

## **Background and History of SA's Sobriety Definition and Interpretation of "Spouse" and "Marriage."**

**Note:** This paper was written by Roy K. at the request of some SA members recovering from same-sex lust. These members were concerned about threats to their own sobriety and SA unity resulting from those who claim that interpretation of "spouse" and "marriage" is left up to the individual. This history will show that from the very beginning, SA as a fellowship has always held to the traditional, legal, heterosexual interpretation of "spouse" and "marriage." (Exhibits referred to are available on request.)

### **Roy K.'s Personal Sobriety Definition Background**

Years before recovery I lived for some months and slept in the same bed with a singer who's lust was same-sex. I was his agent, trying to break him into show business. He wrote me love letters, and I had to hug him before every performance so he could sing better. I wanted to make a million dollars. We auditioned before Jack Entratter at the Sands in Las Vegas and MCA in Beverly Hills. That experience introduced me to the gay world and gay lust. Matter of fact, it helped me see myself better.

The very first phone call I ever made in recovery was to a man in AA who called himself "queer" (he anguished over it). He carried me across that first impossible leap to freedom. My first sexaholism sponsor in AA had been a homosexual prostitute before getting sober in AA. He took me under his wing. He understood what I was going through; he identified. He saved my life. He later committed suicide. My "First Aid," partner (p. 75 in the White Book), called himself "bi-." He later married in sobriety. He was one of the original three members when SA got started in 1981. The third member was married. I knew I was no different than the gays and bi-s, and they felt the same about me. We all had the same problem. The whole "orientation issue" had not yet hit the media by storm as it has today, creating such divisiveness.

We tend to forget how quickly cultural trends can be created by the media when it comes to sex and politics. It's a terrible mistake to pigeonhole people, much less sexaholics. There would have to be as many pigeonholes as there are sexaholics. And the number of pigeonholes keeps growing. It used to be simply "gay and straight." Now it's "gay, lesbian, bi, transgender, transvestite, straight . . ." What will it be tomorrow?

The point is that in all of my early recovery relationships, both gay and straight, all of us, without exception, held to SA sobriety, the traditional, legal, heterosexual interpretation of "spouse" and "marriage," hereinafter referred to as TLH.

My vision for sexaholic gays is grounded in the reality of knowing them personally and knowing their need in the crucible of our intimate recovery

relationships together. (I'm writing a follow-on paper, "My Appeal to Gays.")

I knew what sobriety had to be for me, because I had been SA sober for a year and a half since my first AA meeting April 24, 1974, and again since January 31, 1976, after my slip. That's when the latest sexual trend was hitting America—wife-swapping and group sex (the book *Open Marriage*, for example). My sponsor and his sponsor were doing it and it destroyed both marriages. America's cultural mores were in a state of increasingly rapid free-fall. From the beginning there was never the slightest doubt that for me I had to define my sobriety and it had to be "traditional, legal, heterosexual marriage." The question never arose. So without my even being consciously aware of it, I was desperately trying to find a fellowship of those who had to have SA sobriety, that is, TLH. Any alternative never even occurred to me until a person here or there in SA later raised the issue.

**The fact is**, SA and its TLH interpretation comes out of and was shaped by this kind of historical, cultural, and very personal background, just as AA came out of and was shaped by its historical, cultural, and very personal background.

### **SA Prior to July 1981**

SA as we know it today was formally established the last weekend of July, 1981 with a conference of nine men and women meeting in Simi Valley, California. Before that event, SA's origins were characterized by failure. The last "great attempt" to start the fellowship before that, of the four or five prior failed attempts, was in January of 1979, when it was called Sexaholics Anonymous for the first time and advertised as such in the L.A. Times. In all of these abortive attempts, beginning back in 1974, the TLH concept of sobriety as we know it today was simply taken for granted, understood, even though there was no SA literature. For example, there were meetings I had with other AA members or others specifically for the purpose of getting or giving help with sex addiction, but the concept of what constituted sobriety was a given. I was left alone after each failed attempt. It was the failures, however, which created the need for declaring and writing our sobriety definition.

### **SA 1979 in Hollywood—The First Impulse Toward Definition**

It was analyzing the failure of the 1979 SA meetings in Hollywood that initiated the need for definition. In only the second meeting in 1979 three men from NA came in asking, "Where are the broads?" and "I'm not getting enough." They took over leadership of the meeting and offered the motion that SA would be based on the AA Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve. We all voted for it. They never came back.

In the third meeting, the man who was apparently leading the first nascent attempt at another S-fellowship showed up, the only one who did show. What a disappointment to have him start hitting on me. In the fourth meeting, where he and I were the only two again, on February 25, 1979, a fundamental disagreement between us arose on the purpose of SA and the

requirement for membership. Was it to be for “sobriety” (what I wanted) or for “support and safe sex” (what he wanted—safe in the sense of not getting busted by the vice)? This was the first time the sobriety issue arose, and it arose, not within me, but from someone who didn’t want it. I had to reluctantly break off with the guy, and my hopes for a fellowship of sobriety were dashed to the ground. This was a very formative experience for SA.

In the sixth meeting, three men and two women showed, all from Emotional Health Anonymous, one of whom admitted later she had come there to “score.” In the seventh meeting the same bunch came in announcing they wanted to change the meeting from Sexaholics Anonymous, the name I had given it, to Sexual Health Anonymous. They had prepared their own meeting format (I, being very naive, had none), took over the meeting, and ran it as SHA, the difference being that the meetings would be not for purposes of sexual sobriety, which I had to have, but for people to come in and “rap about their sex problems.” (Those were the exact words she used as we debated the issue.) I didn’t know what hit me. Again, my hope for a fellowship was dashed to pieces. The woman and her followers split and started SHA, (which never lasted). It was my vocal stand on SA TLH sobriety that precipitated their break with SA. Another powerfully formative experience.

After the twenty-second “SA” meeting in Hollywood, after a long string of no-shows, I gave up. “The last grand attempt is dead; Roy goes back to AA and later becomes secretary of the ‘Good Feeling’ Group in West L.A.”

It was this series of Hollywood meetings, more than anything, which forced me to eventually start defining sobriety, putting down on paper what SA always had been and what Kevin, Dan, and I—SA’s first three members—had to have for our own recovery. I began doing this in preparation for the 1981 conference in Simi Valley. Perhaps it is not so strange that this final formative impulse arose where it did, in Hollywood, against the trend of “anything goes.” Let’s face it—recovery for sexaholics may go against some trends. Who said SA has to follow any trend? That’s why it’s not for everybody, just like AA is not for every alcoholic.

Thus, by the time of SA’s first conference in July of 1981, I was ready with something in writing to present to the first slate of SA delegates from around the country. Through years of disappointment, despair, and failure, something permanent was about to take place, by the grace of God.

### **First SA Conference, July 25 and 26, 1981**

The nine of us got together in my garage in Simi Valley and had a real SA meeting; for the first time, people who wanted sexual sobriety like I and my two sober fellow-sexaholics did. It’s informative to look at what Dear Abby wrote in her June 22, 1981 column (see Exhibit #1):

“Abby, I am a recovering compulsive adulterer . . . I found a program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to help compulsive ‘lusts’ control their lust in the same way compulsive alcoholics control their drinking. It is Sexaholics Anonymous. . . .

I am now free from the obsession of sex, and have not had sex with anyone other than my wife for the last five years. . . .The only requirement for membership is a sincere desire to stop lusting and help other sexaholics to achieve sexual sobriety.”

That’s how Abby used my letter to her. (Interesting how she interpreted our Third Tradition in that last sentence!) But that’s what the eight others who attended read in her article, and that’s what attracted them to SA. Note carefully: “Adultery” was the key word, sex with those other than the “wife.” And “lust.” As it turned out, this would be the point in history when the Twelve Step Program would make a breakthrough into a deeper, more “impossible” dimension of recovery. And traditional, legal, heterosexual, TLH, would be the frame of reference, the context in which this could happen..

Remember, all this was 1981 and before! TLH was the prevailing frame of reference in the air. It was only in the late 1970s that the media were beginning to air the subject of heterosexual cohabitation (we used to call it “shacking up,” remember?). Somewhere around that time I remember reading an editorial in the *L.A. Times* about it where the journalist estimated there were some 250,000 in such relationships in Southern California. This was a media breakthrough article. The point is that SA was born in the post-sexual-revolution trend of people living together in “relationships.” On such a scale it was something new then, and media coverage was helping legitimize it. Yes, SA, if we were to be so accused, “discriminated” against non-TLH “relationships”—from the beginning. That’s just the way it is.

SA, from its origins, without realizing it, was counter-cultural in the same way AA was counter-cultural . Who would have imagined that SA might have come onto the scene not only for sex and lust addiction, but to offer solution to those sexaholics unable to survive the new mass “relationship” phenomenon? Of course, none of us ever thought about that; we just wanted to stop doing what was killing us! That’s why SA could never countenance those “relationships” as being sober for the sexaholic.

I wrote and presented to the Simi Valley delegates on July 26, 1981 a two-paragraph paper titled “What Is Sexual Sobriety?” (Exhibit #2). The first paragraph was edited by group decision, as you can see in the strikeouts on the exhibit, but the second paragraph, the definition itself was left intact:

Thus for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse. Any form of lust, sex with one’s self, or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from lust and sex of any kind....”

The vote was unanimous for this wording; it remained unchanged—TLH, the prevailing frame of reference. There was never any confusion on what “married” and “unmarried” meant. Thus I reported in our very first newsletter of 30 July 1981, “The feeling of oneness was remarkable....This

was reflected in our policy agreement on defining sobriety, which we decided to leave as is.” (See Exhibit #3.)

Exhibits # 4 and 5, as well as many subsequent newsletter exhibits where this is highlighted, illustrate the principle that I never acted unilaterally on any policy or principle issues. In the beginning, decisions to be made passed through every single member, there were so few of us; then later, through

what at first was the Steering Committee, then later in 1981, the group of ten men who signed our Articles of Association and acted on other matters.

Exhibit #6, the fifth newsletter, throws some additional light on our subject. In September 1981 Sherman (he was bi-) and I spent a marvelous month together visiting most of the new individuals and groups around the country. There was never a question about TLH. It was the only frame of reference there was. Bill L. and the other gays we met in NYC, mentioned on page 2 of this exhibit, although they became the first SA group in NYC, soon broke from SA because of our sobriety definition and because there was never any doubt in their minds about SA and TLH. They never debated the definition of “spouse” or “marriage;” they understood SA’s interpretation perfectly and decided to go their own way. (Later on in 1990, as we shall see, NYC tried to change SA before eventually leaving and starting SRA for the same reasons.) It was obvious to all that SA was inherently and explicitly TLH.

#### **Dialog with SAA, 1981**

Exhibit #6, the fifth newsletter, reports on our encounter with Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) in September 1981. Some of the SAA members with whom we met in Minnesota wanted dialog with us. I said I’d have to take it to the SA fellowship, which I did. I felt this meant we should draft a Statement of Principle defining our position as the basis for dialog.

Exhibit #7 is the pertinent page from that Statement of Principle. The pertinent paragraph follows:

In defining sobriety, we do not speak for the “normal” person in society. He or she can do whatever he wishes, and we have no opinion on what constitutes sexual sobriety for him. We can only speak for ourselves; and we are different from our fellows. Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse, including no form of sex with one’s self. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. [Note that “married” and “unmarried” assume TLH in that historical context.]

**Definition of Sobriety.** The material on pages 191-193 of the White Book was first drafted in the Statement of Principle for SAA on 12 October 1981. Note the following two statements, clearly supporting TLH, especially as a warning for today:

However, if we come into an SA group where everyone can define his own sobriety, watch those rationalizations come alive! And if we define our own level, that's all we'll ever reach. . . . Finally, unless we define sexual sobriety, we make it possible for those who are still practicing their disease in some fashion to lead meetings and hold leadership and policy-making positions affecting not only the group but SA as a whole. In the long term, we feel this can only mean disaster. Our sobriety is the one and only unique thing we have. Without defining it, we have nothing.

**SAA Refuses Dialog Because of TLH.** Our complete Statement of Principle went through the fellowship-feedback cycle and was eventually sent to SAA. They did not respond until years later, when, after we asked again for their response, they wrote that they declined further dialog "on philosophical grounds." There was never any doubt in SAA's mind that SA's interpretation was TLH. TLH was the "philosophical grounds" on which they refused dialog. Just ask them!

Exhibits #8 and 9 are the result of a sudden realization I had, right after mailing out that Statement of Principle for Fellowship review. "Lust" had somehow gotten lost in the shuffle! To correct that, I reached back to the original definition on Exhibit #2 and came up with the following, rushing it out two days later on October 14, asking that the Fellowship review it instead of the one I had sent on the 12th appearing on page 3 of the Statement of Principle:

For the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from lust and freedom from sex of any kind except with the spouse. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from lust and sex of any kind.

You can see how I had not yet introduced the idea of progressive victory over lust. However, the marriage concept had not changed, and TLH was not even questioned. We were all together, and that unity was the basis of our Fellowship and the young, joyous recovery we shared together.

Exhibit #10 is the 11-15-81 newsletter, called ESSAY for the first time. On page 3 I reviewed status of the SAA dialog.

The informal national group conscience we took recently has made itself known. All but two groups voted for dialog with Minnesota, but others who voted yes expressed reservations that we not compromise our alignment with the principles and traditions of AA . . . . Acceptance of the Statement of Principles was unanimous. . . .

Again, no one in SA raised any question bearing on TLH. SA and SAA remained distinct entities because of our sobriety definition's stand on TLH.

Exhibit #11 was first drafted March 10, 1982 as my first attempt at a rationale for our stand on TLH. I later titled it "Sobriety and the Sea of Relativism" (available on request). When I wrote in it that "The best among these voices would settle for the good," but that "the good was the enemy of the best," borrowing from Bill W., I was arguing that "committed relationships" of any

orientation might be considered good, considering the times in which we live, but fall short of the best we sexaholics must have for ourselves in SA, the real Connection. (I forget why this piece never made it into our literature. Maybe some of the members of the old Literature Committee might remember???)

### **Conference #Two, January 30, 1983**

The main issue at this conference business meeting was how to handle the publicity SA was getting (The unanimous decision was “no interviews with the media.”) The significant point for this paper is that the two delegates from New York City both came from the same-sex experience. One was married, but his lust and acting out were exclusively with the same sex; and the other’s experience was exclusively same-sex. “No one, raised any issues concerning SA’s sobriety statement, Steps, Traditions, or other literature.” Both were SA sober and wanted continuing TLH recovery. ***The gays and bi-s had no problem with TLH.*** As we shall see some seven years later, it was NYC that split on the TLH issue.

### **Conference #Three, December 1983**

Exhibits #12 and 13 indicate how strongly I felt about having delegates come to a conference where I would be asking for help to handle the heavy workload and other issues. It turns out that all those coming to this conference were strangers to SA, people neither I nor anyone else in SA knew anything about, people who might not support our hard-won definition of sobriety. And these would be the ones voting on the crucial SA issues now before the fellowship. Everyone who attended was totally ignorant of the entire preceding nine-year history of the evolution of SA’s sobriety concept and its historical/cultural/personal reason for being. Aside from myself, no one attending the December conference had over three months of sobriety, and some had none! They were all newcomers, many attending as the result of one mentioning SA in other programs where he was prominent. Exhibits #14 and 15, the newsletters of 10 and 24 November 1983, point to the fact that the delegates would be voting for the entire fellowship of SA on the first version of “the SA book.” Note the customary call for editing and input from the Fellowship in these documents.

Exhibit #16 is the 18 January 1984 newsletter reporting on the December conference. That conference was extremely traumatic for me. I was terrified at what was going on most of the weekend. The workload was so great I had had to ask for help, and those with no prior experience in the Fellowship and its long and arduous evolution were taking over SA. I think most of them admit the folly today. I felt everything I had worked for for eight years was disintegrating in a confusing free-for-all. I watched it happen, and was powerless.

That’s why I wrote what I did in the 18 January newsletter after the conference and asked, **JUST WHAT IS THE SA PROGRAM?** Note the pointed emphasis on “marriage” as traditional.

And marriage is marriage in the simple historic concept of the term, nothing else. That's simply the way it is. SA is not for everyone. There are other groups that open this door as wide as some would have it opened, and they are welcome there.

How much clearer could TLH be stated? Note that I also deliberately made the point on page 2 of that newsletter that, "The AA literature does not founder on any trendy controversies. . . ." [So, why should we?] No one in SA at the time challenged this; not a word was spoken or written by anyone to my knowledge, including those who would later be teaching a contrary interpretation. However, there was something in the air which was very unsettling. I sensed for the first time in SA the absence of the kind of deep spiritual unity we had before. Instead of unity, there was chaos.

### **The Divisive Spirit Enters**

Exhibit #17, the 20 August 1984 newsletter. For the first time we had to face the reality that "There are those in groups who do not really want or even believe in our concept of sexual sobriety who poison the atmosphere of unity and weaken the bond of love and trust in meetings" (page 2). Thus, I wrote,

There are many troubled people who want the support group but who are not willing to change their old ideas; they seem more intent on changing SA to suit themselves. (Page 3)

We don't know where you are coming from . . . . We need and cherish the spirit of love and unity and common purpose springing from our common problem and our common desire to stay sexually sober. We dare not let this be jeopardized by any who may still want to "control and enjoy their drinking." If we allow a spirit to take over or poison our meetings that is alien to our hunger for sobriety and spiritual growth, we let in a destructive force. Our common welfare comes first; our own personal recovery depends on SA unity. A threat to the spirit of unity in our meetings is a threat to our sobriety, recovery, and very lives. We want you to understand this. SA is not for everybody who needs it; it's for those who want it. (Page 4) Commitment to sobriety is commitment to the fellowship of sobriety. (Page 5)

### **The Sobriety Definition Reworded for Clarity**

Exhibit #18 is an excerpt of pages 8 - 10 from the January 1985 ESSAY. One member had raised the issue of wanting to go back to the 1981 original sobriety definition, (which appears at the top of page 9). His point apparently was that the then-current definition loses the explicit description of what sobriety is for the single and married which the previous [1981] wording had.

I admitted that, "The current wording does seem to lose the clarity of the original, and there seems to be a growing need to state clearly and unequivocally what sexual sobriety is in both [married and unmarried] cases." (Page 9) So I set about to remove the ambiguity. Wrestling with that suggestion, I then came up with the following clarification of wording for the definition, as you can see on page 9:

Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having sex only with the spouse or none at all. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any

kind. We also see that lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust. Any form of lust, sex with one's self, or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive.

I then added a special starred action item for all members and groups, asking for input, our way of getting Fellowship approval at that time: **“This is your chance for feedback on this important subject. What do you think? ... your timely inputs are requested.”** We were going to press

with the preliminary edition of our book, and, of course, feedback on this was necessary.

There was no stated objection whatsoever to the clarified wording. The point is that TLH apparently had full and unqualified support.

### **The Germany Experience**

SA was introduced into Germany in May/June of 1984. Their first national convention was held in June 1986 and their second in November of that year. I don't have any specific dates, but know that Germany debated SA's sobriety definition for something like a couple of years, including having at least one split directly involving TLH. Germany was wrestling with the same “committed relationship” issue as NYC later, only all on their own. Most of their members were young and single, gays and straights, and many were in “relationships.” But they debated the issue methodically and openly. They finally decided to go with SA's interpretation, and once there have been committed ever since. I'm told that the TLH interpretation is a given, understood, there. As a matter of fact, Germany's newcomer meetings make a specific point of having newcomers answer three questions, one of which is whether they subscribe to the SA sobriety statement as in the White Book. *There was no doubt about SA's interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage” being universally understood in all of SA.*

### **Phoenix Convention, December 7 - 9, 1984**

SA's sobriety statement was brought before the business meeting. I forget how, why, and by whom. Again, as in December 1983, a large number, if not the majority in that convention, were stark newcomers to SA, ignorant of SA's entire preceding background and history, and some were apparently trying to reinvent the wheel. (Someone had a personal tape recorder going, but can't find the tape.) This turned into a session lasting about three hours where everyone had a chance to vent their views and feelings. No one held back in that extraordinary session. One gay newcomer angrily accused SA of being “pro-marriage and anti-gay,” an indication that he had no doubts whatsoever as to SA's TLH interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage.” *The TLH interpretation was the very point of the debate!*

Then one person who had been silent spoke up, suggesting bringing God back into the meeting, and things suddenly quieted down, like a beautiful calm after a stormy tempest. Someone else suggested that a vote be taken, and it was unanimously in favor of SA's current sobriety statement, without a single

dissenter, which meant it was a vote for TLH. The turnaround in mood during this historic business meeting—from “knock-down-drag-out” to total peace and serenity—is one of the marvels and benchmarks of SA history. Amazingly, another motion was then made and carried, also unanimously, recommending that all SA groups read “What Is a Sexaholic and What Is Sexual Sobriety?” at every meeting! *No one in Phoenix could have had the slightest doubt that the interpretation of “spouse” as used in SA literature was TLH.*

During that conference decision, traditional, legal, heterosexual was the explicit frame of reference regarding “spouse” and “marriage.” Crystal clear. It was controversial, but the controversy was resolved in favor of SA’s historic interpretation. The controversy cleared the air, and the spirit and power were back, more than ever. The incident seemed to release an amazing energy, a spiritual force, that brought us all together and made us one. Truly a remarkable experience.

⇨It should be noted here that SA’s TLH interpretation does not depend on *any* vote. That interpretation derives from SA’s historical origins, reason for being, and literature, *just as AA’s definition of sobriety was never derived from any vote.*

### **The New York City Challenge 1990 - 1991**

Documentation for this NYC incident is vast and complex. Let me summarize. An SA member who moved to NYC called our attention to the fact that the NYC groups calling themselves SA had created a pamphlet which changed wording of our Steps and Traditions and other literature to accommodate “committed relationships” in SA’s sobriety definition. This had been their practice, and this publication became the overt expression of their long-standing position. This was done without the knowledge or permission of the SA service structure or the copyright holder.

NYC was challenged, first one-on-one, then with letters, etc. This was a violation of SA Traditions and was done without Fellowship permission or knowledge. Finally, through the Advisory Committee, NYC was challenged legally. The end result was that they finally split from SA and formed SRA—Sexual Recovery Anonymous. In the process, something very significant had taken place, another formative step in SA history.

### **Sobriety Survey 12 December 1990**

Under advice of AA’s copyright attorney, and in order to protect the integrity of SA literature, the Central Office Advisory Committee decided it had to take a “sense of the fellowship” on the issue of how SA as a whole interpreted “spouse” and the “committed relationship” issue. Another reason for such a survey was the fact that NYC, using names of members

taken from SA international convention registration lists, sent a letter dated November 11, 1990 to hundreds of SA members in an attempt to take their own unauthorized survey. An excerpt of that letter follows:

We in New York . . . have been dealing with an issue that is now coming to national attention. Six years ago we took a group conscience and voted to change the sobriety definition for our neck of the woods [to include “committed relationships”]. . . . Some people [those in NYC wanting to go a step further] have discussed changing the wording from “committed relationship” [their then-current usage] to “spouse as you understand spouse.” . . . we find ourselves in a predicament. Is our program in New York something other than SA? We don’t know. We rely on the group conscience of SA to help us come to terms with who we are and what we should do next.”

No one from NYC has ever disclosed the responses to their letter. We don’t even know how many responses they got, if any. Even though some other members sided with NYC, the rest of the fellowship generally considered them a few isolated groups doing their own thing.

The SA Advisory Committee drafted the wording of the query statement and insisted (against my protest) that I write the cover letter. The committee member who drafted the statement was from same-sex acting out. That letter and the query form were mailed from Central Office to every registered group in SA (Exhibit #19). As you can see on the Exhibit, the query form had ironclad controls to prevent fraudulent voting. Every single SA group worldwide, including NYC’s groups, was asked to vote *as a group* on how their group felt about the following statement:

Regarding SA’s definition of sexual sobriety, “married” means traditional, legal, heterosexual marriage, and “spouse” does not include “committed relationships” with either the same or opposite sex.

Results of the survey were reported in the March 1991 ESSAY: 75.3 percent of responding groups affirmed the above statement, 18.8 percent did not affirm it, and 5.9 percent of the groups responding marked “chose not to respond.” This was the largest turnout of voting groups ever in the history of SA. Every written comment—pro, con, or whatever—accompanying the vote from each group that chose to comment was printed verbatim in a ten-page supplement to the March 1991 ESSAY.

This comprised nine three-column pages of fine print, see Exhibit #20. The required “sense of the Fellowship” was thus formally taken; it was not a Fellowship *vote* to determine SA’s sobriety definition.

*↔Again, it should be noted here that SA’s TLH interpretation does not depend on any vote. That interpretation derives from SA’s historical origins, reason for being, and literature, just as AA’s definition of sobriety was never derived from any vote.*

**That convulsive experience should have taught SA the lesson that leaders in service positions must be explicitly of one mind on what constitutes sobriety in SA. Where is our leadership today?**

### **SA's "Sobriety Imperative"**

I believe the term "sobriety imperative" came into use about the time of the NYC incident, tying this expression directly to TLH. It has been in constant use throughout the entire fellowship ever since. In the August 27, 1990 ESSAY I wrote about the implications of the NYC affair:

Some . . . members interpret SA's sobriety definition to include sex in "committed relationships" and relationships outside traditional heterosexual marriage . . . . There are other organizations that accommodate and welcome these views. However, SA's sobriety definition was forged and validated in a process described in "*Outline Summary of Fellowship-wide Consensus of SA's Sobriety Imperative*" . . . . The sobriety definition is a given. . . . That's why we say "we have no other options." . . . However, *only groups holding to the SA principle of sexual sobriety can call themselves SA groups, and SA can only recognize persons as being sexually sober who are sober according to SA's historic definition. . . .*

We would do well to consider the implications of that last sentence. Where is our fellowship today? Where is your group today? Where are you today?

### **Oklahoma City Convention Business Meeting January 12, 1991**

The point has recently been raised by some few who argue and teach against TLH that the vote taken in the regular Saturday business meeting of the OKC convention somehow implies for SA worldwide that there is room for individual interpretation of "spouse" and "marriage." They keep referring to OKC as though their whole argument depends on it. It seems to be the

only peg they have to hang their hat on. Let the record speak for itself.

The following quote is from the "Business Meeting Report" on page 3 of the March 1991 Box 300 portion of the ESSAY:

"Convention planners decided that the convention business meeting, traditionally dealing only with matters pertaining to conventions, would, in this case, also bring up other matters. It was stated at the beginning of the business meeting that any suggestions or recommendations made on such other matters would be suggestions only, not binding on the fellowship. [Fellowship decisions were no longer being made in conventions.]

"The following report is from Jean P., who chaired the business meeting, held in two sessions: "At the business meeting of the Oklahoma City SA conference, January 12, 1991, the following motions were made and passed:

"1. San Diego's bid for the January, 1992 conference was accepted by acclamation.

"2. It was suggested that . . .only one SA-wide international conference a year . . . .

"3. Following a discussion of SA's sobriety statement, a motion was made that this conference business meeting go on record as recommending that SA's sobriety statement be left exactly as it is now written in the SA manual. After extensive discussion, this motion was passed 36 to 1, with 3 abstentions." [Two other unrelated motions were also voted on.]

The purpose of the OKC business meeting and vote has been misconstrued. Rather than speaking for SA as a whole and allowing individual or flexible interpretation, the suggestion that was made by the random 36 persons who happened to attend that session was to *leave the definition just as it was*.

### **“Principles Corroborating SA’s Interpretation of Sexual Sobriety”**

Do you believe that “the very essence and validity of SA are at stake” in this issue? I do, and I made a case for it in a paper with the above title, which was published and given to every registered SA member with the June 1991 ESSAY. I urge you to read this historical document, available upon request. I explain why we dare not validate or even tacitly endorse “committed relationship” sexualizing of any orientation, lest “under the guise of defending someone’s `rights,’ we unwittingly shoot them—or SA—in the foot.” I show how our recovery reveals the lie in those easy assumptions we

helped create and propagate. And I discuss many other cogent reasons. The point here is that I know of no one who has ever debated or shot down any of these arguments, even those who are now covertly advocating SRA-type sobriety. By not having taken their stand publicly against this and other papers, have they not in effect acknowledged that SA has always stood for TLH sobriety?

### **The Fellowship Breathes a Sigh of Relief**

After the NYC incident the Fellowship breathed a huge collective sigh of relief. We actually felt the relief in subsequent conventions. The divisive issue was behind us. “Committed relationships” and “spouse as you understand spouse” had become a non-issue again, as before. A new sex addiction fellowship was formed, Sexual Recovery Anonymous (SRA), filling in that last niche left among the S-Fellowships for those who hold to that interpretation. Unity was restored, and SA entered a new phase of growth.

### **SA The Laughing Stock of the Other S-Fellowships**

Fact: Every other sex addiction fellowship knows that SA’s interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage” is traditional, legal, heterosexual. That it always has been. Just ask them! The whole world out there knows that. It’s our mark of distinction, and that distinction is crystal clear to everyone outside of SA. That’s the point of some of them who find fault with SA. Could this be why some of us tend to shy away from TLH—because we’re afraid of appearing different, afraid of being labeled “homophobic,” afraid of being “politically incorrect,” in the minority, afraid of standing apart from the popular crowd? (See my follow-on paper “My Appeal to Gays.”)

The other S-Fellowships respect us highly for what we stand for—TLH. They refer people to SA, just as we refer people to them who do not want TLH. They know there must be a niche for TLH in the recovery movement, and they know SA has filled that niche from the beginning. ***SA would become the laughing stock of the sex addiction recovery movement if we ever compromised this interpretation. They’d say, “SA couldn’t deliver!”***

Yet some SA members apparently want to deprive the world of SA's uniqueness, its tough uncompromising principles, and sell us out.

### **SA's Twelve Steps And Literature Are Uniquely Designed for TLH**

SA's Twelve Steps and Traditions are tailor-made for TLH. They promise the impossible to all of us. And of course, the rest of SA literature reflects and amplifies this. By design. SA recovery forces us into a deeper awareness of the problem, deeper aspects of the solution, a deeper comprehension and application of the Steps, a deeper recovery, and a deeper connection with the personal God and other persons in deeper fellowship. Obviously, SA cannot be for everybody, not even for every sexaholic. Not even for the many, but for the ones who want what SA has to offer. That is our strength, if we have the faith to believe.

### **Conclusion**

TLH is so intrinsic to SA's origins and principles that most of us simply take it for granted, until it is threatened. The alternative would obviously require different literature, written by and for those espousing the non-SA interpretation. And of course that would mean a fellowship other than SA. The traditional, legal, heterosexual interpretation of "spouse" and "marriage" is unambiguously inherent and explicit in the entire scope of SA's origins, its reason for existence, its early failures and testings, and its history. If we teach or practice otherwise, we create division and disunity, jeopardize the personal recovery of many, and contradict SA's recovery experience. Let us not resist or prevent the work of God in SA's unique niche in the recovery movement.

### **Our Hope for Today**

If there is any pattern so far, it is that every time interpretation of SA's sobriety definition is challenged, we have come through to deeper unity, a unity essential to deeper progress in recovery. It is my hope, prayer and belief that once again, SA will come through to a new unity more real than ever, so God can enable us as a Fellowship to break through the lust barrier into a 12th Step awakening, so the needy sexaholics out there who want it—gay, straight, or whatever—can find what only SA has to offer.

bh 18 May 98 rk

## My Appeal to Sexaholic Gays

by  
Roy K.

I want to share what I believe and what I believe SA stands for and has always stood for from the beginning on an issue coming increasingly to the fore again in SA. In the process, I'd like to share my deep feelings and vision not only for the gays in SA but for gay sexaholics outside who also might need and want SA. In the process, I'll be using this to gauge where we are in SA today. For lack of a better single term, I use "gay" as a broad category including the whole spectrum of same-sex fantasy and acting out. There may well be many "homosexualities," of various origins and expressions; about such "outside issues" SA as a fellowship can have no opinion. I speak here only of gays who identify as sexaholics, powerless over lust, who want recovery.

### Homophobia

In the introduction to my "Background and History" paper I talk about my intimate relations with gays before and during my early recovery years and the part that played in my own recovery and in SA's origins. These men were part of my very survival. What isn't mentioned is my long history of associating with and sharing with gays during the last 18 years in SA. Many of my closest personal friends in the fellowship are recovering from same-sex lust and experience.

Maybe the real homophobia in SA is when we blithely consign sexaholic gays to where the common illness wants to keep them, where we people-pleasingly capitulate to their newcomer fears. Where we relegate them to their "unique differentness," instead of identifying with them on the inside and being with them and bringing them with us into our common recovery. *A wise man says, "Beware of counterfeiting the love of God by working along the line of natural human sympathy, because that will end in blaspheming the love of God."* Beware indeed. I would rather treat gays who are sexaholics in a manner that is true to my own and SA's historic recovery experience than cater to their newcomer ideas and fears and risk keeping them from what could prove better for them.

Instead of patiently sticking with gays in recovery through the "impossible" transitions all lustaholics have to make over months and years, some of us would shove them off to their own "preference" pigeonholes, keep them in their place, leave them consigned to their so-called uniqueness. Is that the kind of Twelve Step program that AA tough love ushered into the world?

I say that most of us in SA don't want to leave you "outside;" we want you inside—inside the same "impossible" recovery we have to face. We want you to stay with us and come through. Who said it would be easy? Many, if not most of the opposite-sexers coming in leave because they also

fear they can't make it. SA is not for the faint-hearted. We want you to STAY. Stay through into recovery as we have to do.

### **What SA Stands For**

SA does not stand for recovery as we as individuals might define it, but for recovery which our common experience is showing us historically to be what is out there for us if we are willing to pay the price. Recovery that works for us. SA stands for the kind of recovery the albies discovered in 1935, recovery that is possible only with God, not a “recovery” we are capable of ourselves.

SA stands for recovery from sex addiction and sexual dependency. Recovery from the centrality of sex in our lives, from sexuality as defining our personal identity. Recovery from the mis-connection with others to fill our sick need. SA stands for recovery from lust, for lust knows no gender and no “orientation.” SA stands for recovery from the self that led us astray. Recovery from having to defend ourselves and our peculiar “lifestyle.” Recovery from being “different,” or from trying to hide or prove our differentness.

SA stands for recovery from our arrested adolescence, our lost maleness, manhood and womanhood, from our aborted adulthood. SA stands for recovery to sanity, to ourselves, to husbandhood and wifeness, to fatherhood and motherhood, to a faith that works, to God as the One who heals and empowers the powerless sexaholic.

SA stands for real-, not *pseudo*-community—an across-the-board community. A community of those who cannot change, who have to admit a First Step powerlessness, that there's no way humanly possible for them to change, straight and gay alike.

SA is not a self-help support group for people with sex addiction. SA is a God-help program. The only hope SA offers, as did AA, is hope for the hopeless and helpless—those who cannot recover without finding God. We can't operate on the assumption that this is a do-it-yourself program and that recovery must be limited to that which is humanly possible. When we do that, we take ourselves out of the basic, original Twelve-Step miracle Program, and we are no longer SA.

SA is for the God who is for the sexaholic, just as we are, meeting us just where we are, so God can lead us beyond what we might consider as “good” into the best—what is best suited for us as both human beings and children of God.

SA stands for discovery—of a way of life we never knew before and feel is beyond us—impossible. This is basic, original, 12-Steps-for-helpless-addicts-Program. Nothing else works for us, as with the early albies.

SA stands for freedom, freedom from self-described or media-driven identities and limitations. Freedom from the slavery. Freedom from having to shove our “difference” or “uniqueness”—whether *Playboy* or gay—in the face of the world and force acceptance of that which even we in our deepest hearts had to secretly reject and loath. Freedom to realize fulfillment of what it really means to be a human being. I'm including myself and us *pseudo*-heterosexual lustaholics here.

SA stands for solution to the common problem characterizing gays and straights. Some would keep you “different” and therefore apart. We identify with you at the core of our common illness, which transcends gender, “orientation,” and the like. We are not different from you; we are just like you, on the inside, if you can but see it. If we can but see it! Some of us can’t see that yet; please be patient with them.

Yes, SA is counter-cultural—subversive to the elements in our culture which are so destructive to the sexaholic! Thank God. No apologies. It’s not for everyone. If you want the “easier softer way,” the culturally legitimized, you won’t want SA, and we wish you well, wherever else you go to find help.

Some in SA would deny you this option; they would try to make you stay in SA by opening the door so wide you can come in and stay just as you are! Is that what you really want—for recovery? Yes, they open a door, but that doorway leads back to where you came from! The door back to weakness, compromise, media-driven political correctness, accommodation to whatever cultural trend has been or will yet be legitimized by politics, the media, entertainment, or religion.

The door they open is not to hope, but to FEAR—failed recovery and fear of recovery—to DESPAIR. The door they open goes farther inward, deeper inside the prison house of the self. If we fall into the trap of trying to appear accepting and loving (read *people-pleasing and putting your personality before principle*), we may wind up accepting and loving the illness, cheating you of the possibility of deeper recovery, shutting the door on your recovery. Is that the kind of “recovery” you want?

We open the door not onto a broad, fast, easy freeway, but to a narrow, difficult mountain trail, an incredible journey. And to even get on that trail, we have had to ford the turbulent rapids called Doubt and Fear. There’s no other way to get on the trail. That’s why we can’t do it without God and each other—without YOU! The brightly-lit sign over the free-way reads YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU, that you can keep the self and old ideas you come in with. The guidepost by the side of this rugged unpopular trail reads, “WE WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT.” And it’s not for the fearful or untrusting. It’s for the courageous who must have it.

We wait for you to join us. We hold out our hand to help you leap across that fearful chasm. You can make it! We were helped across, and you can be too. Who said it would be easy! Some of us are doing it; so can you! Take the leap of faith! To higher ground! We want you to be with us as we trudge the trail of Life together. It’s the only Way for us! It may be for you too. Could that be why you have been led to SA?

### **A Faith That Works**

We don’t know what kind of life yours will be in recovery, just as we could not know what kind of life ours would be. We can tell you, however, that your life, like ours, can be loosed from the tyranny of lust and misconnection. That’s a promise we thought was impossible, yet today many of us, gay and straight, are experiencing impossible joy. If, as we discovered, you surrender your sex, your sexuality, your “orientation,” your life, and your will to the care of God daily in your Third Step and incorporate the other principles of this program into your life, you will be guided into what is best for you, as

some of us are being incredibly guided and blessed. We trust God for that; and it's working. You can too. Whenever we have done that, God has never failed us. But you have to be willing to trust God for that and not believe your own or someone else's understanding of who or what you are and what's best for you! *That's what a fellowship of the Twelve Steps is all about—a faith that works!* And Yes! there's a leap of faith involved.

### **SA Is Not for Everybody**

We realize that this narrow trail is not for everybody. It's not media-popular, and who said it had to be easy? For those of us driven to SA by our dis-ease and needs, SA has been the only way out and up for us. SA's historic way. God in his wisdom and care has provided other S-fellowships accommodating every desire of those who don't want this narrow path. If one of them is for you, we bless you and wish you well. Go where you feel you must. That's what we did! Trying to change SA or saying that SA stands for a sobriety which it does not stand for destroys the spiritual unity of our fellowship, without which we have no recovery. We discovered that we do want the kind of recovery SA promises—that which is only possible with God. And we long for others to experience this life-changing discovery. But it is not and never has been for everybody. We must take a united stand on that, lest our politically-correct people-pleasing of personalities rob us of our lifesaving principles.

### **The Gay Issue as a Measure of Where We Are in SA Today**

**On the one hand**, maybe the gays are the real test of SA. Some of us others think we can hide behind lust and/or misconnection with wives or husbands in what might appear to pass as traditional, legal, heterosexual (TLH) “marriage.” (I venture to say that prior to real recovery, the average “straight” married man like me doesn't have the foggiest notion of what marriage and love and sex are all about.) Or, as singles or marrieds, we play around with being periodic lusters, hiding behind our so-called “sobriety” dates. What monstrous liars we can be! But gays are faced with the fearful prospect of taking a leap of faith into the unknown. They have to “find God or die,” just like the early alkies said. So do we, but how many of us see that and take that narrow path?

So maybe it's the gays who must show us the lie we're living in. Maybe they have to show the way into breaking the lust barrier, breaking the mis-connection barrier, breaking the GOD barrier, in actually finding, experiencing, the God of the lustaholic. We, the so-called non-gays, have no recovery unless we are recovering from sex perversion in our relations with both sexes. (Yes, I use the word perversion deliberately. What better word to describe what I did with the natural God-given sex instinct in perverting my *self*, perverting woman, perverting love?) How can it be any different with sexaholic gays? How can they have recovery unless they are recovering from sex perversion in their relations with both sexes?

Strange as it may seem, the blindness may well be deeper in straights. Gays I see coming into SA seem to know deep down that they aren't making

it, that something's wrong. They're willing to give up being so shrill and infernally demanding, forcing the world into telling them they're okay. But look at the straights in SA: Some of us act like we've got the world by the tail. But how many have broken the lust barrier? And how many of us can see our pseudo-sexuality, our mis-connection with the opposite sex. Are we spiritually blind? We can't see that we are the original sex perverts. We who pervert the image of woman and our relations with women into just another form of sex with ourselves. Isn't that same-sex lust?

It's easy to see how a gay's very identity as a human being today is being defined in sexual terms. But it's more difficult to see how our so-called straight personal identity is predicated on our broken sexuality. Why can't we see that we are all alike? That's the depths of our cultural blindness. (Ref. my *Lust Virus*.)

**On the other hand**, straights may be the real test in SA. And are we flunking the test? Is that why some of us feel we have to accommodate—offer the “easier softer way” to gays? Because we have to fudge ourselves? Because we haven't crossed the lust barrier yet? Or the misconnection barrier? The God barrier? Has SA crossed the lust barrier yet—as a Fellowship? So how can we help the gays? Is that why we accommodate? And if we accommodate to them, instead of being a challenge and blessing, we'll only add to their dilemma and become a curse. That's what some of us don't see. But the only message SA has ever had from the beginning is RECOVERY, and that is precisely what's been happening, slowly, to increasing numbers of gay sexaholics in SA!

So maybe we—all of us—are the ones who have to take the leap of faith. Today, in SA. And put SA to the test as we did in 1981, when we went counter-cultural in proclaiming lust recovery. There were only three of us then, bi- and straight. Isolated at that. No organization, no meetings, no literature, no nothing! Nothing except each other and our powerlessness and the promise given to the world by God in 1935 to hopeless helpless drunks.

What would happen if we appealed to gay sexaholics, instead of with compromise, with the hard truth? This is the kind of approach I take:

Hey, we can't make it either, guys! Our condition is just as impossible. More so, because we can't see it or are in denial or lie about it. But some of us are beginning to see our sexually and emotionally bankrupt selves. It's seemingly impossible, but there is a way out. We didn't find it or do it; it found us. And we're just at the beginning of this incredible journey of discovery, and we invite you to be in recovery with us. To help us recover from the LIE too. The more we perceive you as “different,” the blinder we become to ourselves. So stop calling yourselves unique or different, and don't let us treat you that way. Face the truth about yourselves as we have to do. Let's do it together; we'll never make it separate.

So, our fellow “impossibles,” come jump in! And cross the river of Doubt and Fear. Here, to us. Sure it's frightening. What did you expect? “Tiptoeing through the tulips”? God's got something for us none of us can get by ourselves. WE'LL NEVER HAVE TO DRINK AGAIN!! Yes, that's the promise! Never again! We may get thirsty—sure we're going to be tempted!—but we won't have to drink!

Because the promise is LIFE. The REAL CONNECTION. What our lust has always been looking for. *Because the Program is working—for those who work it.*

### **What Is The Path?**

Encouraging gay sexaholics to follow us on SA's historic pathway, we need to know exactly what that is and where SA has stood and still stands on the particulars of our sobriety definition and its interpretation. Because it is this historic interpretation which is the imperative calling us forward into what only God can do as we join together in this unity-based fellowship of recovery.

In our sobriety definition, the interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage” as marriage of a man and a woman in progressive victory over lust is clearly inherent and explicit in the entire scope of SA's origins, its reason for existence, its early failures, its history, and its literature. (Ref. “Background and History” paper.) *And it is this interpretation which many gay sexaholics in SA are telling us they must have and can get nowhere else.*

*To say that individual members or groups may interpret “spouse” and “marriage” as they may is to violate the unique calling and purpose of SA in history and to confess that we do not really believe in SA recovery.*

### **What If Gay Marriage Gets Legalized?**

Some, even in SA leadership, are saying—as though they had the right to make that decision for SA—that if gay marriage is legalized, SA will have to accommodate to that in its interpretation of sobriety. Since when! Think about it. Does the Twelve Step program work on principle or political expediency? Child prostitution is legal in various countries. Should SA have to accommodate itself to that in those countries? There is a growing movement in this country to legalize incest between consenting parties. If that happens, should SA accommodate itself to that? *Playboy* magazine was declared legal by the Supreme Court in 1953. If the mere legality of something justifies what sexaholics can or cannot do in calling themselves sober, why can't members who choose to do so resort to *Playboy*, bring it to meetings, and share what they see? Child pornography has been declared legal on the U.S. Internet. The same logic says that SA has to endorse that. After Prohibition in 1934, alcohol was again made legal in the U.S., and drinking was wide open again. Yet that's when AA came in, going against the tide, as it were.

*The Twelve Step program, in its historic origins, works on principle, not personality or politics. Who says SA must go along with the tide?*

And let's look at this issue another way. SA sobriety and the Twelve Step program claim that I can recover from lust, sex addiction, misconnection, and codependency. Gay sexaholics in SA are recovering from lust, sex addiction, misconnection, and codependency. Moreover, they are telling us that they must have SA's traditional interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage,” whether they ever marry or not! The gay world out there isn't telling us that;

recovering gay sexaholics in SA are telling us that. SA is not for the world out there; it's for sexaholics who want what SA has to offer, which has never been for everyone. If you say SA must accommodate when gay marriage is made legal, what you are really saying is that *you do not believe in SA recovery, that it is not possible!* That God cannot produce this kind of recovery.

### **The Only Real Problem SA Has Ever Had**

The only real problem SA has ever had—our underlying problem—is UNBELIEF. Unbelief in what SA claims to promise in recovery, which is what the original AA program promises—the impossible. Most everyone coming into SA believes SA stands for the traditional interpretation of “spouse” and “marriage,” especially if they’ve been exposed to the other S-fellowships (which all know that’s SA’s interpretation). Most everyone in the world believes in a God, too. People come into SA in a kind of devout, pious “acceptance.” SA appeals to them as something true and good and desirable and what they should have—what they ought to have and be. And the traditional aspect of SA is part of that appeal.

But the same thing happens after these same people get into SA as what sometimes happens when people “get religion.” All that intellectual assent to the truth, all that conviction, that persuasion, emotional capitulation, and religious sentiment, doesn’t work! The belief is genuine, but it brings NO POWER to change. This is what I call believism. And believism is unbelief!

**Question:** In 1935 which came first, the belief or the power? Seems to me in his hospital experience, Bill W. experienced the power of the Presence of God first, and that’s what led not merely to his “belief,” but to what he began experiencing as “a faith that works,” the hallmark of his AA teaching and writing and the hallmark of our own SA Program. And therein lies the essential difference between joining SA, belief in SA, believing in the traditional SA interpretation, and actually experiencing a faith that works—lasting sobriety and victory over lust and misconnection, regardless of sexual preference.

What SA has always promised is not just sexual sobriety, but release from the power of lust and misconnection. Not just not drinking, but the impossible joy of having our thirst satisfied. And that’s what’s really impossible for me the lustaholic to do on my own. And that’s our point of falling short in SA, is it not? Maybe it’s no coincidence, the new emphasis on groups and SA doing lust inventories today, especially since Daytona Beach. Whenever we get honest with our lust like this, we seem to conclude that most of us are still under the power of lust in some form or other. Look at how many aren’t making it with straight sex, lust, and marriage!

*Unbelief produces both the failure to be loosed from lust and the failure to enter full sobriety and recovery, whether gay, straight, single, or married.*

Why does mere belief in itself, whether belief in SA or belief in God, bring with it no power to change the lustaholic? Because belief in itself does not establish the Real Connection. “Belief” may connect the mind, but it doesn’t

connect the spirit of the believer with the personal saving Presence of the One who saves in that next temptation. What's in the way is the stuff the Steps are designed to get out of the way so the 12th Step awakening, the real Connection, can happen "as the result." Whenever singles or gays, regardless of religious persuasion, actually begin incorporating these twelve principles into their daily affairs, they have a change of attitude and begin to change, as others and I have begun to change, as the Big Book promises. The Steps lead to a change of heart, which leads to surrendering of our wrong attitudes and actions. It's called "a spiritual awakening." The Steps bring about *changes in attitude*, as a continuing process, not just a one-time act.

Moses the "founder" gave his people the principles and led the way out of the slavery of Egypt. But Moses did not take them into the promised land; he just gave them the hope and promise from God that they could possess it. But that first generation died in the Wilderness without experiencing the promise. And we see that it was because of UNBELIEF.

So it is that Bill W., the founder, and all his proven work and writings, and SA and its traditional interpretation—all of it—cannot bring anybody into the Promised Land of release from the power of lust and full recovery. Unbelief keeps us from crossing over. But there is a promise of entering into that REST. I can't make it happen. I've never been able to make it happen, not even for one person, including myself. But— I wake up today, and lo and behold—I am experiencing that rest! By the grace and love of God. And I see some others coming in to that rest too. And lo and behold, it is a blessed land flowing with milk and honey, as promised! It's real, as promised! But we have to face the fearful wave, go through, and possess the land. Each of us individually, yet together. And most of us are afraid. Sure we're going to face opposition! We find ourselves facing the real enemy, the enemy within—Doubt, Fear, and Unbelief—the only real enemies we have. That's when we need absolute unity with one another in what constitutes sobriety.

. . .

Will we trust God and believe in our calling, believe in this "impossible" recovery God is challenging us with? And will we take the actions of faith? In and through each of these Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Will we stop playing the numbers game and glad-handing everyone and anyone onto the FREE-way? Will we be content to be the few, the unpopular, to follow His call so He can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves? Only God himself can give us the grace to believe and surrender—as we take the action.

*"If it is an impossibility, it is the thing we must ask for. For God will do the absolutely impossible."* (That's the reading Iris and I read together this morning. What an incredible coincidence.)

We can, in God's strength, follow Him in victory—together.

Roy K.