

The SCAnner

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Sponsorship Issue

Sponsorship by David A-S, NYC

Sponsorship is a tool of the program. By many people's reckoning, it is the most important tool of the program. It certainly has felt that way to me. As I work my way towards my tenth year in sexual recovery, I look at the several sponsors I've had as bridges who have helped me to cross certain canyons that have opened up before me along the way. Without their willingness to listen to me and validate me as a person, there is no way I would have been able to get across these canyons. I had never been able to do so before coming into program at least. My immediate response to these canyons (and they did seem to come up on my journey through life with alarming regularity!), was either to about face, or to jump to my death (metaphorically speaking). My sponsors showed me that often the canyons were imaginary and when they were real then there were certain steps I could take to get across. This is what my sponsors helped me to uncover and apply.

Reading the steps and trying to do them on my own worked, but it had its limitations and left me isolated. By talking to a sponsor, I found myself connected to the collective wisdom of the program, and I no longer felt alone or condemned to work it out on my own.

In the last few months I have interviewed a few people about their experiences with sponsorship. Paul M. speaks of his experiences as a sponsee, and Bob and Scott speak of their relationship as sponsor and sponsee.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Greetings, brothers and sisters in recovery! 1997 is over and 1998 is just beginning. Here in New York City, it's been the winter that never was! I've had a busy year in recovery, putting out *The SCAnner*, attending the ISO convention in February in L.A. (whose El Nino, we have to thank for this mild winter), the New York Conference in May (read David A-S' tongue-in-cheek report), and the Inter S-fellowship Forum held in Ann Arbor, Michigan this fall (read my report). I am now looking forward to the upcoming ISO convention that New York City is proudly hosting this year.

This is the Sponsorship Issue. "Sponsorship is a tool of the program", as they say, and this issue shows us sponsorship as seen from different angles. Paul M. speaks of his experiences as a sponsee and the difficulties of trusting and opening up to that one special recovery friend. We also have an interview between a sponsor, Bob, and a sponsee, Scott, conducted by David A-S. It's an in-depth look at the dynamics of the sponsorship relationship in action. And finally, in our regular feature, *Food for Thought*, Paul M. compares having a sponsor to having your very own Sherpa guide as you climb the Everest of your recovery. We also have a *My Story*, from Tra D., of NYC. Tra, as you may remember shared his *Higher Power Thoughts* with us a few issues ago. He now tells us of his long road from a Southern Baptist childhood to sex addiction and finally, recovery in NYC.

I would like to remind everyone to renew your subscription for 1998 if you haven't done so already. It only costs \$2.00 and you'll be sure to receive *The SCAnner*. Please fill out the subscription form in this issue and send it to: SCA, Pennsicola Place, P.O. Box 138455, Chicago, Illinois 60613.

If you are interested in submitting articles or information for *The SCAnner's* use, we invite you to do so by sending them to: *The SCAnner* c/o SCA P.O. Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station, New York, New York 10011.

I would like to add that this is probably my last issue editing *The SCAnner*. I took over from Richard K. of San Luis Obispo, CA in 1992, and have been editing ever since. *The SCAnner* has changed since those days. It's leaner and, I hope, more relevant to the fellowship. We need your support to keep this vital tool of the program going. It is one of the few places in our program where one can have access to so much information and recovery, that you might not find elsewhere. Keep buying *The SCAnner*, keep writing for *The SCAnner*, for it is your newsletter, and the way for those both in and out of the fellowship (who don't have access to the internet) to keep connected with the program. They say about the *AA Grapevine*, that it's your meeting away from meetings. Let's hope *The SCAnner* proves to be that for you. Thanks for five years of service.

Yours in recovery,

Joe F., Editor, NYC

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and wisdom
to know the difference.

5 & PIECES

BY
Joe F. NYC-SCA

Editor's Note: A reminder to Intergroup secretaries: I need your Intergroup meeting minutes if you want any information about your group to go in **The SCanner**. Please send them to me at: **The SCanner**, c/o S.C.A. New York, P.O. Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113-0935.

INTERGROUP MEETING TIMES

These are the usual scheduled times for intergroup meetings:

Atlanta.....last Sunday
Chicago.....first Sunday
Los Angeles... third Sunday (odd-number months)
New York.....third Sunday
St. Louis.....second Monday
San Diego.....last Sunday

CALENDAR

The SCA calendar is also available on-line at:
<http://www.scarecovery.org/calendar.html>.

Items are from various Intergroups and the International Service Organization. Please call the local Intergroup to see if plans have changed.

You may submit items for the SCA Calendar by email to info@scarecovery.org or by regular mail to: SCA P.O. Box 1585, Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10011

1998

Feb. 13-15.... West Coast Conference, Los Angeles
Feb. 21-22....International Service Organization meeting, New York
April 17-19.....East Coast Conference, New York
May 1998.....Atlanta retreat
May 19.....Chicago Intergroup fundraising dinner/auction/talent show
July 24-26.....Chicago retreat

LITERATURE

SCA literature distribution has now moved from L.A. to Milwaukee. The new address for literature requests is: SCA/ISO Literature, P.O. Box 1089, Milwaukee, WI 532011089

CALL FOR CORRESPONDENTS

ISO has established an email conference call system that includes members from many cities. If your city is not represented and you are willing to do service in "carrying the message" to people at meetings in your area, please e-mail to info@scarecovery.org and let us know.

Here are the cities currently represented: New York, Los Angeles, San Diego, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Washington.

WEB NEWS

For those with Internet Relay Chat, you might be interested in this new meeting which grew out of our web-based meeting.

Wednesday, 5pm (EDT),
irc server: us.undernet.org
channel: #scameeting.

There are now two ongoing meetings on the Web site, a Topic meeting, and a Feed-Back meeting. The User name is SCA, and the password is HEAL.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

SPECIAL EVENTS

In July, Chair of this committee submitted a proposed set of guidelines for Special Events. In July, Sara B. proposed that a Trips and Activities Committee be sanctioned by Intergroup, and after much discussion, the matter was tabled in September. December 6th, 1997 was the SCA Holiday party held at St. Bernard's Rectory. There was dinner, a show (a Wizard of Oz spoof), and dancing dj'd by the incomparable Michael C.

LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY CENTER

In 1998, the New York LGCC will be undergoing major renovations. Most of NYC meetings take place there and new accommodations will have to be found, even if temporarily.

ISO ELECTIONS

In June, Brian K. and Vito A. were elected as a full ISO representatives, with David N. elected as an alternate representative.

RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT

SCA's Public Service Announcement, prepared by Brian K., has been sent to radio stations in the NYC metro area. Brian K., looking for volunteers, noted in June that this is a time-consuming service, needing persistence and follow-up.

LITERATURE

Joshua B. Has agreed to be co-chair of the Literature Committee to handle Spanish translation issues on the local level. In June, a Spanish Four-Fold was distributed to the meetings as literature...NYC (David W. & Paul W.) has worked on a Beginner's Packet throughout the year, and now has a finished product to present at the next annual ISO meeting to held in NYC in February. Intergroup had some suggestions including listing literature; defining: acting out, counting days, open/closed meetings; and respecting a member's personal spiritual practices.

ISO COMMITTEE

As New York is hosting the Annual ISO Convention in February 20-22, 1998, a committee was formed coordinated by John F. John R. volunteered to be Housing Coordinator.

TRADITION 11

A workshop was held in March on Tradition 11 for the possibility of including gathered insights in the SCA Big Book. John F. & David W. are working on the commentary from this workshop. A copy of the commentary will be given to *The SCanner* and submitted to Intergroup for approval and then sent to ISO.

NYC SCA ARCHIVES

The saga continues. Sol M. has found a home in the East Village for the SCA archives.

WHAT IS INTERGROUP

David N. passed out a document called "What is Intergroup" drawn from archival Intergroup minutes. An ad hoc committee was formed to discuss and augment the description of Intergroup's and its officers, duties, and functions, and its role in relationship to the meetings.

RETREAT

August 8th-10th was the 18th semi-annual New York summer retreat held in at Holiday Hills in Pawling, New York, a short distance upstate from New York City. The theme of the retreat was

"Knowing Ourselves: The Journey to Freedom (Working Steps 4, 5, and 6)." January 30 to Feb. 1, 1998 was the winter retreat, held again in Pawling. The theme of that retreat was "Peace and Serenity in a New Year of Recovery (Steps 7, 8, and 9)." John W. has been coordinating the retreats.

CHICAGOLAND

RETREAT

Two retreats were planned for the upcoming year. The Winter/New Year's Retreat was held on 12/26/97-12/28/97. The Summer Retreat will be held from 7/24/98-7/26/98. Both retreats will be held in Plano, Illinois.

SPECIAL EVENTS

An SCA barbecue party was held at Frank T.'s new place on Sept. 20, 1997. The theme was "See You In September"... Bob C. volunteered to host the traditional Halloween Party October social event which was held on November 1, 1997. The theme was "A Spooky Gathering"... A dinner/art auction/talent show was suggested in September as a fundraiser for Chicago Intergroup with Bob C., Shelley K. and Terry C. coordinating. In January, it was decided that the fundraiser would be held at the 2nd Unitarian Church on Saturday May 9, 1998, consisting of a catered dinner, live entertainment, an art, services and goods auction and a 50/50 raffle... Tom M. hosted the November Thanksgiving social on November 29th, 1997

OUTREACH

Bob C. reported in September that approximately 100 outreach letters along with four-folds and meeting lists have been mailed. Terry C. and Bob C. would coordinate mailing the remainder of the letters... Craig M. & Shelly K. are working on SCA newcomer packet to distribute and sell at meetings as literature... Todd R. brought the SCA public service announcement to B96 FM radio station for airing Sundays 9-11 during the popular show "Private Lives"... The next SCA social scheduled will be a Valentine's potluck held on February 14 at Frank T.'s.

POLICE OUTREACH

In January, Jarvis distributed to Intergroup a pamphlet being developed by the Cook County Forest Preserve Police giving people alternatives to acting out. SCA is listed as one of the options. Jarvis has spoken to the openly gay officer coordinating the pamphlet and will arrange a meeting with him and those interested in a discussion about SCA and the efforts of the forest preserve police. In January, Jarvis invited Officer Dineen of the Forest Preserve to attend the March Intergroup meeting to discuss outreach work

THE SCANNER

The SCanner, though completed in July, was finally printed and mailed by Chicago in December. Chicago apologizes profusely for the delay.

LOS ANGELES

RETREAT

The 1998 L.A. SCA Convention was held February 13-15th at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (directly across the street from Mann's Chinese Theater). The theme was "Reclaiming Our Lives." The convention "demonstrates a simple path that the willing individual can take from an empty life ravaged by compulsion to a fulfilling life graced by the gift of recovery." Patrick Carnes, author of *Out of The Shadows*, was the opening speaker.

Interfellowship Forum 1997

A report by Joe F., SCA-NYC

THE 1997 INTERFELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan on November 8th, 1997. This is an annual conference held among the various sexual recovery programs (or "S" programs, for short) to learn about each other, and to see where we can come together and cooperate, and where we differ. The conference was hosted this year by Sex Addicts Anonymous ("SAA"). Mark N. of SAA/Grand Rapids, made the arrangements for the conference. There were two other SAA members in attendance, Mike R./Indianapolis and Barbara K./Lansing. Also present were two members of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous ("SCA") (Jim M./ ISO chair, St.Louis & Joe F./Scanner Editor, NYC), Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous ("SLAA") (Jacquie T.S.R./General Manager, SLAA, Boston and Gene B./Chicago), and Sexaholics Anonymous ("SA") (Gary W./ LA).

The town of Ann Arbor is a lively college town (Iggy Pop started here) and, fortunately for the conference, we had lovely clear autumn weather. The conference started with an informal dinner Friday night, with meetings all day Saturday and Sunday morning. On Saturday night, there was another informal fellowship dinner, and a presentation by SAA of its program, as well as outreach to prisons and adolescents.

The following is a brief summary of the discussions held during the conference:

OLD BUSINESS

First off, we elected Mark N. of SAA as this year's Interfellowship chairperson. We then reviewed the recommendations from last year's Interfellowship Forum. Specifically we reviewed what

each fellowship agreed, or did not agree, to do. The following is a summary of last year's recommendations.

1. *We suggest individual boards give our URL/Links on their web-site for other fellowships agreeing to do this.*
2. *We encourage each S fellowship service board to provide to all other S fellowship boards any or all of the following: international meeting directory; regional contact phone numbers; central office phone numbers; 800 numbers. Along with any restrictions on the use of the information with the goal of getting information to the still suffering addict.*
3. *We suggest each fellowship exchange directories of meeting information to each other's central offices.*
4. *We recommend that each fellowship be encouraged to provide a brief statement to be used by other fellowships in referral and information work.*
5. *We propose to continue the Interfellowship Forum annually.*
6. *We recommend each fellowship provide a self descriptive statement of their literature/merchandise to the other S fellowships, who, at their discretion may distribute this information.*

ITEM 1: All 4 fellowships approved that links to other sexual recovery web sites is a desirable thing. Each fellowship would provide their own disclaimer of links on their web-site. We have to be careful about the difference between providing information for the addict who is still suffering and endorsement of other programs.

ITEM 2: SCA and SAA approved providing contact information to other

fellowships. SA said no, but that anyone can call SA anonymously and get a directory with contact information. SLAA's board could not come to an agreement, because individual's telephone numbers are listed in their directory as contacts. On giving regional phone numbers, all S groups agreed except SA, with the same provision that anyone can call them anonymously and get that information.

ITEM 3: SCA is the only fellowship to approve exchanging meeting directories. Yet in the ensuing discussion, other fellowships pointed out that they did not wish to give out this information if their own meetings existed in said area. Once again, it was stated that it is a breach of confidentiality for one fellowship to give out personal information about a meeting in another fellowship. All fellowships then agreed that Item 3 be reworded as "When a fellowship receives a request for a meeting referral in an area where that fellowship has no presence, we suggest that the presence of other S fellowships be acknowledged."

ITEM 4: All fellowships agreed to provide a brief statement to describe their distinctive attributes to be used in referral work. It was agreed that the point of this was to dispel misinformation.

ITEM 5: All fellowships agreed to continue meeting on an annual basis, except SA which will decide in January.

ITEM 6: SAA, SA and SCA agreed to provide descriptions of other fellowships' literature when asked. SLAA did not agree. All fellowships expressed concern that we not sell other fellowships' literature. Each fellow-

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Sponsorship

PART I:

THE SPONSOR/SPONSEE RELATIONSHIP

THE SPONSOR/ SPONSEE RELATIONSHIP

An Interview with Bob (sponsor) and Scott (sponsee)/(NYC), by David A-S

David: You two are sponsor and sponsee. Why don't you each tell me a little about yourselves and then we can talk about your relationship.

Bob: I came into program September 2, 1990. I've been on my plan seven years. I've had several sponsors. The best sponsor I've had was Keith who became my sponsor the first week I came into program. I'm a sex addict. I did all the things that sex addicts do.

Scott: I came into program probably a couple of months after Bob. Actually my first meeting was much earlier because I suspected I was a sex addict, strongly. I was going to ACOA. I started going to SCA more full time in 1991. I had a very long bottoming out period. I had a couple of sponsors before Bob. For some reason, after five years, Bob helped me to get sober. Bob had also helped me earlier to find an apartment and a spiritual teacher. One day he heard me at a meeting and

asked me what was the matter and that was it. That's really my history in program. A lot of slipping and sliding and then I met Bob and just began to really work the program.

D: Sponsorship is a tool of the program. Have you found it useful in terms of your recovery.

SCOTT (sponsee): *"If there isn't a very basic fundamental connection, it doesn't work. This isn't about: you have a book here, you have a meeting here and you have step writing here... It has to be primal and very alive. It has to be at the level of nerves and guts. If you don't get there you don't really recover."*

B: It's essential. I think it's the most essential part of recovery. This program is based on the idea that we recover together and only recover together, which goes way, way back to the beginning of AA where Bob or Bill found that to stay sober they had to bring someone into their life and together help each other to stay sober. Reliance on another person, that's the root of sponsorship.

S: I agree. I have been sponsor and

sponsee. As a sponsee I've had a very rich relationship with Bob and as a sponsor I've had very rich relationships with both my sponsees. If there isn't a very basic fundamental connection, it doesn't work. This isn't about: you have a book here, you have a meeting here and you have step writing here, all of which are rather abstract, they don't really hit the living core of a person.

It has to be kind of primal and very alive. It has to be at the level of nerves and guts, and if you don't get there you don't really recover. You could be abstinent without a sponsor, I suppose, but a sponsor is somebody who you trust to take that knowledge to guide you and you put yourself into their hands.

B: I was surprised.

He was in program for 5 years and I had known him for several years. We didn't really have a strong relationship but I knew him. I heard him speak about slipping and I went up to him and said 'Why? What's going on? I thought you were sober. I thought you were together. What's going on that you're not doing it?' I didn't know he was suffering so much. I could see he was suffering. I was interested to know what he was missing from our program that wasn't

working for him because I know the program works.

D: How did you come together as sponsor and sponsee. Did Scott ask you to be his sponsor?

S: No. It was very funny. I was overburdened and he was working with me at the time. He was very helpful. I remember that before he became my sponsor I was under his tutorage and I had my only long term period of

sobriety. I would call him every day. He asked me to write down the most bothersome things about my acting out. So he said: Well, then, that should be your plan. Don't do these things. Which was okay and I talked with him more about it and it was just working. I'd call him every day and after a while I found that I was doing much more work with Bob. So it was a gradual fading in. I asked him if he would be my sponsor and how he felt about it. He felt trepidation about getting into a relationship with another person and I did too, so we did it very slowly.

D: Can you give me an example of how sponsorship helped you get through a difficult period.

S: The biggest example was when I lost my job. It was a job I was totally unsuited for, so I wasn't surprised to lose it. I began to do a lot of heavy gray area things, I was up all night. I was really on the brink of going off my plan. I called Bob and he said: "Why don't you come over

to my office?" So I went to his office and I sat around for a while. I was delirious. I was a lot unsure, unshaven. I hadn't slept all night.

Bob (sponsor): "To be a good sponsor I have to call on that part of me that is not the addict. When I'm talking to a sponsee I have to reach down there and bring it up and believe it. I always tell my sponsee that I need you as much as you need me to stay sober. When I want to act out, I always remember that I have sponsees, that I am a responsible person. "

We went out to the park and he just put it to me in a very basic way. He said: "You can stop now or you can do what you were going to do and come back to the very same spot." And he just stuck with me. I think that's the most important thing. He just stayed with me. He spent his whole lunch with me and told me to call him later on. It's this very concrete expression of love that is the greatest helper to anyone. He told me the truth and I knew he was telling me the truth. And more than anything else I also knew that he did love me and care for me.

B: To be a good sponsor I have to call on that part of me that is not the addict. It's a constant reminder to me that there is another part of me other than this destructive side. When I'm talking to a sponsee I have to reach down there and bring it up and believe it. Generally when I want to act out I completely forget about it and feel that I am

completely alone, lost and disconnected. As a sponsor, it's a privilege to have a sponsee and you have to reach down into that place. I always tell my sponsee that I need you as much as you need me to stay sober. When I want to act out, I always remember that I have sponsees, that I am a responsible person.

D: Do you work the steps together?

S: We don't work the steps formally, but every time

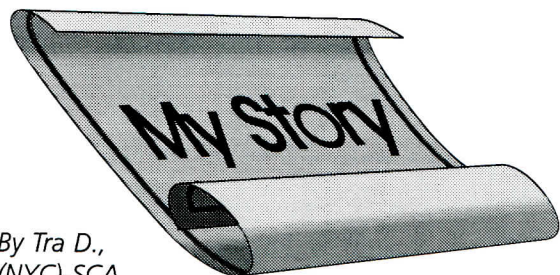
there's a barrier the steps are brought up.

B: Definitely based on the steps. Personally, between us we have a spiritual tradition of Buddhism. Other sponsees call me and tell me what happened and what they feel. I make suggestions and it's very important not to tell them, never ever what to do or what they should think. It's constantly tempting when a sponsee comes to me and says: "What should I do Bob?" I always have to say: "I don't know".

S: What Bob has done for me is exactly what I do for my sponsees in turn. Initially he helped me to figure out what was the most destructive thing that I was doing. After that we established a line that you just don't cross because you'll kill yourself. It's kind of leading you to see how things are made up. Cause when you are wanting to act out it's

(Cont'd on page 13)

Tra's Story



By Tra D.,
(NYC)-SCA

I don't want to focus too much on my childhood, but I do feel it is important to show how my addiction started and how it evolved over the course of my life.

My childhood was not a pleasant one. My home was filled with violence, fear, sexual abuse, emotional incest, physical torture, psychological abuse, and a total lack of any boundaries. I was a lonely child. I was beat-up, picked on and called names (like "Gay Tray") in school. I was, however, devoutly religious. I'm not sure where my faith in God came from. Nobody in my family ever talked about God, let alone attended any church services. As a young boy I tried various beliefs and found that

Southern Baptist seemed to be the right one. The battle inside of me over my religion started when I realized I was gay. The Baptist belief is very exact on this matter. I would constantly pray to God to have my homosexuality lifted and to help me. I felt very betrayed by God when my sexuality didn't change and because of all the suffering I was going through. I couldn't understand why all of this was happening to me. I had nobody to turn to and I felt that God no longer heard my prayers. At one time I thought my calling in life was to be a Baptist minister. But because of my

sexuality I felt it would be blasphemous to consider it, or to even stay in church. I decided at about fifteen to leave the church. I tried to keep God in my life, but the struggle over my sexual identity continued.

My sex addiction started when I was very young. Around ten years old, I would cruise the houses under construction in my neighborhood. I would often masturbate in front of the workers hoping to turn them on. As I got

older the cruising increased in length of time and intensity. At seventeen, I found the restrooms in a shopping mall about 80 miles from where I lived. I spent many days skipping school and hanging out at the mall. The car I used was my family's only means of transportation. I would drop my mother off at work and

room stall. I started crying. This was who I was, a toilet. But of course someone came in, we matched up, and all was forgotten, or at least I thought all was forgotten.

Just before I graduated high school I was introduced to the adult bookstores. At first, I found them intimidating. The people seemed so strange. But that didn't last long. After I graduated something happened. I felt free. I swore to myself that I would never again go through what I had in school. I soon found out that was a joke. I moved in with my father the night I graduated. All hell broke out. I was told where I would work, what school I would attend, and what classes I would take. I was not allowed to do anything but work or school. I was not allowed to make any friends or hang out after school. I was to come straight home and work on my dad's garage apartment so he could rent it out and make money. I was also supposed to pay him rent. I was informed of all of this the night I

graduated. I realized that night nothing was different, I wasn't free at all. I was so upset I went for a walk. As I walked down the road I just cried and cried. Then I shouted out to God "I will never care about another person as long as I live, and that includes you." I instantly grew numb. I didn't care about anyone, and felt no feelings of any kind. I thought how wonderful, no more pain. I didn't realize that it was an illu-

sion or the price that I would pay for that decision.

Within weeks I moved out on my own, and never went back. The illusion stayed with me. I didn't care about anyone or anything, including God. This is when my addiction started having a life of its own. At 19, I started acting out everyday. I would have sex with as many people as I could. No number was enough. I would periodically go out on dates. Occasionally I would end up dating someone. No relationship lasted more than a few weeks. I did live with someone for about 2 years. That was a

"I don't know how to explain how awful my life had become. Nothing mattered anymore except sex. And that didn't have the same power it once did. Sex wasn't sexual anymore. The best way I can describe it is it was like shaking someone's hand. There was no feeling in it, it was automatic—robot-like, and I did it with anyone who wanted it."

take off for the mall. The brakes were bad, and we had no insurance of any kind. I shudder to think of the consequences if I had been in an accident. We would have been stranded, and my mother would have no way to work and make money. God was very much looking out for me.

At the start of my senior year in high school, I had my first bottom. I was sitting in a bathroom stall waiting for my next conquest. All of a sudden I looked around me. It seemed like the walls of the stall were closing in on me. I realized that this was my entire life, a bath-

total nightmare. Neither one of us were faithful. Nor was I ever considered his boyfriend, only his roommate. We fought constantly. I would threaten to throw him out, or he would threaten to throw me out. I would threaten to move out, or he would threaten to move out. Then one day he said he was moving out and he did. I was destroyed, that is when I had my first real attempt at suicide. After this person (I don't really think of it as a relationship, I really don't know what to call it) I never even attempted to find someone again, although all I thought I wanted in life was a boyfriend. What I really wanted was to be loved. The next 6 years were filled with pure sex - anywhere and everywhere.

I left Houston and moved to Florida, trying to find a new life. I was 24 and miserable. When I first got to Florida I thought the plan had worked. I was a thousand miles from my family and what I considered my problem, and I felt free again. Florida is when I started doing the

things I thought I would never do. I started having sex outdoors in the open, and letting others watch. Then I started participating in group scenes. To say the least, it didn't take long to be miserable again--about a month after I moved there. After a year of this, I felt I needed to move again, even further away from my family and my misery. I left Florida and headed for New York.

Ah, New York! How could I be anything but happy here. It was so exciting. I couldn't believe the things around me. Things I had never even dreamt of, including sexual. I started acting out the day I got here. Actually I acted out the whole drive from Florida. I found the sex clubs, parks, baths, movie houses, bathrooms, subway platforms, subway cars. There was sex everywhere I looked, and I looked hard for it.

New York is where my addiction took complete control of my life. I left for work early each morning to act out before I got there. I acted out in the bathrooms at work. My lunch breaks were spent in adult bookstores. After work I went home, changed and head-

ed for the park until about midnight. I was averaging about 5 to 6 hours sleep a night. I knew I needed to find a solution to this dilemma. My solution was to take an apartment across the street from an acting-out place. I still live there today (which has made for some crazy nights in my recovery). My philosophy was simple, if I lived closer, it wouldn't take as long getting there, or getting home. The reality was I simply stayed out longer and still averaged about 5 to 6 hours of sleep. I don't know how to explain how awful my life had become. Nothing mattered anymore except sex. And that didn't have the same power it once did. Sex wasn't sexual anymore. The best way I can describe it is it was like shaking someone's hand. There was

for three days. Now for me to go on a binge at that time of my life is difficult to explain. For three days I acted out, I don't think I came home at all. I had sex with somewhere around 100 people in three days, although the exact number is impossible to say. On the third day, I was in an adult bookstore. There was nobody there but me and the guy at the register. I had been persistently trying to get him to have sex with me, but he wasn't interested. So I decided to talk to him until someone came in. As we talked about his job, his school, and his boyfriend, I was masturbating. Then it happened. I realize today it was my first spiritual awakening. All of a sudden I saw myself sitting there. I saw myself masturbating while

having this perfectly normal conversation. We were not talking about sex at all. I saw myself, literally, it was like an out of body experience. I also saw how pathetic I was, how lonely, desperate and afraid. I had had enough. I just couldn't go on like this anymore

- something had to give. I had been hanging on to the end of my rope for years, and on that day I let go. That's when God reached out and grabbed my hand.

I had been suicidal most of my life. I had made several half-hearted attempts at it, but the fear of the Baptist belief of burning in hell for committing suicide had been too great. The suicide thoughts were never for attention. I realize today, I simply wanted out. I wanted out of my life, out of my pain and suffering. I didn't want to be here anymore. On December 28, 1995, the fear was gone. I felt that hell couldn't be any worse than where I was today so why be afraid of it. My mind was made up. I pulled up my pants, zipped my fly and headed home. I was ready to leave this world behind once and for all. I actually was somewhat relieved that it would all be over soon. On my way home I had an overpowering urge to be with people. I keep telling myself that since this was my last day on earth, I didn't want to spend it alone. I wandered around aimlessly for a while and

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"I had had enough. I just couldn't go on like this anymore - something had to give. I had been hanging on to the end of my rope for years, and on that day I let go. That's when God reached out and grabbed my hand."

no feeling in it, it was automatic - robot-like, and I did it with anyone who wanted it. I had long since lost the ability to find anyone attractive or unattractive. I simply had sex with anyone who was willing regardless of age, race, or physical appearance. It just simply didn't matter, and I felt I simply did matter. I didn't even feel like I was part of the human race.

On Christmas Day 1995, my 27th birthday, I was sitting alone in my living room. Once again it was Christmas and once again there were no cards, no phone calls, no letters, no nothing, from my family. I had nothing in my life. I had one friend that I had tried to get rid of. I didn't want anyone around me, including her. I thank God today she stayed. She has helped me in my recovery as much, if not more than any one person has. She stood by me, when nobody else on this planet did. Today I love her dearly and am very grateful for her friendship. I thought I had grown used to being forgotten by my family. It was nothing new. But this year it was too much to bear. I went on a sex binge

Food For Thought

SPONSORSHIP: A BEGINNER'S EYE VIEW

by Paul M., NYC

I am prefacing this to all those who are new to our program and have not the faintest idea of what the hell a sponsor is or does, and why he should go to all the loathsome trouble to get one. Imagine, if you will, that recovery is like deciding to climb Mount Everest. Standing at base camp, wearing your fierce, black Armani ski parka and a smashing pair of mirrored black Oakley wrap-around mirrored sunglasses, you stare up at the glistening, snow-covered summit that is your goal. You brace yourself for the physical and emotional journey you are about to undertake. You look great and you think you are ready. But what kind of dangers will you face? Doesn't it

make perfect sense that climbing a really big mountain alone would be rather foolhardy? It would be so comforting to know that you had at your side, at all times, a trusted Sherpa guide. Someone who has been on the mountain a much longer time, knows the terrain, and can keep your cute little tushie on the road to the Summit rather than falling into that crevasse. OK, so he has no teeth and smells like a yak.

You don't have to be pretty to know your way up the mountain.

We are all pretty much terrified and lost when we first come to program. Many of us had just recently managed to pull ourselves from whatever bottom we had reached, desperate to end the suffering and pain that our acting out had brought us. We were at the foot of our Everest. When I first came in it took me a good six months to get the

Doesn't it make perfect sense that climbing a really big mountain alone would be rather foolhardy? It would be so comforting to know that you had at your side, at all times, a trusted Sherpa guide

nerve to simply say "Hello" to another person, let alone to find a sponsor. Everybody seemed so far advanced from where I was. They spoke a language I didn't understand and had customs that were as foreign to me as the religions of the Amazon rainforest. I spent my first six months scared, that I would be told what a disgusting miscreant I really was. I assumed that if I opened my mouth I would surely

be shown the door, in no uncertain terms. Perhaps if I had not been so terrified to ask for help, my early recovery could have been just that much easier.

It is so important to have a sponsor in early recovery. There are so many new things to learn. The 12 Steps and Traditions, the bedrock on which our program is built, are just the beginning. There are the slogans, which at times can seem trite, but are always the quickest access to the serenity that keeps us sober. There is an array of meetings that address specific issues that may pertain to your own recovery. Your very own Sherpa can show you the way through these things.

Your introduction to SCA is only the initial purpose of sponsorship. The responsibility of maintaining the sponsor/sponsee relationship lies with the sponsee. "Why is that?", you might ask. Well first of all, it breaks the isolation that we all struggle with. When those emotional blizzards set in,

and the going gets cold and painful, we all want to hide in our tents and wait the storm out. When we reach out to our sponsor, we break the debilitating isolation and connect not only to our sponsor, but to a power greater than ourselves.

Our relationship with our sponsors is only effective when we practice rigorous honesty. When you honestly share with your sponsor what

is going on with you, especially when it concerns a slip, you can begin to let go of shame. Most interestingly, when you work with your sponsor diligently, it is not only you that benefits. Your sponsor's program is enhanced as well. The relationship becomes a true symbiosis, as you share your problems openly and honestly. Your sponsor not only advises, but shares with you his experience, strength and hope, without judgment or ridicule. Together you both grow. While you are learning your basics, your sponsor is constantly being reminded of aspects of his program he needs to tend to. When this relationship works well, there is a feeling of intimacy that we have not often known previously. As with any relationship this is work. Issues are bound to come up and this is a perfect opportunity to work out our interpersonal issues in an upfront healthy manner that can lead to even greater intimacy. Now there is a concept.

Step back on that shiny, slick glacier as you climb your way up that mountain and take a good look. Your relationship with your sponsor is a metaphor for all the other relationships you have. When we become honest and express our needs and frustrations in a healthy manner inside of the sponsor/sponsee relationship we begin to get a clearer picture of how to deal constructively with all our other affairs. Sometimes it does become necessary, for various reasons, to end a relationship with a sponsor. There may be an issue that simply can not be worked out. Perhaps you have grown

to the point where your sponsor can no longer meet your needs. Perhaps there has been a breach of boundaries (like white shoes after Labor Day), and you simply need to end the relationship. Whatever the problem, knowing when to end a relationship that has become unhealthy and doing so in an appropriate way is another gift which will carry over into your life outside of program.

There is a certain number of people in program that manage their program without the benefit of a sponsor. It is indeed a personal choice. If you decide to go it alone and let God be your copilot, then so be it. But ask yourself a few questions. Am I afraid that the person I ask will reject me by saying no? Do I not want someone breathing down my neck and ruining my acting out? Am I ready to totally surrender myself to program? Am I capable of the honesty it takes to maintain a sponsor relationship. A sponsor relationship can indeed be a powerful matrix from which we can have an opportunity to work out some of our most ingrained behaviors, and a life changing model of interpersonal relationships can spring.

SCA works best when you work all the tools the program can offer. Service, such as chairing a meeting, working the steps, regular attendance at meetings, sponsoring as well as being sponsored, are the backbone of our program. So as you climb up this steep and slippery slope to the top of your personal Everest, remember this, no man is an island.

PEN PAL PROGRAM EXPANDS

By John F., National Coordinator

With the entry of SCA onto the Internet, our "pen pal" program has gone there, too. If you would be interested in this service, we ask you to make a commitment to send one letter a month. Here's how it works:

- 1)** We pair you up with another member of SCA. We ask that both SCA members have at least one year in the fellowship and six months on a recovery plan.
- 2)** The two SCA members are paired with one "loner," someone who lives too far from an SCA meeting to attend.
- 3)** The SCA members decide for themselves how to divide up the work. Sometimes one will do the writing while the other will read over the letters to be on guard against inadvertent provocation, intriguing, etc. Sometimes the two will alternate months. You decide.
- 4)** To maintain anonymity, we do not send out identifying information, including home addresses or identifiable e-mail names. (Anonymous e-mail is O.K.)

If you are interested in the e-mail version of the "pen pal" program, write to: **info@sca-recovery.org**.

If you want to join the regular mail version of the program, write:

SCA Pen Pal

P.O. Box 1585,
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113-0935

11th Annual SCA NY Conference

Report by David A-S, NY

The 11th Annual SCA NY Conference took place on the weekend of May 30, 31 and June 1, 1997, at the Gay and Lesbian Center in New York City. The theme of this year's conference was "Opening Our Hearts, Lifting Our Spirit." Over two hundred people attended. There were workshops about SCA tools, Bisexuality, body image, finding the perfect sponsor, detachment, and exploring feelings through art. There was also a marathon meeting that ran all day on Saturday and Sunday; a quiet room where people could just relax; a candlelight promises meeting; a cabaret on Friday night; a dance on Saturday night and a full length Show about giving up our masks on Sunday afternoon.

A lot of work went into putting this Conference together and I was curious to find out what motivated some of the people who gave so much time and energy to make this Conference come together. I spoke with Vito, who was Co-Chair and Charlie K. who chaired the Registration and Literature committee.

I asked both Vito and Charlie what possessed them to commit themselves to so much service in putting the conference together. Both responded that they did not intend to be quite so involved but since there were no other candidates volunteering at the organizing committee meetings they were partly volunteered and partly volunteered themselves. Vito actually said that he "needed to experience some pain and suffering" but quickly followed that by saying that he has a sentimental attachment to the Conference. When he first arrived in

program, doing service at the Conference helped to keep him sober. He was on the entertainment committee and he knew he could keep his commitment there. That then spread to the rest of his life. One of the reasons Charlie did service was because it has given him a sense of belonging in a way that he doesn't get from just attending meetings.

The preparations for the Conference begin in February and culminate at the Conference. It's a lot of work with one meeting at least a week to begin with and then much greater frequency as the Conference gets near. What is to be gained from exerting oneself so much? For Charlie it was an opportunity to "show up" and discover that his best was good enough. On the other hand Charlie discovered that "the group's opinion is much more important than mine" (Trad. One and Trad. Two). He learnt that some of his own preferences, like the color of a t-shirt was not all that important in the long run. Expressing that kind of opinion, he noted, may not actually add anything to the process, while at other times sharing some of his foresights about what might happen did contribute significantly to the group direction and dynamic.

To host a conference requires much planning and many people. Is it really possible to stay with principles and not get caught up in personalities, I asked Charlie K and Vito. Charlie made a gagging motion at this point, but then proceeded to explain that he got to know people by swallowing his pride. "I could see that other people were afraid," he said "and so became controlling like me." Charlie went on to assure me that principles always came before personalities and he concluded: "Group conscience meetings keep us

sane!" Vito also found that principles came first, in spite of the fact that he was doing service with people who were long time friends.

Since service is the life line of our fellowship, I asked Vito and Charlie how and why they would recommend service to the newcomer. Vito explained that the Conference is a lot of work and that being involved as someone who contributes gives you a feeling that it is not possible to put a value on easily. "It can keep you sober. You can't just check out, because someone is going to be calling you for something." Vito also pointed out that it's a way of giving back what you get from recovery. "It's like paying rent!" he concluded. Charlie said that service keeps you busy and being busy means that you are less likely to be triggered. He added that service is not a meeting, not a phone call, not a sponsor, not a date, it's something different and gives you like a runner's high!" At this revealing remark, Charlie belched.

Finally, I had to ask, who was the most glamorous person at the conference? Vito exclaimed immediately that he was and then quickly followed that with the declaration: "Never again!" Charlie on the other hand wouldn't tell me who he thought was the most glamorous but I gathered it was someone who's name begins with "V."

Certainly this 11th Conference was very full and intense. It will long remain in my mind, as a Conference run by a committee that forged new ground and took bold steps. What was that statement by Goethe? "Boldness has greatness in it." Thank you everyone who did service at the 11th Annual SCA NY Conference, it was bold and great.

12th ANNUAL NEW YORK CONFERENCE:**"FROM I TO WE—INTO
THE HEART OF RECOVERY"****APRIL 17-19**

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (SCA) will hold their Twelfth Annual Conference on April 17-19, 1998 at St. Bernard's Parish School, 327 W. 13th Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues), New York, NY.

The theme of the Conference is "From I to We -- Into the Heart of Recovery". 1998 marks the recovery program's 16th year of service. The three-day Conference will include 24 workshops throughout the weekend, a reception on Friday night, a catered dinner, the ever popular SCA show, and dance on Saturday evening, and a gratitude meeting on Sunday.

Workshop topics will include "Intimacy and the Single Addict", "Pornography and Sexual Fantasy", "Releasing Shame", "Accessing Spirituality Through Ritual", "The Triple Threat: Money, Career, Sex", "Femininity and Masculinity", "Sexual and Social Anorexia", and many others.

The Conference, which will be held with the participation of SCA-Anon, will have an advance registration fee of \$20 (to be received by April 3) and a \$25 fee at the door. Registration forms will be available at all regularly scheduled SCA meetings. More information may be obtained by contacting John A. at (718)768-3591, jpa3000@is2.nyu.edu, or SCA Conference Registrar, P.O. Box 1585, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113-0935.

"The SCAnner" is Your Newsletter

The SCAnner is published and distributed quarterly by the international Service Organization of SCA as a means toward unifying the fellowship and getting the SCA word out. The opinions expressed here are those of the people who gave them and do not necessarily reflect the principles and traditions of SCA. Take what you like and leave the rest. Your contributions and comments are always welcome and are sincerely invited. Send them to:

The SCAnner
c/o SCA, NY, P.O. Box 1585 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10113-0935

**MEETINGS**

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

SCA International Service Organizations
P.O. Box 1585,
Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10113-0935

National Hotline (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
Midland/Odessa, TX.....(915) 560-5240
Milwaukee, WI.....(414) 299-0755
St. Louis, MO.....(314) 253-4085
Phoenix, AZ.....(602) 340-3081

SPANISH:

Los Angeles.....(213)-368-4814
New York.....(212) 388-9124

SCA is not affiliated with SLAA or SAA, but maintains a list of meetings in cities and countries without SCA meetings. Contact ISO for this information at least 2 weeks in advance. The following is provided in the spirit of interfellowship.

For information on SLAA and SAA meetings in the USA and overseas, write to:

SLAA, PO Box 650010, West Newton, MA
02165-0010(617) 332-1845

SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270
.....(713) 869-4902

For SCAnner subscriptions:

SCA SCAnner, P.O. Box 138455,
Pennsicola Place, Chicago, IL 60613-8455

For other SCA literature:

SCA/ISO Literature,
P.O. Box 1089,
Milwaukee, WI 53201-1089

Sponsorship

PART II: A SPONSEE'S POINT OF VIEW

An Interview with Paul M. (NYC),

by David A-S (NYC)

[I met with Paul M in a café on Madison Avenue to talk about sponsorship. I began with the obvious question.]

David: What is a sponsor?

Paul: Someone who gets to know your story and has more time than you in program, more time on a plan, more experience. A mentor. Someone who is closer than other people in the fellowship. Someone who gets you through difficult times.

D: What is a good sponsor?

P: Someone who is sober and practices the principles of the program, someone who is not judgmental, not an advice giver, but is not afraid to give me suggestions. Someone who points out my patterns.

D: What is the difference between advice and suggestions?

P: Advice is: "You need to do this" A suggestion is: "What helped me when I was in that situation, was going to more meetings." I like a sponsor who tells me what to do in the context of the program, meaning: pray more; what step are you on?; are you calling people?; are you going to meetings? As opposed to: what are you feeling right now? I like suggestions that keep me based in the program.

D: What kind of boundaries should exist between sponsor and sponsee?

P: That depends on the people involved. You have to decide for yourself the

ground rules. I can tell you the boundaries I set up for me. I didn't want anyone to know who my sponsor was, because I wanted anonymity in the rooms. If I had difficulty with my sponsor and I wanted to talk about that in the rooms, everyone in the rooms would know who I was talking about, and I didn't want that. Also I want a sponsor who is available and that we can set up regular meeting times when we can meet and speak. Someone who is accessible, who goes to meetings, has a plan, and is sober on that plan.

D: What is the goal of the sponsor-sponsee relationship?

P: In all honesty, I think it's about getting someone through difficult times. I think underlying that is getting through some of our intimacy issues. A sponsor is someone who you're going to have to open up to. If they are really going to know your story, if you are really going to be truthful and honest in the program, then it's someone who is going to break down some of the barriers to intimacy in getting to know someone and developing trust. Someone who is not going to run away. It's a lot about relationships.

D: What do you do to make this work?

P: I talk to my sponsor about 4 times a week and that can range from 15 minutes to an hour. I think I need a lot of contact. I also need to get to know the person and have them share about their stuff.

D: Really? Why do you think that is important?

P: I have to have identification. I must identify with people or I start to feel isolated. I start to feel that I am the only one, I alone suffer with this. Even if they

don't have the same issues, they have to be able to relate their issues to mine. For instance I am really a sex addict not a romantic obsessive and I like to act out in public places. I definitely must have a sponsor who has done that too, or at least can relate to my issues in terms of feelings, what drove him to do it, how he felt afterwards.

D: So you need someone who emphasizes with you and doesn't just listen to you?

P: Absolutely. I think you have to meet regularly with your sponsor. I do that twice a month. Every other week we make an arrangement to get together. Sometimes it's after a meeting, sometimes it's not. I think you have to be consistent about it. Plus I think it's the sponsee's responsibility to make these arrangements, make the phone calls, make it work for you. I don't think it's the sponsor's responsibility to say "Are we getting together on Saturday? When are you going to call me?" It's me needing help from that person. So I've got to take the initiative, which is tough. A lot of people are very lazy and don't want to take risks.

D: Is there anything else you want to say about sponsorship?

P: I think it's one of the most important tools after meetings. I don't think I would stay sober without a sponsor. I rely on my sponsor a lot. He has 12 years of sobriety. When he says something that is striking or has a lot of wisdom I pass it on to my sponsees. A note to people who are having difficulty with their sponsor: just hang in there. It's an important tool and people should give it a whirl, so that they can stay sober. If people are sober, they usually have a good sponsor.

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(MY STORY Cont'd from page 7)

ended up at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center. I didn't have a reason to go there. I looked at the listing on the front desk, and found out about a meeting going on. It had already started so I asked the front desk person if it was alright to go in late. He said yes, people show up late all the time. So up to the Knights Room I went. I didn't know what it was, or what some of the people were talking about. But some of the people I understood well enough. It turned out to be my first SCA meeting. I had heard of Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, but never referred to as SCA. Until that day, I didn't know I was a sex addict. I realized it in my first meeting, and have never doubted being an addict.

I would love to say how this big bolt of lightning came down and struck me. That I never acted out again, that in an instant my life was wonderful and worth living. But that would be lying. What did happen was that I felt that I didn't have to kill myself that day--maybe the next day. The next day I went to another meeting, and again the day after that and almost everyday since (about 5 to 6 meetings per week). I got my first sponsor, and freaked out. I got another sponsor, and stayed a while longer before I freaked out, then moved on to my third sponsor, and took still longer to freak out. I have had some days of sobriety, and lost them, then gained them, several times over. Today I live with the highest day count, one day at a time, I have had since I started.

I have struggled more now then I have ever in my life. I have committed myself to something for the first time in my entire life. I understand the meaning of one day at a time, although it is difficult to live by sometimes. I work the steps as thoroughly as I can. I apply the principals of the program throughout my entire life, as best I can. I am learning to be gentle with myself, to love others, and myself and to appreciate life. I no longer feel alone, both because of the people in SCA, friends, and because I am reestablishing my contact with God.

Reestablishing my contact with God has been the most wonderful and healing aspect of my program. Today God

is not dictated to me by someone else's principals and ideals, but as I understand God. God did not turn his back on me or betray me. It was I who turned my back on and betrayed God. God has always been watching out for me. A perfect example of this is the fact that part of my history has been unsafe sex. I would be on the receiving end, and allowed thousands of people, over the course of my addiction, to ejaculate inside of me. Some of whom I knew were HIV positive. I do not mean to be graphic, but the point is, a year after I came into program I took my first HIV test. I am still HIV negative today, and have never had any sexually transmitted diseases, other than anal warts. The statistical odds are incredible. There is no way to say how many people I have had sex with, but I have conservatively estimated the number to be easily 16,000. There is only one explanation and that is God watched out for me all those years, through all those sexual experiences. I do not know why I was spared AIDS, I do know it was simply God's will. The wonderful thing today is I am learning to accept God's will, even when it seems to hurt so much, for I know that there is a purpose for everything that happens to everyone. I don't have to know what that purpose is to accept it.

Today I am still, and realize always will be, in my process. Some days are very hard, and others are calm, and still others are wonderful. I have not had a day like before program in a very long time. My worst day today is a much better than my best day before program. I have much work ahead of me. I no longer fear, or am intimidated by it. I actually look forward to it. I am not afraid to look at myself, or my character defects. I try not to judge them but accept them and the knowledge that in God's time they will be removed. I have seen much of the promises fulfilled for me. I realize I could have never had the life I have today if it were not for my addiction, SCA, friends, and most all God. I do not have answers too many of my questions. I don't even know many of the questions. I don't really feel I need to ask anymore, but simply trust God, and have faith. But I do know one thing: life is very much worth living today. For that I am truly grateful.

(SPONSORSHIP

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monolithic, it's overwhelming and it's going to come crashing down. And what Bob does is show me how I built it up for myself. That being so, I can then, if I have the willingness, take it down. We are powerless over the thoughts that come into our heads. Without another person to help us, we can't always break it down on our own.

B: In my role as a sponsor, I think it's important to show the sponsee that that monolith wall is made up of different parts and that if you change one part you change the whole wall. Recovery comes piece by piece. And with each piece, another piece of my personality that is contributing to the acting out, to the desire to die, the suicidal feeling.

S: If I can interrupt. . . There you have the 4th step. This is how Bob reveals to me my character defects. It's in this piecemeal fashion . . . which is very useful, because I can absorb it a little at a time.

B: I'm very much of the AA idea. I don't think we hear enough about this in this program, Character defects are the fuel of acting out. Without an honest, searching and painful examination of our own functions, our arrogance, our fantasy life. . . whatever it is, without examining all of this, we have no power to stop, because these are the things that are going to propel us out there, It's not a nameless force. I think the force behind acting out and self destruction is character defects.

The Traditions

Learning to Live and Work with Others, A Path to Intimacy (Part III)

by David A-S, NY-SCA

Tradition Three

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or SCA as a whole.

The path to intimacy is a difficult one to tread. We've already seen that it involves belonging and working for the common good (Tradition One); negotiating and being part of the game (Tradition Two); accepting everyone on their own terms (Tradition Three). In Tradition Four, we find out that intimacy means accepting that we are entirely on our own!

Tradition Four teaches us about autonomy. What is autonomy? Something that is autonomous is self-contained, independent, and able to sustain itself. This is quite different to anarchy (the act of destroying everything we can not have, so that no one else can have it). Autonomy, in terms of our groups, means that we can respect local customs (like sitting in a circle or in rows) without compromising the basic premises of the program. Yet there are certain things that need to be passed down from group to group, without change, in order for the integrity and purity of our fellowship to be maintained. The Steps, Traditions and Tools of the program are what keep the program as they are. If we start to rewrite the Steps or Traditions, for example, we start to change the whole nature of what we are about, where we are headed, and how we get there. This affects the whole fellowship. Tradition Four shows us how to deal with these potentially explosive situations.

Each group is autonomous and can, by group conscience, for example, ask every person at the meeting to wear clown make up. However, such an action, even if contained very clearly within the group, would

immediately begin to affect the whole fellowship. There is a very good reason why Tradition Four stipulates that every group is autonomous "except in matters affecting other groups and SCA as a whole." The fact of the matter is that there is very little that is done in one group that does not affect every other group. Tradition Four protects us all from the over-zealous who would like to improve and update some of our ways.

So how can we be autonomous if the fine print ensures that we are all sworn to not change anything unless we engage in long and exhaustive debate? We are all on

"When I considered the concept of autonomy in relation to my whole life, I was able to start apportioning time, money and other resources to every area of my life in equal portions. This began to squeeze out the addict. Going to bath houses, bars and bathroom and buying pornography began to have less of a control of me because I had the strength of my determination to fulfill the goals of my whole life behind me, whenever I made a decision."

our own in maintaining the integrity of the constituent parts of the fellowship. Instead of engaging in compartmentalization, as acting out forces us to do, we are forced to consider every action, thought, and deed in relation to the whole fellowship. This may seem the opposite of being on our own, but in effect it places us in the position of being equal and singularly responsible all the time for everything that happens, while ever reminding us that we are just individual members with no power of our own. We are responsible and representative of the whole fellowship, while at the same time being only an equal and equivocal member.

A simple example of how this works is that while I am encouraged to accept people as they are and respect their local customs, if someone behaves in an unacceptable way, I must intervene immediately. Tradition Four flows quite naturally out of the first three. If we feel we belong, and are able to partake in the running of things, then surely we will want to defend and protect what we have.

When I looked at my own life in relation to the Tradition Four, I realized that there were many areas (finances, emotions, spirituality, family, work, creativity) that were not autonomous. These areas were not independent, and fully and regularly resourced. Because of this they were, in fact, affecting the whole of my life. The only area in which I acted independently and in blatant disregard for every other part of my life, was of course my addiction. It wasn't autonomous (because it was not mindful of all the other areas of my life) but rather anarchic. Thus my whole attitude and behavior towards others was inconsistent, erratic, unreliable, self-centered, and (me-first) anarchic.

When I considered the concept of autonomy in relation to my whole life, I was able to start apportioning time, money and other resources to every area of my life in equal portions. This began to squeeze out the addict. Going to bath houses, bars and bathroom and buying pornography began to have less of a control of me because I had the strength of my determination to fulfill the goals of my whole life behind me, whenever I made a decision. Feeling strong and resourced in every area of my life made me feel very motivated and increased my connection with others. I no longer approached people from the vantage point of "what can I get out of them" or "how can I manipulate them to get my

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way," because I already felt that I had met many of my needs. So when I spent time with people, it was simply to be with them, to enjoy their company, not to take advantage of them in some way. I began to experience true connection and real intimacy with others. My interactions were based on the honesty of knowing myself, taking care of my needs, and not expecting anyone to take care of my needs for me.

This new found sense of autonomy also gave me the courage to say no to others without falling apart, because I realized that I didn't need to fix others in order to feel good. Indeed, the secret to feeling really good, was to fix myself and then I could feel good with others, instead of feeling good because of others. Yes, my acting out had made me very dependent on others and Tradition Four has helped me to realize that I was entirely on my own in all my actions, yet completely inter-connected to everything and everyone around me. That's the amazingly freeing double bind of Tradition Four.

SCA RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

SCA Radio PSA Kits are now available. The kit contains a pre-recorded audio tape and script for a 30 second and 60 second radio spot about sexual compulsion and how to get in touch with SCA via our 800 number for help. A step-by-step instruction sheet on getting the spots aired by local stations is included with each kit. This sheet also explains how to alert the 800 number volunteers who pick up and return calls, of any special instructions, phone numbers and meetings you'll want passed along to people seeking help in your area.

This project grew out of a desire

to provide assistance to small, fledgling meetings and intergroups who were contracting ISO for ideas on how to let their communities know of their existence...initially to increase their membership just to stay alive. Larger intergroups then become enthusiastic as they saw the PSAs as a 12 Step tool that could reach those who might not otherwise hear about the program.

The kits cost \$12 for the first and \$10 each for additional kits. Order a kit for each station you hope to have air the spots. Make checks payable and mail to: SCA/ISO LITERATURE, P.O. Box 931181, Los Angeles, CA 90093-1181

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Interfellowship Forum 1997

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ship's literature catalogue is considered to be a self-descriptive statement.

NEW BUSINESS

After lunch on Saturday, we discussed and prioritized new items of business (since all items of business were not of the same urgency for each fellowship and because of time constraints). The first item on the agenda, as suggested by SLAA, was to write a mission statement for the Interfellowship Forum, which was: "To promote a spirit of cooperation among S fellowships, with a primary purpose of reaching the still suffering addict."

The items chosen for discussion (listed in order of importance) were the following:

1. *Unique characteristics for each fellowship.*
2. *What should we do when a member confesses to an illegal act?*
3. *How do you keep recovery centered on the 12 steps?*
4. *How are you inventorying your fellowship?*
5. *Use of non-addict representatives as spokespersons.*
6. *Who shall be invited in Interfellowship conferences.*

ITEM 1: Unique characteristics for each fellowship. Each program agreed that there were common misperceptions about the membership of each particular program. SCA is the "gay fellowship." SAA is the "perpetrator fellowship." SA is "homophobic." SLAA is for "women love addicts." In the ensuing discussion each program addressed these issues and tried to arrive at a more honest definition of their program. For SCA, we are gay friendly, but do not want to be known as a gay fellowship. For SA, there is the issue of lust and of what constitutes a marriage of committed relationship. In fact, this is even a volatile issue within

SA. For SLAA, there was the surprising fact that there are more men than women in the program, and that, in addition to love and sex addiction, SLAA addresses sexual, social, and emotional anorexia. SLAA also does not encourage special interest (i.e., gay, women) meetings. SAA, is a fellowship based on helping people who are addicted to sexual behaviors which they feel are destructive to their lives. Ten percent of SAA's membership is women. It was moved that we take the synopses of who we are back to our fellowships for use in creating the self-descriptive statements.

ITEM 2: What should we do when a member confesses to an illegal act? SCA affirmed that individuals must take responsibility for themselves, and that anything shared at a meeting could not be used against the sharer in a court of law. We all agreed to ask members not to be graphic in the group but to be explicit in doing a fifth step with your sponsor.

ITEM 3: How do you keep recovery centered on the 12 Steps? There was a general consensus that all the programs did not focus strongly enough on the 12 Steps. Many people shared about going to AA step meetings because of the lack of strong step meetings in their fellowships. Some complained about lack of sponsorship, a tendency to lean towards therapy rather than a spiritual program of recovery. Many people felt that the more sober they got, the more they realized that sobriety is more than just not "acting out." Long term sobriety depends upon continuing to work the steps. Jim M. shared how in St. Louis, there is a weekly Inter S Fellowship meeting that focuses on the step work. We need people to talk about their experience in working a specific step.

ITEM 4: How are you inventorying your fellowship? We talked about how

we relate to each other and how we relate to newcomers. What is the difference between recovery and sobriety? We have no objective measures of how many people stay in program, of how many people achieve sobriety. SCA mentioned how it reached out to the Spanish-speaking community by translating literature. There was a lot of talk finally about the phenomenon of people getting well and leaving the program. How can we encourage people to move on to a healthy sexuality? There are people with long-term sobriety (sales of 15-20 medallions in SLAA). So what drives people away?: the addiction; the level of honesty; the focus on the problem; denial; too much service work. But it was also admitted that because somebody left the program, it doesn't mean that they have slipped.

ITEM 5: Use of non-addict representatives as spokespersons. The question was precipitated by a psychologist on the SA board, who wished to speak about recovery and the program to a group of non-addicts. SAA and SCA do not have non-members of their boards. How do we deal with the media? SLAA seemed to have the most experience with outside media. They have non-members on their board and have a pamphlet on dealing with the media with a specific procedure in position. The most important point seemed to be that people speak for themselves and not on behalf of the program.

ITEM 6: Who shall be invited to Interfellowship conferences. All four fellowships agreed to continue to meet, with a special effort to be made to contact Sexual Recovery Anonymous ("SRA"), another S fellowship, to the next conference. Though there was discussion of inviting the S-Anon programs to next year's conference, it was finally decided that "next year's meeting be limited to the five S fellowships, with a letter of information being sent to the S-Anon fellowships, indicating that we would be open to receive agenda items from them."