

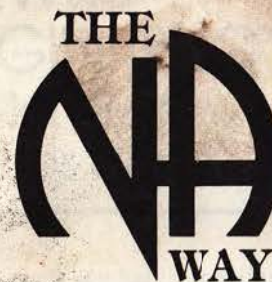
My Gratitude Speaks . .
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.



MARCH 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".



**MARCH
1983**

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 7

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

The N.A. Way presents the experiences and opinions of N.A.s. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply any endorsement by either Narcotics Anonymous or the N.A. Way.

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NEW BEGINNINGS

A Member Shares Hope...



Last night we had a meeting in a friend's living room. I'm new here. I've found work nearby and the local Fellowship is warm and loving; so recently I decided to move here. This is my first major move in a few years. In my first months clean, I moved often. I've made many close friends in the last few years, and I've gone through a lot of changes in making the decision to move away from them. It's painful; they're the friends who shared my early struggles with denial, anger, surrender, and God. They were there in my darkest hours, they held me with love and gave me assurance that if I kept coming back, things would get better. They shared the joy of celebrating my first and second anniversaries clean. They loved me despite my character defects. Already I miss my fellow members from "home". Last night helped me feel welcome and at home here in my new area.

There were only three of us there in front of my friend's fireplace. The decision to have a meeting was spontaneous. Peace and calmness engulfed me as I shared. I watched the flames dance above the logs and the warmth of the fire was very healing. I could feel the

weight of defects that have caused a lot of pain and turmoil lately, being lifted from my shoulders. I felt the ability to be more honest than I've been in some time.

One of my new friends shared their struggle to understand and accept the ending of a relationship. I remembered the way I'd felt the last time I had to "break up". That was over a year and a half ago, but I could recall the pain and confusion I experienced then, and I felt empathy. I'm now in a new relationship; going slowly, trying to let it grow a day at a time, at my God's pace. It's not easy to go slow after a year and a half without a mate. The addict in me wants to "dive right in" and feel the overwhelming instant gratification of this new love. The results of acting on this sort of addictive desire are still written painfully in my memory. I've known this person for over a year, and first experienced the desire for a relationship four months ago. I made the decision to turn this over to my God, and to build a friendship first. We've now decided to share at a more intimate level. This transition brings on fear some days. I remember, however, that the foundation of our relation-

ship is the firm bedrock of a real friendship and my fears subside. It seems we've been brought together for a reason. The honest communication that developed through our friendship keeps us in touch with each other, emotionally and spiritually. Last night I was reminded of the value of sharing my fears and hopes with other addicts. They help me gain the insight and understanding that I need to maintain an intimate relationship. They also help me to remember to keep my recovery first, and to trust someone outside of "us" with my feelings. I've watched a lot of addicts, including myself, make the tragic mistake of excluding others

from their lives, trying to make one person meet all their needs.

"...honest
communication
keeps us in touch
with each other..."

Today recovery has taken me physically away from this person I care for so deeply. I long for us to be together, but I realize we are together in my heart. I'm glad to be alive today, aware and living a miracle.

SHORT TAKES...

*DRUGS, DRUGS, DRUGS, DRUGS...insecurity, dishonesty, loneliness,
emptiness, fear, resentment,
uselessness, self-pity...DRUGS, DRUGS, DRUGS, DRUGS.*



My denial started to subside when I realized that I wasn't powerless over what I was addicted to, but was powerless over being addicted.



My recovery began when I realized that being addicted wasn't what had made my life unmanageable, but that being powerless over the disease of addiction means my life has become and will remain unmanageable by me.

Responsibility for Our Recovery...

I could not believe addiction was a disease when I first came to the N.A. Program. I chose instead to believe it was a moral deficiency. I accepted total responsibility for the destruction my active addiction brought into my life and the lives of those around me.

Self-pity isolated me. Guilt, and distrust of others were my constant companions. I hid behind these walls until someone strongly pointed out my denial...denial of my disease, denial of a Higher Power and denial of hope. Denial kills, and I was willing to exist in a living death rather than to take action.

Being clean is just not enough. Many times in the past, I stopped using, only to start again when faced with the unmanageability of my life. I could not surrender the armour of denial wrapped tightly around me. I needed changes in every area of my life, but change terrified me.

A nuclear blast was needed.

Once again, I was in the grip of my addiction. A desire for freedom from this pain that engulfed me, overpowered by my self-centered need to do it my way. Surrender to the disease concept of addiction

**"I needed changes...
change terrified me."**

brought the willingness to change in all areas of my life. I let go of my old "playmates, playground and playthings". Isolation, self-pity and guilt were replaced with the unconditional love of my Higher Power and our Fellowship. The N.A. Program gave me the first step toward action...recovery in my life.

No one could give me the First Step. I had to be willing to take it. I put down the drugs for the last time, surrendered and began to live for the first time in my life.

Today I am responsible for my actions in recovery. Today I do have a choice. Knowing this has given me a way to find happiness, joy and freedom...freedom from the hellish living death that denial of my powerlessness over addiction forced me to live in for years.

Coming to Believe...

An Awakening of Awareness, Serenity and Reality.

I have come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity...honesty.

Lying separates me from my God. Professing to believe something that I do not really believe, for whatever reason, to whatever personal gain is dishonest. When this dishonesty is about God, as I understand God, then I've lost contact and have no Power greater than myself.

I've called God many things for many reasons, usually to look good in the eyes of other people (sometimes without realizing this was my motive). What is important now is that I've stopped confirming to myself exactly what I do believe.

My Higher Power is in people, things and events. Rocks, seeds, growth, water, smiles, memories, understanding, sunshine, snowfall, blue skies and empty canyons I've seen. It's being touched by children and loving adults; watching the flow of things changing; being patient with another and another's patience with me...breath...beauty and ugliness and a willingness to face both.

God is smiling to me in "alone moments" at nothing at all. Not in smugness, but in "okayness". Mute

acceptance is found in inanimate objects, rocks shaped by wind and water, crumbling through the ages. It's found in people alive and in memories of people past. All that happens each moment and all the parts of that happening moment.

If God is everything, everywhere, then I am in God, and so is every other person and animal.

I am comfortable with this idea; by honestly admitting that I am a part of God, then I have no need to lie to myself or another. As part of my God, how can I deny any other part of my God? I would then be denying part of myself. I cannot exist in isolation for long. This belief makes me a part of all that is happening. Not alone, as my physical body might suggest, but

"I cannot exist in isolation for long."

connected spiritually to every event at each moment.

My thought or action can add to, or distract from the value of each moment of life. Believing this gives me an opportunity to be a part of whatever grand design or grand accident life is.

An opportunity for dignity.

My God is my reality, let reality prevail.

Well, here I am at another weekend function for N.A. It's hard for me to believe how much my life has changed in so short a time. I became totally committed to and involved in N.A. less than a year ago, even though I'd been clean for some time before that.

Lately, I've thought about the traveling I've experienced through N.A. If a function is going on anywhere, I make every attempt to be there. I love the feeling of participation; the powerful hug that devours me and gives me a warmth I've gotten nowhere else.

I still have a fear of people. Here I sit, alone in my room writing, while hundreds of addicts are downstairs in fellowship. I am getting better though, because I'm here in a strange city, and know as soon as I finish writing, I will go back downstairs and join in the fellowship.

Something has just become clear to me as I've been writing. At every N.A. function I've attended so far, I've met and shared with many loving, caring people. At each function, my Higher Power has put one or two *very special* people into my life. The circle of people with whom I can share without fear of exposing myself completely con-



On Finding Those Very Special People

stantly increases.

I started to wonder a while ago why I'm still insecure in these situations. I'm not going to ponder on that question any longer. I'm going to "hit my knees", ask for help, then go back downstairs and meet more of those *very special* people my God has waiting for me!

A Thought About Timetables...

In God's time doesn't mean that we can justify procrastination.

It doesn't mean that we can stop working and delivering. Sometimes we know that the results of our work aren't necessarily in direct proportion to our efforts.

No Crisis.

My disease, the disease of addiction, is with me wherever I go. Whatever I do, it's there. A chemical identity doesn't fit me today. I'm powerless over my *addiction*, not just one symptom of drugs. My addiction is my reaction to events in my life, my need to change and control what's going on around me. It's the way my thoughts flow, so naturally, in a negative direction.

I don't use mood changing, mind altering drugs today, but that does not mean I won't think and react in my old ways. Abstinence doesn't make my life manageable. My disease is sneaky, and very patient. It waits quietly for complacency, a moment of apathy or closed mindedness. When it sees a change, it moves quickly and will again take over my entire life if I'm not aware and working the steps.

I'm the only person who can keep me clean today, but I can't do it alone. Asking for help from my Higher Power, and letting that Power greater than myself work through N.A. members I surround myself with, attending meetings, reading literature, sharing with and listening to my sponsor, making phone calls when I want to isolate myself — these are ways I participate in my recovery.

In the past, not knowing how to live and enjoy life on it's own

**"...a new way of
seeing problems without
being driven into panic..."**

terms, I let problems pile up until they became "crises", and ended up using to escape. N.A. has given me a new way of seeing these problems without being driven into a panic by them.

Today life presents me quite regularly with "growth opportunities"; painful problems. They are reality, my reality and I embrace them. Having my identity, knowing who and what I am, an addict, gives me a foundation upon which to build my new life.

I'm powerless over addiction; problems are only opportunities to grow...there's no crisis.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If simplicity is confusing,
look at denial.

— — — —

Look beyond apparent
impossibilities...all we know is
subject to revision, especially
what we "know" about the truth.

— — — —

Do it: Do what you would
tell others to do!

— — — —

Anger is a
deficiency of love.

Sharing with Empathy

"A Newcomer asked me what empathy was and I attempted to explain..."

I was talking to a suffering addict today in a detox unit. For a few moments while sharing intensely, answering questions about surrender and coming to believe, I lost my ego, just briefly. Before I knew it, two hours had passed and we were both still talking enthusiastically.

This new person asked me what empathy was, and I attempted to explain it using a quote from "We Do Recover" in the white booklet. "Empathy is a wordless language of recognition, belief, and faith", I told him. I knew from our earlier conversation that "Faith and God" turned him off or at least made him uncomfortable. I wanted to be careful to explain simply and truthfully what I believe, hoping that he would understand.

Empathy, to me, is being able to feel someone else's pain or joy. It begins with recognition or identity. Identity is knowing the sincerity and truth of another person's words or actions because we've "been there". Identity is what you and I share that allows us to talk so freely, even though we barely know each other's names. We recognize and identify with each other at a deep level of pain, self-loathing and self-disgust. We've both experienced the horror of addiction, the terror of finding out that we've failed to stay clean once again even though we knew we could do it this time. We knew we had to keep off dope, yet after a short time, we'd find some reason to take the first one (ignoring or denying what we knew about the results). We share that terror, the kind of terror that non-addicted people do not understand.

For us, empathy starts here with recognition of each other as kindred spirits. Okay, so take recognition and identity one step further and it becomes belief. We lack belief when we isolate ourselves, listen to ourselves and get caught in our own traps. We begin to believe "once an addict, always an addict". There's no hope, I'll always be either strung out or coming down or getting ready for the next run. All of *our* efforts, all of *our* solutions fail. Then we meet a clean addict. Identity tells me he's just like me, thinks like I do, had experiences like mine...and he's clean, he says he's been clean for some time. He says he has a plan for staying clean and growing up. I know he's telling the truth about addiction because it's my life story he's telling. I begin to think, maybe, that some of the things he says about this "recovery" might just work, *maybe*. Belief sparks that jump

**"It begins with
recognition or identity."**

from identity to accepting some unknown possibility. This spark of belief is something that *happens* to me, I didn't *do* it, it just happens or occurs to me.

Faith is acting on my belief. I exercise faith when I try to follow some of the directions from this other human being who I have identified with and who has sparked some belief that I didn't have before sharing together.

Empathy sometimes feels like magic. It allows me to share those parts of my story that the person I'm sharing with can most relate to. Empathy is directly related to my spiritual growth and conscious contact with my God. It allows me a space of selflessness from which to share recovery.

THE NEED TO COMMUNICATE

In recovery, I have felt the need to share with other addicts so my trust and faith could grow. I now feel the need to reach out further and share with other areas and countries. In doing this, I find that isolation leaves and constructive sharing follows. How many times, at the level of member, group, area, region or country, have we thought to ourselves, "we're the only ones going through this problem."? And yet, when I put pen to paper, I find that 5,000 miles away, they have just been through our current problem and they can share experience, strength and hope. I find that as our structure grows and we venture into new areas of service, I need the experience of those who have gone before to give me the faith and courage to go forward — to help the suffering addict. The worldwide Fellowship of N.A. is now a reality, and with communication, this amazing unity can and will grow. Some of my warmest moments in recovery have come when I've opened a letter from half way around the world and shared with another addict.

*With Love & Fellowship
From Across the "Pond"*

Direct Responsibility

A Member Takes A Close Look at Tradition Nine...

I was recently asked to share with a group of members on the Ninth Tradition. Study of any one of our Traditions has recently made me aware of how intertwined the spiritual principles of our Twelve Traditions are. Achievement of the spiritual goal in each Tradition is dependent upon the spiritual principles in several of the other Traditions.

As I see it, our Ninth Tradition provides the ways and means to achieve the spiritual goals of the First Tradition and our Fifth Tradition. The Ninth Tradition gives us the vehicle which allows our trusted servants

**"...so that the message
becomes more available."**

to express and satisfy the will of our Ultimate Authority. Our directly responsible service boards and committees are composed of our leaders; those members in whom we've invested our trust. They do the jobs that we as groups require in order to make our message; recovery from addiction, more generally available. Directly responsible service boards and committees also offer us enhanced personal recovery through the development of N.A. Unity. That all seems quite complex, but in the reality of practice, it's really quite simple. We as a Fellowship utilize our talents as individuals in order to live the Twelfth Step in our personal programs. We band together in

groups in order to carry the message of recovery from addiction more effectively than we can as individuals. In our meetings, we reinforce each other's recovery as well as offering recovery to new people. As individuals and groups of individuals we sponsor the addict seeking recovery in their attempt to stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. That's what N.A. is all about. We are each, as individuals, responsible in our Twelfth Step to carry the message to the addict

seeking recovery.

We gratefully live this responsibility in order to keep the re-

covery we have found in N.A. As groups, this remains our primary purpose so that we may work together for our common welfare and the unity that results in enhanced personal recovery. Each of us has a special way of carrying the message of recovery from addiction. We meet together in groups and work out our differences. We design our meetings so that the message becomes more available. A loving Ultimate Authority is expressed when we work together to do this. We select from among our members the best qualified and most willing, trusting them with the jobs that we need done. They serve us. Although the group is the most primary vehicle of sharing

recovery with addicts who seek it, we find that some of the jobs that need done require groups to band together. The Ninth Tradition provides for us a structure within which our autonomous groups may collectively achieve their primary purpose. We're not organized, but we do have structure. Directly responsible to autonomous groups, our service boards and committees are different from each other because each of them serves the needs of a different part of the Fellowship. Our service boards and committees need no autonomy because they are directly responsible to those they serve. Each service board or committee specializes in their activities according to the needs of the groups and members they serve in order to be directly responsible.

Direct responsibility is a two-sided affair. The people we trust to serve us become informed through travel and communication within N.A. They learn the best ways to do the jobs we entrust. They don't act on their own exclusively — direct responsibility demands that they receive at least their general instructions from us; the groups and the members. Therefore, it is their responsibility to inform us of what is required for them to accomplish the job we've trusted them to do. We members and groups need the correct information to make logical decisions. It is equally our responsibility as members of autonomous groups to seek out this information, accept information from those we trust to serve and discuss it so that we might provide the guidance that

our trusted servants need to act. We've often seen groups make decisions based on rumor and misinformation, forcing their directly responsible service boards and committees to take action detrimental to our common welfare. Sometimes these inappropriate actions result in our message becoming less available rather than more available. We have also seen service boards and committees acting in opposition to the wishes of those they serve, or simply failing to seek guidance from those they are designed to serve. This usually results in disunity, confusion and fewer addicts finding recovery.

It seems to me that directly responsible service boards and committees would result in more addicts finding the life saving message of recovery from addiction, more unity, more trust in our servants, and a clearer expression of the will of our Ultimate Authority. We can not allow groups of individuals to perform tasks in the name of Narcotics Anonymous unless they are directly responsible to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We may only create service boards and committees which are directly responsible to us. Clearly stated in the Ninth Tradition; it is our duty to guarantee that any service board or committee or any groups of individuals functioning in the name of N.A. are directly responsible to N.A. and composed of our trusted servants. We the groups and members of N.A. give the directives to our service boards and committees.

To The Newcomer...

This article was written in an effort to dispel the fears, stereotyped thinking and preconceived ideas that most of us had in our initial contact with Narcotics Anonymous.

You are probably not unique in any way you think or feel because we were all new in the beginning. We had impressions, good and bad and sometimes expressed them. Being new is frightening enough, but questioning whether or not we belong is also something many of us worried about. When we recognize our problem, and that Narcotics Anonymous could pose a solution to that problem, investigation became necessary.

Were these members really like me? Did they have the answer that had so far eluded me? Was I, again lost in a world of confusion and despair, or was recovery possible? The answers to these questions and many more will be answered in their proper time. For now, being here is enough.

Most of the members of this Fellowship project an inner calm, manifested by a genuine smile or occasional laughter. This at first may appear to be a "put-on", but you will later find that they have gone through a kind of transformation from their

...we would understand
and more would
be revealed."

ugly past to the beauty of the present. It's an "inside job" that does not happen overnight, but don't be discouraged...you can experience it, too. N.A. members can be "dead" serious, and they have every right to be, for this is their life and their program for survival. Occasionally, you will notice small gatherings or "cliques" of members who appear to be secretly discussing the solutions to the world's problems. These small groups of members are probably close friends who closely identify with each other. You too will in time become part of a set of people you feel comfortable with. It is, however, most important for us to concentrate on the group as a whole, for that's where the strength lies. "Am I ever going to belong?" you may ask, "I keep hearing that if I have an honest desire..." and that "I'm a member when I say I am", but you may still wonder about those horrendous bottoms. Those acts of complete and absolute insanity. Those years spend in jails and prisons...the mental institutions. How many failures, what criteria is necessary to qualify? Is it a requirement to use heroin, or to be a felon? The answer to those questions is "Whatever got you here, got you here!"

Even with our questions answered, many of us still felt out-of-place; like a square peg in a round hole. We had to surrender the "hope-to-die" theory and give up the idea that "once an addict, always an addict". Although we

suffer from a disease, we can obtain, maintain and sustain a fulfilling, productive life. With the help of others we saw and felt something new. It was called hope!

The word *grateful* shocked many of us! In our wildest imaginations, we couldn't find anything to be grateful about. Surely these folks weren't grateful for being addicts or for the disasters that their lives had become. We recoiled at the thought of a Higher Power or even more at the mention of a God. What was that *love* talk all about? How could *anyone* love everyone? This sounded absurd and out of place! The hugging looked peculiar, but seemed real enough. In general, we may have wondered if they were play-acting or if they "walked like they talked". They kept saying that the newcomer was the most important person, yet most of us noticed the certain individuals that portrayed a different picture. There appeared to be many contradictions in the language, slogans and jargon used. The truth of the matter was we just plain didn't comprehend the meanings. Were we destined to feel like the new kid on the block or would we ever fit in? We wanted recovery and we wanted it now! We were told that in time we would understand and that more would be revealed.

They said that by sharing our burden, it would be lightened. In other words, we could "talk ourselves well". We were assured that our attitudes and behavior would change through a process called growth. Members told us that we could stay clean — just for today. That seemed unreasonable and maybe impossible, but they told us that they had and we could. Our fantasies once distorted our lives, and now our denial was being fractured by reality.

We heard a lot of things that were suggestions only, but it sounded like our lives hung in the balance. Members suggested that we listen carefully; that we get names and telephone numbers, and actually call those people. We were told to get a sponsor (whatever that was) and to sever all ties with our old "friends" who continued to use drugs. We wanted to rebel! We felt defiance and rage well up inside of us, but then we thought, "who are we fighting?". Later, it became clear to us that we attend meetings for ourselves and other people could share experiences that would help us to change. Many of the older members said that it took an "all-out" effort consisting of surrender, acceptance and repeated practice of the principles of the program. The principles being the Twelve Steps of recovery which allowed us to clear away our deepest secrets, our guilts and fears so we could discover who we really were.

This program was designed for people whose lives were filled with misery and self-destruction. It shows us a new way in which peace of mind, freedom from bondage, and love of self can be attained. Today the addict has a chance. You can find it as we have in Narcotics Anonymous.

THE LIFE OF AN ADDICT

The life of an addict is bitter and sad,
When he thinks of the good life he could've had.

While into his body the drugs will mix.
Then all he can think of is his next drink, pill or fix.

Surely he knows that this addiction is really insane,
When he's seen all his hopes in life going down the drain.

His life is spent only to find ways to get drugs,
Like water in sinks, without any plugs.

He'll hurt, rob and steal, with a head that's not level,
Why, for drugs he'd sell his soul to the devil.

He does things that hurt people without even a tear,
For drugs have taken his emotions of love, care and fear.

He'll defend his right to get high, until he's out of breath,
Or until he ends up in jail, an institution or death.

He's got troubles at home with friends and the cops,
This routine is endless, no, it never stops.

He's destroyed himself morally, physically and mentally as well,
Life for him is a virtual hell.

He can't face life, without this crutch that he bears,
It seems no one's able to help him, maybe nobody cares.

Well, if you can relate to him in any kind of way,
Please give an ear to what I now have to say.

For there is a sure way you can cut it loose,
That life-destroying addiction of compulsive drug abuse.

The way out is sure and it is guaranteed, too.
It's working now for thousands and it will work for you.

It's a program for living that you really can trust,
The name of this hope is Narcotics Anonymous.

So listen my friend to what I've just said,
If you're still using drugs, you're already half dead.

Won't you give N.A. a try for just ninety days?
The results of this program are sure to amaze.

God knows it's the truth and not a big lie
We want you to live, not go on and die.

If you've got any doubts, then here's who to see,
ask any recovering addict, that includes me!

SURRENDER: A Gradual Process...

I was in deep pain. My life wasn't going according to my plans and desires. Self-will coupled with self-pity and refused surrender. Acceptance could not be found.

In one short day, my life was completely turned about and I began to feel as if I were in a vacuum. A close family member was found to have a malignant tumor, a faltering romantic involvement was brought to a close, and a large N.A. service project I am committed to received little support. I slept very little that night. Service work and sharing with another addict kept me up into the very early morning hours. I work an emotional wreck. An old image of a "punishing God" returned. Thoughts of ending my life were very real and I became obsessed with them. I felt that this God had no reason to punish me. Anger and denial were the very root of my being. I felt isolated. I could see no reason for this God to give my family pain, to deprive me of my desires, to isolate me from humanity. Tears came often throughout the day. My nerves were exposed. My whole body trembled. Taken to a meeting that evening by loving friends, I was involved in a First Step discussion. My comment was intertwined with tears of pain and

of hope. I had somewhere to go where I am free to share feelings of anger and of being punished.

Much has happened in my life since that day. Hours upon hours have been spent with my family, my loved one still lies in critical condition following post-surgical complications. I am grateful that living amends have allowed me to be free of guilt and free of a sense

*"...experience has
deepened and strengthened
my faith..."*

of obligation. I am there purely out of love today.

Surrender comes slowly, a gradual process. This entire experience has deepened and strengthened my contact with and my faith in my God. The hospital chapel provided a quiet place for strength to accept His will in my life, and to guide me in living that will. The major realization that has come as a result of surrender is that I am human. Surrender does not eliminate pain. Surrender and commitment to working the steps, and the spiritual principles inherent in them allows me to feel. It allows me to be human. It enables me to

tap my feelings honestly and to share them openly. Through the strength of my Higher Power, and the love and compassion of the friends my God has given me in this Fellowship, I can live each day as it comes.

Never alone! I always like the sound of that, and used to think

about how soothing and peaceful those two small words could make me feel. Today I am able to feel the soothing effect that concept provides. Even in times of pain, just knowing I'm *never alone* makes everything alright. My life is in the care of a loving God.

SHE IS AN ADDICT...

She was a very selfish inconsiderate, dishonest person — even as a recovering addict. She'd do things for herself, by herself, to please herself. If someone would ask her for a favor, she would say no if it was going to put her out of her way. She didn't have respect for others, especially those who were respectable. She took what she needed, even if it wasn't hers to take. She did things her way. She is an addict. She knew that these were things she must change in her life so she could be happy. If she made others happy, she could be happy, too! She also decided she must try to control her moods, and not get so upset or frustrated. Through sharing and surrender, she can be happy.

Because of N.A. and through a loving God, she was given the ability to do this.

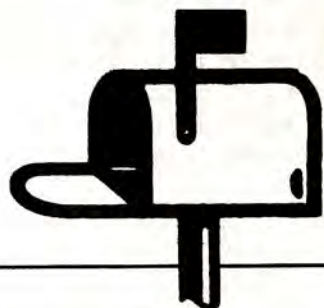
Thank you N.A. — She

Group Conscience...A Feeling

Group conscience is a dynamic thing — sort of like mercury — it always exists. It can be felt as it moves and changes during a meeting. The most obvious example of group conscience seems to be during a meeting while members are sharing and empathy exists, alive in the room. If someone is very honest, group conscience becomes very intense and loving. When someone is full of hot air, group conscience gets bored. The difference is easily felt. One prob-

lem with group conscience is that it seems to be sort of shy. When we try to pin it down, it seems to vanish...when we think we can put our finger on it, it moves out of the way. One responsibility of our representatives is to be aware of this conscience above and beyond any votes or decisions the group might make. Perhaps monitoring this intangible group feeling and carrying its message is the hardest thing a Trusted Servant has to do.

Letters from Our Readers . . .



From Overseas . . .

. . . we are growing in numbers and have seven meetings a week here now. We will soon have ten a week, plus three in hospitals. We had our first N.A. learning day, where those of us who had gone to a service 'conference' in the states shared what we had learned. We are now putting our hearts into N.A. and carrying our message of recovery from addiction to the still suffering addict no matter what the obstacle. There is no better feeling than to see a newcomer come to a meeting, identify and continue to come back and get better. N.A. works for me . . . a day at a time. No longer will I rip myself off clean of feeling good and happy. So may we breed like rabbits the N.A. way and grow in spiritual strength each thanking God as we understand God for the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous . . . keep doing what you're doing!

. . . with Love and Care

Dear N.A. Fellowship,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and to grow you have given me in the form of this magazine. I never finished high school, and for years my disease set unreal limitations for me. It told me I couldn't write, that I was almost illiterate. My care and concern for you, and my belief in our Fellowship's need for this recovery magazine has forced me to write, to think, to commit, and to follow through with the commitment I made. My God has given me gifts of awareness and experience in recovery that I need to share with others freely. I can share them here without the hinderance of personality coming between us. I have Anonymity here.

(Continued Next Column)

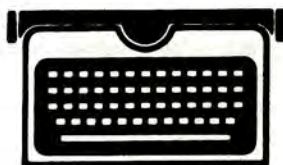
Working with others on this sub-committee has brought opportunities to practice patience, tolerance, openmindedness and surrender quite often. Learning to work as a team is a lesson I value highly. 'I can't' . . . we can' has taken on a new meaning as I've watched self-willed people (just like me) surrender to the group conscience of our editing process. My self-esteem has risen since my involvement with our magazine began, and it needed to. Today, you don't have to just accept my words of gratitude, mine and those of many others show on the pages of the 'N.A. Way'.

Member, 'Sub-Committee to
Administer to the publishing
of . . . the 'N.A. Way'

Dear N.A. Way,

Reading this magazine has changed my life. It has reminded me of the enthusiasm I once had and helped me to regain the needed enthusiasm to come out of the isolation I had been in for months. Hurting as I was forced me to surrender more deeply to the First Step of N.A. Narcotics Anonymous has taken on a new meaning in my recovery, and the 'N.A. Way' has helped a lot.

Thank You



Dear Family,

I am a very grateful addict. I haven't had a drink or a drug since January, 1982. I'm a seaman by trade. I work on a supply vessel out in the Gulf of Mexico. I went into treatment because I couldn't stop using on my own. I stayed there 50 days and was given the tools to my recovery; the Twelve Steps of N.A. When I left treatment, I was given my separation papers from my wife. I'd been told to make 90 meetings in 90 days, but in order to keep my job, I had to go back to work. With just a little less than two months clean time under my belt I left for 21 days at sea, to the same old 'playgrounds', the only thing I had left was my job. I stayed clean and when I came back from work, I hitch-hiked to a meeting that was close to where I lived . . . only 110 miles away. I made 3 meetings that week then left for another 21 days out. I was so depressed the first week out that I wanted to kill myself. I had literature to read and an N.A. Book, but I was alone with people who were still using. One night I was sitting on the back deck of the boat trying to figure out how I could kill myself when one of the deckhands saw me and came to talk with me. As we talked, I found out he had a problem with drugs and didn't know how to stop using. We talked for about 4 hours and my depression left me. We started a meeting out there and it lasted about five months till he lost his job. I have since become very close to my Higher Power. I still go through bad times and I let self-will run my life, but when I turn my will over to my H.P., life is beautiful. I'm not alone out here any more. I'm never alone. I have my best friend with me and as long as I let Him run my life, I have nothing to be afraid of. I'd love to get involved in service, but my job keeps me away too long at a time. When I am 'in', I do whatever I can to help. I make coffee, clean ashtrays and make twelfth step calls whenever I can. I do what I can because if it weren't for N.A., I wouldn't be alive today. It's very little what I do, but it means my life to me. I thank N.A. and the people I've met since being clean. We are a long-lost family; brothers and sisters who may not have met each other, but have the same things in common. We are fighting for our lives. I love you all.

A Loner . . . But GRATEFUL

EDITORIAL NOTE:

Thank you for sharing your inspirational recovery with the N.A. Fellowship through our magazine. It sounds to us as if you're doing quite a bit. We hope our readers will share your story with other isolated addicts, loner members and loner Groups. One of our goals is to provide a meeting in print so that all of us may feel a little less isolated from the rest of N.A. each month when the 'N.A. Way' comes to our mailbox or meeting. Our dreams are coming true through the efforts of members like you.

Thanks!

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



The N.A. Way
P.O. Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio 44432

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Submitted in Loving Service...

Errata Sheet
"oops, we goofed"

Dear Reader,

You will notice that the layout of the N A Way is improving with every issue. We also feel that the quality of articles is improving. In this issue, however, we missed some of our mistakes and the magazine was printed with some errors, typographical and otherwise. Our budget is very limited and we are still behind our deadline, so we have included this sheet of corrections instead of reprinting the whole magazine. We simply do not have the time or money to correct the errors in the most desirable way. We will try our best not to repeat this mistake. Thank you for your patience, love and understanding. We have printed the corrections so that they may be cut out and pasted in the appropriate place in your magazine if you desire to do so.

Your imperfect but
dedicated Trusted Servants
NA Way editorial committee

Page 7 Paragraph 4 line 5
delete the word -by- line should read:
overpowered my self-centered...

Page 8 left column Para. 5 line 1 should read: God is: Smiling to myself in "alone

Page 8 right column Para. 1 line 1 should read: acceptance found in inanimate

Page 9 Inset lower right should read: A thought about excuses... In God's time doesn't mean that I can justify procrastination, or stop working and delivering. It only means that the results of my work are not necessarily in direct proportion to my efforts.

Page 10 left column Para. 2 line 9 should read: edness. When it sees a chance, it

Page 10 FOOD FOR THOUGHT item#1 should read: If simplicity confuses you,
look at your denial.

Page 15 6th line from bottom of page 1st word should be: spent

Page 18 left column Para. 2 line 12 should read: very early morning hours. I woke