

July 1, 1998

## **Open letter to SA's Leadership and the Fellowship from Roy K.**

Dear Delegates, Trustees, and other Members:

I'd like to share some additional thoughts bearing on the current dilemma facing SA's leadership in Newark and close with a request.

### **SA's Concept of Lust Recovery Challenges the Impossible**

Step One, "We admitted that we were powerless over lust-that our lives had become unmanageable." Have we ever really thought through the implications of this step-for sexaholics? Introducing the concept of lust recovery into the 12-Step world put SA into a very unique position, setting SA apart from all other Twelve Step programs by introducing a highly spiritual and counter-cultural concept. From its origins, SA has been "different." Its concept of lust recovery made it so. With the advent of SA, the traditional Twelve Step program crossed into a deeper (and different?) dimension. The temptation for many is to fail to see this and to treat SA as just another substance or behavioral addiction program as these have come to be in today's world. But our concept of lust sets SA apart, forcing SA into new territory. This will naturally, perhaps even unwittingly, be resisted by some who are used to the usual self-help movement, those who will try to make SA fit the traditional mold of "self-help" programs.

SA's core belief of lust recovery is so starkly unique that some people label SA as "religious." (Thus reads the description of SA on the Internet, where it is compared to the other Sfellowships.) And in a sense, they're right, because lust forces the God issue as no other 12 Step program does. No more generic "doorknob" or "light bulb" higher-power gods if we're dealing with lust-possession. They don't work for my lust.

And God as I understood Him did not work for me. I thought I understood all about God; and I believed! My relation with God was wrong, and recovery could not proceed without that changing. Our Eleventh Step imperative of improving our conscious contact (read union) kicked me in the gut, and Lust drove me to desperation until I found the One who could actually handle my lust, take it, and loose me from it. My Higher Power has to be not only as extremely personal as my lust, but more powerful! I need to be "saved" from the hell of my lust. And I need to be saved in that next temptation to act in or act out. And I came to the place where I wanted to be free from lust's pull inside me and all its lingering after-effects. That's what progressive victory over lust means. Yes! To be free from the pull of lust. To move beyond fear-driven wandering in the wilderness of merely distracting, curbing, suppressing, or counteracting lust. Not to merely talk about, but actually enter the Promised Land.

Or do we want to settle for always living in the combat zone? I did for years. Fear-driven sobriety is not good enough for me any more. That got old and wearisome until I had to cry out, "I don't want any of this any more!! Take it all away! Keep me sober from EVERY lust today." And then, "Take away my desire to lust!" It's either something like that, or we adjust our sobriety downward to fit the best we're able to come up with, our lowest common denominator. Some are beginning to ask why we don't talk more about sobriety from sex with self-what forms it takes and how we compromise. Right on! Well, I've been talking about SA "hitting the wall" and our need for crossing the Lust Barrier for some time now.

**Tradition Three--** *"The only requirement for membership in SA is a desire to stop lusting. ... "* Are we aware of the full import of this requirement? The world out there insists on our making and retaining the lust-connection. It is counter-cultural to even suggest that anyone might want to stop lusting. The lust-imperative is the primary motive-force behind our entire capitalist culture.

Why don't we switch it around and say that the requirement for membership is a desire for sexual sobriety, and then adding progressive victory over lust as a kind of optional add-on? Why put lust first? Why make membership in SA so hard? You mean I can't just come in for my sex addiction but have to want to STOP lusting? Like in AA an alcoholic has to want to STOP drinking? The current controversy seems to dwell on interpreting sexual sobriety; has the membership requirement for the desire to stop lusting gotten lost? Because it's so seemingly impossible to achieve?

*"Powerless"* in Step One means we were powerless to change ourselves, that we had tried to change and failed. It means that we either wanted to change or felt we had to change but could not. We had come to a place where there was something unchangeable within our very being-gay, straight, single, or married. And *"unmanageable"* means that we had lost control of some intrinsic aspect of our being. For us it was not just sex, which is merely one of the behavioral symptoms of our disease. And it was not our so-called "orientation," but our mis-orientation. My real problem is neither sex nor lust but mis-orientation. I am mis-oriented to the people I've been having sex with all my life. (I develop this in other recent writings.) Some gays in SA recovery are telling us the same thing about their mis-orientation.

**Step Two.** *"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore-us to sanity. "* Alcoholism insanity is nothing to sneeze at. It kills brain and body. But sexaholism's insanity destroys our ability to give and receive love. It absolutely destroys the *soul*. We didn't know change was possible until we came to SA, and even then we weren't sure, until we gradually began experiencing it as we took the leap of faith. This Step says we have to come to believe-in the impossible! Now that is simply not for everybody. But it is for some. And I believe it is this tough line that has historically drawn many to SA. Why would anyone want to weaken that appeal and turn SA into something as spineless as a wet noodle?

**Step Three.** *"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God ... "* For the early alkie this generic turning of will and life over to God seemed to be enough (?) For me the sexaholic, I have to be more specific and go deeper in surrender. I have to turn my sex, my lust, my sexuality, my orientation-my mis-orientation and *mis-connection--over* to God. All of it! And not just once-every day! Without any expectation of the result. Half measures avail me nothing. I do this on a daily and nightly basis, because all of my "once-and-for-ails" don't hold up very long. And I might achieve some kind of sexual sobriety all right, but until I see that I am misoriented to and misconnected with others, I cannot begin to recover from my lustaholism. How can it be any different for sexaholic gays? Really now, don't all of us lustaholics in SA have to change our mis-orientations? I do. And it ain't easy! It is absolutely the toughest thing I've ever tackled in my life.

(Does anyone else feel the force of this?) But it works, when I work it. Thanks be to God!

**Steps Four and Five.** What is *"a searching and fearless moral inventory"* for the sexaholic? Doesn't it have to include awareness and insight into misconnection with and misorientation to sex and lust partners? And what does "fearless" imply but that we have to

face the unfaceable about ourselves? This may be easier for gays than straights, some of whom seem to feel there's nothing wrong with their orientation. Do you know how long it took me to see-to see that I, "God's great gift to women," was really a *pseudo*-sexual? That my so-called "sexuality" and "orientation" were false? This has to be true-the shattering "impossible" truth-for all who are real lustaholics, straight, gay, married, and single. (I develop this concept at length in other writings.)

**Steps Six and Seven.** Ready to have God remove all these defects, and actually asking that they be removed? This implies that we've come to the end of ourselves and are asking for something we could not make happen-the impossible. Why should we have to ask for something we could do ourselves? No. We have to ask for the impossible! That's what this whole program is about—awakening to our need for, asking for, and experiencing the impossible. Do you know how many years it's taken for me to begin to see, much less correct, how misoriented I am to women, to my wife, and to people in general? Do you think it's any easier for gays? Why do you think we call ourselves love cripples? And if so, what is it that needs to get healed? The orientation of our very being. That's why so many can't and don't make it-straight and gay alike.

**Steps Eight, Nine, and Ten.** Make amends to people we have harmed? How can we make real amends without changing who we are, changing our misconnections with people, our misorientation? This is the real impossibility in our program. Telling my wife and children I was wrong is something anyone can do; changing who I am is another story! That's why so many turn back or can't make it. If gays think they have it rough in facing the fear of the dreaded "C" word (CHANGE), wait till they comprehend what I have had to go through and am still going through! It's no different with straights. If, that is, we come out of our denial and blindness and see our real condition as sexaholic *pseudo*-sexuals. All of us. Does anyone else see this? Today's media—driven pigeonholing by sexual preferences trivializes our common problem and blinds us to our common spiritual sickness. In doing so, it virtually wipes out our chances for full recovery. (See "My Appeal to Gays.")

**Step Eleven.** "*Sought*" implies a slow *process*. It takes years for humans to grow up. And we sexaholics aborted normal adolescence. And apparently it takes years of true sobriety and recovery to even begin to grow into our manhood and womanhood. Step Eleven puts us onto the seeking *path*-"*Ask and ye shall receive.*" Can I stay unchanged and still improve my conscious contact with God? Not this sexaholic! I tried it. It doesn't work. It only hardens my religious addiction. How can I improve union with the Spirit of God while remaining perverted in my own spirit and in my relations with the spirits of other human beings? Forget the sex; it's my relations with the spirits of others-my misuse and misconnection-that has created and perpetuates my disease. I can connect with God no better than I can stop misconnecting with others. Conversely, improving my connection with the personal God, changes me and begins to change my relations with others.

**Step Twelve.** What is the spiritual awakening-for the sexaholic? It means an awakening of what was dead or worse than dead-twisted, warped, depraved, degraded, debased. That's me! And I personally believe that if a real sexaholic does not eventually come to see this stark truth about himself or herself, recovery is aborted. There was no way I could raise myself from the stinking putrefaction of my death as a human. I had died and passed into something subhuman! I needed an awakening! Nothing less than bringing to life what was negation of

life, the destroyer of life. But thanks be to God, I'm being raised from that death to newness of life! And if this can happen to me, it can happen to anybody!

So, can you see the radical nature of SA's lust-recovery concept, that SA's Twelve Steps are tailor-made for the impossible, that they promise the impossible? For straights and gays alike? Yes! Because they depend on the God of the impossible. And the rest of SA literature reflects and amplifies all 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 into a deeper connection with God and others in deeper fellowship. SA's traditional interpretation of sobriety is so intrinsic to SA's origins, principles, and literature that most of us simply take it for granted, until it is threatened.

But obviously the real SA cannot be for everybody, not even for the many. But to be true to God's calling, we must keep SA's historic principles intact for those who will be satisfied with nothing less.

Jean P., of Nashville and later South Bend, is a former member, long in leadership roles in SA and fondly referred to often in SA. Perhaps she is best remembered for her famous sign-off, "And for that I can never be sufficiently grateful." Jean led the now "infamous" business meeting of Saturday 11 January 1991 in Oklahoma City. She addressed the fellowship the following Sunday morning in a moving appeal to principle regarding the then-current sobriety definition controversy with NYC. Her talk is on tape, and I'd like to close with a few of her words from that talk:

[Referring to the classic controversy between her and another long-term member over sobriety interpretation in Nashville:] "On the one hand, as long as we try to control, to make things happen, to force our vision onto others, nothing is going to work. On the other hand, if we don't have a vision, if we don't have a grasp of recovery to offer and to share, nothing's going to work either, and our meetings will collapse into a group of people getting together sharing each other's pain and enabling each other's disease .... If I don't tell you who I really am and what I really feel, because it's going to upset you or make you angry or drive you away from SA, I'm being as manipulative as when I am trying to control. ... [She then goes on to explain her practice of not sponsoring people in relationships.]

Jean's fear-overcoming stand on principle can be an example for us all. And I ask, Do we have a vision? Do you, the SA leadership, have a vision, a clear grasp of recovery to offer?

I join with many, many others in asking you to issue a clarifying statement regarding SA's sobriety interpretation. We are **NOT** asking for the sobriety definition to be changed in any way or for existing literature to be changed. That's a misconception floating about. We are simply asking that the fellowship leadership go on record as affirming SA's historic interpretation and clarifying it in the light of the current controversy. This could be done by any of several means, for example, issuing-a simple one-sentence statement for publication in ESSAY, including such a statement in one or more forthcoming pamphlets, etc.

May God bless you each and everyone and enable you to do His will. In sobriety, by the grace and love of God,

Roy K. 12steps 1July 98 rk