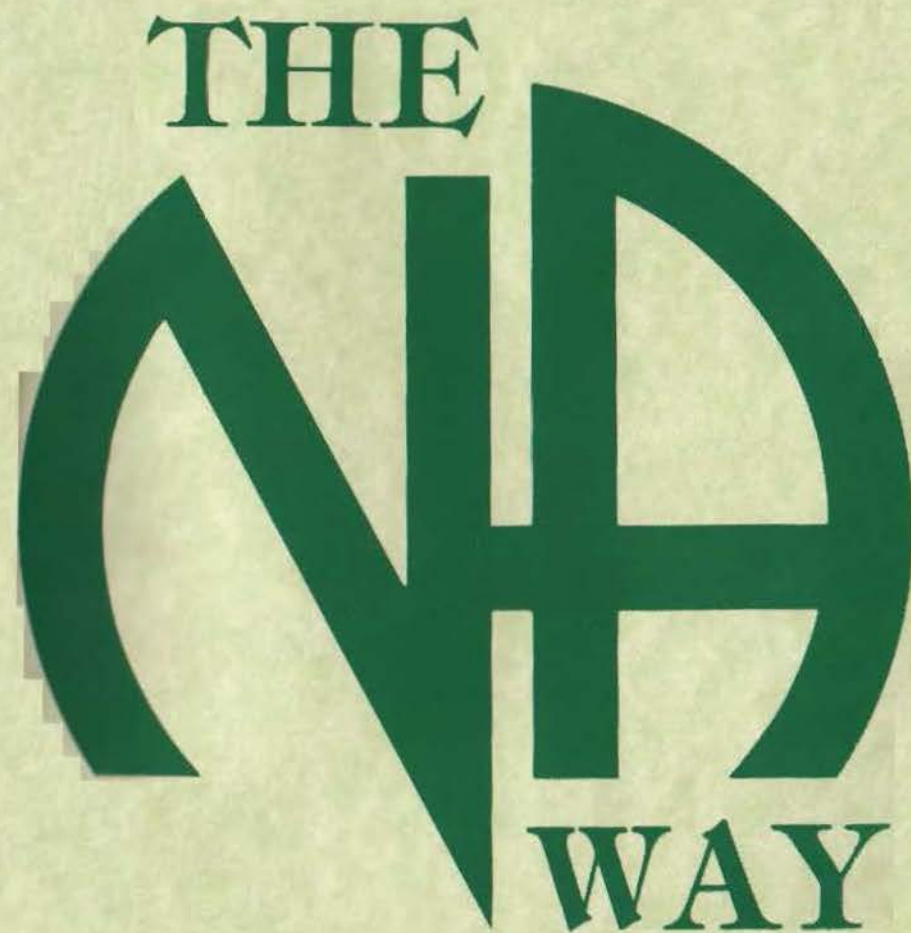


My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.



FEBRUARY 1983

N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work".



**FEBRUARY
1983**

VOLUME 1

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*Please mail all articles, subscriptions
input, questions and letters to:*

The N.A. Way Magazine
Post Office Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio 44432

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I Can Handle It.

"You can handle it." That's what my "street friends" always told me, and for five years I believed that *I could handle it*.

After being so lucky to graduate from "HIGH" school, I lost my job. Not being tied down I took off for a well known West Coast "DRUGSVILLE". After four months of drugging, living at four different homes, and more drugs, I mooched a ride to my midwestern hometown.

During my first week home I spent nights and mornings in bars and days wherever I could find a bed. At the end of this week, my best friend and constant companion left me for the West Coast.

I felt deserted and said to myself, "Oh no, I'm alone, but that's okay, *I can handle it*." Since I was never one to party alone (misery loves company) I went on a search for a new party buddy. Bar after bar, each of which were loaded with people, only made me feel more and more alone. I couldn't even find a *joint*, let alone a friend. I gave that up and went to visit a relative.

*"There I was
with nothing left."*

I told her how alone I felt and that things just weren't the same. I felt like I was crazy. There I was with nothing left. "What has happened to me?", I wondered. There was definitely something wrong. Could it be all the drugs I was doing? It had to be. Now that I recognized my problem, what could I do to help solve it? I wanted help. I didn't know anyone who had ever done anything about a drug problem except to use more drugs. I realized... "*I can't handle it*."

For the next six days I tried again to "handle it" — just one more time. I practiced my same old routine. On the seventh day I partied like I never partied before. I nearly met my God that night by driving into a very large tree at 50 miles per hour. By some *coincidence* I missed. I saw my life pass before my eyes. The very next day, my God saved me by bringing an old "party" friend back into my life. He called and said he'd be in my area

and asked if he could stop by. "Sure" I told him.

When he got to my place I was amazed at how different he seemed. We sat down for a chat and I asked him where he was going. "To a church." "For What?", I asked. "A meeting." he replied. "What kind of a meeting?", "N.A.". Still further curious, I asked "What's that?" He started to explain and before he could finish, I asked if I could go with him.

I couldn't believe the love I was surrounded with at that meeting. I couldn't wait to go back next week. That one meeting wasn't enough, so the next week I shared my feelings and those beautiful people saw to it that I got to more meetings. I've been clean since my second meeting and I love it. I'm so grateful that my God brought N.A. into my life. I couldn't handle it alone. I have one hope, that the person who is as lost as I was, can find N.A. too.

EXPRESSIONS OF DENIAL

"I can quit anytime I want to — I just don't want to."

"I didn't get that bad..."

*"These N.A. people really don't
understand what's going on with me."*

*"How can these people help me? None of them ever shot drugs."
or "How can these people help me? They all shot drugs."*

"...But...I never..."

*"I can do anything I want to as
long as I don't use any drugs."*

"I don't need that many meetings."

"I don't need a sponsor, I've got a therapist."

*"I'll quit tomorrow... if I see that I'm
having a problem, then I'll quit."*

"I don't need to call my sponsor... it's no big deal."

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY ALLOWS ME TO SERVE

When I first came to N.A., there weren't any meetings near where I lived. I met a person who I identified with; we were both addicts seeking recovery and at that point we both related to the chemicals we used. We talked about how they made us feel and what we did while we were using. I'd been to an N.A. meeting and he hadn't so I took him to one. We began to share some time together. We'd go places and do things with each other, but most of all we just sat and talked. We talked about not using drugs. We talked about how we stayed clean that day. We shared openly with each other. We did this on an occasional basis at first, it seemed with days and then weeks clean, we needed each other more regularly. We regularly traveled together to the one N.A. meeting that was available to us. At one meeting we picked up a "little white booklet" and took it home with us. Then when we would sit down together and talk about staying clean or talk about the sick old things we used to do, we'd read a little bit from that "little white booklet".

Soon we decided to start a meeting. We decided to start it on a Saturday night. We told all of our friends, scheduled our meeting, brought a pitcher of iced tea, and some cookies, opened the meeting place and sat down together, but no one else came.

Finally a woman brought her "loaded" son in and we sat and shared with them. We shared what we knew about total abstinence. We read a little

*"... we shared
what we knew..."*

from the booklet to them. Her son never came back. I think at that point we gave up. We were discouraged. But eventually our spirits lifted, and with the help of some other people who were concerned about us and our recovery, we decided to try again. This time we asked for some help from those folks who regularly attended the meeting where we originally found N.A. They came and supported us every week. They spoke at our meeting. They helped us have a meeting. They helped us put together a

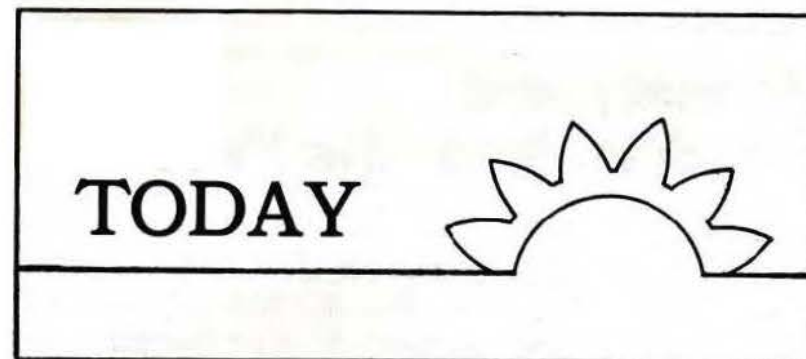
group. By the grace of a loving Ultimate Authority, that meeting still exists. It wasn't my fault.

My friend soon moved away, and I was left as the "sole founder". I had my own ideas on what N.A. should be. I went away to "greater N.A." to a convention, and came back felled with excitement, energy and drive. I wanted for "my" little group what I'd seen there. I wanted *real* N.A. recovery for me and the people who came to that meeting. I'd been hugged into submission. I took the hugs back. I hugged the people who came to that meeting whether they wanted to be hugged or not. I told them the things that had been shared with me at that convention. Only I wasn't quite sure about those things and I shared them very, very **FORCEFULLY**. I wasn't quite sure about myself either. I acted like an authority, so that no one would challenge me in my insecurity. Newcomers came to our meetings. They came hesitantly, frightened, searching for acceptance, looking for hope. I regularly accosted newcomers — "are you sure you want to stop using?" — "Do you believe in your heart that you're an addict?" — "Do you know how to stay clean? I do. Work the Steps or die!" I accosted these newcomers. Some of them never came back. I ran the group with a firm hand. I felt like it was my responsibility. I thought I was the only one who could do it. I didn't share the load. Oh, sure, other people had titles or were trusted servants of the group, but I did all the work. I came earlier than anyone and set up the meeting. I laid out the literature which I kept in my car, at my home in between meetings. I brought the pitchers of iced tea until we had a coffeepot, and then I brought the coffee, and kept the cups. As soon as the meeting was over, I started emptying the ash trays, picking up the chairs and sweeping the floor. I never asked for help and all the time looked from side to side — from newcomer to newcomer. I laid out heavy guilt trips in an attempt to intimidate them into surrender. I only wanted the best for my group. I only wanted it to be the same kind of "hard-core recovery" meeting that I'd seen...only better...only harder core. In the group business meetings I offered my wisdom, my advice, my experience. Few stood up to me and I shouted them down. When everything didn't go my way I pouted and cried, conned and cajoled, and assassinated characters until others gave in and did it the way I wanted to do it. In spite of all this, the meeting grew.

Addicts sought recovery in our group. We had lots of literature, because I had made friends with the right people. The meeting grew in spite of me, (but I thought it was because of me). I thought that I'd done a good job. Everything got done. The meeting place was always ready, and was always cleaned up. The speakers were always "good", after all, I had chosen them. But my phone wasn't ringing as often as it had, and soon it seemed to stop ringing altogether. One meeting night I got delayed in traffic coming a long distance, "going to any lengths" to make *my* meeting. Amazingly when I got there, everything was taken care of. The chairs were set up, the ashtrays were out, the coffee was made, the literature was laid out, all the little signs were up, and the meeting had begun. I sat in the back; angry, disgusted, searching the room for the mistakes that I was sure the others had made. I don't remember finding any mistakes. The chip remained on my shoulder. I accosted newcomers with my intimidating sort of sharing that night, they all seemed to go and talk to someone else.

One evening the next week, a woman in my group called me. She had three small children, and couldn't get away from home to many meetings. She said she had a meeting planned at her house, an informal, impromptu meeting, because she needed to share. Would I come? "Sure" I said, "I'll be there at eight." I got to that meeting on time, and there seemed an air of tension. We sat around the table. The meeting consisted of several of the regular members of my home group, *my* group, as well as my sponsor who had driven in from out of state. I wondered what was going on. I certainly felt a funny sort of anxiety, an anticipation. We started the meeting in the regular way, with readings from the white booklet. The woman who needed to share introduced the topic that she needed to share about. It was the Second Tradition. All eyes turned to me. Each in turn shared what they had seen me do in "our" group. Each in turn shared the intimidation they felt and I got ever more progressively angry. I felt they didn't understand. "They couldn't even know anything about N.A. except what I've told them." They shared their gratitude for me. They were my eyes and ears that night. They showed me what my intimidation and my forceful sharing with newcomers was doing. They told me of several who wouldn't come back to that meeting because I was the way I was. They

were grateful to offer love and empathy and caring to newcomers, but were concerned because I refused to. They told me how it felt to share love and caring. To share love unconditionally, to care and to share with empathy. I just got angrier and angrier. "But you don't understand", my denial spoke, "I only want to help. That's what *real* N.A. is like." That's what I had heard at that convention. They shared with me the love and the hugs that I brought back and told me what I had said before my disease got it all twisted around. They told me how much they themselves needed to help with "our" group, they told me what they feared I might relapse if I refused to let them help and they told me they were going to help. In spite of what I did, in spite of what I thought, they needed "our" meeting and "our" group and that it could no longer be "mine". "Well," I decided, "I'll show them, I'll go right when the meeting begins and leave right when it ends." I did just that for several weeks...maybe months...the meeting grew. The group had developed a conscience. The business got taken care of. Newcomers came and learned how to stay clean and many are clean today. Eventually I saw that they were right. I don't know how humble I was when I said I was wrong to the group. I do remember the courage it took to go back to that first business meeting after my friends had loved me enough to confront me with my defects. Today this experience is clear in my mind and whenever I think of something in N.A. as "mine", I remember where to find the Ultimate Authority in Narcotics Anonymous... In a group conscience, not in my head or someone else's.



Today, not only do I attend N.A. meetings to stay clean, but I know I am an example for the addict seeking recovery. I help my group achieve our primary purpose. That is basic service. A definition of service that is written in our literature is... "doing the right thing for the right reason." Selfless service speaks for itself.

Members of committees do not serve the committee, they serve the Fellowship. They serve the addict who still suffers. If we do not give our selfless ongoing service at the group (sharing and caring) why should we be serving on a committee? Is this really selfless service or are we taking those minutes or serving as chairperson for other motives? There is no need for a committee unless we have newcomers striving to stay clean with the help of those who have gone before them. There is also no need for a committee to exist unless we have a message. Where do we learn about carrying the message and the principles upon which our recovery program is based? We learn at the group.

*"...no need...unless
we have a message."*

Internal strife cripples our Fellowship. When we are at odds with ourselves, it's likely that we are at odds with N.A. We probably won't show as much love as we really have. We might put personalities before principles. We may judge. This can cripple our Fellowship and dampen our atmosphere of recovery. In facing ourselves, not only do we become better people, but we share our solutions with our members. The group becomes healthier by reaching out to the addict seeking recovery.

Honesty and Freedom from the Past

I was living a lie during my first several months of attendance at meetings, I'd set my clean date, my "birthday", when I'd stopped shooting drugs. I was caught up in my chemical identities — thinking that "my addiction" was different than other peoples'. I was dishonest, especially with myself. I went through all sorts of denial; wearing the trappings of respectability by cutting my hair, getting a job, a car, a girlfriend, and searching for manageability in socially-acceptable behavior. I claimed time "clean" in meetings; I was "sober" and hadn't used a needle — "after all"...I rationalized..."my addiction was the drugs I was powerless over,...my specific favorites; and I wasn't using *them* anymore." Honesty began to penetrate my denial. I felt guilty. My socially acceptable lifestyle was not enabling me to manage my life as I had expected it to. Each time I heard *total abstinence* I cringed with guilt. The walls of my denial (social acceptability and chemical identity) began to crumble. Finally I realized the truth, I accepted my personal powerlessness over the disease of addiction and the ongoing unmanageability of my life. I came to believe that I too must abstain totally — just for now. Surrender settled around me in my commitment to live by working the N.A. Program. Real honesty got a foothold in my life when I shared with my home group that I'd been lying about my clean date, I was desperate, totally obsessed with my need to use something, but as soon as I got honest, my desperation eased. My group shared my pain, accepted me, and lovingly reinforced my honesty. They told me I could get better and gave me hope. The rejection I had feared was not there. I was free from guilt for the first time in my life and felt relieved. I no longer needed to remember my lies in order to stay consistent and not get "caught". Honesty worked — what a relief.

This experience prepared me for a turning point in my life... a searching and fearless moral inventory. Our Fourth Step

means honesty to me. The result is freedom from my past.

I started writing with what hurt me the most. As I wrote, memories I thought I had buried inside me began to reappear on the paper — it must have been the prayer. I couldn't do this on my own. My God was revealing to me the experiences, thoughts and feelings my di-

seased mind was using to program my self-destruction. I was amazed, intimidated, and frightened, but as my life spilled out on the paper in front of me, old ideas began to

*"Old ideas began
to lose their
power over me."*

lose their power over me. I saw the intricate traps I had built for myself. I saw my talents and began to realize that they were gifts from my God that I had selfishly twisted into tools for pleasure. I listed my anxieties, fears, angers, resentments and guilts. I honestly began to see how sick I was. Denial forced me to stop time and time again, but pain, faith and commitment to live allowed me to continue each time. Honesty forced me to balance my defects, shortcomings and liabilities with my assets. Seeing my assets and admitting that I wasn't hopelessly bad was real hard. Praise has always embarrassed me. Sometimes when I'm caught up in ego it still does today. I've learned to simply say thank you and it's getting easier each time. As I neared the end I had to force myself to continue writing. I "reached" deep inside myself as honesty set me free to see myself. My heart lightened. I came to know myself as never before and began to let go. Here was my past. I had allowed it to control me. I choose to let go of it and live in the now. Real freedom became possible for the first time in my life.

A NEW START

Can you tell me what it is that's happened?
I've lost ten years on a nod.
And now I find myself grasping
For the love and strength of my God.

Sometimes it makes me wonder
If it's really been worth all the pain.
But you tell me that I must suffer
To make any kind of gain.

I'm starting to feel better now,
The future seems a little bright.
And you know that long dark tunnel?
Well, I can finally see some light.

To not "get high" forever —
Well, it seemed there was no way.
But I understand much better now —
I just don't "get high" for today.

Twenty-four hours seems so short a time
Full of love, Fellowship and hope
Especially compared to those yesterdays
When my thoughts were filled only with dope.

I always thought that a program like this
Could not be good for someone...not me.
But I'm not so very different now
That's something I'm starting to see.

All my days are not good ones
And I'm still biting my nails.
But it's nothing like the fears of yesterday...
of police and county jails.

I've seen the program work for others
And even some people I know.
And this has really made me hopeful
To share the peace and happiness they show.

I know my work is not over,
I've only just now made a start
But I'm beginning to feel good about me
Where it counts — down deep in my heart.



*Dreams Can Come
True in Recovery...*

*Reach for
Your Dreams!*

TOTAL ABSTINENCE...

When I first came to N.A., I heard the words *total abstinence*. With my very fine sifting mind, I saw that to mean pill takers were co-signing verbally in meetings for others to take pills from doctors. That sounded great to me.

I checked into treatment and reviewed total abstinence for myself after nine months around the program. I had been unable to get over ninety days clean and had just finished a five day "run". In treatment I made a commitment to my God and myself not to use drugs even if my rear end fell off; which is very close to what really happened.

My years of running and using had left me with the problem of hemorrhoids. They became so bad fourteen months after I got clean that I had to see a doctor. He said I needed surgery.

I had always felt if something so physically serious ever happened to me requiring medical use of drugs, then I would have to be in the hospital. So my mind immediately flashed "free high".

I had heard of only two people who had surgery without any drugs, but I had no idea it could really be possible for me.

Two weeks before surgery, I was in a hospital waiting room with a friend and found this in an article: "Because general anesthetics depress the system and slow circulation and the rate and depth of breathing, many doctors prefer to use local anesthetics wherever possible (injections that numb the area of body needing surgery while the patient remains awake) in certain operations."

*"I was turning my life
over with an intensity
I'd never felt before."*

I had already told my doctor I was an addict, but I was not sure he knew what that meant. I called him and said I wanted it done with a local anesthetic and no mind altering drugs at all. No pre-operation shots, no pain shots, no pain pills, fully intending that if he refused, I would find another doctor to work with.

He agreed, but let me know general anesthetics would be there if I needed them.

I'd like to say I had no doubt or fear but I'd be lying. My prayers began to get real intense and I was turning my life and will over to my God with an intensity I had never felt before. Two days before surgery there was a really unusual calm and peace that came over me. Since I believe in total abstinence, I talk a lot about it and now the time had come for me to walk my talk.

I checked in at 7:00 a.m. and had surgery at 1:00 p.m. and needed to share many times that I'm a drug addict and don't use drugs. I felt that if I could make it through the first thirteen hours after surgery clean, I could make it all the way. I had heard of others making it six to eight or twelve hours, but none thirteen.

My first night was the toughest. Thank God for the program and the people there who helped me stay in the now and out of my head.

The night nurse was also a recovering person. She worked with me using ice bags, aspirins, love and humor to help me make it through drug free.

It was painful, but the two times I cried in the hospital, they were tears of gratitude. I knew and know with no doubt in my mind that if I let go of my fear long enough to have faith in my God and abandon myself completely that my God would do for me what I could not do for myself. I found it's not whether my God loves me, He does, it's whether I love Him enough to trust Him to work in my life. I do and He does!



IMAGES

The image of Narcotics Anonymous is something that each of us can and does contribute to. We, when attending conventions for our Fellowship as anonymous members, leave an impression on the community. Our dress, our manner, our demeanor and our behavior is evaluated by the hotel staff, and those merchants who we come in contact with during such events. We all know the obviously negative things that we have done that contribute negatively to the image of N.A. There are some obvious things that we can do to contribute positively to the image of N.A., not only at conventions or other events where we as a group of anonymous members have an impact on large communities, but also in our daily lives and our group efforts that have a long lasting effect on our local communities.

I make a personal statement about who and what I am to my neighbors through the way I dress, the way I talk, the way I act, and the way I keep my house and property. Many of them saw me in my active addiction. Most were concerned. Several have asked what has happened to me and I have at times mentioned that I attend N.A. meetings. I often indicate that attendance at those meetings is what has resulted in a change in my life. What the public sees, what my neighbors see, is the way I behave in society. Society places value on obeying the law. Society places value on public expression of morality and immorality. How we behave when people are watching is a direct reflection on our personal program and can have an impact on the image of N.A.

As secretary of a group, I told my story to the board of a local church in order to secure a meeting place. I shared the fact of my N.A. membership with these people. Then I spoke to them about the principle of anonymity, and requested that they keep in strictest confidence what I had told them about my personal life. The condition in which we leave our meeting place on a weekly basis reflects very strongly the local image of our Fellowship.

Periodically, our group holds community awareness meetings to inform concerned professionals and others who have routine contact with addicts seeking recovery. We inform them of the N.A. program, what we offer, how and when we're available. We have personal contact with these professionals whenever

possible and urge them to attend. How we appear to them reflects on the image of N.A. The dignity and public acceptability of those N.A. members who conduct our "community awareness" meetings, again reflects on the image of N.A.

My home group also sponsors an institutional meeting in a local rehabilitation center for addicted people. We co-sponsor this meeting with our Area Service Hospital and Institution sub-committee. We have made a commitment to this institution to bring a meeting in on a weekly basis. We have made a further commitment that this meeting will carry the message of recovery from addiction as found in N.A. How well we live up to that commitment reflects not only upon our group and the individual members attending, but also on the image of N.A. Our autonomy as a group is therefore compromised, because such efforts within the treatment community have the potential to effect N.A. as a whole. We try to be sure to live up to our commitment. Oftentimes my personal rebellion and defiance leads me to dress, behave, and use language in a rebellious and defiant manner. This personal immaturity reassures me that I am still sick, still powerless over the disease of addiction. I'm confident that this local treatment community is tolerant of my growing up. I am grateful, however, for the awareness that my public immaturity can effect that Fellowship which I hold so dear. In public information and institution work on a group level, I feel that my *personal opinions* about recovery from addiction are *not* an appropriate message to carry. My knowledge of and experience with the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of N.A. are the most appropriate sharing in such situations.

Our basic text provides sufficient guidance in these matters. It seems that study of this Basic Text can help me express the "WE" of our program. Appropriate use of personal experiences which illustrate the material in our Basic Text constitutes responsible sharing in P.I. and H&I work.

These are some things that come quickly to mind in terms of the image that we project to the public at the group level and as individual members. Many events are sponsored by groups, areas and regions to help us learn about and have fun in our recovery. I can't think of any such event where some member of the local community is not watching our behavior. How would you have them view our Fellowship? How can we help them see it as it is?

SURRENDERING SELF-WILL...

My involvement in service for N.A. has given me the sense of belonging and purpose I had always searched for. That fulfillment is backed up by a spiritual feeling that I cherish and don't take for granted.

Certain periods of my service work haven't been pleasant, though. At different times I wanted to run away, quit... throw in the towel and be done with it. I recognized old behavior in that attitude and through prayer and meditation, God as I understand Him, gave me strength and motivation necessary to continue.

Being restored and renewed, I could learn from my pain, indifference and intolerance, to grow toward practicing spiritual principles. Although I felt very clear, profound and revitalized in my growth, I knew I continually needed to ask my God to help me keep a close check on self-will and the self-centered actions characteristic of my disease. In no way do I expect to become perfect, all I want is to feel better about myself and that means to take action in order to be changed.

I've experienced the beauty of our Ultimate Authority lovingly being expressed in our Group Conscience, both at meetings and in structural service. On the other hand, I have been very frustrated when I've seen character defects in full bloom, altering the course of the Divine will for us all.

I've come to believe that God, as I understand Him, allows this to happen so that we may see how strongly the destructive forces of our disease of addiction are still with us — even though we are abstinent from all drugs.

When we experience these periodic rampages of self-will, we often see the newcomer blatantly affected. With our primary purpose in mind, all that much clearer do we see the need to recognize the loving expression of our Ultimate Authority in our Group Conscience. We can trust that a Spirit will provide the guidance, through whatever channel that Spirit may express it... if we truly seek Spiritual answers, not our own.

When we feel our individual way is the best and only way for the Group, Area or Region... or the entire Fellowship, we may

have slipped back into control and strayed away from our spiritual principles; our foundation. If what we feel is part of the expression of a Group Conscience, it will be in harmony and accord with other informed members present. Even though much discussion may take place to pursue an answer, we often discover our best ideas have been based on selfish motives that were unseen to us and thus revealed. Upon this realization, we can humbly yield to what was expressed for our common welfare or remain on the outside, causing conflict and disunity in the atmosphere of recovery and service.

Our spiritual foundation is very important in both our recovery and involvement with service. We cannot afford to relax our working of the steps when participating in service work. Where there is recovery, there is true, selfless service which has its rewards for the individual as well as the Fellowship as a whole.

When we are rigorous and watchful in our efforts to stay aware of the principle of Group Conscience, we can remain to be the loving, caring, sharing Fellowship our Ultimate Authority seems to want us to be. We can work a "Group Third Step" from which our God's loving care is a result, whether we see it promptly or not. It comes in our God's time, not our own.

In striving for these ideals, we can improve the quality and attractiveness of recovery and service. Fulfillment can then come from watching others grow and enjoy that same sense of belonging and purpose.

UNITY:

- 1) The state of being one.
- 2) Accord (agreement) as to feelings, aims, etc.

There's a lot of talk around the Fellowship today about a thing called *Unity*. It seems to me that most of it is just that... talk...lip service. Let's look at this closely. Are we in accord? Do we agree with each other?

What is the simplest, most basic factor in Unity? Well, obviously, we can't know whether or not we are in accord unless we know what we feel, what our aims are. Therefore, very simply, for there to be Unity, there must be communication. The exchange of thoughts and messages within N.A. makes Unity possible. To me, the spiritual principle of Unity is being as one. We are as *one* in purpose. Our groups carry the life-saving message of recovery from addiction to the addict who still suffers. We need not agree as to methods, but we can learn from each other. How much we are as one, how much we agree with aims and feelings depends on how well we communicate. I don't know the best way to live. Much of what I know about life and recovery I learned from meetings. You shared how you did it and I learned how I could do it. We communicated. The meeting is the best vehicle for personal communication. Between meetings I learned how to use the phone. It worked. We communicated. We learned and grew. The same thing happened to our group. We floundered in isolation, then we began meeting together with other groups in an ASC. We communicated, learned and grew. Groups may stay in regular communication through ASCs and participating in each other's meetings. Areas find this regular participation and communication more difficult. RSCs help. Sharing ASC minutes helps. Somehow the feelings and aims seem to get lost in the policies and the procedures. Regions find communication and participation even more difficult; we meet once a year. Our Unity is compromised by our lack of communication. What is the answer? How can we inform each other of our aims and our feelings? What can we do as a Fellowship to become as one?

Many Areas and Regions have made a step towards Unity. They have begun to communicate among themselves and with others. They have started newsletters, which express

their feelings and their aims. They are not only talking about Unity, they are doing something to make that Unity possible.

N.A. Unity is a dream today. We can make it a reality. We can build the communications network that will allow N.A. Groups and Members to know what's going on around the Fellowship. We can do this now if we're willing. I don't think that ignorance is bliss. It seems to me that we've kept each other in the dark long enough. Let's build the communication system that can give us some real Unity.

FOR OUR INFORMATION (From a Reader)

NARCOTIC: Any drug that with prolonged use become(s) addictive - something that induces a dream like or insensitive state.

ADDICT: One who is addicted or given over habitually or compulsively to.

CLEAN: To remove impurities from. Completely cleared or rid of something. With moral purity. Without limitation.

CLEAN (Slang): Free from narcotics...use or possession.

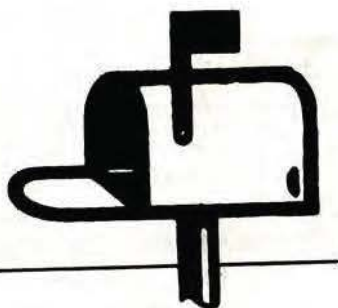
DISEASE: An abnormal or morbid condition that...impairs...functioning. A condition...regarded as deadly.

ANONYMOUS: Without any name.

RECOVERY: Restoration or return to normal (functioning living) condition.

One of the ways that N.A. meetings and our basic text "Narcotics Anonymous" have helped me is by teaching me to get my words *right*. I was amazed when I found out that even dictionary definitions of these words helped me to see myself more clearly and understand our Fellowship better. Thanks N.A., the *right* words have helped me find recovery.

Letters from Our Readers . . .



Dear Friends,

...The 'NA Way' is a great idea and you folks are doing a fine job. Thanks for the dedication and work that goes into each edition.

Yours in Love, Fellowship
and Service

To the 'NA Way',

I recently started to receive the 'NA Way'. I really love it. It's a great piece of work. I'm also on a local newsletter committee. Could you please send me the first issue? It's the only one I don't have and I really would like to have all the issues... Keep up the good work and God bless.

Thank You

NOTE: Back issues will soon be made available. Please watch for an announcement on how to get any back issues you may wish to have.
Editorial Committee

Dear 'NA Way' Staff,

I want to take this opportunity to tell those of you who have made our magazine about recovery, 'The NA Way' a reality - THANK YOU!! I know in my heart that this magazine is capable of saving lives. It did mine! It has done a superb job of carrying the message of recovery from the disease of addiction.

I walked into my first real NA meeting full of confusion, loneliness and pain. The kind of suffering only an addict can truly understand. At this point in time though, I believed I was the only one. I also knew that this meeting was my last hope for survival. I couldn't continue on with the know in my gut much longer, with or without drugs. During this meeting something wonderful happened, one of the members took time to read from the 'NA Way'. In the article he read, I heard my feelings, which I had no words for, being expressed in such a way that I could relate. My feelings coming out of the mouth of a complete stranger! I was astounded! During those few moments of reading, I surrendered to the NA Way of life. From that day to this, I'm still clean and recovering. Thank you 'NA Way' for the opening to my beginning of a life full of joy. TODAY I LIVE!!

Love in NA

Hi Folks,

The staff of our local newsletter is grateful to HP, NA and y'all that we (the Fellowship of NA) now have a "meeting in print".

Gratefully

Dear Editorial Committee,

I'd like to congratulate you on your work with our magazine, the 'NA Way'. I was recently at the compilation workshop for the magazine guideline proposals and I saw some things I thought I'd never see... addicts like myself working together for a good cause. I felt a spiritual 'aura' there, that God was working through us, to better carry the message to the still suffering addict. I know that I was meant to be there. Before I went, I felt that the trust that goes along with the Fellowship was gone. I'm

(Continued)

very glad that I was able to see the truth, it made me feel good. Again, I'd like to thank you for your understanding and service. I hope and pray that things go smoothly in the future of the 'NA Way'.

I Love Ya

Dear Readers,

We need articles more than ever. Please share your recovery Fellowshipwide by writing articles for our magazine, the 'NA Way'. Please help us help N.A. have an ongoing Recovery Magazine. Most of all we need subscriptions, love and prayers. Thank you.

Editorial Committee

Editorial...

I'm sitting here writing again. It seems that most of my recent past has involved writing in N.A. service. Sometimes it feels like imprisonment and I wonder when my time will be up. Responsible to a fault, my need to serve N.A. feels at times like a heavy load. My mind wanders to tasks not completed. I took on this responsibility because I thought I could do it in my 'spare time at home'. What a fool I am. At first there were many others to help but their commitment and dedication wavered and in my hyper-responsibility, I took on more and more. There are a few others who care as I do - who persevere. Their resolve inspired me to continue. Occasionally although, amidst inuendo and rumor, working to meet a deadline, backed-up against the wall of ignorance and apathy, I wonder, 'Is it all worth it?'. During that darkest hour is when I always get a phone call or a letter, the distant voice of a member, grateful for the service, the clarification ring of honest recovery and gratitude for trusted services raises my spirit. One life improved, one day clean, one hour of Joy makes all the effort worthwhile. My loving God has graced me with words to share recovery through. If I keep them inside, I'll start to die and someone else may never start to live. Thank you Reader for the opportunity to serve.

Dear 'NA Way',

Obviously, we are not going to violate any copyright laws if we can avoid it, so we won't reproduce any articles from the 'NA Way' without express written permission from you. Some of us are concerned with the issue of copyright abuse throughout the Fellowship, and want to avoid damaging N.A. as a whole. Please help us clear up the copyright issue as it applies to Fellowship Newsletters and periodicals, especially concerning NA approved material, material distributed for approval, etc. How can we help you?

Love and Thanks

NOTE:... We here at the 'NA Way' believe that strict adherence to Spiritual Principles and a strong dose of common sense will need to suffice until we can get some valid information from qualified professionals concerning copyrights and non-profit corporations as they apply to structural service activities of service to Narcotics Anonymous. We are currently trying to acquire some valid, non-political, non-hysterical information. All of our articles are released and available for reprint to any other service board or committee of N.A. As is our release form. We would appreciate it if you would mention that an article was reprinted from the 'NA Way'. Any help from readers on this issue would be appreciated greatly.

Editorial Committee

Please mail all articles, subscriptions, input, ideas questions and letters to...



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(Compiled January, 1983)

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