

("A Promise" continued from page 17)
and enjoy my lunch on a beautiful, sunny day. As Chuck C. from Alcoholics Anonymous said, "How fortunate can a man be?" **Michael R.**, Seattle, Wash.

Clarification of the Sobriety Definition

In Cleveland on 9 July 1999, the Delegate Assembly and the Board of Trustees unanimously approved a clarification of SA's sobriety definition. The approved statement of principle is as follows:

"In SA's sobriety definition, the term 'spouse' refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman."

The action came at the end of more than a year of controversy over whether a clarification was necessary and whether the membership wanted a clarification. In many ways, this resolution was a surprise, and especially surprising was the unanimity of the decision. Here's how it happened.

On the previous day, the Board of Trustees had approved and passed on to the delegates a three-paragraph proposal offered by the Southern California Area Intergroup and amended by Southwest Region delegates. In that proposal, the first para-

graph – the one that generated the most disagreement – was a longer, more complex statement of clarification than the one (above) that eventually passed; the second and third paragraphs listed foundational principles of the Fellowship and proposed a mechanism for changing them if the membership should desire that in the future.

After discussion and debate, the proposal passed by a vote of six to two, with one abstention. One of the delegates on the minority side invoked the "Right of Appeal," the right of a minority in a Twelve Step group conscience, even a very small minority, to ask for reconsideration of an issue. The other delegate on the minority side joined in that appeal. They said that they were not only against the idea of clarification but also against the particular language of the original proposal on the grounds that it was too complex and confusing. They offered to vote with the majority if the assembly would reconsider the original proposal and accept, as a substitute, a sentence that was shorter and simpler.

In response, delegates on the majority side voted for reconsideration. There followed a short break to allow the delegates and trustees (who were also present) to work on the substitute language; in the process, they decided

to remove the second and third paragraphs of the original proposal as containing separate issues that could best be addressed separately at a later time. Then, as a gesture toward unity, the delegates invited the Board of Trustees to join them in voting, and nine delegates and seven trustees voted in favor of the new language, with none voting against it.

There was a sense among the delegates and the trustees that the best course was to settle this issue in the hope that we as a Fellowship can return to focus on the solution and not the problem. That is why the delegates invited the trustees to join in the vote, and that is why both bodies expressed unanimity. *Submitted by the Delegate Assembly.*

Following are portions of two reports sent to SA-Net by Dorene S., chair of the delegate assembly, regarding the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote:

First I want to clarify what was actually voted at the Cleveland conference. It was this statement of principle: "In SA's sobriety definition, the term 'spouse' refers to one's partner in a marriage between a man and a woman." This statement was formulated and approved unanimously by nine delegates and seven

trustees during the last half-hour of our discussion.

Second, I want to give a timeline of events. Between the January 1999 Sacramento International Conference and the July 1999 Cleveland International Conference, I received conflicting opinions about the meaning of the January 1999 vote that we do not need to clarify the SA sobriety definition.

Many (probably most) were convinced this vote meant that we are already clear on the meaning of traditional SA sobriety and no further clarification is needed. Others were equally convinced this vote meant that "spouse" and "marriage" could be interpreted as understood by each member. Some were convinced that SA is afraid to "say what it means and mean what it says," so several groups and intergroups clarified the definition for themselves, calling it a "reaffirmation" of SA sobriety.

In addition, in January the assembly delegates directed the SA Literature Committee to work on original literature (such as Member Stories 2000) and literature that does not contain quotes from existing SA literature (the "White Book," "Recovery Continues," and the SA pamphlet with 20 questions). This was influenced by a recommenda-

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tion by the founder that no new literature be published until confusion over SA's sobriety definition was resolved.

As July drew near, there still seemed to be an impasse in resolving these matters. The delegates were experiencing unity, partly I think, because of more frequent contact, and partly because we were studying AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, which enhanced our understanding of our "trusted servant" role. However, we seemed to have no solution to disunity about the sobriety definition, and the creation of new literature was still "on hold."

So in early May, I drafted a proposal to put on the agenda for Cleveland. That proposal underwent several revisions, and was finally submitted in this form to the delegates and trustees:

"Agenda item: SA sobriety and Fellowship-wide group conscience:

"A Resolution Offered by Southern California Area Intergroup, amended by Southwest Region delegates, request to be affirmed at the July 1999 Board of Trustees and Delegate Assembly meetings:

"BE IT RESOLVED: Regarding SA sobriety: 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.

"AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD:

That neither the Twelve Steps of Sexaholics Anonymous, nor the Twelve Traditions of Sexaholics Anonymous, nor the understanding of SA sobriety as stated above, shall ever be changed or amended except by first asking the consent of the registered SA groups of the world. (This would include all SA groups known to SA International Central Office around the world.)

"These groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered groups who respond to such proposal. (Last two paragraphs adapted from The AA Service Manual, 1996-97 Edition, page S35.)

"This 'resolution' is for discussion in Cleveland. I hope it may provide a basis for unity in SA, and a method for change firmly grounded

in the openness and honesty of 12-Step tradition. I also hope it may help end the current stalemate in publishing new SA literature with quotes from prior SA literature."

When submitting this resolution, I hoped to spend a maximum of an hour and a half discussing it in the delegate assembly meeting. God had other plans. That Friday in Cleveland, I began by spending time alone with my Higher Power. I prayed for a quiet and gentle spirit. I did an inventory on my fear of division in SA. I admitted self-reliance had failed me. I committed my will and my life in SA to God's care. I asked God to remove my fear and direct my attention to what He would have me be.

In the afternoon when it was time to discuss the "resolution," we began by each delegate expressing his or her view. We then opened discussion to the floor. When the floor finished its input, the delegates voted. The result: six in favor of the resolution, two opposed, with one abstaining.

Then one of the "minority" vote requested an opportunity to rephrase the first paragraph so that he could also vote with the "majority." The other opposing delegate also supported rephrasing the first paragraph. So we took a 15-minute

break while an ad hoc committee went to work on that first paragraph.

The resulting revision was acceptable in its simplicity, except that several delegates felt it did not adequately exclude opposite sex committed relationships as being SA sober. The ad hoc committee tried unsuccessfully to figure how to add this wording without using the word "legal." But we were tired; it was 6 p.m. and time for dinner. We did not want to vote "yes" on the second two paragraphs until we were sure the first paragraph said everything intended.

So we voted on the one sentence we could all agree on. In a gesture of unity, the delegates invited the trustees to vote with us on the new wording. The result was total unanimity: nine delegates and seven trustees voted "yes" on that one sentence.

I feel strongly that God was at work in Cleveland. I don't think any of us expected what actually happened. Yet we all seemed satisfied with the outcome. I think God wanted us to know for sure that the results are in His hands, not ours.

Dorene S., July 18, 1999.

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*("Clarification" continued from page 21)
(Here is additional background information on the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote. I've outlined my understanding of the Concepts used in arriving at the vote.)*

First a brief overview of the three "legacies" of AA:

Recovery (for individuals): 12 Steps

Unity (for groups): 12 Traditions

Service (for the whole Fellowship):

12 Concepts for World Service.

The assembly delegates began a study of the 12 Concepts this last six months. In our discussions, we have used the AA Service Manual, two AA pamphlets (12 Traditions illustrated and 12 Concepts for World Service illustrated), and a set of tapes from Glenn K. (a panel discussion about AA's three legacies). We are coming to understand the 12 Concepts better. Of course there is room for improvement.

Concept I states that "final responsibility and ultimate authority" for world service lies in the "collective conscience of our whole Fellowship." Concept II states that the groups delegate their authority for the maintenance of world service to the Conference (in SA terms, to the Delegate Assembly in session).

Concept III gives the "Right of Decision" to each world service entity. Thus, "trusted servants" can "decide which problems they will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions."

In the Cleveland vote, instead of first consulting the groups, the delegates exercised their "Right of Decision" under Concept III. The consensus was that the groups are tired of discussing the sobriety definition, and some expressed hope that settling the issue would enable groups to concentrate on their primary purpose—to carry their message to the sexaholic who still suffers.

To balance Concept III, there is Concept V, which grants a traditional "Right of Appeal." This assures "that minority opinion will be heard." "This 'Right of Appeal' recognizes that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are in error they still perform a most valuable service when they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority."

The Southern California Area Intergroup exercised its "Right of Appeal" when it asked delegates and trustees to affirm what it sees as a

founding principal of SA. In Cleveland, after the initial vote, a delegate exercised his "Right of Appeal" by requesting a chance to reword the first paragraph of the resolution.

In my understanding, the unanimous vote of the delegates and trustees can be appealed under Concept V, if members feel strongly that they have not been heard and wish the debate to continue.

Dorene S., July 19, 1999.

(Following are portions of an e-mail sent to SA-Net by Dorene S., chair of the delegate assembly, regarding SA sobriety and the Tenth Tradition issues)

Objections to the Cleveland "Statement of Principle" vote revolve mostly around its effect on sexaholic gays. Here's my view of how this relates to the Tenth Tradition: "Sexaholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

Please remember I do not speak for SA; I am only a trusted servant in constant need of a Higher Power.

SA is a spiritual Fellowship for those who have a desire to stop lust-ing and become sexually sober. SA is the only S-fellowship that defines sexual sobriety. In doing so, SA speaks only for itself. SA has no

opinion about those who do not need SA sobriety. SA passes no judgment on those who do not need SA sobriety.

An appropriate response to those who object to SA sobriety is to simply say, "Maybe your case is different. Why don't you try something else?" (from Twelve Concepts for World Service, by Bill W., page 72). Arguing is not fruitful.

Please consider an analogy with AA sobriety. In AA, only complete abstinence from alcohol is considered AA sober. However, AA acknowledges that some do not need AA sobriety. The AA Big Book (pages 20-21) describes two other categories of people: (1) the "moderate drinker" who can "take it or leave it," and (2) the "hard drinker" whose habit may "impair him physically and mentally" but who with difficulty may learn to moderate his drinking. AA is not for the "moderate drinker" or "hard drinker." AA is for the "alcoholic" who is powerless over alcohol and must stop drinking or die.

In the same way, SA is for the sickest of the sick. Others may be healthier. There are other S-fellowships available for them. But for a sexaholic, the only safe sex is in a lust-free marriage between a man

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and a woman. Everything else is toxic. (Yes, it's a difficult program for everyone.)

A sexaholic can be gay or straight, or maybe both, or like myself, neither gay nor straight (that's another subject). The strongest pleas for SA to remain true to its founding principles come from gay sexaholics. They have given up the struggle to moderate their gay sexuality, and need a Fellowship where others have done the same.



New Groups

- Bend, OR
- Concord, MA
- Columbia, MO
- Columbia, TN
- Jamestown, NY
- Littleton, CO
- Manhattan, NY
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Sewanee, TN
- Wallingford, CT

I see this as similar to my struggle with masturbation. Society and therapists told me my habit was "normal," that I was simply afraid of my sexuality. When, in another S-fellowship, I gave up my struggle to masturbate moderately, I was warned by other members that I might become sexually anorexic. In despair, I realized these friends might be healthier than me, and I grudgingly joined SA. In SA, I found what I desperately needed: a Fellowship where long-term abstinence from masturbation is encouraged. It is not helpful for me to sit in a meeting where someone shares his progress in becoming a moderate masturbator. I guess moderation is possible for some, but not for me.

Struggling sexaholic gays, whose "own enlightened self-interest" tells them they "have no other option but to stop," face the same dilemma I did. Society and therapists tell them they are "homophobic" and need to simply accept their sexuality. But like me, they desperately need a Fellowship where long-term abstinence is encouraged. It is not helpful for them to sit in a meeting where someone shares his progress in becoming a moderate homosexual. Apparently moderation is possible for some, but not for them.

The stories of numerous gay sexa-

holics indicate that for them, trying to become a moderate homosexual is as futile as trying to become a moderate masturbator. Many gays, and many sex and relationship addicts in out-of-wedlock opposite sex relationships, view SA as the only Fellowship where they find support (instead of controversy) in giving up their struggle for moderation. In Cleveland, the leadership said SA is still that Fellowship.

Dorene S., July 22, 1999.

Non-sexaholic Trustees

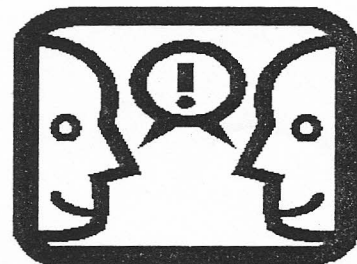
There is an opening on the Board of Trustees for a non-sexaholic trustee. If you or your group knows someone who would qualify, please notify the Nominations Committee via Central Office. An eligible candidate would be a friend of SA and able to fill the duties of Trustee. Interested parties should submit a service resume and a letter of recommendation from an SA member, group, or Intergroup. A questionnaire for candidates is available from Central Office.

Five of the Trustees are sexaholics, four are non-sexaholics. Every year one or two members finish a term of office and rotate to other duties. The Nominations Committee is charged with the responsibility of

maintaining a file of service resumes of potential candidates. From that file each year, the Committee selects a candidate who will best fill the needs of the Board.

The Trustees are the administrative arm of SA, carrying most of the daily business of the Fellowship through their work on and oversight of the committees of the Fellowship. A Trustee is a member with at least five years continuous SA sobriety. An interested candidate will submit a service resume and a letter of nomination from his Intergroup to the Nominations Committee via Central Office.

The General Delegate assembly elected the first four non-sexaholic members of the Board of Trustees at its January 1997 meeting. Non-sexaholic trustees have provided a unique perspective on SA operations. They are a legacy from AA, which says that their non-alcoholic Trustees provide a "window on the world."



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