I was immediately reminded of a poem by Robert Frost that I once read. The simplicity of the tale, the complexity of its structure, gives me pause, and excites me at the same time. The message of keeping up healthy and natural boundaries, while ensuring communication and respect for other's boundaries, is moving. There are certainly many more interpretations. When one neighbor is all pine and the other all orchard, they must still work together to correct the broken boundary. The stones are wobbly and the narrator tells us they must use spells to make them balance, telling them to stay in place until his back is turned, admitting that all things fall, no matter how well or how precariously placed. A spring mending time will come again.

The absolute beauty of this literature, and other pieces that I have read, reminds me that the work of spirituality did not start with me. I must, must, must accept it, and pass it on as the great ones have and continue to build and tear down according to value and by the means I have been granted. I walk my wall and repair the gaps where the stones have fallen, and create gates where necessary to allow others through.

## On Just Being There

by Carol Ann R

A year or so ago, as part of a Fourth Step process, I traveled to a town in North Texas where I once went to college. Thirty years before, I had witnessed an accident in the woodshop of the art department in which a classmate lost her hand. At the time of the accident, I was standing just a few feet away with my back to her. I turned and saw her clutching her arm. The next thing I remember is the voice of the shop steward yelling at me to get out and I realized that somehow he had run in to help her and the other two students had already run out. I left and hid in my dorm room for three days.

Rationally, I knew that I was not really culpable for blacking out, but the feeling of regret for not doing more to help her had re-appeared on many Fourth Step harms lists over the years. I had gotten relief around a similarly persistent regret by revisiting the site of another event, so I decided to try going back to the woodshop to see if I could put my feelings about the accident to rest somehow. I wasn't sure what I was looking for exactly, but I went anyway.

I arrived on campus about an hour before the art building was scheduled to open, so I walked over to the library to look for background information in the archives of the campus or local newspapers. To my amazement I found articles in both papers. The details were consistent with my memory – and included the full name of the girl who had been injured. I had remembered her first name, but now I had her middle and last names as well.

When the art building finally opened, I braved a thirty-second look into the basement woodshop. I was struck by how close it was to my memory. Every machine, every door and window was just as I remembered. The only significant difference was the scale of the room. In my mind it appeared much, much bigger – but in reality it was quite compact. Of course there was blood on my shirt! I was only a few feet away from her when the accident happened. Seeing something that violent and bloody at such close range would have stunned anyone. Blacking out somehow seemed more understandable.

When I got back to Houston, I entered my former classmate's name in a search engine. I clicked on a likely site – and there was her picture! Her name was the same but now she was the vice-president of a media corporation. I sent a brief email telling her my name and that we had been in an art class together that terrible spring. I gave her my phone number

and told her I would welcome a call if she was willing to talk. To my delight she called the next day.

She told me she didn't know anyone from that class, but that she was glad I wrote to her. I told her about my trip to campus and the articles I found. I also told her I was sorry for not doing more for her at the time. I explained that I had blacked out but I was glad the shop steward was there to help her.

Then she said she knew exactly who I was—I was the one who stood by her. I said that while I supposed that was true in a literal sense, I was actually just frozen. She said she didn't care. All the others had left her but I had stayed.

And there it was. We remembered the same basic facts, but we attributed very different meaning to them. Her truth and my truth were side by side and I had a simple choice as to which I wanted to emphasize. I could continue to regret an automatic response over which I had no control — or I could adopt her more benign view. I could insist on beating myself up for doing nothing — or I could accept that doing nothing apparently did more good than harm.

What that suggests to me today is that I can run and run and run on the hamster wheel of doing, but I also have the option to relax in the reality that sometimes just being there is enough. It also tells me that doing a Fourth Step is not just a matter of filling in columns on a sheet of paper. Sometimes I am also called to go somewhere, check out the facts and risk seeing things differently.

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

**First:** Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say. Suggested Topics are listed below.

**Second:** Send your article: by e-mail to: [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)  
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Sep-Oct 2013	July 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10, and “ <i>Gratitude</i> ”
Nov-Dec 2013	Sep 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12
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