

The SCAnner

The SCA NEWSLETTER International Service Organization © 2001 SCA

VOLUME 11, Number 1 Winter 2001 \$1.00

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The Beginnings of SCA



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The SCAnner is YOUR Newsletter.

The SCAnner is published twice a year (in the summer and in the winter), by ISO, the International Service Organization of SCA. It is meant to serve as a forum for SCA members, who want to share their experience, strength and hope with other members, particularly those who may be isolated and can not reach a meeting easily or regularly. Your contributions and comments are greatly encouraged, and always sincerely invited. Please send your contributions to:

**The SCAnner c/o SCA NY PO Box 1585
Old Chelsea Station New York NY 10011**

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 Send to **SCA Subscriptions c/o SCA NY,
 PO Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY, 10011**

The SCAnner is published twice a year (Summer and Winter) by SCA ISO, PO Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station New York NY, 10011. Editor: David A-S, Proof Reader Scott B, Distribution Rob S. Printed by Advance Copy Center 552 La Guardia Place NY NY 10012, Tel (212) 388 1001. The opinions expressed here are of the individuals who gave them and do not necessarily reflect SCA as a whole. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of SCA ISO. Copyright 2000 SCA ISO.

Editor's Note

Welcome to another issue of the SCAnner. This is a very special issue of the SCAnner. It is the 10th Anniversary Issue, indeed the beginning of the 11th Year. The SCAnner began as a humble Intergroup newsletter for South California Intergroup but after the first issue was circulated at what became the very first ISO Conference at the end of February 1990, it immediately became the National Newsletter of SCA. And it's been non stop ever since. Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has been involved in the production of the SCAnner in the past ten years. Thank you most of all to all the contributors who have made the SCAnner the rich and rewarding SCA tool it is today!!

To celebrate the beginning of this very important tool of the SCA Program, this issue of the SCAnner, focuses exclusively on the Beginnings of SCA around the country and indeed around the world, making this truly the first International Edition of the SCAnner. I was able to reach many of the Founding Members of our Fellowship and spoke to them personally or communicated with them through one of the many means available to us now in the Information Age. Their stories about the founding of SCA in their city are presented here, for the first time. To set the whole thing in perspective we begin with Bill L's, Frank H's and H B's Story, then that is followed by recollections and reminiscences by Saul M, (NY), Marshall L (LA), Gary (S Orange County), Jimmy S (Montreal), Tom M (Chicago), George M (San Diego), Raymond K (Milwaukee), Jim M (St Louis), Bill E (Washington), Steve W (Phoenix), Miguel C (LA Spanish), John F (NY On-line), Paul C (Belgium), Brian B (SF), George U(Budapest), and Tra D (e-group NY).

Also included in this issue is a history of the SCAnner put forward by the thus far three editors of the SCAnner, Richard K, Joe F & David A-S. Frank T the current Chair of ISO shares his story with us in My Story. The whole issue is rounded off with an interview I did with Bill L and Frank H the founding members of SCA NY.

This was one of the most challenging and ambitious editions of the SCAnner I have yet put together. I hope that all the extra effort and heartache was worth it. It was certainly a worthwhile experience for me, and I am grateful to have spoke with so many of our Founding Members. Thank you to all of you. I hope you will enjoy this very special issue of the SCAnner.

You can also find the SCAnner on the Web at: <http://www.sca-recovery.org/scanner>
 Yours in Recovery,
 David A-S Editor

The Serenity Prayer
God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I can not change,
Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference

THE BEGINNINGS OF SCA NEW YORK

The Beginning of SCA have been documented before in the SCAnner, in the SCA Blue Book and on the SCA Website. For the sake of integrity I have decided to re-print Bill L's, Frank H's story here so that it can act as an official starting point for all the other beginnings of SCA across the country and around the world presented here after. Ed.

Bill L.'s Story

Looking back to September of 1977 when I went to my first AA meeting, little did I know that I was putting down one drug just to pick up another: compulsive sex. Actually most of my adult life from the age of nineteen had been devoted to the pursuit of sex, searching for sex, having sex, feeling ashamed afterwards but starting the whole cycle over and over again. I would also romanticize these events in the hope that one of them would develop into a relationship. Of course it never did. However, the pain, despair and shame did lead me to start to search for help. As soon as I started to go to AA meetings I stopped drinking and I remember how frightened I felt. 'Who are these people, can I trust them?' I thought. I found some sort of escape and solace in the darkness of the bathhouses. It makes me sad now to think that the darkness was what I felt I deserved. In all honesty I have to admit at first it was a way of discovering my sexuality and a big boost to my ego to discover that so many other men were interested in me. That didn't last long and soon I started to live with a lot of despair. Talking about this area of my life in AA was uncomfortable even though I did it anyway. I even remember talking to Frank H about what was going on. Little did I know that a few years later Frank H would reappear in my life, in such a profound way.

During this time I started a number of things. It seemed that even though I talked about my acting out to my sponsor and just about anyone else who would listen, I just couldn't stop acting out. I felt so out of control. Sometime during 1977, I started going to consciousness-raising groups. No one had heard about AIDS and the sexual revolution was in full bloom. For the next two years I was in three of these groups and they did help. I was able to start to feel better about myself and to accept myself as a gay male. Two other things happened at this time that I did not then realize how significant they would be in my recovery. I started to use my creativity again and stopped using amyl nitrate. Getting completely sober and honest with myself really woke me up. At that time I stopped bringing strangers home and/or going to their apartment. At first I managed to stop this behavior only for several weeks but then the periods grew longer. This was a difficult time because I was trying to control the disease.

In 1981, I went to my first DA meeting. Even though I thought I was making progress, I continued to act out and even started to go back to bathhouses on a regular basis. I remember one incident very vividly. I was lying on a bed in one of the little rooms and as I glanced at my outstretched arm I realized that there was no difference between me and a heroin addict waiting for his next hit. I closed the door, got down on my knees, and prayed for help. I certainly didn't have much hope, but the next evening I went to a DA meeting. I shared about my frustration, despair and helplessness about my not being able

to stop acting out sexually. A few months earlier I had brought the idea of starting a program of self help for sex addicts to my therapist. He told me that a program for sexual sobriety would never work because everyone needs sex. Fortunately, I stopped seeing him a week later.

John the founder of DA approached me after I had shared and just held me. He shared with me that it sounded to him like I was in a place like the one he was in when he started DA. My first thought was how could I start a program? But when Collin, Jim J, Thomas T, Nochem, and a few others said that they would support me. I did just that.

On a Sunday evening in 1981, the first meeting focusing on acting out sexually met in my apartment. I felt so scared and also so excited. What would this actually be about? Who would come? For the next few months the group met every Sunday at my apartment. In the beginning the people were mainly from DA: Collin, Saul M, Jim S, Thomas T and a few others, including women. We didn't have any structure and certainly we had no literature. At that time I had not read anything about sexual addiction. After a few months I received a letter from someone who had been in one of those consciousness-raising groups I had attended a few years earlier. He enclosed the names of three programs: SLAA in Boston, SA in Simi Valley, and another whose name I can't remember now. I wrote to all three and received information from SLAA and SA and presented the information to the group at the next meeting.

I was beginning to get some recovery and didn't act out nearly as much. Also I was beginning to have hope again. We liked what we read in the SA literature, even though we didn't like the tone of what was said about homosexuality. Some of the other people in the group felt the same. When the founder of SA, Roy K, met with us, we brought this to his attention and he said "No problem" and that it could be taken care of. We took a vote and became SA New York. I felt so good. I felt I was walking on air for I had hope again.

We continued to meet and in a few months new literature arrived. It directly put down homosexuality and personally I felt I had been betrayed. The more I learnt about the principles and the underlying beliefs of SA, the more I began to feel that SA came from a place of feeling guilt about one's sexuality. With all the work I had done on myself I was determined not to feel guilty about having sex. SA was based on the idea that you couldn't have sex unless you were in a committed relationship. It was based in the fundamentalist religion I had been taught as a child. I decided that this was not for me and that it would not be being true to myself. I said that I couldn't be part of SA and suggested that the meeting find another meeting place. They found a place at St Jean's on Lexington Avenue. The meetings had at this point been taking place in my pottery-filled apartment for six months. With no meetings to attend, needless to say, in a short time I was back to my old acting out behavior.

When the phone rang in May of 1982 I was surprised to hear Tom L at the other end. Even though I knew him from AA he had never called me before. He told me that he was interested in attending one of the meetings he heard were meeting in my apartment. I explained all that had happened and added that I was desperate for a meeting myself. I

arranged to meet Tom at an SA meeting. Somehow I had got the information wrong and when Tom and I arrived we found no SA meeting. I must say that I was relieved and at the same time felt that I needed a meeting. It was such a beautiful spring day that Tom L. and I decided to walk to Central Park and there talked for a few hours. I felt so uplifted. Later Tom L. came back to my apartment and I gave him the SA literature that I had. We decided that we would try to find a meeting place, since I wasn't comfortable using my apartment at that time.

A few weeks passed and on the morning after one of my binges I got down on my knees and prayed to God for help. That afternoon I was walking up Seventh Avenue and I heard a voice call to me from across the street. It was Tom L. I was overjoyed to see him and embraced him. He told me that Richard from AA was allowing a sexual recovery meeting to take place in his apartment. It had just started and the second meeting would take place next Monday. He asked me if I would speak. Would I ever!

I couldn't wait for Monday evening to arrive. Little did I know that I would see Frank H there. I remembered our talks a few years before in AA. It made me feel good inside. Saul was there and a few other people from OA. We met in Richard's apartment for six months before we started to meet in other people's apartments. We used the SA literature with parts I didn't like crossed out. I put everything I had, all my energies, into not acting out. While some of my behavior seemed to have stopped, I just couldn't seem to stop going to bathhouses. With just one meeting a week I started to call people up on the phone for help and support.

There were times when I felt I would die if I didn't have sex. What really helped was being able to go to my studio and work with clay. It was a very painful time for me, but having my creativity was a spiritual and healing outlet. A few of us kept showing up week after week to meetings. We began to get stronger. I don't know if at the time any one of us knew what was going on. In time we became Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. Frank H found a meeting place at Washington Square Community Church. It was a wonderful learning time for me. For the first time I started to try different approaches to deal with my sexual compulsion. I stopped cruising on the streets and soaking in those seductive images. I tried dating without the goal of ending up in bed. SCA helped me to stop viewing people (as well as myself) as sexual objects. I started to be not so seductive. My friendships with people changed for the better.

SA asked us not to use its name on our literature. Soon afterwards the first SCA Literature Committee was formed. The Literature Committee meetings were very unstructured, but we continued to meet. Richard, Bruce, Saul, Nochem, Bob M and I (I hope I haven't left anyone out) started writing out the Characteristics. Bob took notes on our discussions and formalized the first piece of SCA literature: The Characteristics. Even after sixteen years, when I read them I am still amazed at how true they are. I now know that God was guiding us during these Literature Committee meetings, as well as in starting Sexual Compulsives Anonymous.

Frank H's Story

After I'd been sober in Alcoholics Anonymous for a few years I began to be able to see the addictive nature of my sexual activity. I wanted to stop but I couldn't. I tried all combinations of sexual activities in the hope that one or another combination would "work," and that I'd be freed of the compulsion.

I talked to a couple of other AA members who shared my problem. One of these friends was Tom. We shared with one another our successes and failures. Once Tom suggested that I pray while going to and being in acting out places. This seemed to help me to accept myself as someone who couldn't stop running from one sexual episode to another. There was a part of myself that was good and virginal and another part that felt like a turd. Praying helped to let these two parts of myself come together a little bit.

About a year before the first meeting of our program, I had a sort of spiritual awakening in a bathhouse in Amsterdam. I wasn't getting what I wanted in the orgy room. But instead of going on to look for sex elsewhere, I was able, somehow, to go back to my hotel.

On returning to New York, with the support of Tom, AA and my therapist, I was able to stay on what we now call a sexual recovery plan. At this point I thought it would be great if we could have Twelve Step meetings to support recovery from the craving for sex. I tried to find a meeting place in churches, a meeting house and other institutions, but had no success. I finally became discouraged and stopped looking. In June 1982, my friend Tom called to say that Richard, another AA friend of ours, was interested in a sexual recovery meeting and that he was willing to donate his apartment for the meeting, at least for a start. On June 22, we had our first meeting. Tom, who was scheduled to speak, didn't appear at first. So I became the first speaker. I don't remember what I said, but I suppose I must have talked about my long history of going to tea-rooms, bathhouses, trucks and other acting out places. Then I must have said a little about my year of uncertain and shaky sobriety. Tom showed up somewhere during the qualification. There couldn't have been more than four or five people present at the meeting.

At the third or fourth meeting, Bill L. spoke. We'd known Bill since he first came into AA. I think it was at this meeting that I learned that Bill had started the first Sexaholics Anonymous group in New York, based on the principles established by Roy, the founder of SA on the West Coast. After meeting at Bill's apartment for several months, the group had moved to St. Jean's Church. Bill felt the SA literature was overtly anti-gay and decided he didn't want to participate anymore.

At that time, we also called ourselves Sexaholics Anonymous, not because we considered ourselves a part of that program, but simply from lack of imagination. We had already clearly differentiated ourselves from SA in our determination that each member would define his own recovery plan for himself. It was my feeling that each person came to the program with something that they wanted to change about their sexual behavior and that they would start their sexual recovery plan with that. In addition, the membership for at least the first six to eight months was exclusively gay men. The literature we had from

the original SA seemed very homophobic to us. We were out to create a program that would support the self-esteem of gay people, not put it into question. Almost from the beginning we had members from Al-Anon and from OA. Some of the early members included George, Saul and Bob McC. Not too long thereafter, Bob R., Robert N., Nochem and Barbara McC began to appear. Most of these members are still with us, though some no longer attend meetings.

In the fall of '82, there was to be an eclipse of the moon. A friend told me I shouldn't watch it on my roof because it would be too dangerous. I concluded that I would have to watch from the park where I'd acted out most consistently before I got sexually sober. The night of the eclipse was the beginning of a two-month slip for me. I just couldn't stop. I visited temples in Bangkok and prayed for sobriety; for the lifting of the compulsion. Then I went, powerless, directly to the octagonal tea-room right outside the temple.

When I returned to meetings in New York (still only one a week at that time), I feared they'd throw me out. Here I was, a founding member back "out there" again. But no. They said keep coming back. They understood. It still makes my eyes teary to remember that I was wanted; I belonged. With great difficulty, I got sober again. It was like swimming against the current, but the fellowship sustained me.

About this time, we started talking about getting a meeting place in a public space. We had stopped meeting in Richard's and the meeting moved from place to place, making it difficult for new members to find us. We met for a while at Bill L.'s, and for a while at the Gay Jewish Synagogue. I finally agreed to look for a space again. Bob O'C. suggested that another program met at the Washington Square Community Church in Greenwich Village, and that they might be willing to give us space. I called. I talked as best I could about who we were and what we were trying to do. None of us had a lot of sobriety at this point and I found it hard to talk about sexual compulsion. It felt very much like I, a sex maniac, was asking for a place in the church. I didn't see how I, or we, could be accepted. But we got the place and began to meet in a long, narrow room looking out onto West 3rd Street. I still feel so grateful to that church where we still meet on Monday nights.

It was also at the Washington Square Community Church that our first literature committee was formed, and put together the Characteristics which have become such a keynote for us.

We were approached by SA in California and asked to change our name, since we were infringing on their copyright by calling ourselves SA and being a different program. We had a long business meeting at which I maintained that I wanted to continue to call myself a sexaholic and to have the group called Sexaholics Anonymous. I liked the name and felt defiant. But group conscience ruled after much debate that we would be called Sexual Compulsives Anonymous.

The next landmark was when Paul F. decided that he was going to start another meeting. The new meeting was to be for gay men only with no smoking and no eating. Paul wanted a meeting where he would feel safe sharing, and a woman and a smoker had started coming to meetings. Neither the smoker nor the woman are still with us, but the meeting continues on. It is interesting to note that without any conscious decision, except at the beginning of that Tuesday meeting, all of our meetings have been non-smoking. Bob R., who like many of us was finding Sundays a difficult day, located a space for a meeting on Sunday evenings at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center on 13th Street in the Village. The Center was to accommodate most of our new meetings for several years.

SCA IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The beginnings of SCA in California has been previously printed in the SCA Blue book and is also available on the SCA Website. Ed

H.B.

In the Los Angeles, California, area in the late 1970s a small group of men, all of whom had been arrested for engaging in sexual behaviors in the parks and other public places, banded into a self-help group to support each other in trying to stop these actions which they could not stop by themselves. In 1979 Peter took over as leader of the group and the focus moved to confrontational reality therapy. This direct confrontational approach continued for several years. Slowly others began to hear about the group and the courts began to refer those arrested to attend meetings just like drinking offenders were sent to AA meetings. But more important was that a few individuals showed up with some Twelve Step experience and the tone of the meetings began to change. Michael M. came back from a visit to New York City where he attended SCA meetings. He brought back SCA literature, including the original version of the common characteristics. This became a strong cohesive agent, to know that there were others out there with the same problems, and that the Twelve Steps could be worked on sexual compulsion as well as on alcoholism and drug addiction. The seeds had been sown for the program to grow.

The original focus of SCA in LA was primarily on stopping illegal sexual behavior, and later also "unsafe" sexual activity. With the arrival of the Twelve Steps, the Characteristics, and the other SCA literature from New York, the focus broadened to address recovery from sexually compulsive behavior as described in The Characteristics. With this new focus and a non-threatening spiritual base, the group started putting new meetings together. As attendance grew, the first Saturday afternoon meeting moved from the little room at the back of the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center into the large upstairs meeting room. Also a Tuesday evening sharing meeting was formed, and a Friday evening round robin meeting was begun.

During this initial swell of new information and people, Peter encountered a major stumbling block; he could not deal with the Higher Power issue and chose to resign. This was a sad time, for his dedication had helped the group to stay together for many years.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the Twelve Steps and the new focus opened the group up to faster growth and a wider circle of people interested in getting sexual sobriety and recovery, rather than just those wanting to avoid arrest. In November 1985 the first Sunday evening meeting was started in Plummer Park by several members including Michael M. and Anthony. Also Joe, who had been working SCA in New York, moved out to LA and was able to share the experience of hope and recovery that he had gotten from the New York meetings.

About this time I tried getting sexually sober and just couldn't get any time together. My interim sponsor suggested I go to a meeting every night and talk. Well, even with going to all four SCA meetings and the one Saturday meeting of another sexual recovery program on the other side of town, I still had nights that I needed meetings. Therein began a daily search for rooms that would have our group, and for three people who would commit to supporting the new meeting for its first three months. A few outlying meetings had been tried but never lasted long enough to develop a true base of support. During this year the word really began to get out; people started coming, staying and getting some time together. Some of them went off to Orange County and Long Beach and started meetings there as well. It took another three years for Jim K. to get the first San Diego meeting going on a regular basis with the help of George M. As of this writing Southern California has had a very active Intergroup with lots of special workshops and retreats for the membership. It has also been of service in developing and coordinating literature, and contacting the courts and therapy community.



People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people may accuse you of selfish motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you may win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable.

Be honest and transparent anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People who really want help may attack you if you help them.

Help them anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you may get hurt.

Give the world your best anyway.

Mother Teresa.



The Beginnings of the SCAnner

The first issue of the SCAnner came out in February 1990, just in time for the first SCA ISO (International Service Office) Conference, where it was passed around and approved as the Official SCA National Newsletter. So far there have been three editors, Richard K, (1990-1994) Joe F (1994-1996) and David A-S (1997-). Here for the first time each editor details a brief history of the SCAnner under his editorship. Ed

Richard K, LA (Editor 1990-1993)

I was a member of the LA Intergroup in 1989. I had gotten a copy of the SLAA and the SAA newsletters. I took it along to the Intergroup and showed it around and asked why we couldn't also have a newsletter. Marshall L who was head of the Outreach Committee said "Why don't you do it?" I had a Commodore 64 computer and matrix printer at that time. I talked to several people and we decided that since the first ISO Conference to be held in LA was coming up in February of 1990, we should try to get the newsletter ready for that. I bounced the first edition of the newsletter at the ISO Conference and ISO agreed that it would be nice to have a newsletter and I was elected to do it.

When I moved to Atascadero (half way between LA and San Francisco) Doyle S in LA said that if I emailed the articles down to him he would format and put it together. It took a few abortive attempts to transfer from the Commodore to the PC, but we made it work eventually. Then another guy, a Scandinavian or German guy took over when Doyle couldn't do it any more. (All this happened within the first year). I send each story to him with a suggested layout and he put the whole thing together. This lasted for a few issues. At the end of 1993, I turned it over and Joe F in New York took it over at the beginning of 1994.

For a couple of years after that I continued to contribute a column called Food for Thought. From the feedback I got, the column was like a by-proxy sponsorship.

Joe F, NYC (Editor 1994-1996)

As editor of the SCAnner I continued to record of aspects of the program that were not duly recorded elsewhere (including intergroup reports, Inter-fellowship forums, ISO meeting reports, and conference reports). The Scanner is an important record of SCA history.

I also worked on updating the "look" of the Scanner by introducing professional layout and printing. When I started editing the Scanner, it was mainly a west coast affair, with the editor and production both originating in LA. The previous editor, Richard K., out of necessity performed many of the duties on his own. In those days, we would mail out a Scanner master for the various Intergroups to photocopy.

I wanted to make the Scanner more accessible and valuable, especially to people who didn't live in those places where there was a major SCA intergroup. I started up the idea of subscriptions to the Scanner, which allowed people/groups to subscribe if they wished and always have access to the Scanner even if they couldn't get to a meeting. Also, when the SCA website was first introduced, I made sure to have the Scanner posted, as well as a collection of My Story-s available on-line.

I also tried to centralize production of the Scanner. When I first took on the reins, production happened in LA, editorial in NYC, and then Chicago took on printing and distribution. I then found someone in NY to take on the production aspects, an outsider that we paid (one of those paid professionals they talk about in the traditions). This was the first time a non-program person was intimately involved in the process and due to the nature of the material in the Scanner (including things I wrote), I found it challenging to work with this outsider. It was a totally positive experience (he was a great, very open, and spiritual artist, from California...I guess we were fated to be desk-topped by California no matter what we did). Also, I enlisted David A-S, in New York, to help out with proofreading, and some editorial tasks, which facilitated things a lot as well. It also helped him prepare to be the next editor. I was conscious of keeping this a "we" process, and not a "me" process. Ultimately, the NY desktop guy proved to be too expensive, but it was something we tried out, and learned a lot in the process. Centering most of the process in NYC made the process so much easier. (Ultimately, ISO decided that production of the Scanner should take place in the same city as the editor.)

David A-S (1997-)

When I took over the editorship of the SCAnner the budget for the SCAnner had been cut from \$2,000 an issue to a mere \$250. It was quite a challenge to make the new plan work. The new plan was to do all the editing, production and distribution in the one city, (the city where the editor was) and it was to be all the responsibility of the editor. It also meant dispensing with professional or at least a professionally paid layout artist, and doing the artwork myself in Microsoft Word.

While I had worked with Joe on the SCAnner I had spend a lot of time chasing people around the country trying to get them to send us reports on the activities of the Intergroup in their city. It was unfortunately a very exhausting process that often did not yield the desired results. Up to this point the SCAnner had been mostly a newsletter for up-coming events or a reporting on events that had taken place at various Intergroups around the country. Since the SCAnner came out, at that time, quarterly the events advertised had often already taken place, and it seemed like the SCAnner was always out of date. In view of this, I decided that I would attempt to make the SCAnner more timeless by turning it into a literary journal where SCA literature could be produced.

So I changed the format of the SCAnner to a clasp booklet and began to stalk members at meetings till they promised that they would write an article for the SCAnner about a particular topic. And so issue on Meetings, The Steps, The Traditions, The Tools, The Characteristics were born. I went to great effort to ensure that I got people from across

the country to contribute but as usual the majority of the contributions came from NYC, simply because I could lean on my fellow New York SCA-ers more regularly and persistently.

It was quite a thrill to put these issues together, mostly because I was able to allow the diversity and breadth of our program to shine through the writings. I did not attempt to homogenize contributions but rather allowed the contributors to really share themselves as fully as they might at a meeting. It was particularly rewarding to produce the first piece of writing detailing The Characteristics, since The Characteristics are one of the defining aspects of SCA and since no expository writing about The Characteristics had been done before. Putting together this issue about the Beginnings of SCA, was also exciting since it allowed me to speak with or interact in some way with the Founding Members of many SCA meetings around the country.

From the very First SCAnner, February 9, 1990

On the Origins of the name SCAnner

Why the name SCAnner. Well, obviously SCA fits into it, which is handy. And Webster's give one definition of scanner as: "a device that....checks a process or condition and may initiate a desired corrective action". Change "device" to "program" andneed we get out the sledgehammer.

On the Origins of ISO (International Service Office)

President's Day Weekend, February 16-18, 1990, marks a milestone in SCA history, the first Southern California SCA National Convention, a weekend of meetings, spiritual gatherings, workshops and discussions on issues concerning recovery from sexual addiction.....and a dance and entertainment. All this will take place at the LA City College Students Center 855 N Vermont Avenue.

Three "official" delegates from the New York SCA Intergroup will join our three delegates making this conference truly a National Convention. The major items to be discussed by the delegates will be steps towards the establishment of an International SCA Organization, with unified "core" literature being the first major step. The three SC-SCA delegates named at the January 21 Intergroup meeting for a one-year commitment are: Hunt B, Maciek K, and Marshall L. New York will be represented by Frank H, co-founding member of SCA New York, Robert K and Bob M.

My story

In this issue My Story puts the spot light on a workhorse of the program, Frank T, from Chicago who is the current Chair of ISO. I hope you will find his story as riveting as I did. Ed

Frank T Chicago

Every once in awhile I need to look back and see where I have come from. By telling my story, not only do I realize that I have come far, but I also realize how cunning and baffling, the addiction is. By remembering how unmanageable my life was, it makes me work the program even more.

The day I began having sex with men was the day I became an addict. I started having sex when I was 15 and from that time until 7 years ago I wanted sex more than anything. My first encounter was with a neighborhood boy who everyone new was a "fag". Right after that encounter I quickly sought out 2 neighborhood boys for mutual sex. I needed the sex. At 16 I realized that something was happening at the local mall bathroom. I discovered cruising. In no time I was having sex with guys that I would meet in the bathroom. It did not matter what they looked like as long as I was sexually satisfied.

I learned very quickly where the other cruising places were in the mall, especially the ones where you could see into the next stall. I started lying to my folks about working late at a fast food place, so that I could go to the mall. Every spare moment I had was dedicated to having sex with as many different people as I could. When I graduated high school, I went away to college and that was heaven.

I now was in a city where I could be me. It took me less than an hour to find the cruising street. I knew I was meant to be gay since God had given me the gift of finding the place to pick up people. I entered into a relationship with someone and yet I had to cruise. My schoolwork began to suffer, but I blamed it on other people.

Then just before Halloween, I ended up being seduced by a young woman who was drunk. I could not believe the person I had become. The person, who I was dating, broke off the relationship because I was sleeping around. In the midst of the chaos of that year, I attempted suicide. I had to leave school, but again I blamed everything on other people.

Once back home, I began to cruise again and this time I was old enough to go to the bars. I discovered the wonderful life of the backrooms in the bars as well as the bathhouses. My appetite for sex grew and I thought it was normal. I believed that to be gay in the early 70's meant having sex and lots of it. I mean what else could gay mean other than wanting to have sex with a guy. I continued to cruise even though I was arrested in a parking lot for having sex with a guy. I was lucky in the sense that I was given a warning. The undercover cops told me that they did not want to see me there or at the

beach. The next week I told myself that I had to check out the beach. I found another place to cruise.

About a year later, sometime in the early part of 1973, I realized that the life I was living was not what I wanted. I truly hated my life and knew that I had to change. And so change I did, I decided that since I did not like being a slut, then I should be straight. I decided to go straight. Well that lasted about 6 months. I became so irritable, short tempered, a real "bitch". One day my sister asked what was up. I told her that I had gone straight and she laughed. She told me that I could not be something I wasn't. She was right, I was gay and I needed to full accept it. Well it was gay pride day in NY when I went to my closest friends and told them that their "sister" was back and with a vengeance. I also decided that if I was going to be gay, I was going all the way which meant having even more sex more often. I began to have multiple anonymous encounters every day. The more I had a day, the more I thought I was being gay. Again in spite of getting a ticket for loitering and seeing my friend arrested I continued to cruise.

A year later I met someone and entered into my first long relationship. He was a wonderful person and yet I thought him strange, since he did not want to have sex with me right away. He explained that he wanted to love me for who I was and not for what I did in bed. In spite of this relationship I continued to have sex with other guys. My boyfriend even new I was cheating and told me "I understand". I found that funny at the time since I did not understand. Again I knew that something was not right but I could not put my finger on it. I decided to end the relationship (which was the hardest thing I've ever had to do) and I entered the seminary. I thought that the answer was becoming a missionary priest.

Well I had to go back to college to study philosophy and I found a school that was at least 50% gay and no one being celibate. I figured well I would eventually get the hang of celibacy, but for now it was okay to have sex. The number of partners dropped considerably, from several in one day to several in a week but it did not stop completely. When I finished my philosophy studies it was time to take a year out in preparation of taking my vows. The year was meant to be one of prayer, contemplation and spirituality. Well for me it was also a year of continued sex.

At the end of the year, it was time for me to take my vows. When the ceremony was over, the priest who took my vows realized that I looked puzzled. He asked me what the problem was and I said that I was expecting a change; I thought that I would be different and I wasn't. Well I was off to graduate school to get my degree in theology and to a new city. I was hoping for a new beginning, but the old behaviors were still there. After my first year, I went away to the jungles of New Guinea for a pastoral year. Again I figured, that this would change things. Things did change for about 9 months. I ended up sleeping with a young man there and soon there were drawings of a man wearing glasses with his privates showing. I knew that it could not be me. How truly blind I was.

I returned back to the states and decided that I should tell my superiors that I was gay. I thought that if they knew I was gay, they would surly kick me out. I was wrong and three years later I was took my vows for life and was ordained a deacon. Again, I thought that the skies should have opened up when I took my vows. I was ordained a priest 7 months later and on the night of my ordination, I slept with someone. I told myself that it was okay, since I knew the person. I'd been having sex with this person on and off for six years, ever since he was a high school senior. The next day I celebrated my first mass and still I felt no change. I was still the same person as I was before. Nothing had changed.

I started classes at a local university for a master's degree in Chemistry. It took me less than a day to find the cruising places. I soon had to withdraw from graduate school before I was kicked out. I was off to the Philippines and a new start. The school I was to teach at was right in the middle of the "red light" district. On the one side there were female prostitutes, the other side there were drag queens looking for straight men and on the third side were male hustlers. I was glad that I was being sent away for six months of language school on another island. I figured if I could get the right start, things would be different.

While at language school, I was given a language buddy to help me when I was away from school. He was to be my translator and teacher when not at school. Well after being with him one day we were in bed together. I also ran across a birthday beach party one night. All the guys were gay and by the time the night was over, I had sex with all of them.

Back at the university, I began visiting a gay bar about 2 blocks from the school. The purpose of the gay bar was to watch dancers and then select one that you would have sex with. It was not a place to meet other gay men. I would go there to pay a dancer to have sex with. Also right near the gay bar was the pick up spot. At least 3 times a week I was out looking for and paying for sex. My life was so out of control that I truly believed that no one knew who was at the gay bar or on the cruising street, in spite of the fact that I celebrated mass three blocks away every Saturday and Sunday evening, and close to 2000 people attended mass. I truly believed that no one knew I was a priest. There were of course a few people who knew I was a priest, manly the college guys who worked at the church. They would need money on occasion and I would give it to them in exchange for sexual favors. My life was spinning more and more out of control.

I began to get involved with a renewal program among businessmen and women. I thought that maybe joining this group, the crazy behavior would stop. I was even "baptized in the spirit". The crazy behavior did stop, but only for 4 days. Things were getting worse. I picked up a hustler one night and 2 months later he demanded more money. I began to pay him off, but soon it was too much for me. Out of desperation I told my superior and we both sought out lawyers. While it might have been somewhat acceptable for a priest to hire a female prostitute, it was totally unacceptable for a priest to hire a male prostitute, and the hustler I had knew this. Both lawyers suggested that I leave the country for a period of time. I quickly packed everything but left the city thinking that I would return. I flew on to the capital city and had to wait there until the

appropriate papers where filed so that I could return. Again I could not control the crazy behavior and was soon cruising a local mall and acting out. About two days before I was scheduled to leave the lights came on.

I remembered a conference that I had attended 9 years earlier on sexual addiction and I also remembered word for word a questionnaire that I read in which at the time I answered no to every question. Now I was answering yes and it scared me. I arrived in San Francisco and went to my parent's home. I told them that I was sick and needed help. I called my superior in Chicago and told him that I needed to fly to Chicago right away and see him. He suggested that I take a week or two and just relax and have a vacation. I told him that a vacation was not what I needed. I told him I needed help and that I was an addict and could not stop. I was booked on the first flight to Chicago the next morning. When I arrived in Chicago I opened up completely. I now knew what the problem was. I was a sex addict. My superior told me that there was a treatment center in St. Louis that I could go to. I was also told that a priest from my religious community was scheduled to go to the center, but he could not get out of the Philippines. There was a ticket for me to St. Louis and a place at the treatment center. I flew to St. Louis and knew that I was on the right road. That was a week before Thanksgiving Day in 1992. A week later I attended my first SCA meeting and again I knew this was the place for me.

I wrote my bottom line in January of 1993 and have been true to it ever sense. When I left the treatment center in St. Louis I moved to Chicago and was blessed again for there was a growing SCA community in Chicago. After 2 years of aftercare, I chose to ask for a leave of absence from my religious community. I was able to make the request, because I had surrounded myself with a rainbow of support, a good sponsor, good friends in recovery, good friends outside of recovery and a loving religious community. A year later I had to make a very tough decision. Again being blessed with a nurturing support group, I decided to leave the priesthood permanently.

Since being in recovery, I have come to believe in the promises. The promises do indeed come true. My life is a testament to the promises. I have job, in which I love and am appreciated. I have a family that has for the most part accepted not only my being gay, but also has accepted the man I have been dating for almost a year now. I am in a loving relationship with a man, who loves me the way I am and who wants to make the relationship permanent. Of course now that I am in a relationship, my addiction has put on a new face. While my addiction took the form of anonymous sex in the beginning, it now has now taken on a new form in my relationship. I find myself being compulsive in my relationship. This disease, this addiction is indeed very cunning. As I stated, the promises do come true, but not without a price. I have had to work for my recovery. Doing the steps, reading literature, making calls, going to meetings, meditating and doing service has caused the promises to come true in my life. I've also had to stay away from people, places and things that were harmful to me. I've had to say goodbye to friends who would keep me in the addiction, bye to places that were slippery for me. But the goodbyes were worth it, for I have gained something very precious, my life.

The Beginnings of SCA

In an attempt to record the beginnings of SCA around the country and around the world, the following pages detail the beginning of SCA (in chronological order) in New York, Los Angeles, Orange County, Chicago, San Diego, Milwaukee, St Louis, Washington DC, Phoenix, LA Spanish, On-line, Belgium, San Francisco, Montreal, Budapest and e-group. Generally I was able to speak or communicate with the founding members in each of these cities. I either interviewed them or got them to write out a history of SCA in their city. Since I asked them all the same questions (When did SCA start? What were the first meetings like? Format? Size? Location? etc) I decided to remove the questions and present the text as a unified whole. For this reason there sometimes appear to be gaps in the text, but rest assured nothing is missing, it's just that the questions were removed. At the end of the interview I did ask the founding members if they had any recollections about the SCAnner when it first came out and since then. Not everyone had anything to contribute on this point. Where there were comments these have generally been added at the end of the transcript.

I hope these transcripts will act as a starting point for discussion, reminiscing and further research into the courage and faith of the founding members of SCA. Thank you each and everyone of you for continuing to come back and for being there when the rest of us arrived.

[To avoid repetition (in the case of NY and LA) I asked Saul M (NY) and Marshall L (LA) both founding or near-founding members in their city to give their impressions of the early meetings in New York and Los Angeles]. Ed.

New York Saul M (1981)

I remember that SCA started in 1981 in Bill L's apartment. He had gone to SA meetings, and he wasn't getting what he needed there, so he decided to start a meeting in his apartment, using their literature, which was homophobic. The meeting in Bill's apartment was very comfy. He had a small apartment. There were three or four people all in one room, his studio apartment that was full of pottery. I remember sitting on a piece of pottery at the very first meeting and I didn't know what it was. All I knew was that it was hard and I was sitting on it.

The first meetings were very interesting. We had a phone network, what we called a phone tree. We didn't know where we would meet from week to week. We had more than Bill's apartment, we had Tom and Richard's apartments too. So we'd call each other and say "Ok girls, where are we meeting tonight?" And the answer would be that we would meet at Tom's or Richard's. We didn't have a static space we had a fluid space.

It felt like we were the two daughter of Lot, surviving Sodom and Gomorrah. We were the first people out there. Would there ever be other survivors of sexual addiction? I felt

very blessed. I felt like I was one of the first to get a seat on the rowboat leaving the Titanic. I thought "Why me?". I felt very lucky. I belonged to other fellowships, which trained me very well. DA, which is a very disciplined fellowship, was in my life before SCA. That's where I met Bill, who was my sponsor. I was twelve stepped from one Fellowship into another. I was also in OA, which is also very disciplined with its Food Plan, and DA has a Spending Plan and an Action Plan. In SCA we have the Sexual Recovery plan, so it was like "Welcome home!". I joined seven more programs after that.

My DA sponsor noticed that I was spending money on hustlers, which is not good when you are trying to pay off your debts. I told him how I went to backrooms and bathhouses, and he understood, but he was not into hustlers. He could see the money I was spending and he said to me "Have I got a program for you!". I was a little upset and offended. I thought "Is this for me?". I'm out every night looking for men, all over the city, at the baths, piers, trucks, bathhouses and bookshops, and not getting any sleep, yet I asked "Is this for me?" I decided to give it a shot.

When I first went along I thought, "Well, therapy is not helping me", (my therapist tried to seduce me, by the way), "what else have I to go to deal with this kind of thing?" My therapist (who was very handsome and was once totally naked in his apartment when he knew I was coming to see him), told me that what I was doing was not good for me. I said "Really?" So then I described how I had sex with a man who had no legs and that I didn't know it. The therapist said that this wasn't a positive thing that I was doing. I told him: "This is a great insight you are giving me. And for this you are charging me \$80 an hour?" That's why I stayed in SCA, to show him that there was another way. Another route, where I didn't have to pay \$80 to be told that it wasn't a good thing to go out with men whose names I didn't know, or men who just got out of Attica and bring them back to my apartment. It only cost me a dollar to go to SCA.

Frank H used to tell us about the cutie pies and cutie dolls he had met, which meant someone as short as him and absolutely adorable. I always used to get hungry because of all the cutie pies. He used a lot of hand gestures too when he talked and was very dramatic. Bill L would talk about his mother and what he went through, and how Virginia, his sister, was so difficult, and how temptation is everywhere in New York. He was more a Katherine Hepburn, he even looked like Katherine Hepburn.

There's really no merit on my part in my still being in SCA. I'm a Taurus. My karma is loyalty and stick-to-it-ism. I'm the kind that will be playing God Save the Queen when the Titanic has its last bubble going out. I don't know if there is any great merit in that on my part. I've done that with all my programs. I have loyalty to organizations, like the Gay Temple, for example. I've gone there every Friday for the last 28 years. People who drop out for 10 years, and then still see me there when they come back, faint, because they don't expect someone going back 28 years, still there. And it was the same thing in SCA. I had nowhere else to go, that was my brilliance, my merit, I just realized. That was my merit, I had nowhere else to go.

The first few SCA meetings we were like war stories of how we couldn't stop acting out. No one had a day count. It was, I got home okay last night but then I acted out coming to the meeting. People would actually describe what they were going to do physically with someone after the meeting. Then someone with sobriety in another program would say "First Step!". The people from AA were like the Praetorian Guard, they would say "First Step, we don't do that!" But the rest of us in SCA were in a complete fog. There was no literature the literature had no coalesced. We were like one of those stars that had not coalesced. We were so amorphous. Meetings were from one apartment to another, the literature was homophobic and was all blacked out with a marker, new literature was being written day to day, so you get the picture, it was like the front line, very fluid and amorphous. Recovery was still possible because it was the Grace of God. These little steps we were taking was like reaching out for the grace of God which was always there. It wasn't that we had great merit, but rather we had the humility to know that there was no solution without God, Higher Power. That was the great insight we had and we were willing to stick around to see it happen. It wasn't just a gay men's disease which we all thought that it was back then.

We went from one meeting a week at the 4th Street Methodist Church that was big enough to hold us all to five a week, and then the Gay and Lesbian Center opened and there were 10 a week. It all started from sitting on one hard vase in Bill's apartment to now. We were in a little raft thinking, "if we don't stick together we will go under". Now we are in a big steamer.

There was competition too in the early days of SCA. Who would be the worst story of the night and who would be the funniest person at the meeting? I myself won many a golden bow in the latter category. There were one or two rivals but they don't come any more now. People still do that, but there is a lot more honesty in the rooms, there isn't that one-upmanship. Money was also a big issue. There was a point where we were desperate for funds. We had to pay the rent and if there are only ten people in the fellowship, where do you get the money from? Then there is the ones who have died. This is my own thought: if you are in a fellowship then you don't die, you are in protection. We lost a lot of people to Aids. They were the protégés of service. They weren't like those ones who do their nails in the back, you know, "I just want to share and get out of here! Call me so I can get out before the break!" No, it wasn't those kind. One was Ariel, he was a school teacher, he was just happy to be in the rooms, he died of Aids. Another was Bart who was involved in putting up the scenery at SCA shows.

God has a sense of humor. I used to act out on the bottom floor of a Hotel called the Asonia. One of our members had an apartment in the building, the Penthouse of the same Hotel. His whole apartment was covered in recovery statements. He was a famous ballet choreographer. He died of Aids. His name was Burton. He did the first SCA Show, called "SCA Lake". We still remember these guys and lots of others. They are not there anymore but they made a lot of real contributions. I wish we had a plaque for them for all they have done.

Los Angeles Marshall L (1981)

SCA began in LA in early 1980. I joined about six months after the original inception. A group of men who had this problem and couldn't find any other group, doctor or service to help them banded together to form a group. When I joined there were 8 - 12 men attending on a regular basis, once a week on the second floor of the old gay Center in Hollywood. There were a couple of members from AA and they directed us to a speaking followed by sharing type format. We sat around in a circle more or less to the configurations of the room. There was no recovery. If someone had more than a week of recovery we thought that they had got the word of God, (ie that God had spoken to them directly). We were just dumping on each other, talking about what we couldn't stop doing. We kept coming back because we had no where else to go. Also because we were all gay men we banded together because of the stigma of being gay.

When I got there I had been convicted and charged for having sex with someone under 18 years old. I was put on probation for 3 years, back then that was not a big deal. My probation officer who had an AA background suggested that I should go to an organization that had a terrible name, SCA. She suggested I go to a meeting to see if I connected with anybody there. I said that I would do so voluntarily. At my first meeting I sat cross legged. I heard some of my own thoughts spoken by complete strangers, and I felt at home. After my first meeting I went back and told my probation officer about my experiences. She told me to continue to show up. I didn't share for the first six months, but I kept going back.

We had no literature then. We used AA literature and substituted alcohol for sexual compulsion. I was elected to be the first Literature person. We saw the need for our own literature committee so we formed a group and I was on it. A group of us started to go through AA and OA Literature, to find literature that we could put together in a book. We were just about to go to press when we got a call from a pushy guy in NY, Frank H, who told us that they were doing it in NY and that we should stop. In typical California style the LA people said "Fuck off!". Frank didn't take to that kindly and there were phone calls back and forth. Finally we decided to get together for the first time to work on Literature, what was to become the Blue Book. Frank arrived with 2 other people from NY. We felt threatened so we got three people together, plus a moderator and someone to take copious notes. We had a meeting. They had their plan and we had our plan. We were both in about the same place, both ready to go to press. It was an auspicious occasion. It was the first time LA and NY had got together to anything in a joint effort. People had been to NY meeting and brought back stuff but there had been no official contact. This was the first time the Fellowship came together as one whole. At that meeting we decided that instead of an East Coast and a West Coast version, we would combine our strength and hope and put together one book.

The book did not come about easily all the same. It took some time. I remember a one hour conversation about a semi-colon. It was extremely hard work to put it together. We did 12-18 hour sessions to put it together.

Now we have many different meetings. We have more focused meetings. The first meetings were just speaker meetings. Now we have meetings that focus on dating, relationships, new-comers meetings, Spanish speaking meetings, 12 Step Study meetings, all those special focus meetings. We even have candle light meetings. A few of the original members still attend but most have just faded away and have gotten their own kind of recovery, they don't feel threatened by the issue any more and have moved on. We have had a great deal of death in the fellowship too. Some have also moved to other cities and started meeting there, George M for example moved to San Diego.

I remember the SCAnner. Richard K brought some newsletters from other fellowships to the Intergroup meeting and said we didn't have any inter-group communication. I said that was a great idea and said "Why don't you do it?" That was the beginning of the SCAnner. Richard K was the Barbara Walters of SCA.

Gary S Orange County (1984)

The Meetings in Orange County started around 1984-85. At that time there were only two meetings in all of Southern California. My therapist suggested that I should go to a meeting, and so I went to the meeting in LA. I was appalled at my first meeting. It was everything I feared it would be. Three months later I truly hit bottom - I went back and I found it supportive and caring, everything I needed. The meeting was 45 miles away and in a slippery area. There were only one or two meetings at the time, and I needed more. The secretary of the SCA meeting suggested I start a meeting in Orange County.

So I did a bit of outreach. Some people I had been "tricking" with. Some were priests and therapists. They agreed with me about having a meeting as long as it was a closed meeting by invitation only. We got together and started a closed meeting on Sunday nights in Laguna Beach. Some of the therapists from those first meetings went on to form practices specializing in sexual recovery. Shortly another meeting opened at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, on Thursdays. It attracted between 10-20 people from Long Beach as well as San Diego. The two meetings were now going strong. Then a third meeting for working the Steps opened up at the Garden Grove Center too. The three meetings hovered between 4-15 people each.

Eventually the Sunday night meeting moved from a private house to a church in Huntington Beach, and then it dwindled. Two meetings, the Tuesday and Thursday night meetings have lasted for the last 8 years.

Since there was a lot of therapists in the first meetings we did not use a format. We just shared about how our week was. We didn't talk much about Steps. There were some recovering Alcoholics who knew about the Steps, but no one talked about them or tried to use them for the first year. Then some new comers asked if we were supposed to practice the stuff we were reading about in the Four Fold? Aren't we supposed to share about doing the steps instead of just talking about having slips and how out of control we were and how insidious the disease was. After that many of the members tried to share

about the Slogans, and The Traditions, powerlessness, spirituality and journaling, and talking about the Steps on a regular basis. Now we have a number of resources. We get people from all sectors of the community. We have our own telephone line. We also have a lot of referrals from various courts, Lawyers and therapists. We are also part of Southern County Intergroup and we have a ISO representative, so that we can avail ourselves to new literature, and stay in touch with new meetings, retreats and conventions.

The make-up of the meetings is such that members will come till they feel a little better and then they move on. There are only a few people who have given back through service. After a few months many go back to society and re-integrate. As a result we don't have the long-term sobriety or support for new comers. It's not the way I run my program, it's an individual thing. Part of my commitment to recovery is to give back and to work my program. I don't go back to the depth of despair that I was in when I came into program by helping others and allowing others to help me.

I started a meeting in the early 80's and a lot my friends, including my sponsor have died. That was a hard thing to deal with. Going to meetings and the program helped me process all these losses. I feel, that the program is a blue print on how to cope with various things in life.

I have always been enthused about the SCAnner. It has represented the program so well, and talked about hope and recovery as well as what Intergroups are doing. We read from the SCAnner at the Tuesday night meeting, and then have an open discussion or even use it as a basis for a workshop. It's a great tool we have, full of invaluable information that can't be found in other books. The contents have come from the heart and mirror people's experiences.

Jimmy S Montreal (1986)

SCA began in Montreal, Canada on Oct. 22, 1986 in the home of Tom B with two other members: Jerry C and David M. Actually the three members had not yet defined the program as SCA, they only knew they all shared a common problem and were searching for a common solution. Their first meeting in the yet unnamed group lasted three hours, each of them grateful that at last they had others to identify with. During the next weeks David M found 'Out of the Shadows' and the process of defining the group started. Nov. 12th, 1986 the fourth member, Michael, joined; yet still the group remained unnamed. Still searching, Tom B called New York whereby the group was introduced to the SCA fellowship. May 87, Tom, Jerry and Michael went to their first N.Y. conference where they meet Frank H and Brian K. Afterwards the Montreal group becomes part of the SCA fellowship and the pamphlets with the Steps and Characteristics become the guiding force for the members.

In March of 87 the small group moved from Toms' home into St. Patrick's Church. There they stay, with a few newcomers drifting in and out, until Sept. 87 when they

moved to The Good Shepherds' Center. The next six months saw the original members drift away until only Tom B remained. For the following years, Tom remained the Montreal SCA contact, on occasion meeting out-of-towners for coffee, and if needed, directing them to an existing SLAA meeting. In spirit the message was carried until 1995 when, once again, the meeting restarted in Toms' home. For the next year it remained there with the format centering around the SCA literature which the original members had obtained from the New York conference. In the months that passed the group grew until a larger space was required. For awhile the group, around four to eight members, meets at a public indoor 'pic-nic' like place, until finally one of the members, Steve M., goes out to speak with the different parishes around downtown Montreal.

All groups have their highs and lows, and a good story must be told here: After speaking with several individuals in charge of public places, trying to secure a location for our meeting, Steve M., and Jim S., at last found what looked like a terrific place. But (of course) they wanted to know more about our program. When Steve was asked by the church secretary to describe our SCA program, he mentioned the Bill Clinton scandal of inappropriate sexual behavior: and then he loaned the secretary and the church authority the Blue meeting book (with 'The Characteristics' delineated). Afterwards, he returned shamed and frazzled. Speaking openly about the specifics of our addiction with those individuals outside the fellowship was extraordinarily embarrassing and painful. In spite of his awkwardness, the church agreed to have us meet there!

On October of 1996, ten years after the meeting of the first three, SCA found its new home at St. George's Church. Not only was the Church centrally located, but the group had a beautiful, private, meeting room. Over the next four years the group remained small, on average two to five members, and on rare occasions reaching ten or so. Steve M attended SCA meetings regularly in the early '90's, and kept us informed about the fellowship in New York, and has since gently encouraged the group to follow the SCA format. Today, though the core remains small, it shines with sobriety, one day at a time. Thank-you God, SCA, and those before us, for carrying the message of Hope and Recovery.

Chicago Tom M (1989)

SCA started in Chicago in March of 1989, as near as I can remember I believe it was the first Sunday of the month. The reason it started was because myself and the other two founding members Doug S. and John G, were all in ACOA meetings in the Newtown Alano Club in Chicago and as near as I can recall, John I believe talked about his sexual compulsive issues at one of our ACOA meetings. And then Doug and myself identified with those issues. At the time I was seeing a therapist and he felt that I did have sexual compulsive issues. John informed me that there were 12 step meetings for this issue, one of them was SCA which at that time existed in New York. He had contacted some SCA members in New York and had gotten the information to start a meeting. John approached me about starting a meeting in Chicago.

The first meeting started in my apartment and went on from March to June or July of 1989. We advertised at the Alano Club. Typically during that time we had about six members in my apt. It got a little uncomfortable continuing to have meetings there because we were getting new people we advertised in the gay Chicago magazine so people would come to find out where the meeting was and with all these new faces, we realized we needed to find a public place to hold our meetings. John was a choir director at a Unitarian church in a suburb outside of Chicago. So we decided to contact a Unitarian church near where I lived here in the city and John went before their board and made a formal request to rent space. Thus the first Sunday 7:30pm SCA meeting found its first and permanent home. It still meets today. Within the next couple of years other meetings sprung up. The first ones were founded at the Newtown Alano Club. There was a Monday 7:30pm meeting a Friday 7:15pm meeting and a Saturday 2:30pm that formed, I believe in that order.

We have been using the information we got from New York all along. The meetings themselves in Chicago vary a little in terms of time. Most of the meetings are 90 minutes a couple are an hour long. For instance, our Thursday meeting is a Step One, Two and Three meeting. We read from *Hope and Recovery* Step One, one week and then we rotate Two and Three. The Sunday meeting was a Step One through Twelve meeting. We still do Steps One through Twelve on successive weeks. Group members periodically throughout the year write down ideas for a discussion meeting. For instance, "keeping your sobriety", "the slogans, how they help you". We put those into an envelope and every other week we pull one out and that is our topic

We do have somewhat of a revolving door problem with our meetings. In other words, people will come around for a couple of months, or a couple of years and then we don't see them anymore. This is a difficult addiction to get a grasp on. What I've seen change is the faces. And that can be a bit of a problem because periodically throughout the eleven years we've had, we've needed the old timers and they haven't been there. For whatever reason, some have moved away, but a lot just don't come back anymore. One of the things that I think has been consistent and to everyone's credit is that we really do have a very active Intergroup here in Chicago. Each meeting has a representative to our Intergroup, and our Intergroup is very successful in putting on monthly socials. And we seem to have a commitment now every year to have some kind of workshop/convention in October where members can go to a variety of themed workshops that are scheduled over a weekend. And people find that very helpful to their recovery.

I think that people who stick with the program gain confidence. I see people come into the program, (myself included), who are very depressed. I mean, nobody enters our doors because life is going well. And if that is the case, it's a horrible form of denial that soon is broken. I've seen people become less depressed and then happy in their lives. I've seen people regain careers. I've seen people be able to be in relationships because of their involvement with the program. And form friendships. And I've seen people with horrible despair gradually turn that into hope. What's most powerful for me in meetings is when somebody begins the program, keeps going and is able to report back progress. And I not only hear the progress, but I see it in their face and I see it in their lives. And that shows me what the power of this program is all about.

Somebody might talk about being able to not act out, or somebody may talk about the fact that they've overcome the urge to act out on a Friday night as the result of going to a meeting and calling people and I hear about it on Monday night and I see a change in them. The previous Monday they were down cast. But because they took the initiative to begin to use the tools of the program there was a change and then lo and behold they were able to remember. Sometimes I think this disease is a disease of forgetting. I have to constantly remember our tools. I see people remembering what worked in the past and they continue to use it and I see a strength in them. I don't see the sad face I don't see the sad eyes. I see them gain time of sobriety that later is followed by them being able to make decisions for themselves in their personal lives, maybe change a career, end a relationship, or start one.

I have in the last year I have rediscovered the SCAnner. I have saved many copies back the last three or four years. And a few months ago I was grumbling that we as a fellowship didn't have much of our own literature. Then as I was going through a drawer I realized this stuff existed. How had I forgotten about it? And I've begun re-reading some of that information and I find it very powerful. In beginning years I wasn't too interested in the SCAnner. I don't think my addict wanted me to look at it. More recently I just see the value in the literature. It's a wonderful tool. I've heard literature called 'the meeting in our pocket'. And that's true. It truly is a meeting in a pocket. When I'm sometimes feeling triggered, or not in a great space, I may not be able to find someone on the phone, there may not be a meeting, but there is literature. I think the other value we have in the literature is that it's a great way for me to start my morning. So I have started to read the SCAnner just a little bit in the morning, just a couple paragraphs even, breaking an article into bits and reading it, I get more out of it.

San Diego George M (1989)

When I got to San Diego in 1989, there was just one meeting with only one or two people. As far as I can remember, people heard about it happening in LA and they got some information from there. In the first meetings people just talked about what was going on for them. We also read from the Steps and the Characteristics, but we had no formal format. Now we have sponsorship, people talking about steps and working the steps, and step study. We also have a Conference every year and we have an Intergroup. We have almost one meeting a day. SAA is also here and we have co-operated with them to put on our Conference. We have a variety of meetings. We have one that focuses on relationships, one for Steps and a First Step meeting. We also have step studies that are done outside meetings, where people study and work on the Steps.

I keep going to meetings because I really need to go. It keeps me from going "out there". It's also a reminder and a way of connecting, as well as a way of giving service.

The SCAnner was very valuable when it first came out because it got people united and got them to know what was going on across the country. Today it's become a little more sophisticated with more technology and stories. It's changed from that stand point, but

the message is still the same. Recovery. There are people out there that are struggling and winning, we are not alone. There is hope.

Milwaukee Raymond K (1992)

SCA meetings began on Milwaukee in 1992 but we are not certain of the exact date. There were other fellowships going on in Milwaukee prior to SCA. One member, Leonard S who was a member of SLAA had friends in Chicago. He had been to a meeting of SLAA at the Newtown AI-Anon Club a social recovery club for gay and lesbian recovering from addiction, and there was an SCA meeting going on there. Leonard had experienced some problems connecting with other gay and lesbian and had (as did I) a desire to connect with other gay and lesbians who were recovering from addiction.

When Leonard went to his first SCA meeting in Chicago he had thought that we needed this in Milwaukee. So he contacted the Board of the Galliano Club in Milwaukee, a gay and lesbian recovery club that housed 12 step meetings as well as a social recovery club. He wanted them to permit SCA to meet at the Galliano Club. The Board approved it and the first SCA meeting in Milwaukee began on a Sunday night in 1992. I couldn't go to a Sunday night meeting, so I started a Wednesday night meeting. We had a Wednesday at 8:00pm meeting for some time. Sometimes the Wednesday night meeting was sparse, in fact there were times when I was sitting there on my own. I would just sit and read from a daily meditation book, or an SCA pamphlet. At other times there were one or two people. The Sunday night meeting was a little more populated.

We created a format based on our experience of other 12 step fellowships. The meetings started to grow. Then I had to work on Wednesday nights so I asked the group if we could move the meeting to Thursday night and everyone agreed. The Wednesday night meeting closed and to date the Sunday night and Thursday night meeting continue. A Tuesday night meeting has been added. We had a Friday night meeting at a different site that flourished for a number of years, but eventually closed.

A number of years ago (1996) we hosted the Annual SCA ISO Conference. I helped with hosting that. It was a wonderful event and very meaningful for my recovery. Our hosting the ISO Conference helped to bring SCA validity to this city. Some of the other "S" fellowships had been here and there but the ISO Conference really helped to establish SCA in Milwaukee. We have a phone list and a toll free help line, we put a notice in the popular gay and lesbian Milwaukee periodicals and we do outreach to health professionals.

Our membership had never been exclusively homosexual, that's been consistent. The meeting format has predominantly stayed the same. The meetings are closed meetings. We have had groups, the Sunday night, the Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday night meetings have hosted open meetings or speaker meetings. We read literature, though not necessarily SCA literature. We use Hope and Recovery as a basic text. Our meetings focus on a Step or a Tradition or a topic suggested by a group member, or a story from

Hope and Recovery. We use these things as a basis for holding the meeting. We also use SCA publications like Secret Shame. It is a wonderful experience when you find another gay and lesbian who is in recovery, the hope that you see. The identification becomes meaningful. Thank God for SCA, and the gay and lesbian groups that have supported 12 Step groups. It has helped us with the denial we all go through.

We have 3 fellowships in Milwaukee SLAA, SAA and SCA, but no SA. I used to think that there was no way I could go to SAA but now I see that if that's where you need to be then and that's where your path leads you, then that's where you will be. I used to feel horrified at the idea of everyone having their own path. I just hope I can keep following mine and share it with others who are like-minded. The idea of a personal recovery plan, the idea of healthy sexuality is a perfect fit for me.

I remember the first issue of the SCAnner. It was a wonderful publication. I remember how valuable it was to learn more about SCA. It helped me to see that sexual recovery was a broader concern, not just something happening here in Milwaukee.

St Louis Jim M (1992)

SCA started in St Louis in 1992. A small group of gay men had been going to S recovery meetings since 1985. The only program we had in St Louis at the time was SA. A couple of us found the sobriety statement in that program a little too restrictive. We started to talk about this among ourselves, but we didn't know of any other program. So we started to explore other possibilities. We started a small SAA meeting that lasted from 1987 to 1990. There was a handful of people that would attend, a core of about 10 and a range of 5 to 12 some weeks. We had only one meeting a week.

We had a group conscience and decided to try another format and went to the SLAA meeting at the Alano Club in St Louis. We met there from January 1991 to February 1992. Around this time, one of our members Phillip B had taken a trip to NY. He heard about SCA. I originally pooh-poohed the idea of SCA. I said that we had already tried 3 programs, we didn't need another one. Within weeks of Phillip going to New York, another member Bob C, a friend of mine in Chicago had started drug and alcohol recovery. By total accident he went to an SCA meeting at the Alano Community Center and told me about it. I went to an SCA meeting myself and it was incredible. I knew I needed this program. I read the Four Fold, the 14 Characteristics, the Blue Book. It was a revelation. This is what I had been looking for over the last 7 years.

Then a Flier came from LA about the ISO Conference. I decided that I had to go to the ISO Conference to find out what this was all about. I called Brian K, from New York, who was the national Coordinator at that time, and asked if I could attend the ISO Conference, so I could find out more about SCA. He said "Yes, of course" I went and met all these incredible people. The ISO meeting was completely over my head. The main debate that year was whether SCA should remain exclusively gay. I was at that time totally opposed to integration, because I felt that we had struggled so hard to find our identity and we didn't belong anywhere. My attitude has changed now.

I got copies of all the SCA literature at the time and took it back to the SLAA meeting at the Alano Club in St Louis. When I read out the 14 Characteristics everyone was stunned into silence. We all agreed that this was where we wanted to go and within a month we changed our format and became an SCA meeting.

A core group of about 5 people had been meeting for seven years, but we had not been that organized. Almost within weeks of declaring ourselves as an SCA meeting God started to send people to us. The group doubled in size from five to ten people and within a year we had a core of 25 people. We started two other meetings and an Intergroup. We had representation at ISO. People traveled to other cities and got more information. Things just grew and grew. Today we have 10 meetings and a core group of about 60 people who attend meetings regularly. Well, over 50% of our membership is straight. I had always thought that we would stay gay but it hasn't turned out that way. We have also getting more black people attending our meetings in the last year. Some meetings have as much as 25% black membership. We don't however have much of a female presence.

The format of our meetings is such that we generally rotate the format. Once a month we will do a first step inventory meeting. We have a meeting that focuses on the first three steps, sponsorship, a speaker meeting steps study group and the Monday night meeting is for beginners. We generally bring up the Sexual Recovery Plan at every meeting.

I have always been concerned about the number of people that drop out. SCA is such a revolving door program. People leave program all the time, but this disease doesn't go away, and people do make their way back. The 12 Steps do work with this disease. Even people who leave for 2 or 3 years come back. The 5 guys who started up SCA in St Louis are all still in recovery.

We are so grateful for the leadership of SCA in New York. Whether you guys realize it or not you have touched so many lives for the better. Our meetings in St Louis shot 15 years ahead when we got our SCA infusion. We had been a recovery community but we had never known that we could celebrate being gay brothers in sexual recovery and that we could embrace our God given sexuality and be grateful for it. This was the gift of SCA. It allowed us to see our sexuality in a positive light and not the negative, abstaining way in which we had previously done. We love SCA today.

Washington DC Bill E (1994)

SCA began in Washington, DC, in January 1994. I had moved to DC from Los Angeles in September, and I had attended both SCA and SAA meetings in Los Angeles. When I arrived in DC, I started attending SLAA meetings and found that I was uncomfortable in several of them. The meetings focused primarily on relationship addiction, and I sensed a nervous energy in the room whenever anyone shared about sex addiction issues. In informal conversations with others, I realized that others felt the same way. Among the people I met were Robert K and Joe V, who had both been SCA members in New York

before moving to DC. In fact, Robert had been one of the individuals who had participated in the focus groups that led to the SCA publication, *Secret Shame*.

The three of us decided that we would be happier in our recoveries if SCA had a presence in DC. Robert agreed to start a meeting, and I found that the Du Pont Circle Club, a twelve-step meeting facility located next to Lambda Rising bookstore, had a space available on Thursday night, when Robert wanted to have the meeting. We met in the "Sun Room," which was a small solarium off the main meeting room. In fact, participants in our meeting had to pass through the main meeting room to get there. The room was hot in the summer and cold in the winter, but it was cozy and we could make do with the fans and the space heaters provided by the club.

Robert decided to propose that the format of the meeting should be "Topics in Recovery," after a meeting he attended in New York. I must admit to have cheated a bit in getting the meeting started, as I publicized it at SLAA meetings, saying that we were starting a meeting that focused on sex addiction. We also publicized the meeting in the *Washington Blade*, the local newspaper aimed at lesbians and gay men. We were also a bit nervous, as the meeting time conflicted directly with a well-attended SLAA meeting that was held at a nearby church.

Attendance at the meeting was helped by the nearly immediate participation from residents at a local sexual addiction treatment program for Catholic priests. To this day, the priests provide a steady attendance base for our meetings.

Joe began the second meeting, on Monday nights, also at the Du Pont Circle Club. Originally, the meeting was a step study group, but we had so many newcomers that soon Joe proposed that the meeting focus on Steps one through three. The meeting originally read from *Hope and Recovery*, followed by sharing. As time passed and the program matured, the meeting alternated reading with a speaker and then going back to studying all Twelve Steps. Both meetings eventually took over the main meeting space at the club.

I started the third meeting, on Sunday evenings at the Triangle Club, another 12-step meeting facility near Du Pont Circle. I proposed that the meeting focus on sharing, round-robin style, after my favorite SAA meeting in Los Angeles. This format has continued, though attendance has not been as strong as at the Monday and Thursday meetings. Part of the swings in attendance can be attributed to the fact that the priests from the treatment center do not attend meetings on Sundays.

Rod F, the current ISO electronic communications coordinator, began our fourth meeting, on Wednesday nights in Northern Virginia. Originally, the meeting was housed in a conference room at an AIDS treatment facility, but it eventually moved to a more convenient (and Metro-accessible) location at a church. Some of those who attended this meeting had also attended the Du Pont Circle meetings, and some came to this meeting because it was more convenient for them. Currently, many of the Wednesday night meeting members attend that meeting faithfully and other meetings rarely.

A few other experienced members who had attended SCA in other cities joined the groups or participated during sojourns in DC. These individuals were quite helpful in bringing more recovery to the meetings and in showing newer members that the program could work for them. We encouraged members to attend the New York conferences and retreats, and we eventually started an Intergroup.

A turning point came when the DC Intergroup agreed to host the ISO meeting in 1999. For many of our members it was the first time that there was any real sense of connection to SCA meetings outside of DC. Three ISO members from three different cities shared their stories at an open meeting and social, and several DC members sat in on ISO sessions. The result was a greater level of interest in the fellowship, and a greater commitment on the part of the core members of the DC SCA group. The intergroup started sponsoring well-attended workshops combined with socials, and there is talk of attempting a joint conference with the other S-fellowships in the area (SLAA and SA have a large number of meetings in all parts of the DC metropolitan area; SAA has a small number of meetings, in the Virginia suburbs). Our goal still is to have a meeting available each day of the week, but attempts to start a Saturday morning and a Tuesday evening meeting have proven to be unsuccessful. Many of our members also attend either SLAA or SA meetings, and one SLAA meeting, on Friday evenings, is primarily attended by SCA members. After six years, we have several members with multiple years of SCA sobriety, and we look forward to much more trudging on the Road to Happy Destiny.

Phoenix Steve B (1994)

After being in the program for almost two years in LA, my partner and I made a decision to move to Phoenix in March of 1994 after experiencing first-hand the Northridge earthquake. Even though my partner and I were looking forward to the out-of-California move, the fact that there were no SCA meetings in Phoenix made the move for me an even more challenging one. After two years in the program I knew that I would need the same support from recovering sex addicts in Phoenix that I had received in LA. At the time, my sponsor, Bill D, gave me some encouraging words. He stated that he felt that my move to Phoenix had a special purpose: to start an SCA meeting in Phoenix and ultimately give back to the program.

Shortly after arriving in Phoenix, I began to work on creating an SCA meeting. Of course, there were many of my old thoughts of low self-esteem playing in my mind, such as: "I'm too new to the program. I don't work the steps right. I'm not good enough. I don't know how to start a meeting. I don't know how to find others who may be interested in a meeting." Fortunately, I moved passed those negative thoughts and asked for God's help. I thought, "His will not mine be done." So, if a meeting was to be in Phoenix, then it would be. My first task was to find other recovering sex addicts in Phoenix. I took the Phoenix phone book and had a very difficult time locating any information on any local "S" programs. I thought I had hit it big when I found "The Recovery Room" listed. When I spoke to the man who answered at "The Recovery

Room” and explained what I was looking for, he laughed and said that I had called a bar. I could see that locating other recovering sex addicts was not going to be an easy task!

A few days later I was finally successful in locating a local city agency which had information on SAA meetings. I called the SAA meeting information line and found at the end of a very long meeting list that there was a Friday night gay meeting. I began to attend that meeting and was thrilled to find other recovering sex addicts. Unfortunately the format of this meeting was quite different than what I was used to in the LA SCA meetings. I knew that my “calling” was still to create an SCA meeting some day. Out of the SAA meeting on Friday night, I met Tony P, who had attended New York SCA meetings and Arlan E, who had attended Chicago SCA meetings. Suddenly there were others who longed for an SCA meeting as well.

In a little over two months after arriving in Phoenix, I, with the help of Arlan’s and Tony’s feedback, started the Wednesday night meeting. Through the help of SAA, I ended up choosing the Samaritan Behavioral Health Center in Scottsdale for the meeting location. I had attended one SAA meeting on a Monday night at the Center when I had first moved to Phoenix. I was impressed with the facility and its somewhat central location for the entire Phoenix metropolitan area. The first Phoenix SCA meeting was held on Wednesday, May 18, 1994. Since that first meeting, the Samaritan Behavioral Health Center has been the location of the two Phoenix meetings.

The Phoenix meeting took some format characteristics from the West coast, the East coast and the Midwest! I felt that it would be important that everyone who had been in SCA in various parts of the country would feel at home with this meeting. For example, from my experience, the West coast meetings tend to applaud after every short share. This is not common, from what was told to me, on the East coast. Likewise, the Friday night SAA meeting in Phoenix did not have much applause throughout the meeting. Therefore in Phoenix SCA there is applause after every reading and long share, but not after every short share. We simply say “Thank you, X”. On the other hand, the West coast crosses their arms when holding hands during the serenity prayer. When I was new to the program, I was told that this crossing of arms represented us loving and helping ourselves as well as others. This has always had special meaning to me, thus, we cross arms in Phoenix when reciting the serenity prayer. When we decided on the length of time a member would serve as an officer in a Phoenix SCA meeting, there was a compromise. I was familiar with three-month terms, Tony and Arlan were familiar with longer terms of service. We decided on four-month terms. Officers have been elected on the last meeting day in the months of January, May and September for quite a few years now.

At first, the attendance at the Wednesday night meeting was low. There were a few times when I was the only one attending and most of the time assuming the position of all the offices of the meeting. But, if there are any others who are starting a meeting in a new area, my advice is to hang in there. Although I joked that the first regular attendees in 1994 were Peter, Paul and (no, not Mary) but me, I cannot begin to tell how many lives which have been touched by the meetings here in Phoenix over the years.

The SAA Friday night gay meeting disbanded by December 1994. That event, coupled with an interview article in the local gay newspaper in 1995 about my life as a recovering sex addict (done anonymously of course!), spurred more interest and attendance in the meeting. Eventually a weekend meeting was started in 1996. This meeting had low attendance for some time. Those few that attended tried to help the attendance on the weekend by trying different days and times. It began on Saturday mornings and then moved to Sunday nights in hopes that the Sunday schedule would work for more people. Due to even less people attending on Sunday nights, the meeting eventually moved back to Saturday mornings in late 1996. In 1997, a step-study group was formed and met before the Saturday morning meeting. The members committed to attend the step-study group assured that the weekend meeting would be here to stay.

SCA literature, including The SCanner, has always been an instrumental part of the program in Phoenix. It reconfirms to us Phoenix members that we are not alone in recovery. The Scanner’s articles on the Steps and various members’ long shares have been especially uplifting to the group. It reminds me of one of my first copies of The Scanner. My first sponsor had his story written in The Scanner which gave me words of encouragement during my early days in the program.

After six years of existence in Phoenix this May, the SCA meetings in Phoenix are small but still alive and kicking. (I estimate that we average ten members at a Wednesday meeting and five members at a Saturday meeting. According to our current phone list, if everyone attended at the same time we could have 20 or more at one meeting.) Our fellowship has grown to include gays, bisexuals and straights. We have been fortunate enough in Phoenix to be able to budget in our Intergroup treasury participation in the annual ISO Intergroup meeting. In 1999, we sent Trip B to DC to attend and in 2000 we sent two members, Trip B and Steve W to attend in Chicago. It is hoped that we will host the 2002 SCA ISO Conference.

There are many members in Phoenix whose only insight into SCA is what they know SCA to be in Phoenix. I have personally seen these members grow in recovery over the years and it is truly a blessing. For those who no longer attend, I pray that they have found peace and recovery through some other means. In addition, Phoenix tends to be a transient town. (It’s a dry heat and your blood thins, but if you can’t stand the heat, you get out of the kitchen!) Over the years some members have moved to other parts of the country. Many have taken with them the thought that they, too, can have the program move with them. They know that all one needs is two sex addicts to start a meeting. God does work in mysterious ways.

LA Spanish Miguel C (1995)

Spanish meetings in LA have been going for about 5 years, since 1995 in LA. Originally the meetings started off as a bi-lingual gay meeting for middle class bi-lingual Spanish men who had been in the country for a while. There were about 5 people. They met for about two years in the gay district of LA. The meetings would start up and then die.

Then the meeting moved to the Hispanic working class neighborhood. As a result 99% of the members were court referrals and only spoke Spanish. It became the immigrant meeting. It's been like that for the last 5 years. The SCA message has not got out to the general Hispanic Community. The Courts supplies all or most of the members and 80% of them are straight, some are bi-sexual. Most members also do not have American citizenship.

Members do share and there is recovery in these meetings, but there is a great turn over and once they have finished serving their sentence they never come back. These meetings are very different from other Spanish meetings. Spanish meetings in other fellowship are generally quite rowdy. Speakers are heckled and there is lots of cross talk over and above speakers. In these meetings, we have adopted the SCA manner of sitting around a table and listening quietly while someone speaks.

ON-line meetings John F NY (1996)

The online SCA meetings began with the inauguration of the SCA Web site in 1996. This grew out of my personal interest and expertise in using the Internet and the desire of SCA's International Service Organization to spread the SCA message.

The first online meeting began in July 1996, and was a topic meeting, where the topic was changed once or twice a month. It was set up in the style of a bulletin board, where people could share what they liked over the course of the meeting. Because I had experience with face-to-face meetings, I was able to encourage the group to establish a Group Conscience that specifically discouraged crosstalk and the like. The online Topic Meeting has continued to attract a small but loyal following ever since, and it is archived on the Web site. Among the topics have been various Slogans, the Steps, and whatever the trusted servant or members have suggested from time to time.

About the same time we began a Feedback Meeting on the Web site. Just as in the "face to face" world, it is very difficult to have a Feedback Meeting that does not venture into crosstalk. However, the Feedback Meeting is far and away the most popular part of the Web site, getting hundreds (yes, hundreds) of postings a month. I estimate that this is the largest single meeting in the SCA fellowship, attracting as many as 300 regulars. It also has a written Group Conscience that has been changed from time to time to adapt to changing circumstances.

Both these meetings are available through the SCA Web site at <http://www.sca-recovery.org>

About two years ago, one of the online members, Ray from Washington DC, started "live" meetings on the Internet. Because I had had problems with Internet chat rooms, I was leery about these at first. However, these meetings continued to thrive, and I was encouraged to attend. Recently these meetings have expanded, so that there is a meeting

seven days a week at 9 p.m. New York time, in addition to four other meetings, for a total of 11 live meetings.

One live meeting, on the Steps, is held the last Friday of each month, and is the only one that I know of to explicitly rely on literature. We post excerpts from 12-Step literature on the Web site in preparation for that meeting, and people can share based on that or whatever moves them.

One of the things I have seen at many meetings is that they ebb and flow. Sometimes a lot of people show up; sometimes not many. Some old timers fade away for awhile, and sometimes they come back, and sometimes they don't. I am grateful that I continue to go to meetings, although I must admit that I tend now to go to the live online meetings rather than the face to face meetings. My experience has been that face to face is MUCH more effective, and I always encourage people in isolated locations to start new meetings. We now have SCA meetings in northern Michigan, central Europe, and many other far-flung places as a direct result of the Web site, and I am extremely grateful and privileged to have been a part of that. I am also now an online sponsor, and again I encourage my sponsees to consider getting a face to face sponsor, which I find much more effective.

I believe the Internet will be a major factor in the future growth of our fellowship, as it has already become, and I hope we are able to harness the advantages of the Internet while always being aware that it can promote the very isolation that is so much a part of sexual compulsion.

Belgium Paul C (1997)

SCA-Belgium started his first meeting at BAAL, near TREMELO / BRABANT at 6 april 1997. After getting some good advise from doctors, lawyers, priests, AA-friends and other good friends, I decided to give SCA a chance in Belgium. I started to look for a meeting-room, but this wasn't easy. Most people were afraid to give SCA this opportunity. After a contact with a priest at BAAL and an other local AA-member, we started at the home of the priest. Via the internet, a new member from Holland got in touch with me (Paul) just before our first meeting started. So, there were 4 men at our first meeting, Doulos, Jos, Paul and Stefan.

We had already had contact with SCA USA, so we became familiar with the meeting-formats, used in USA. Our first meeting was structured like it is formulated in the SCA Blue Book. We open our meetings with the SCA preamble. Then we each say our name and read one of the Characteristic. Then, the chairman, asks that everyone read one of the 20 questions from the SCA Fourfold, with a pause of 2-3 seconds between each question so that we have the time to get an answer to the question in our hearts. After this reading, the chairman, asks the members, when they will talk, not to tell exact places of our behavior, and to focus our minds on the feelings that each one of us, will communicate, instead of the difference of story. After this, the first person starts his talk

about the last week, or his history. Then the other members get the chance to tell their story.

Those who can read English, read from the SCA books and pamphlets, 20 questions, SCA Recovery, Masturbation, the Scanner, Secret Shame, and also the AA 12/12 and the books of Dr. Patrick Carnes. We have translated, the Pamphlet, 20 Questions and currently in draft is the SCA Blue Book. We hope to get the Recovery Book ready by end of this year.

Mostly, in the beginning people told their stories. Afterwards, the way of life of the past week, and after, we read a part of one step of the AA-book, and talk about it. Unfortunately, we haven't grow like we thought. Many of the newcomers, come for a few weeks or months and then don't come back. But, those who still come, are very recovered, and have had growth in spiritual sense. Today, in Antwerp there 3 to 6 members. In Brabant 3 and in West-Vlaanderen 2 to 3. So, in total we have 12 regular members.

There are meetings now in ANTWERP, each Monday; BAAL, BRABANT each Sunday, and in WEST-VLAANDEREN on demand by phone. We still have financial problems. This is, because we have a SCA-phone, 24 hour a day phone, and that costs. Also a Post Office box. We also have a very beautiful poster; The poster is something like the poster of AA, with a question, but really SCA minded with the telephone and PostOffice number. In Belgium we have setup an official fellowship by Lawn (I don't know the name in English. In our language it is called 'VZW Vereniging zonder Winstgevend doel'. There are three board-members, one external SCA and one SCA. Their names are Willy M, Stefan N and Paul C. Each year, we come together, and look after the financial side, the progress SCA made in Belgium, the opportunities at the press and tv.

In last 3 years, we have had anonymous interviews on television and in many newspapers. After these media interactions, new members are always the result. We have good contacts with hospitals for sexual addicts and also courts. We have had the opportunity to explain what SCA is and how it works to many Health Care Professionals. So, I hope you have now some insight in our Belgium SCA fellowship.

San Francisco Brian B (1997)

The first SCA group started in the early 90's, meeting in people's apartments; but it only lasted a few months before it folded. I started it with some folks from SLAA. (I had attended SCA in Los Angeles and I wanted to import SCA to San Francisco.) Unfortunately, we were not able to make a go of it at that time.

In 1997 Juan and Nicholas, who had moved up from LA, started up SCA again. They had gotten sober in SCA in Los Angeles and wanted to recreate their experience in San Francisco. This time it stuck. They started two meetings right off the bat, one on

Monday and one on Friday. We still have those meetings going on today, but in different locations. The meetings have been stable in these last three years. They tend to be small, about 10 people on average. The original format of the meetings was simply "getting current", but over the years we have incorporated different formats: Step studies, Tools, Characteristics, etc. Even though we only have two meetings, we have a variety of formats to cover many needs.

Maybe half of the people who attend SCA also go to other S programs in San Francisco, such as SLAA or SAA. People often ask me why the San Francisco SCA hasn't expanded like LA or NY. I think it has to do with the fact that SLAA got started in San Francisco first, as an accident of history. Someone had come back from Boston and started SLAA before any of the other programs arrived in San Francisco. When I started to get involved in sexual recovery in the late eighties, SLAA was the only program in town. There wasn't a need to start a new S program at that time. There may be more to it: nationally, SCA created a safe place for gay men, a place where they could talk about their experiences; but in San Francisco, a special, safe place wasn't really necessary, because there were always gay members of SLAA, and SLAA was gay oriented in San Francisco anyway. SCA didn't get a foothold: whenever a new meeting started, it was always another SLAA meeting. But now we have all four programs. SAA started three years ago, and that's taken off, and there is even an SA meeting now.

We are a very friendly, socially oriented group in San Francisco with a ritual going out for coffee after every meeting. That's one of the things people particularly like about SCA. People are also into the Sexual Recovery Plan, and the positive aspects of recovery. One reason people go to SCA instead of or in addition to other S programs is that there is an emphasis on incorporating sexuality positively into one's life, not just abstaining from negative behaviors. It appears to be working: even though we are a young group, we have a few people with long-term sobriety and that's very gratifying.

I don't remember the first SCAnner. We worked for a long time with the Blue Book. The first issue we got was the Winter 2000 edition that focused on the Tools. It was also the first time one of our members contributed a piece and we were really thrilled to get represented nationally!

Budapest George U (1999)

SCA ran in Budapest for one full year (from 1999 to 2000) only but in summer we almost stopped and now I think that the group practically stopped existing at least in the last weeks, but I go to other 12step meetings and to online meetings so it's okay for me. But maybe it's not a positive enough story although we might restart any time.

Well, but add please that if anybody coming from outside Budapest calls my home number or writes me via e-mail, we can set up a meeting even if the other members are now in probably suspension. (But last week there was a member, so it is not completely off yet.)

On line e-group Tra D N Y (1999)

The On-line e-group SCA Fellowship meeting began last summer, August 25, 1999, when fellow member Tom went to Florida. 15 people from the fellowship were emailing him to give him support. When he came back we decided to continue to email each other. We had a group conscious and decided to call ourselves a fellowship and align ourselves with SCA.

There are about 65 members right now. This number is made up of mostly of people who know each other and live in the local New York area, which makes it more intimate. The way it works, is this. A person will post what is going on for him/her and then others will respond to the postings. We are working on organizing a live chat set up at the moment.

We don't have any real topics as such people say what they want. If there is graphic language we put a warning in the subject line. Since we are not sitting in a room full of people staring at us, we can share much more deeply. We say things we wouldn't say in a meeting. When we are in a meeting room, nervousness can sometimes make us go off track and we end up not saying what we had intended. But when we write it's much easier to be focused and get out what we want to say. It's also great to be able to get feedback. The feedback constitutes people who relate to what someone has posted and then they share their experience about similar struggles. We got a lot of views on HP in one instance. It was great to see lots of different views on the Second Step.

There is no format as such, but we are focused on program stuff. Sometimes people will share about the struggle with staying sober on the computer. People will post something like: "I just spent three hours on a porn site and I finally made it here!" When they get to the e-group reading all the postings helps them to snap out of the addictive trance. Some people even put the SCA site as the first thing that comes up when they log on. It helps them not to go to the other sites. This meeting is really good for people who travel. They can really take the program with them, and it's more active then literature. Literature can be isolating. It's good even if you are not a traveler and can't get to that many meetings. I read postings every day. Sometime it's only one or two, sometimes 5 or 6. The idea is that no one is expected to read everything or respond to everything. You just deal with as much as you want to. I've shared some things that I thought I would be shunned for saying but I got lots of feedback about being honest.

There is a great potential for these meetings. At the moment, this meeting is just a local NY thing, although we do have some people from Canada on the list as well. These e-groups won't replace live meetings. The e-group meetings are great but you get much more form going to a live meeting. The e-groups are a new tool that enhances our experience of meetings and program. It doesn't replace any of it. If anyone wants to join this e-group, please write to nyctra@prodigy.com. You will be asked a few questions to ensure that you are a bona fide SCA member, but otherwise it is open to anyone who wants to participate.

The First SCA Conference in Washington DC Saturday October 21, 2000

Bill E. Chair, SCA-DC Intergroup

The Washington, DC, Intergroup held its first recovery conference October 21, 2000. The one-day event was held at the Friends Meeting House, near Dupont Circle, and attracted between 45 and 50 participants.

The day began with coffee and donuts, followed by an opening "doctor's opinion" session, featuring Dr. David Bissette, a local therapist who specializes in sexual compulsion. Dr. Bissette went through the research on sexual addiction and compulsion for more than an hour, while the audience listened raptly. Dr. Bissette's presentation was followed by a speaker meeting.

Rod F., from SCA, Ed, from SAA, Gordon, from SLAA, and Dan, from SA, each told their stories. After a break for lunch, we held two sets of two workshops. In the first time block, SAA presented a workshop on the three circles and how to use them to construct a recovery plan. SCA presented a workshop on writing a dating plan. In the second time block, SLAA presented a workshop on feelings, while SCA presented a workshop on spirituality, prayer, meditation, and working the 2nd and 11th steps.

The day ended with a closing circle, where those in attendance expressed their gratitude for various elements of the day. We were very pleased with the results of the conference, and we hope to make it an annual event.

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Interview with Bill L and Frank H on the Beginnings of SCA

After the February 2000 ISO Conference I managed to get both Frank H and Bill L, the co-founders of SCA, in one room long enough to do a short interview with them about their recollections of the beginnings of SCA in New York. I largely let them talk because everything they had to say was so interesting. Ed

Frank H: Several of us had been talking about sexual compulsiveness for years in AA. The first manifestation, if not SCA itself, of a sexual recovery program was what Bill did so maybe Bill should talk about the SA portion of the evolution of SCA in NY.

Bill L: I did some research. I looked into a number of the S programs, and they all started within a few years of each other. I really think it was consciousness and God's divine that really wanted this to be addressed. Frank and I used to talk about sexual compulsion when I was new in program 21 years ago. We used to talk about it, but we didn't formalize it then. It seems so simple now, "Why don't we start a program?"

My experience came out of the DA program, though I tried so many things. I was told I was inappropriate at AA meetings for speaking about sexual compulsion. I did three consciousness-raising groups. I did anything I could to get help with this. Finally I brought it up at a DA meeting and fortunately John the founder of DA came up to me and said "You sound at exactly the same point I was when I started DA. Why don't you start something?" My reaction was like to so many things: "I can't". But I received so much support at that DA meeting that I did.

I started a meeting on a Sunday night, June 21, 1982, at 7:00pm in my apartment. There were a number of people who came from DA and OA. I don't know how they heard about it. We met in my apartment for six months. Someone had heard about what I was doing and he send me a letter about three other S programs, SA in Simi Valley, SLAA in Boston and another program in Texas. I wrote them all a letter. Someone from Boston and Roy K from SA came to meet with some of us in a hotel. We liked SA's literature, but it had some homophobic words in it. I brought this up and Roy said that the literature would be changed. We continued meeting and continued using that literature. We received new literature and it was even more homophobic. I decided that I was not 12 years old again and that I did not want to feel guilt about sex, which is what the literature made me feel. We had established that we were an SA meeting, and so I said that we could no longer meet in my apartment. This comes up to how Frank and I got together.

Frank had a friend, Tom L, I get teary eyed when I think about it. Tom called me up. He said that he had heard that there was a meeting in my apartment. I told that there wasn't anymore, but I was so desperate that I said I would go to an SA meeting with him. I met him up town at St Jean's on 76th Street. Fortunately I got the day wrong and we missed the meeting. I remember we had a wonderful talk anyway in Central Park. It is so hard to find another sex addict but when you do it's like heaven. Afterwards we came back to

my apartment and I gave him the SA literature. He said he was going to call up Frank. A little later, I was walking up 7th Avenue and Tom called out my name. He told me that he had gotten together with Frank, Richard had offered his apartment and they had established one meeting. He asked if I would come to the next meeting and I said "Absolutely". It was Tom that brought Frank and I together.

Frank: I had been talking to people in AA about sexual addiction for a year prior to the actual beginnings of SCA. I had had what could be called a spiritual awakening in an orgy room in Amsterdam. When I came back to New York, I used a more tolerant AA group and therapy to keep myself on what we now call a sexual recovery plan.

I had been talking to Tom. Tom and I both shared a predilection for movie theatres and sexual activities in them. I remember Tom saying to me that maybe it was a good idea to pray while in those places. That seemed like a perverse idea but it turned out to be quite a useful tool for me. When Tom told me that he had found a place and that there would be a meeting on June 21, I was delighted and went. Tom was supposed to be the first speaker, but he didn't appear and I ended up speaking at the meeting. The meetings were small at first and were composed of AA, OA and Al-Anon people. Bits and pieces of all those programs went into the formation of the concepts that SCA came to represent.

We called ourselves SA, not in any sense aligning ourselves with SA in California, but simply because we were sex addicts. It seemed like a convenient name. We received a letter from Roy not too long after we had begun to say that we couldn't use the name "sex addicts" because it belonged to him. So we had a meeting to decide what to call ourselves and we decided to call ourselves Sexual Compulsives Anonymous. I remember that there were 18-20 people at that meeting.

Our meetings places varied quite a bit then. We started meeting at Richard's apartment, we met at the gay synagogue, and finally I was able to get the Methodist Church on West 4th Street to agree to have us on a regular basis. That was a hard thing to do at that time, to go there and say we are sex addicts and we want a space. But they were wonderful. We've had the same space ever since, although we have moved around in the church complex.

In the beginning we only had one meeting a week and we used the AA format. We had a speaker and then we had people sharing from the floor. That makes it sound like there were a lot of people, but it might have been only three or four people all together. The amazing thing was that we kept at it when we didn't know whether it would work in any sense whatsoever, since no one had any time on any plan at this time. I remember Robert N coming into the meeting and yelling and screaming "It won't work, fuck you all!"

Bill: And then he looked at me and asked me "Has it worked for you?" and I said "Well, I don't know if it's working but I keep coming back".

Frank: We believed it would work.

Bill: So many of us had tried so many things before this program. I think we were desperate and we wanted this to work. We bonded together, and the beautiful thing was that there was no ego involved, we were really there for one another. I remember, one day there was a man at my window and I thought that I had to invite him in. I called up Frank, and he said, "Can you take an afternoon off?" As flippant as I am I said, "I can take a week off, or a month or a year off, but I don't know how to take an afternoon off!" And Frank said, "This is what you are going to do. You are going to leave your apartment. You are not going to turn around. You are going to go to the Waverly Theatre and you are going to see a film, it doesn't matter what. And when you get out it will be time to go to the meeting". I did exactly as he said and that's the way we really help one another. I learned how to build on those experiences. I learned that I wouldn't die if I didn't have sex.

Frank: I'd like to say something about how the whole thing expanded. I went through a few years when I went to no meetings at all. And when I came back it was amazing to discover that 50% of the people at meetings were old timers. The first meeting that had a permanent location was the one at West 4th Street. One member had a few resentments. One was that smoking was permitted and that women had started to come and some third thing that he didn't like, that I can't now remember. So he went to the Gay and Lesbian Center and got a space and started a new meeting. That was the second meeting. As they day in AA, to start a meeting, all you need is a resentment and a coffee pot, and in this case he didn't even need a coffee pot. In the beginning the meetings were homogenous. They all had a speaker with either round robin or raised hands to share. In recent years there has been a lot more specialization, we now have a meeting on Intimacy, another that focuses on Phone, the Internet and Pornography, and we have a Fourth Step Workshop.

The meetings on the West Coast came out of a therapy group and the arrival of some people from SCA New York. Our first get together (later to become ISO), in February 1990, was for the purpose of ironing out differences in the Pre-amble. Six or seven of us spent two days on that paragraph attempting to come to a compromise so that we could have a Pre-amble common to both the East and West Coast, and that it the Pre-amble that we have today.

There are 5 or 6 sexual recovery programs now. I don't know the extent to which they need to be as separate as they are. We had our first Inter-Fellowship Forum in 1991. I am interested to see how the IFF continues to work together, to see how close the various programs can come. Without this closeness, we are not serving best the community out there. We are presenting a very divided front. Therapists, parole officers and individual sex addicts are presented with 5 programs. How are they suppose to select. One thing the IFF did was to get each program to provide a self identifying statement. It's an on going political process that I find fascinating.

(SCA is defined as the gay fellowship, SLAA as the women's fellowship, SAA as the perpetrator's fellowship, SA as the straight fellowship)

The Twelve Suggested Steps of SCA

1. We admitted we were powerless over sexual compulsion - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood God*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood God*, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sexually compulsive people and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of SCA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SCA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority - a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SCA membership is a desire to stop having compulsive sex.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or SCA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers.
6. An SCA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the SCA name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SCA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sexual Compulsives Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SCA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. SCA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SCA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

SCA INFORMATION LINES

For information on SCA meetings, or to list a new meeting, write to:

SCA International Service Organizations
PO Box 1585
Old Chelsea Station
New York NY 10113-0935

National Hot Line (800) 977-HEAL
In New York or International, call
(212) 606-3778

Web: <http://www.sca-recovery.org/>
E-mail: info@sca-recovery.org

SCA Information Lines
(recorded message and call-back)

New York	(212) 439-1123
Los Angeles	(310) 895-8659
Chicago	(312) 935-3573
Orange County CA	(714) 664-5105
San Diego CA	(619) 685-8540
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Washington, DC	(202) 736-3736
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