

What's Your SSSStory?

By Bill Taverner

It's been a number of years since I've been a member of SSSS and I am happy to be back. I first learned of SSSS in the early '90's when my graduate school professor, Ron Moglia of New York University, encouraged my fellow students and me of the importance of professional affiliations in sexology. I didn't need much convincing and booked a flight to my first SSSS annual meeting in San Diego. I wrote about this experience in an article for students and emerging sexologists (Taverner, 2006) and described my sense of geekish awe as I shared the room with academics I had come to admire, such as my textbook author Betsy Allgeier. I also remember Beverly Whipple deftly fielding questions after her plenary. I remember not understanding the questions, much less the answers!

My membership lasted a few years until economic realities set in and I realized I could not afford the significant jump from student rates to full-blown membership. More than anything, I think I missed receiving my subscription to the *Journal of Sex Research*, which helped keep me on my toes academically and intellectually as I pursued my career as a sexuality educator.

So, what brought me back? There were two things. First, I read Ira Reiss's book, *An Insider's View on Sexual Science Since Kinsey*. Those who have not read this book may be interested to know that it presents a chronology of the history of the Society. Reiss's book also re-invigorated my love for sexual

science and cemented the importance of science as the foundation of any important work in sexology, particularly sexuality education. I was reminded that my work *depends* on sexual science. This may seem self-evident to readers who are students of sexual science, but it has not been the case in the public eye in recent years. For more than a decade, federally-funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have prevailed despite scientific evidence that they were failing and putting our nation's teens at risk for unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Beyond the politics, science underlies *every* fact I teach or put into a sexuality education manual. Every fact I read from a staple sexuality textbook --- whether Gary Kelly's *Sexuality Today* or John De Lameter's *Understanding Human Sexuality*, or any other excellent text authored by SSSS members --- emerges from science and is rigorously cited. I think the importance of science is sometimes lost among sexuality educators and therapists. The theoretical frameworks and knowledge relied upon by sexologists of all disciplines comes from sexual science. This is what makes SSSS so critical.

The other development that encouraged me to become re-acquainted with SSSS was seeing one of my sexuality education heroes, Konnie McCaffree, distributing SSSS membership pamphlets at a retreat for sexuality educators and trainers. I listened to Konnie speak passionately about the importance of sexual science giving credibility to sexuality educators.

Konnie's pitch conjured President Barack Obama saying, "We will restore science to its rightful place" in his inaugural address. It occurred to me that if ever there were a time to be a member of an organization devoted to sexual science, *this* was it!

So what exactly will I be doing with SSSS? I will assist Robin Milhausen's team to seek a substantial number of exhibitors and sponsorship for our annual meeting in Puerto Vallarta. I will work closely with Eli Coleman and Carey Bayer in formulating a number of projects that seek to increase SSSS membership, and therefore its long-term sustainability. My sense is that there are many professionals that fall under the big tent of sexology and more people need to know about the important benefits of the Society. I intend to tap into the creative minds of my esteemed colleagues and offer a few ideas of my own. A first important step is to encourage all SSSS to utilize their own networking capabilities. There is *nothing* more powerful in motivating a person to become a member than to see a respected colleague speak positively about the Society. In the same way that Konnie inspired me to reconnect with SSSS, we need each other to serve as ambassadors for the Society. I have one request if you've read this far into my introduction. When you're finished, think of *five* colleagues who are not currently SSSS members and send them an e-mail message. It does not need to be a 1,000 persuasion article; a message such as this will suffice: "Hey [name] – I thought you might like to join SSSS. See www.sexscience.org." If you are feeling more inspired, you can tell your colleagues what's important to you

about SSSS. Feeling even more inspired? Share your thoughts on a list serv. Or change your Facebook or LinkedIn status to say what you love about SSSS. (And include the link, too!)

After you've sent your short email to five colleagues, consider sharing with your Society colleagues. I hope this column – "What's Your SSSStory?" becomes a regular feature in *Sexual Science*, so that we can all continue to feel invigorated by sexual science and continue to remind each other why the Society is so important to us. So tell us why *you're* a member. Send your comments – up to 500 words – to rmilhaus@uoguelph.ca. And thanks for welcoming me back to SSSS.

Reference

Taverner, W.J. (2006). "Tips for Emerging Sexology Professionals: Networking and Nurturing," *Contemporary Sexuality*, 40(2):13-18; 19.