

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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**THE ISO ENCOURAGES GROUPS TO REPRODUCE
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The following actions were approved by the Board of Trustees at the August 17, 2013 Teleconference

- To disburse \$75.00 from the LGBT Designated Fund to the SAA NY Intergroup to help cover costs associated with adding a flyer about the LGBT Booklet to the NYC Outreach packet. Further, to allow future expenditures from this fund to be approved at the discretion of the Executive Director.
-

Conference Charter Committee (CCC) News

The CCC is continuing to solicit and collect feedback on the draft conference charter in preparation for presenting the charter for approval at the 2014 annual meeting of the ISO conference.

Please read, share, and discuss the charter with your group.

Updates:

- **Draft charter mailing.** A mailing to all delegates containing the current draft charter and an FAQ document went out in mid-October.
- **Tele-workshops.** The first tele-workshop on the draft charter for this service year will take place on **Saturday, Nov. 16, at 2:00 p.m. central time.** This is an opportunity to ask questions and share feedback. All SAA members are welcome. Please contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org for call-in information. Additional workshops will be scheduled for January, April, and March 2014.
- **Draft charter on the service website.** The draft charter is available to all SAA members in the conference charter area of the ISO service website at <http://www.saa-iso.org>. This site is password-protected. Please contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org for the password information.
- **Draft charter study groups.** The draft charter is being studied by the Conference Steering Committee and is being presented at several SAA retreats over the coming months.
- **Draft charter revisions.** The CCC Content Work Group is incorporating revisions to the charter as feedback comes in. As revisions are approved by the CCC, they will be posted to the service website. A new revision in response to fellowship feedback was approved and posted on Oct. 13, 2013.
- **CCC mailing list and meetings.** Contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org if you would like to be added to the CCC mailing list and

receive invitations to monthly CCC meetings. All SAA members are welcome at the meetings and all current delegates may vote.

- **Feedback address.** Send feedback on the charter to the CCC at:

ccc.feedback@saa-iso.org

In grateful service,
The Conference Charter Committee

CCC Mission Statement

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) was established as a committee of the ISO Board of Trustees in 2007 and transferred to the ISO conference in 2010. The primary task was to research and draft a charter for the ISO conference. The CCC shall continue to solicit and collect feedback from the fellowship in order to prepare and present to the conference for adoption a final draft that reflects and incorporates our collective wisdom and can serve to guide the conference in the years ahead. In preparing this final draft, the CCC will work closely with other components of the ISO to ensure coordination of the charter with other foundational documents. Upon approval of the charter, the CCC will gratefully disband and pass oversight of the charter to the conference.

The ISO is pleased to announce the approval of
our **newest** piece of SAA literature:

“Getting a Sponsor”

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This pamphlet addresses many questions SAA members may have about sponsorship, including the importance of having a sponsor, how to find one, what to expect from a sponsor, and much more.

Thank you so much to all who put so much hard work into producing and approving this important new addition to our SAA Literature.

ISO Structure Committee News

The ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) continues to work on implementation plans for the bylaws amendments passed by the Conference at the 2013 annual meeting in Summerlin. The focus of the work at this time is to develop recommendations for consideration by the new Conference Steering Committee (CSC).

The ISO-S anticipates completing its work on the process for nominating at-large Board and LitCom members by November. At the core of these recommendations is a joint Conference-Board-LitCom nominating committee that would be charged with soliciting candidates from within the fellowship and bringing a slate of nominees for consideration by the Conference. The recommendations will be presented to the CSC for further consideration.

Work on the details of a process for transition from regions to areas has just begun. Building on the discussions by previous ISO-S committees over the past two and a half years, the Committee hopes to develop recommendations for presentation to the CSC before the first of January.

Feedback received during the past two service years and at the Vancouver and Summerlin Conferences has been helpful in shaping the discussions this year; however, the ISO-S would welcome additional input from delegates and other members of the fellowship.

The mission of the ISO is to serve SAA member groups by helping them carry their message of recovery to sex the addict who still suffers. As trusted servants, we depend on feedback from the fellowship, as we try to plan for the future of the ISO.

Please send questions or comments to the ISO office at 713-869-4902 or by e-mail to info@saa-recovery.org, with ***“ISO-S” in the subject line.***

Calling All Rookies: Please Write a Meditation!

For those who may wonder why someone would start a pitch for receiving creative, spiritual writing with “rookie” in the title should know that it is meant in a very positive way. No curve ball being tossed there.

Alas, in baseball as in other sports and disciplines, a person who is new is sometimes referred to as a “rookie.” While this often means someone without depth of experience, it does not mean someone without talent, drive or perhaps plenty of experience, strength and hope! Almost everyone can write and there are many, I will repeat that, MANY of you out there who could easily pick up a sheet of paper and a pen (or your laptop) and create a meditation much like those you may have read in all those meditation books out there. Further, writing a meditation can be a deeply moving experience and, as with most recovery-related activities, helps in the sobriety department.

So, how can one go about writing and submitting a meditation to be included in the SAA Meditation Book? Simply read the information about writing a meditation on page 10 of this newsletter and, when ready to submit your superbly written masterpiece, simply follow the submission guidelines on page 11 of this newsletter. Before you know it, your first meditation is done and submitted for possible inclusion in the upcoming Meditation Book.

Lastly, consider the fact that we are always looking for NEW talent. We want to be sure that as many different voices as possible can be heard as the meditations are read aloud in meetings or quietly enjoyed at home. So if you haven't written one before, please consider it. We want submissions from as many “rookies” as we can get!

Chris J.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

ISO to Hire New Editor for *The Outer Circle*

The ISO is searching for an experienced writer to serve as editor for *The Outer Circle*. ***The application period is open until January 6, 2014.***

Job Description for the Editor of *The Outer Circle*

The successful candidate for editor of *The Outer Circle* will have demonstrated superior skills in writing, copy editing, and project management. Experience as a published writer/editor is strongly preferred. The editor shall be responsible for editing the submissions received from members of the fellowship, and writing/providing additional material as necessary to complete each bimonthly issue. The writing style of the editor must be fluid and easy to read, and must possess a compelling style that promotes the experience and hope of recovery contained in the SAA message.

Specific tasks include:

- Reviewing all literature submissions to the ISO newsletter.
- Selecting literature submissions for program compatibility, reader interest, style, and literary quality.
- Editing selected submissions for program compatibility, spelling, punctuation, and length.
- Communicating with the authors of the submissions where necessary.
- Writing or providing additional material as needed to reach the twelve-page requirement for each issue.
- Sending the material to the *The Outer Circle* oversight committee for review and comments in time to have the material to the office by a set deadline.
- Submitting corrections within twenty-four hours after the rough draft of the upcoming issue is sent to the editor from the office.
- Working with the Literature Committee and ISO staff to facilitate publication of a finished and polished product.
- Reporting to the Literature Committee and responding to feedback from the Literature Committee.
- Attending the monthly meetings of the Literature Committee and participating in subcommittees of the Literature Committee.

The editor is required to have a working knowledge and background with regards to the SAA message of recovery including the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts of World Service for AA and the basic tools of recovery. The editor should meet the Guidelines for International Service for the literature committee.

The time commitment needed to edit the newsletter averages around fifteen hours per issue. The editor does receive compensation for the work performed. Compensation will be determined based on experience.

Applications should be submitted **no later than January 6, 2014**, and should include a cover letter, personal resume, description of experience in SAA recovery, and samples of written work.

Please send applications (and any questions) to:

ISO
P.O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

or by e-mail to:
info@saa-recovery.org

LGBT Outreach Subcommittee News

The GLBT Outreach Subcommittee is now known as the LGBT Outreach Committee. This was done to be consistent with the wording in the LGBT Booklet. A Google search showed the majority of current usage is LGBT.

As many of you may be aware, the booklet entitled *SAA and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Sex Addict-A Message of Hope for Sex Addicts in the LGBT Communities* is now available in read-only format through the ISO website. The booklet is also on sale through the ISO at a cost of \$3.00. This brings closure to this project and the LGBT Outreach Committee sends out a heartfelt thank you to all who participated in bringing this to reality.

Projects that are currently being worked on include:

1) **Monitoring and responding to e-mail inquiries.** Inquiries received are mostly for general information, looking for local meetings or seeking sponsors which are shared with volunteers. In this vein, we have also received inquiries concerning transgender issues. Currently we have no volunteers in this area. If you are willing to respond to transgender issues, please contact us through our e-mail address listed below.

- 2) **Updating the LGBT friendly meeting list.** We are in the process of updating this list, which is used when we get an inquiry concerning LGBT or LGBT friendly meetings. If you know of one please contact us via e-mail.
- 3) **Organizing literature distribution to health clinics, treatment centers and therapists.**
- 4) **Working with the Information System and Online Presence Committee (ISOPcom) to develop information to be placed on the ISO website.** The information that was sent is under review by the committee.
- 5) **Member suggestions on PSA's in local or regional publications.**
- 6) **LGBT Designated Fund.** A disbursement method for funds has been worked out with the ISO Board and the office. Request for funds can be sent to the LGBT Outreach Committee, then once approved, the request will be sent to the Executive Director for final approval and disbursement. If your Intergroup or Group has any ideas that can use these funds to further LGBT Outreach, please e-mail them to us.
- 7) **A one-page flyer which can be mailed or e-mailed to outside professionals, containing relevant quotes from the LGBT pamphlet and the link to website version** is being developed by a LGBT committee workgroup.

For more information or to volunteer for any of the current LGBT Outreach activities, e-mail us at GLBT@saa-recovery.org or attend our monthly teleconference, which is the first Sunday of each month. Contact the ISO Office for call in information.

Women's Outreach Subcommittee News

Dear fellow SAA members,

Greetings from the Women's Outreach Subcommittee (WOSC)! Please call on us if we may be of service to you in your efforts to carry the message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers.

The mission of the WOSC is to carry the message, specifically, to the woman sex addict who still suffers. Here is why we feel that is important. Some women struggle to feel a sense of hope in a program that currently has, proportionally, a small number of women. They may not see or hear their stories reflected in meetings with mostly, or all, men. They may wish to relate to women only and feel afraid of, triggered by, or angry at, men. Other women prefer to be around men and have strong negative feelings for women. Some have both, or neither! Although many of us on

the WOSC have had similar feelings, the message we wish to carry to women newcomers is that others have found the miracle of recovery in the fellowship as it currently exists, and they can too.

We keep in mind always that the solution in the SAA program is the same regardless of gender or any other identifying factors: meetings and the suggested Twelve Steps of recovery worked with a sponsor. Even so, to support the woman newcomer in staying with the program, we have developed some special resources for individual members and for groups:

- Women's pamphlets: *A Special Welcome to the Women Newcomer* and *Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings*. We encourage your meeting to keep a supply on hand.
- Women's only telemeetings. A full listing can be found on the SAA website under "Electronic Meetings."
- Women's column ("Dear Grace"). This Q&A column, written by WOSC members, appears in every issue of *The Outer Circle*.
- The Women's Outreach List. This is a list of many women SAA members, who have chosen to share their contact information with each other, to support one another via phone and e-mail. Women can request to join by e-mailing Grace at grace@saa-women.org
- Women's page on SAA website. Information about many of these resources can be found at www.saa-women.org.
- Women's Welcome reception and Women's Room at each annual ISO Convention. An ideal place for women to connect face-to-face with other recovering women SAA members.
- Women's Retreat. Under this initiative, we have hosted two annual retreats, and a third is scheduled for March 2014. These are open to all women SAA members.

Please reach out to us if we can support your group, or if you need more information about any of these resources. We also want to hear from you if you have ideas, suggestions, questions, or issues related to women in the fellowship. You can reach a member of our subcommittee by e-mailing us at : genoutreach.wosc.chair@saa-recovery.org.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for your dedication to carrying the message of recovery.

Women's Outreach Subcommittee

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 are 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

<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i>	<i>Abstinence</i>
<i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i>	<i>The Bubble</i>
<i>First Step to Recovery</i>	<i>Writing to Prisoners</i>
<i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>	<i>Group Guide</i>
<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>	<i>Intergroup Guide</i>
<i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>	<i>Three Circles</i>
<i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>	<i>Tools of Recovery</i>
<i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i>	<i>Getting a Sponsor</i>
<i>Safe & Sexually Sober Meetings</i>	
<i>SAA and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict</i>	

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.”

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.

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.

November 24, 2013
December 29, 2013 (5th Sunday)
January 26, 2014
February 23, 2014
March 23, 2014
April 27, 2014

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).

Submissions and a signed release form may be e-mailed as attachments to the ISO Literature Committee at 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*.

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of:

***“Sex Addicts Anonymous and the Lesbian / Gay /
Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict: A Message of
Hope for Sex Addicts in the LGBT Communities”***

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This new booklet has valuable recovery suggestions and insights that are useful for ***any recovering member or group***, regardless of sexual orientation.

Thank you to all who put so much hard work into producing this addition to our SAA literature!

ISO Income/Expense Summary as of September 30, 2013

	Sep 13	Monthly Avg	Jan - Sep 13
Income			
Sales	18,445.47	18,129.62	163,166.57
Shipping & Handling	1,875.99	1,883.35	16,950.15
Donations	24,585.69	24,267.83	218,410.44
Investment Income	17.30	563.11	5,068.02
Other Income	0.00	119.18	1,072.63
Convention Income	0.00	5,314.84	47,833.54
Delegate Meeting Income	0.00	644.44	5,800.00
Total Income	44,924.45	50,922.37	458,301.35
Cost Of Goods Sold	7,260.48	6,927.29	62,345.59
Gross Profit	37,663.97	43,995.08	395,955.76
Expense			
Wages & Benefits	22,044.54	23,021.05	207,189.46
Payroll Taxes	1,326.95	1,531.97	13,787.71
Payroll Expenses	18.54	18.54	166.86
Insurance	0.00	646.74	5,820.70
Financial Charges	1,151.01	1,212.64	10,913.80
Communications	523.64	599.12	5,392.08
Occupancy Expenses	1,277.73	1,454.74	13,092.66
Office Expenses	22.16	1,081.30	9,731.74
The Outer Circle	1,151.80	909.90	8,189.07
Professional Fees	1,035.00	493.00	4,437.00
Depreciation	175.00	175.00	1,575.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	-3.50	7.67	69.06
Travel-Related Expenses	-50.00	4,230.11	38,070.96
Board/Committee Expenses	2,904.99	2,602.80	23,425.17
Convention Expenses	0.00	4,370.64	39,335.80
Delegate Meeting Expenses	0.00	1,353.32	12,179.85
Total Expense	31,577.86	43,708.55	393,376.92
Net Income	6,086.11	286.54	2,578.84

Financial Results for September 2013

In the month of September our budget showed a surplus of \$6,086.11. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$2,734.00. The increased surplus of \$3,352.11 was due to our sales exceeding budget by \$2,905.47 and our individual donations exceeding budget by \$2,317.08.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$2,373.13 for September and has exceeded our estimate by \$12,108.88 for 2013.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$623.08 for September and have exceeded our estimate by \$8,344.51 for 2013. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$75.00 in September and have exceeded our estimate by \$1,644.37 in 2013. Our Chips were below our estimate by \$108.49 in September but has exceeded our estimate by \$1,343.54 in 2013.

Our total sales for September exceeded our estimate by \$2,905.47.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$2,317.08 for September and have exceeded our estimate by \$7,250.29 for 2013. Group donations were below our estimate by \$994.39 in September but have exceeded our estimate by \$3,522.15 for 2013.

Our product inventory is valued at \$46,705.30.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$680.14 in September.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2013 to September 30, 2013):

- Sales have exceeded our estimate by \$22,406.57
- Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$10,722.44
- Expenses have exceeded our estimate by \$3,288.94
- Net surplus has exceeded our estimate by \$2,707.82

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

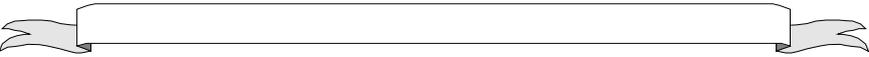
director@saa-iso.org

[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.

For some reason, I have been thinking lately of friends and relatives whom I have not seen or spoken to in many years. This came to a head a few weeks ago, when I had a chance to think back on members of my extended family whom I haven't seen in probably fifty years.



The topic for the July/August 2014 issue is a simple one: "meditation."



I can never remember whether my mother was born in 1928 or 1929; I'm sure that if 1929 weren't the year the Great Depression began, I wouldn't have any reason to confuse those years. Recently I was really trying to remember the year once again, and decided to look on the internet to see if any information was available. I found a website maintained by B. that seemed to mention my mother in the course of looking for further information on the family, and I wrote to her. When she wrote back, she was kind of skeptical as to whether we really were talking about the same family; when I replied, a couple of facts I mentioned—that my grandmother, her great-grandmother, lived in Los Angeles later in life and that my Uncle Earl, her grandfather, had completely grey hair by the time he reached thirty—confirmed to her that we really were relatives.

She spent some time talking about Uncle Earl and describing his larger-than-life personality, reminding me of how highly I regarded him on the few occasions that we met. My mother would compare photographs of the two of us to show me how similar our mouths were. Apparently we both also were interested in making music, as he played the violin, the mandolin, and the ukulele. (He also cast his own bullets, a talent I confess has never

been in my, er, arsenal.) I wish he had been around when I was considering giving up the violin to play the piano in elementary school; as he might have been the one to tell me, "Mike, you can play both."

My mother used to mention a brother of hers named Zeb and said that he disappeared one day and was never heard from again. I asked B. about this and she replied that it was actually my Uncle Robert who disappeared; he drove a truck as an expression of his wanderlust, and one day he just fell off the face of the earth. She said it was one of Earl's great regrets that he never knew what happened to his baby brother. B. later found Robert's obituary, and unfortunately this was after Earl had died. That still leaves open the question of how one of them could have confused my Uncle Zeb and my Uncle Robert, which I guess will always be a mystery.

B. said that she was going to see my Aunt Marie, Uncle Earl's wife, just before Thanksgiving and did I have any questions to ask. I decided not to bother her with my mother's birth year and instead asked her just to convey how much I had admired Uncle Earl. I'm happy to have a chance to deliver that message posthumously. I often didn't tell people in my life how much they meant to me, and I'm getting a chance to make one indirect amends in that regard.

The back articles in this issue of *The Outer Circle* are from the years 1994 through 1997. It includes one of the early articles about Lifeline Partners, which I thought would be particularly apropos right now as we are looking for more folks who will sign up.

Right now is an excellent time to submit an article to *The Outer Circle*; for once I do not have a backlog. The topic for the July/August 2014 issue is a simple one: "meditation." What does it mean to you, how did you make it part of your daily life, or whatever else comes to mind.

I'll probably share more of my stories of reconnection to my past in the next four issues of *The Outer Circle*. Have a wonderful holiday season and I'll talk to you again next issue.

Step Twelve, Tradition Twelve, and Right Thinking

by Fernando L.

I see that “right thinking” is the topic for this issue of *The Outer Circle*. I’m not sure what that rather vague-sounding phrase means. For years, all I knew about it was that it is, according to the old saw, something I “can act myself into.” I think I have managed to come up with some possible specifics about what “right thinking” is.

The first part of Step Twelve states: “*Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps . . .*” The very first sentence of text relating to Step Twelve in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* restates this essential concept: “Working this program leads to a spiritual awakening” (p. 58).

And yet, this spiritual awakening was not something that suddenly came on for me when I reached the Twelfth Step, as *Sex Addicts Anonymous* makes clear just a few sentences later: “[E]very step of the program contributes to a fundamental change in our outlook” (p. 59). And *Sex Addicts Anonymous* is definitely not vague about what this “fundamental change” involves: as it says, I start gaining in awareness; I become more humble and less judgmental; I start making efforts to repair old relationships; and I create new relationships from among people who respect me and treat me well. Overall, I start living according to my true purpose, as God intended for me to do.

I don’t start suddenly doing these things when reaching the Twelfth Step. If, among other things, I have done fearless and thorough Fourth and Fifth Steps, and if I’m working sincere Eighth and Ninth Steps, I’ve already started seeing some of these changes in my life. I think that is why the AA Big Book introduces the promises as part of Step Nine with that famous statement, “If we are painstaking about this phase of our development [i.e., working Step Nine], we will be amazed before we are halfway through” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 83).

It’s easy to say, “Sure, my life has changed.” And yet, when I look at the examples above, and I ask myself, “Have I made these changes in my life, I’m not so sure I can always answer with an unequivocal “yes.” I can still be incredibly judgmental; I can put off those Ninth Step amends that would allow these old relationships to start healing.

Still, these concrete examples are just that: examples of how I can incorporate “right thinking” into my life. Looking at Tradition Twelve, I can start considering the bigger picture, the picture that is larger than these few valuable examples. Tradition Twelve reminds me of the “spiritual foundation” of all that I do. In its mini-essay about Tradition Twelve, *Sex*

Addicts Anonymous discusses our fellowship's basing "our actions and deliberations on spiritual principles." So I look at my petty jealousies and realize that I'm not following any spiritual principle in holding them.

In dealing with my jealousies and resentments, I don't stop with just "ask[ing] in prayer for everything [I] want for [myself] to be given to [the person I resent]" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 552); I take a more definite action than that. If I'm fearful, for example, that somebody else is getting attention that I want for myself, I step back and deliberately allow that person the room to get that attention. It may seem silly and overly simplistic; yet, when I have taken that action, my resentment goes away, more often than not immediately.

Another example: If I have decided that I know what another person is thinking about me, I remind myself of another old saw, that "what somebody else thinks about me is none of my business," and I let go of my supposed "knowledge" about the other person (certainly an example of "acting myself into right thinking," if there ever was one). Maybe not immediately, but within very short order, I find that the other person was harboring no such thoughts toward me.

The Steps and the Traditions give me lots of opportunities for self-reflection. I can see plenty in them to help me in the direction of "right thinking" as well.

Give 'Til It Feels Good!

by Penny K.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the March 1996 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper and is just as germane now as it was then. "NSO" refers, of course, to "National Service Organization," the former name of our current ISO.]

We have a saying in our local SAA groups: "Give 'til it feels good." I can honestly say that before recovery, giving away my hard-earned money never felt good. As a matter of fact, nothing felt very good! Now giving feels great even though I'm in worse financial shape than I have ever been. Actually, I'm in worse financial shape than I ever even imagined. Still, one of the first checks that I write each month is to NSO for my Lifeline Partnership Pledge. If I start to tell myself "you don't have enough to give away," or "just skip this one month," then I think about, "How would my life have been different if I hadn't found SAA?" As much as I may worry about finances now, that's nothing to compare with worrying about going to jail, getting AIDS, being institutionalized, dying, or the plain misery of acting out

“just one more time.”

Before really getting involved with SAA service work, I used to wonder “Why do we need an NSO?” What I realized is that my giving to NSO allows sex addicts all over the U.S., and around the world, to become aware that there is such a thing as sex addiction and that there is help. I also realized that having a unifying organization keeps each new group from having to “reinvent the wheel” to get started, and it provides a means for existing groups to find out what is working and what is not in other parts of the country or world. Finally, it provides for a group that same sense of belonging, of not being terminally unique, that the group provides for an individual member. It allows our groups not to isolate.

I encourage each of you to think about “How would my life have been different without SAA?” and then decide what level of giving feels right for you. Any gift, from a few cents to a couple of hundred dollars a month, is welcome and will be greeted with appreciation and respect. If every member donated one-half percent to one percent of his or her monthly income, NSO would not have any financial concerns.

I close this message with gratitude to SAA as a whole, and to each of the individual members who make the whole a reality.

In recovery,
Penny K., Treasurer,
NSO Board of Trustees

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,

Just who is Grace? Are you an individual? Can I be Grace?

—Curious

Dear Curious,

These are great questions! No, Grace is not a specific individual. Then again, sometimes Grace is a specific individual, and Grace could be you. [Whoa, what? Yes, it’s a little confusing.] Grace is the name that was

adopted by the Women's Outreach Subcommittee of SAA (WOSC) for use in two different outreach efforts. "Grace" is a *nom de plume*, or pen name. It's also a word for our group conscience. Let "me" explain. The two outreach efforts are this column and the Women's Outreach List.

This column is written by a work group, a subset of the members who serve on the WOSC. For each TOC published, we take a question and create a collective answer through group conscience. We try to answer from the perspective of a long-sober woman member, who has experienced a spiritual awakening and is active in service. We refer to that woman as "Grace." She isn't an individual, but she is alive for us. She represents both our group conscience and the grace that is available from working the Twelve Steps.

The other outreach effort that uses "Grace" as a pen name is the Women's Outreach List. Some people call this the "Grace list." This is a contact list of women in the fellowship, who agree to support one another. (It's like the phone list of a face-to-face meeting.) To join the list, a woman sends a request to the e-mail address grace@saa-women.org. The person who answers the e-mail is a woman serving on the WOSC who meets certain guidelines. She must have two years' continuous abstinence from inner circle behaviors and have worked the Twelve Steps with an SAA sponsor. She must have working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions, the endorsement of her home group, home internet access, and working knowledge of e-mail and Excel. The position of "Grace" is a one-month, rotating service position. Although none of these women is actually named Grace, we think of them all as Grace. They are supported by a different WOSC work group, which has written guidelines and holds regular meetings.

To become involved in either of these outreach efforts, please contact the ISO for information about how to attend a meeting of the WOSC. Getting involved there would be the first step to finding out more about serving as Grace.

—The WOSC "Grace" workgroup, known collectively as "Grace"

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

Dear Will

Submitted by the Men's Outreach Committee

Dear Will,

I was recently at a meeting where one of the participants interrupted another one who had made reference to something that somebody else had said, and told him that he was engaging in "crosstalk." What is crosstalk, and why is it frowned upon?

—Afraid to Speak Up

Dear ATSU:

Will wonders if the people in your group found it as amusing as Will does that the person interrupting the other one was engaging in a far worse form of crosstalk than was the person he was interrupting. Will suspects that the one interrupted was not amused.

Anyway, it's funny, ATSU, that you should ask that question. Will was recently at a newcomer's meeting where the topic of crosstalk came up. The group facilitator said that "crosstalk" boiled down to three things: giving advice, speaking directly to another person in the meeting, and interrupting another's share. Will thinks that one or two other descriptions might also fit here, although these three pretty much cover what crosstalk is about.

Will cannot be one hundred percent certain why crosstalk is considered by many to be a bad thing, although he certainly has his theories. If Will is sharing and somebody interrupts him, for whatever reason, it's possible that Will will feel that the meeting is a little more unsafe than it was before. It would be easy in those circumstances for Will to come away thinking that his share was not very important, especially since Will comes from a family situation where the children were not allowed to have opinions or feelings.

Will thinks that the unwritten rules against crosstalk also serve as practice for honoring the boundaries of others. Not every person in a meeting is going to want the advice of another on that person's share. The person speaking may only have wanted to vent. Will has seen people in meetings ask to hear experience, strength, and hope from others after the meeting on a particular topic, and Will believes that that is as it should be.

Speaking of "after the meeting," one thing that Will really likes is for another person to ask him after the meeting if it is okay if he or she makes reference to something that Will said during the meeting. Will considers such a question to be the ultimate in observing boundaries and in honoring Will's desire to feel safe.

Essentially, ATSU, Will believes that the “no crosstalk” rule, or rather suggestion, has to do with keeping the meeting safe. If anything, it is an extension of the suggestion that people in meetings restrict themselves to “I” statements, something else that contributes to safety in meetings.

—Will

Every Day New

by Tom T.

Coping early in natural ways
Leads innocent children sadly astray

Isolation and escape become your friend
Healthy relationships never begin

As pain and progression take their toll
Soon behavior is out of control

Boundaries crossed and left behind
Self-loathing and hatred never kind

Life becomes pain from end to start
Seek escape from every part

Becoming desperate drives more stress
Over and over I get no rest

Longing for relief, I soon realize
I am not alone, others sympathize

Finding fellows, it just feels right
Many days are black as night

Growing up and getting sane
Brings its own new kind of pain

Reading here and calling there
Attend meetings for my care

Work the Steps and don't lose focus
Life is better and joyful for us

A Christmas Surprise in My Outer Circle

by Harvey A.

Christmas can be a very difficult time for those of us who are in prison because they are away from friends, family and homes, and the pain of being away seems stronger than at any other time of year. Suicide rates for prisoners during that time are higher than at any other time of year.

One good way to carry the message to someone who still suffers is to send a prisoner in recovery a Christmas card. Better yet if everyone in one's home group can do it. It has happened to me several times and never fails to lift my spirits, or surprise me.

I sing in the choir as part of my outer circle spiritual practice. Knowing how prisoners suffer during Christmas, I also wanted to sing Christmas carols to prisoners with the choir last winter. Something about singing old spiritual songs refreshes my soul and washes out my emotions. It is also a wonderful opportunity for spiritual community and heightened conscious contact with my Higher Power.

Last winter, our prison went on lockdown about three days before Christmas. I was disappointed because I'd been hoping to carol the prison with the choir and we even had a friendly officer willing to escort us around to do that. But when the prison goes on lockdown, everyone is locked up and ordinary prison activity is suspended. It was a sad time.

Then, prison officials began to let us eat in the chow hall while the process was underway. Some high-ranking officials must have gotten the Christmas spirit because, on Christmas Eve, about twenty of us prisoners were also called out to carol during the middle of lockdown. This was unusual, not only because there was a lockdown going on, but also because the twenty belonged to different choirs, both Protestant and Catholic, who never otherwise sang together. It was quite a surprise and it gave us an opportunity to meet each other and celebrate Christ's birth together on Christmas Eve in spite of our differences. We sang in front of the chow hall on Christmas Eve as prisoners came there to eat. We sang "Jingle Bells," "Frosty the Snowman," "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," and more traditional songs. It was like a Christmas dream come true.

The next day, we were called out to sing again on Christmas Day. It was freezing cold and drizzly, but the officers graced us with hot coffee and pie. After a few hours, the rain began to turn to snow and piled up on the lawn in front of us. Our dreaming of a White Christmas actually materialized and overwhelmed us. It got colder and colder but we kept on singing.

The other prisoners got to eat their traditional Christmas meal in the chow hall while we sang and blessed them with Christmas songs during a painful

time. That made last Christmas an especially blessed time, one for which I am thankful to God, my sponsor, and SAA, as well—ahem—as the Powers that Be. Merry Christmas!

Signing Up for Sobriety? It's Like Signing Up for a Marathon

by Joel D.

Recently while out on a morning-long run of fifteen miles, this article started forming in my mind as I passed the time away clicking off mileage. I see many people in Sex Addicts Anonymous indicate that they want sobriety. I see newcomers and even some members who have been around for a couple of years here in Montréal want sobriety, and still I see some seeming to struggle with the idea. This reminded me of the marathon. Anyone can sign up for a marathon—anyone, even while reading an article like this one.

So signing up for a marathon is like signing up for sobriety in our fellowship. For those who have never run 26.2 miles, the marathon might seem like some unimaginable goal (like sobriety), but anyone can sign up for it. Furthermore, it isn't even necessary to train for it if one doesn't want to: one can simply show up on the day of the race and line up with everyone else who registered for the race. However, that is sort of like going to meetings without working the Steps. When the gun goes off, how likely is a person who hasn't trained going to get past the first half of the marathon, let alone just the first mile, without having trained to run any distance?

What non-runners don't realize is that the hardest part of a marathon is not the marathon itself: it's the training. Who wants to get up on a Sunday morning to do a long run? And that long run, during the peak of training, can reach up to twenty miles. Many people, I'm sure, would rather sleep in and stay in a warm comfy bed as opposed to suiting up and preparing for a long run of eighteen miles at marathon pace. In sobriety, who wants to answer questions about childhood or make an inventory of their resentments? Who wants to make amends for harms done which seemed easier to leave in the past? And who wants to help another sex addict?

When I trained for my first marathon, I thought it would be easy: just get out and run. I quickly leafed through articles and books about marathon training—I took what was convenient for me and left about ninety percent of the rest. I ran by myself. I thought thirteen miles was sufficient preparation for the marathon. I also thought that my running shoes were perfect for the job. The day of the marathon in Portland, Oregon, I was able to run sixteen miles without stopping, and I was running at a pretty good pace; but then I

hit “the wall” after mile sixteen, right before going up a ramp onto St. John’s Bridge; I was out of gas. I ran/walked the remaining distance to the finish line. I finished my first marathon, but I struggled to hang on and continue.

When I did train for a marathon, I ran with a recovery brother for our long runs. We had the opportunity to check in as we did our runs together. We brought water as well as energy bars as our distance began to get longer and longer. We bought appropriate shoes for the distance. We trained in the clothes that we were going to wear for the marathon to see how the fabric worked as we ran; running 26.2 miles, there are areas which can be prone to chafing which we wanted to know and take care of before the day of the actual race. We trained up to twenty miles and began to taper down the miles until marathon race day. On race day, once we pass mile twenty, the rest of the distance is between me and my higher power; it’s unknown territory. I needed to dig deep and find the inspiration to keep me moving forward. My recovery brother and I ran the marathon at our own pace, and we finished strong without having to struggle. We trained exactly for what we signed up for.

So really anyone can sign up for sobriety, but still it is important to consider how much struggling through sobriety one is willing to tolerate. From personal experience, I can say that the experience is much better shared. The Steps, like training for a marathon, are less daunting when someone like a sponsor is there to show how he or she made it through. Sponsors and other members of the fellowship run alongside to help get through the miles and the milestones of our recovery.

Relationships and Tradition Three

by Freeman P.

[Editor’s Note: This is the third part of a twelve-part article called “Relationships and the Twelve Traditions.”]

Tradition Three: The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior (Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 81)

This simple tradition stands firm. “The Third Tradition is based on trust rather than fear. When we live in the spirit of this tradition, we acknowledge that we cannot stand in judgment over any of our fellows . . .” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 82). If I prejudge a new member of SAA, I need to speak to my sponsor. Prejudging is known as prejudice, my own preconceived opinion or bias. Perhaps there is some type of sex addict I don’t want in my

group; if so, I may set myself up as judge, jury and executioner by withholding information or help from the sex addict who still suffers.

This is a self-inflicted and self-diagnosed affliction. And it is self-treated by working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor. If I fail to follow these spiritual guidelines, the result will be a return of my sexual addiction, followed by my suffering, sickness and death. Do I wish to deny someone access simply because of his or her race, living location, sexuality or criminal history? Perhaps I am easily impressed by these social conditions and align myself with them.

The Green Book says, "The Third Tradition protects us from the human tendency to set up applications, tests, qualification procedures, or other demands that are meant to control membership of groups" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 81). The Green Book also informs me that ". . . desire is subjective" (p. 81). When a person claims to be a sex addict and has a desire to stop addictive behaviors, that person is welcome. He or she is an SAA member from that point forward. The fellowship has abandoned all rules and regulations for membership beyond Tradition Three. To deny anyone access will be detrimental and injures SAA as a whole.

The reason SAA holds Tradition Three is because it wants to extend the same great chance that each of its members has received. Only by giving away what I was once given am I able to remain abstinent and keep SAA strong.

Tradition Three (Relationship Form): The only requirement for a mutual good relationship is a desire to make the relationship work—a total commitment is necessary.

Once I determine that a person is healthy for me, I want to make a total commitment. Sometimes I will have to yield, even though I know I am right. I can hold my opinion to myself and revel in the joy of friendship. After all, I often choose friends because of the differences between us. These differences create an opportunity for me to grow. At times I will be the one to carry the load; at other times, the other person will be the one. All I can do is express my desire to be in the relationship and back that desire with action. Just as the Twelve Steps is a program of action, so too are relationships. I don't *tell* others, I *show* them.

At times our differences may lead to conflict. I'm always quick to say, "I'm sorry if I have done anything to harm you." In the long run it doesn't matter who is right or who is wrong. What matters is our mutual desire to make the relationship work. Sometimes the other person gives in first, at other times it will be me. We always manage to do whatever it takes. I strive to be the first to apologize if something isn't going right. We both have the desire and are willing to make the relationship work.

I Was Standing at the Fork

by Anonymous, Minneapolis, MN

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the January 1994 issue of the newsletter, which was then called The Plain Brown Rapper]

I am a forty-year-old woman with fifteen months in the program and six months of sobriety under my belt. I have never felt more alive. I found my way to SAA almost a year after my first spiritual awakening, and for that moment I am forever grateful. It occurred when my partner of over six years invited me to tell the truth about an affair he had long suspected I was having. I remember the moment with crystal clarity. It was as if I was standing at a literal fork in the road of my life. One way was my old way. The road of lies, of shame, of self-loathing and self-hatred. The road to yet another acting-out episode. But the other road appeared to me as well: the truth. The truth in its entirety, which encompassed not one affair during our relationship, but many more meetings of bodies and minds. For the first time I saw a choice. The old road I knew well, each rut of excitement, each pothole of despair. I realized in that moment just how familiar that road had become, how many times I had traversed it, just how many relationships I had embarked upon out of desperation, all ending the same way. The circular path of a "monogamous" relationship peppered with affairs. Always looking for a magic experience that would fill me up. None ever did.

So I chose. I told the truth. Not just part of the truth...the whole truth.

My partner left. I was living alone for the first time in my life. The one thing I knew was, in taking the leap and telling the truth, my Higher Power caught me. I began a long process of taking responsibility for my actions in that relationship, of deep personal reflection on my life and past actions in other relationships. And I prayed. I prayed hard for forgiveness and it came. It came from my ex-partner and it came from my higher power. Deep and profound awareness of how I had treated myself and others. Painful and joyful realizations about how I had lived, and how I could choose to live from then on.

I still did not realize that I was an addict.

Nearly a year of abstinence followed. I essentially avoided most situations or people I considered dangerous to my newfound self. I figured I had "my problem" licked. I had taken pains to repair a number of relationships marred by my acting out, made some amends to people I had hurt, and felt pretty stable spiritually and emotionally.

Then I had dinner with an old friend. I had known this man for fifteen years,

knew his wife and two children. What I didn't consider when I accepted his invitation was that I had had a group sex experience with him a number of years earlier. He had not forgotten it. Apparently neither had I. I spent the night with him wrestling physically, emotionally, and spiritually with his and my own desire to have sex.

In the end, I could not say no. I woke up the next morning smelling of his cologne, feeling the same old shame, despair, and self-loathing I always had when I acted out. When I told my best friend about the episode, he gently suggested that it sounded like I was powerless to say no to sex. I remembered then a phone number another friend had given me nearly a year earlier. It was the local SAA intergroup. I was stunned. Me? A sex addict? When I searched my heart I admitted I felt powerless and made the call that same day.

In many ways my SAA group saved my life. I believe in my heart that my higher power put me there to heal among a group of the most courageous women I had ever known. I have made it through Steps One, Two, and Three, and am working on Step Four. I had a slip and, through the Steps and the wisdom of my group, learned from it. I am learning to care for and about myself, about the value of service work and of the friendship of women in recovery. I seek God's will through prayer and am earnestly seeking to live the Twelfth Step: *"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives."*

A Way Out of the Shame and the Despair

by Mark N.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the May 1995 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper]

My story starts when I was ten years old. I had an incestuous relationship with my sister, who was eight. We did not have sexual intercourse, but there was much fondling and nudity involved. There was also some childish play as well; my sister later identified what happened between us as adolescent sexual exploration. My parents, however, identified it as my rape and ruination of my sister. I believe today that this was causal to my sexual addiction.

I always had obsessive thoughts about women, and about sex in general. I remember listening to high school locker room talk and believing that everyone felt as I did. The problem was that my thoughts and attitudes about sex never left the locker room arena. I also had great feelings of unworthiness regarding women and severe rejection issues with people in

general and with women in particular. I lived a life in constant sexual desire with no healthy outlet.

I did little dating in high school. I was obsessed with one classmate of mine, with whom I remained obsessed for over twenty years. One time she asked me to claim that I was the father of a child she had conceived on a one-night stand. I had not seen her for two years at the time, and realized that I couldn't see her any more. I had thought I was in love with her, but I had really only been obsessed with her. I always was most desirous of those women who said "no" to me. If I could only make them love me, then that would prove I was lovable.

I joined the Marines after high school. I didn't want to continue my education; besides, my grades were poor as I spent most of my class time fantasizing about the girls. I had also had some experiences with masturbation and improper touching of women in public, which caused me even more shame about my sexuality. I served four years in the Marines, having my first experiences with drugs, which I did not pursue, alcohol, which I did pursue, and prostitution, which I pursued on and off for years. Nevertheless, I did get married in 1973. My five-year marriage was a total disaster; I was cheating almost immediately. We divorced in 1978.

I became very depressed and began to drink heavily. I blamed my problems on others and took no responsibility for my acts. I especially blamed the women in my life for my not having a relationship. I believed that all women were in league against all men, and especially me.

I was involved with compulsive masturbation, anonymous sex with women in bars, prostitution, anonymous sex with men in rest areas, public parks, and adult bookstores; I was sexual with married women every time I had an opportunity. I was very ashamed of all of these activities. They fueled my addiction and gave me what I thought I wanted, but my world was a frightening and dangerous and shameful place for about twenty years. I could have died many times.

I joined AA in 1981 after my second DUI. I have been clean and sober in that fellowship since 1982. I know that the Steps work. I remember wishing that there were something like AA for people with "sex problems." I didn't know that there was such a thing as sexual addiction, or that I was a sex addict, but I knew I had a problem. For example, I would get in my car to take a drive. I would find myself on my way to a cruising area. I would argue with myself and head towards home. I would argue some more and turn around. I would arrive at a bookstore or a red-light area and act out. I would promise myself that this was the last time. Half an hour later I would be acting out all over again. I meant all my vows, but was totally powerless.

In September 1990 I visited my doctor. He had treated me for gonorrhea

and chlamydia more than once. I asked him for help with my sexual "problem." He referred me to a psychologist. On my one visit to him, I told him I couldn't leave the red light district alone and that I was afraid of AIDS. He told me he thought I was a candidate for SAA, a twelve-step group like AA, but for people who suffered from compulsive sexual behavior. I was thrilled!

I have tasted gun metal. I never thought that there was a way out of the shame and despair. I was ready. The psychologist gave me a phone number to call. I found out about the Fireside Group, a Sunday meeting in my hometown. September 15, 1990, was my first meeting.

I went to my first SAA meeting a lifelong woman-hater. I blamed all my failed relationships and sexual frustrations on women. I would sometimes be friendly in order to set up a woman for rejection and scorn. I was paying them back for all the pain they had caused me.

I opened the door to the meeting room and thought at first that I was alone. Then I noticed someone sitting very quietly in a corner of the room. A woman. I asked her if this was the Fireside Group and she said "yes." We waited about a quarter of an hour for other people to attend the meeting, but nobody came. So, I was first-stepped into SAA by a lone woman. This was the first great gift that I have received from SAA, and I have received more than my share. I started to stop being a woman-hater that day, and I am not a woman-hater any more.

I attended the 1991 SAA convention in Grand Rapids. I found myself avoiding any workshop dealing with incest, but finally attended one called "Healing the Family." I sat through it as though I only wanted to support the presenter. I didn't want to just walk out. But a seed of truth was planted in me, and I was finally able to talk to my sister about what had happened between us. I had never been able to face this issue before that convention. My sister and I were able to bury the family ghost. It took me thirty years to be rid of the shame involved.

I also had the pleasure there of hearing the first woman in SAA speak. I related to her as a fellow addict, without gender-based negativism. It was wonderful to feel free of that prejudice.

After one year in the program, I was able to develop a relationship with the lady who first-stepped me. Even though our relationship didn't last, I shall always be grateful to her because I was able to share on an intimate level for the first time in my life. We never acted out and were able to stay healthy. This was the first healthy sexuality I had ever experienced.

Letting Go of Ego

by James H.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the October/November 1997 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper]

I continue to struggle to feel a real sense of belonging in my SAA home group. I've been in sexual addiction recovery for eight years, in this program for five, and in my home group for four. Unfortunately, I feel less connected to members of this group than I feel to any other meeting I attend. I am writing this essay to get a better understanding of why this is so, and perhaps to find the wisdom to change or accept whatever I need to. There are perhaps three main reasons why I struggle to feel their love and acceptance. First, my ego and my desire for prestige and respect tend to dominate my view of the world. Second, I have a competitive win-lose attitude toward recovery. Finally, my group is composed mainly of young males with less than one year of sobriety. In the following paragraphs I will take a closer look at each of these reasons.

It is dangerous, if not uncommon, for a sex addict to have a large ego. The AA book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* states that "All of A.A.'s Twelve Steps ask us to go contrary to our natural desires . . . they all deflate our egos" (page 55). The AA Big Book, on page 62, says that our egos are fed by self-centered fear and selfishness. At first this was hard for me to understand. I've been a good member. I've been of service, involved in intergroup and literature. Isn't that what recovery is all about...service? Then I realized it isn't that being of service is a problem. It's just that I need to have the proper attitude toward service. I therefore decided to look toward Traditions One and Twelve for some guidance. Tradition One encourages us to put our group welfare ahead of our own because without the group we shall all almost certainly fail to recover. Tradition Twelve outlines the principle of anonymity that we are to be of humble service as "trusted servants" asking for no recognition so "that our great blessings may never spoil us" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 192). Studying and reflecting upon these traditions is helping me to improve my attitude toward my home group.

A selfish attitude is not the only by-product of my overgrown ego. My competitive attitude toward recovery also causes me to constantly view others' successes as my failure. I've been going to meetings and trying to work the program to the best of my ability for quite a while, but long-term abstinence continues to elude me. My ego continues to bristle when I hear others say how they have "worked the program" successfully. I feel like their success only punctuates my failure. Looking at the traditions, I can see that this is a losing attitude. We are in this thing together. We all suffer

from the same illness, and we all need God and each other to find a way out. If I keep reminding myself of this truth and praying for the sanity to believe it in my heart, a warm affection toward my home group may finally be allowed to bloom.

My last reason for having difficulty with my home group has to do with its makeup. Most of us are young, between the ages of twenty-one and forty. Being addicts, we are naturally self-centered and tend to want more recognition or prestige than is healthy. Being young men, we tend to be takers, not givers, doers, not nurturers. Maybe that's why I rarely am approached by another member to ask me how I've been, how is my job, my marriage, my daughter, etc. Sometimes I prefer the company of older men and women because they seem to be more willing to give me the attention and nurturing I crave. Here I must stop and ask myself the question: Okay, so maybe this is true, but can I change others, or should I be asking for the courage to change? Without even consulting my sponsor, I realize that the latter is probably the better answer. I therefore decide to look at the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

"Lord, grant that I may seek to comfort rather than to be comforted—to understand, than to be understood—to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 99).

This prayer directs me to stop worrying how I am neglected and unloved in the meeting and start trying to give to other members without expecting anything in return, not money, not recognition, not even a simple thanks. Surely this will lead me in a better direction than silent, lonely sulking. God bless the program of SAA for showing me the way.

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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

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May-Jun 2014	Mar 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 5 & 6, and “ <i>The Outer Circle</i> ”
Jul-Aug 2014	May 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 7 & 8, and “ <i>Meditation</i> ”
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