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

THE NA WAY

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The Glamorous Life

THE NA WAY

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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 recovering 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*.

The Glamorous Life

I'm not sure I was born an addict. I do know that as a child I felt and acted in ways which were beyond my control, and which eventually made getting high seem like an answer to a prayer. I was deathly afraid. My brothers (one now clean many years in N.A.) could torment me just by telling me they were **thinking** about hitting me. I felt alone and unwanted, so I shoplifted pockets full of gum from drugstores and tried to buy myself some friends. I felt undistinguished, so when the teacher put a board on the wall with stars for each book we'd read, I lied—eighty stars for me. Number one or nothing. The irony of all this, looking back, is that I was plenty smart and had lots of friends. What I felt had nothing to do with reality.

Most of us in N.A. didn't say to ourselves as kids that we wanted to grow up to be junkies. I did. I'd read a few stories about the strange, sleazy, romantic dream of addiction, and I was intrigued. No more worrying about who liked me—there was camaraderie among dope-fiends. No more concern about whether I was a special person—who's more special than the stoned-out addict laughing at the squares? No more fear—only euphoria, whenever I chose. That was for me.

I had the distinction of being the only kid in the eighth grade to overdose on a monthly basis. I came as close as a thirteen-year-old boy could come to death, over and over. I was busted twice that first year of using, and that humiliated my middle-class family. But I didn't care. I was willing to pay the price, whatever it was, to live the glamorous life.

After high school it was a pretty standard war story. Married, divorced. Caught embezzling thousands from a friend who'd hired me as a bookkeeper. Three weeks in the army—they decided they could get along without a soldier who O.D.'d and passed out on parade grounds. But the parade continued. Minimum wage jobs held just long enough to pay a month's rent and score. Nasty wine and ditch-weed by the railroad tracks. Flophouses and mooched-away friendships. Ah, yes, the glamorous life...

Somewhere in there I stopped making believe I believed—in God or anything else. That's when the suicide attempts started. Life was getting too painful to make it worth the bother. Everything I tried to fix things up with—work, school, affairs, causes—got all messed up. Getting high when I could was no longer compensation enough. I knew Hope, but only because that was the name of a friend. And she died from hepatitis.

I bought myself a bunch of extension cords. I mapped the electric lines in my apartment, and tied a line from each fuse into a cord. I filled the bathtub, grabbed the four lines, and stepped in. Nothing happened—just a tingle and a buzzing noise. Ten seconds later I let go of the cords, got out of the tub, and looked up at the ceiling. "You're not gonna let me go, are you!" I screamed. I've since come to the conclusion that either:

a) addicts do not conduct electricity; or,

b) I was saved from a certain death at my own hand by the miraculous intercession of a powerful, loving spiritual being.

Through a long series of coincidences, I found myself a couple of weeks later, detoxed, in an N.A. meeting. My brother, his wife (also an N.A. member), and a few others cared for me when I couldn't care for myself. The first few months were real rough. I was so afraid it wasn't going to catch, and so certain I would die if it didn't, that "just for today" seemed distant. But the black episodes were interspersed with some strong, direct assurances that it would work if I'd just trust.

You people told me to get a sponsor to help me work the steps. I was too afraid to ask a stranger to spend time with someone as messed up as I, so I used my brothers wife as a "secret sponsor." When I couldn't talk—but **had** to—she knew it, and would ask me to tell her what was going on. When I felt cut out of the friendly circles talking after meetings, she would bring me over to meet someone. When I felt like I didn't belong in N.A. because I'd never shot heroin, she carefully explained that addiction was far more powerful psychologically than physically anyway, so what did it matter? But my insides resisted. Could I stop using dope on my own? Lord knows I had every reason in the world to stop, but how could I learn to **want** to stop?

She shared her experience with the steps—not her theory, but her experience. According to everything I've ever heard about who should sponsor whom, she was all wrong. But as she says, "God works in ridiculous ways, his wonders to perform." (By the way, I now have a man sponsoring me who's not a relative, with whom I share on a regular basis, who knows me better than any other human on earth, and who has saved my sanity and my life on more occasions than one. For the long run, what's suggested usually works best—but for those first few months, it took what it took.)

My own involvement in my recovery was intense in that period. Every morning over coffee I read a chapter from the basic text of another Twelve Step Fellowship (ours had not yet been printed). My attention span was pretty short, so to help me concentrate I took notes during meetings. I felt like I had to do everything in my power to grasp what was being offered, or I'd die. I grabbed people after meetings sometimes and tried to articulate the questions I had about what they had said. Sometimes I succeeded, but sometimes I was only able to smile and hug them and say, "Thank you." I prayed every morning and every night. Sometimes I took long walks through the desert and the hills surrounding Vegas, just being quiet and trying to feel some comfortable contact with a Power greater than me. Once, frustrated with

a seeming lack of progress, I asked a fellow member for help. He suggested that I was no more able to manage my program than I'd been able to manage my life. My life had been given back to me, a day at a time. And my program was coming just the same way: given to me, everything I needed, right on schedule.

When I was able to work a little, I was given a little work. It was half-time minimum-wage clerk's job at a chain store, but it was just as much as I could handle and it just met my financial needs. Sometimes it was too much, and I would hide out for a little in the store room and pray, "Please, God, keep me clean, and keep me from losing it, 'cause I can't hold it together right now." I'd notice a couple hours later that things were going smoothly without my having been aware of any transition. It was hard adjusting to work (at the time I was hired I hadn't held a job in almost two years), but I did. And as soon as the adjustment was complete, a better job came along.

Facing myself, admitting who I was to another person, seeking aid from a Higher Power in dealing with my defects and taking responsibility for them led me into service. I'd had a spiritual awakening: a gradual understanding that I was alive again as a result of working the steps of N.A. I wanted to make sure that what had been available to me would be available to others. A year ago I started a new meeting. That meeting became a group with a regular secretary and GSR; now it meets three times a week, and is one of the most solid groups (I think!) in our area. I've worked the N.A. Twelfth Step directly, sharing what I've found and where I've come from with newcomers. My life has expanded. I'm not just L.M.—I share in the recovery of those I sponsor; I'm living their first few months **with** them and seeing my own recovery in a whole new way to boot. I'm not just L.M.—I'm part of a worldwide Fellowship of people just like me, growing together as one addict helps another. I earn my own living, I've not ripped anyone off in a long time, I'm vitally useful to others, I have folk I love dearly and who love me. I'm alive, and awake, and free.

N.A. members have a dream: "to assure that no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life, from this day forward may we better provide the necessary services." Those services were there for me: the group, the sponsor, the dances, the literature. They saved my life. They gave me a home. Today I try to give what I have to continue to make that dream come true. Now **that's** the glamorous life.

L.M.,
Nevada

HAWAIIAN WEEKEND ROUNDUP

The Fellowship in Hawaii proudly announces its first annual Hawaiian Weekend Roundup, to be held on the north side of Oahu. The dates are February 1,2, and 3, 1985. Special guest speaker will be Jimmy K. from California. Come join us for fun, food and fellowship in paradise!

For information and reservations call 1-808/254-3718 or write to Tom M., 322 Iliwahi Lp. Kailua, HI 96734

Not My Will

Over two years ago, when I was about four years clean, a "major miracle" happened in my life. My two sons, aged twelve and thirteen, came to live with me. That is not the miracle. The miracle is I didn't run. Somehow, through all the fears I experienced at that time, **I didn't run.** I found the strength and courage to face life on life's terms. I must admit, all this new responsibility was not something I prayed for; actually responsibilities have never been very appealing to me. To say the very least this new adventure was freaking me out! Although I had been staying clean, attending many meetings, working steps, and working what I thought was a "good program," I just couldn't handle the thought of all the responsibilities I now faced—all of a sudden the job I had was important, the apartment, the groceries, the emotions at home, meetings, staying clean. How could I do it—well if I would have followed my own thinking, I would have cut back on meetings and spent more time at home with my children and more time at the job so I would have that "security."

Fortunately, I remembered what you N.A. people had been telling me over and over: "Turn to the program, turn to the meetings." Well, I had been going to many meetings for the last four years, but still so much was lacking. I needed more courage to face life. I was scared. This was the turning point. I turned to N.A. and became willing to get involved at a new level, deeper and closer to N.A. than what had previously gotten me by.

I just returned to meetings, stayed clean and waited for further instructions. Starting with my home group, I stayed for the business meeting. I let them know I wanted to get involved. I reached out for help with a new willingness. Maybe only those of us who have faced the fear of "losing it" **clean** can relate to that kind of willingness—a kind born of hopeful desperation.

Today, as I look my life over, I am able to see with a clear mind how the difficult times have been the times that I have been able to surrender to N.A. at a deeper, more-meaningful level. Thank you N.A. and thank you God for giving me the strength needed to go on another day.

Today, the paralyzing fears have been replaced by feelings of love and security that are beyond putting into words. I knew miracles happened all the time, especially among us addicts. I just never really believed it would happen to me. I was willing to settle for so much less. So thanks again. God bless you.

H.T.
Florida

3RD ANNUAL LOUISIANA REGIONAL CONVENTION

The 3rd Annual Louisiana Regional Convention will be held at the Oak Manor Hotel, in Baton Rouge, on March 8, 9, & 10, 1985. Special Tradition, H. & I., and Newcomer Workshops will be conducted.

Come and join us for some good old fashioned Southern hospitality, the N.A. way!

For more info., call:
Tommy R. 504/675-8118
Billy E. 504/275-2310

I Felt Alone in a Crowd

I got into this program when I ran out of options—not a moment sooner. It had been a few years since I had gotten high, and those last years out there were all about "getting even." I got to my first meeting beaten, feeling dirty and useless. I walked around the meeting with my head down, and I remember thinking, "these people are clean and they all know each other; if they knew where I've been, they'd throw me out." But I had nowhere else to go.

By the grace of God I've been clean since my first meeting, but it took a long time before I felt like I really belonged in the Fellowship. I'd hear about God and self-esteem, and I'd shake my head. That kind of talk didn't sit too well with me, and I had a hard time grasping those things, but I kept coming back. People in the program gave me their phone numbers and asked me out for coffee. I went to meetings morning, noon and night; they were the only place I felt safe. I got a sponsor and began to share a little bit about myself. She in turn shared her past with me, telling me things I could have never told her, but she was unashamed and open. I know today she did that hoping I could grab hold of this program and stay.

A few months passed, and though I was clean, I began to feel uncomfortable with the way I felt about myself. Somehow I just didn't feel part of this new way of life. As I looked around at meetings, I noticed that people who looked happy and proud to be in this Fellowship were the ones who were getting involved. I saw people drive for miles to carry this message; I saw dedicated members take on responsibilities in their

groups; I wanted to get involved too, but I was afraid I had nothing to share.

I did not like the woman I saw in the mirror, and I knew I had to either run or change. I began to read the basic text, hoping that it could help me learn how to change. I was desperate to ensure my recovery one more day. The only other option was to run, but I didn't want to leave one minute before the "miracle" they spoke about happened. The conflict was building, and it was getting harder to stay.

It was at a newcomers' meeting I had been attending when, I believe, God came through for me. People began to say "hi," and they even remembered my name. I was suddenly beginning to feel like I belonged to something and that people liked me. The meaning of "spirituality" began to take shape. When people asked for help cleaning up the meeting room or washing cups, I raised my hand. It was a beautiful realization: I had the choice. I could deal myself in or wait for someone else to do it. I could be a member or a spectator, as I wished.

I began going on H. & I. panels whenever I was asked. I can't say I wasn't scared—I'm still scared today when I do something like that—but I learned not to say no. I left my first panel feeling useful. I had shared some of those small, personal truths about myself, and they did not come back to haunt me. I could see that perhaps this past of mine could be of use to someone else, just as my sponsor's had been helpful to me.

Since then I have gone on several more panels, and I began going to business meetings. I have gotten to know a lot more people through service, and I've found that the people in this Fellowship aren't as intimidating as they once seemed. As I become more comfortable with them, I let my guard down and got more open. As I continue to do that, I get more comfortable with myself. In that way the expression "it gets better" is making more and more sense. I have begun to work with other women who are new to the program. The more I give of myself, the less empty I feel. It sounded backwards when I was new, but that's just the way it works!

I still have days when I want to run and hide, but I get a call or find myself on the way to a service commitment and I feel like hanging in there. I know it'll pass—it always does.

I'm not the same woman who came in the doors a short time ago; today I kind of like that reflection in the mirror. There are no guarantees, but if I stay clean the rest of my days, and give away every bit of what I have, I still can never repay the Fellowship.

H.C.
California

A Message from Brighton

Last night, by arrangement, I met a suffering addict, two days clean, sweating, very tired and very lost; but his desperation got him to that pre-arranged place. I'm glad he made it; he doesn't realize what he's given me. Another Brighton member and I sat him down and shared our stories with him. It was then that I saw through his jaded eyes a spark of energy, probably the first bit of natural energy he'd experienced in years, that little bit of energy which always accompanies the hope that says, "Maybe there is a way out for me; maybe there is a solution. These guys know me, and yet I've only just met them."

We left him that evening with one important message: he need only get through the rest of this day drug-free, and we would be there tomorrow. That was something he thought he could manage, and it left me so grateful to be clean, so grateful that God had sent me to N.A.

M—
Brighton, England

Personal Controversy

Last night I went to one of the meetings I regularly attend, and a couple of issues came up that I feel a need to share about. I love N.A. very deeply. This program gave me back my life, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to live my life free from the use of drugs and to have a relationship with a Higher Power. I want those things to be available to all who need them.

When the meeting got underway, I noticed that the secretary was wearing a T-shirt that obviously belonged to another Fellowship. When I questioned him on this, he insisted that it didn't make any difference—that it was all the same program anyway. This is a common statement for newcomers, or people who aren't too well versed in our traditions, but coming from an N.A. trusted servant, it concerned me. If there were no differences in the programs, we could easily discuss overeating, gambling, wife beating or any other combination of problems that exist in our society. My question is this: where, in all those subjects, is the message for the addict who is suffering? Isn't our primary purpose to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, or are we just a forum for people to come and air their opinions haphazardly? What about the newcomers who may be easily discouraged because they're not hearing the message that they came to Narcotics Anonymous to hear?

Now, don't get me wrong—it was not the shirt itself that concerned me. It was the unspoken attitude of disregard for the N.A. Traditions that was being

conveyed to the group by the trusted servant who was wearing it.

The second thing that bothered me was the fact that at the end of the meeting, a piece of literature was read that also belonged to another Fellowship. Aside from the fact that this violated Traditions Four, Six and Ten, we certainly have enough literature of our own to inform us of the nature of addiction and recovery.

I became frustrated at this point, because I realized then that it would be impossible for me to pursue the issue any further, because the person already firmly believed that these things were O.K., and for me to say any more would only cause him to become more defensive. What I saw in this person was a lack of open-mindedness and willingness, and a disrespect for the traditions of our program.

All I can say is that this is not an isolated instance—I see it continually with people who go to a variety of programs, and who insist on bringing those messages into the rooms of N.A. Again, the problem with that is not that there's anything wrong with those programs, or with N.A. members attending their meetings. The problem is that our traditions teach us to keep our focus clearly on addiction and recovery in N.A. Any other discussions or literature in our meetings makes that focus fuzzy, and violates our primary purpose. Thanks for letting me share my views.

P.B.
California

Financial Recovery

I'm a few days over 21 months from my last day using. I'm still moved to tears of gratitude and relief as I write these words. I was then, and still am, on AFDC (welfare), and I'm grateful too for the support of the state as I've made this wondrous and difficult transition to recovery.

In August, our women's meeting's Eighth Step discussion was mainly on financial amends. I began feeling the possibility that I can become self-supporting and make those amends. I saw that new door crack open, and I welcomed the change. Every day since has brought new lessons and opportunities.

None of my old ideas apply. I've never worked without stealing from my employers. Beginning when I was 17 years old, I was always using drugs. In the early years, they were prescribed by doctors so I could stay on the job. I "claimed control of my own health care" in the late sixties and kicked prescription drugs. I had no support from other people, and no understanding of withdrawal beyond my own daily experience; it took two years. I "succeeded" by switching to street drugs, and over the years I became completely incapable of sustained employment.

The grace of God, the love and responsibilities of motherhood, and the support of other clean addicts have brought me to the possibility of honest and harmonious involvement with my society. What blessings!

Every day, just for today, I do my work, using the principles of the program as expressions of spiritual truths that apply to every aspect of my life. "Just for today," "Let go and let God," "My gratitude speaks..." these expressions are not just good advice; I'm discovering that they're simple statements of the true principles of living.

I'm in love with the Fourth through Seventh Steps again. As I'm entering this new life, I'm so grateful for the skills of self-examination, honest admission, willingness to change, and humble desire to be reshaped into the true image of my God.

There is so much I still don't know. How do I become honestly and fully financially self-supporting? How will my being an addict help or hinder that process? My involvement in service to the Fellowship has been invaluable for giving me realistic ideas about my ability to work, to be responsible, and to cooperate. Being an active participant in service committees has helped me to develop those skills. "Coincidentally," several months ago, I became treasurer for two different meetings. The experience I gained by keeping the books balanced is just what I need now in my personal finances. I've not yet achieved my ideal of self-support, but for the first time, that goal is in sight.

I'm scared during some part of almost every day, and I struggle to surrender my fears and doubts to the knowledge of God's will for me. I'm discovering that when I strive for faith, I gain greater self-acceptance. I don't have to keep "lifting the lid" of my recovery to see how I'm "cooking." As I show up for life every day and greet whatever comes as God-sent, I feel shattered and remade, and grateful for it. Thanks to every one of you.

A.V.
California

Service Or Responsibility

I am a recovering addict in a rural area in Louisiana. When I first cleaned up in 1983, this area had one H. & I. meeting in existence, and one open meeting 23 miles away. I was fortunate enough to find some addicts experienced in service in the N.A. Fellowship. From these loving, trusted servants, I began to see how the service structure of N.A. worked.

In a matter of a few months, a meeting started up another 25 miles away. A few months later, another meeting started in which I had the honor of helping find the place. We had four people in this 75 mile radius that were starving for the life line of recovery. When I first heard the words: "areas," "regions," "service committees" and "trusted servants," these were all very foreign to me.

Our ASC opened in 1983 and we had another meeting open and joined the area. At present, we have four meetings, all open, and one H. & I. group (the oldest in the state).

Now to the point of this article:

When I first arrived through the doors of N.A., I don't remember what I thought about the meeting; I just know I was damn happy to know there were other people trying to come back from the living hell where I had been for many years.

As I hung around more, I began to see that N.A. is a society or Fellowship of recovering addicts. The Fellowship depends on newcomers to stay and become members for N.A. to survive.

My personal feelings are that every **member** of N.A. has a personal responsibility to this Fellowship to serve when the service is needed.

Today, we do not have to depend on word of mouth for information about N.A. We have RSR's that bring back the Fellowship reports, give the information to ASR's who then relay the message on to GSR's and then to the rest of the members.

Today, we have meetings all over the world, and we don't have to hide alone anymore just because we have a disease. We truly have a worldwide, strong Fellowship. A separate and distinct Fellowship in its own right.

I guess what I'm trying to say is this: where would we be today if no one took the responsibility for carrying the message? If no one had taken the responsibility to be a GSR or open the doors, where would we be?

Today, the reason I can sit here and write how I honestly feel is that I continue to receive love and hope from the Fellowship of N.A., and that I accept responsibility, as I was taught by other recovering addicts.

So the next time I am asked to do something or asked to volunteer, I will try to look at it in this light: "Will it be optional **service** work or will it be my **responsibility**?"

D.R.
Louisiana

A DECADE OF MIRACLES

Georgia Regional Convention of Narcotics Anonymous will be held at the Macon Hilton Hotel in Macon, GA on February 14, 15, 16, & 17, 1985. The festivities will include; dances, workshops, speakers, fellowship and entertainment. For more info., call:

Paul B. 912/714-7645
Andrea R. 912/746-4213
Edgar G. 912/922-2605
Doug G. 912/741-1027

The Ties That Bind

"As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well." What are those "ties that bind"? The answer to that question seems to change as we grow into a greater awareness. I have some thoughts to share about those ties as I see them today.

One important tie that binds us together is our personal tolerance of individual differences. We come to this program from active addiction still often carrying the old baggage of prejudice, mistrust, insecurity and warped values. In such a state, our tendency has been to become preoccupied with flushing out the defects of character in other members. We need some time to practice the new values we adopt in N.A. After a period of recovery, this tension eases. We come to see many of our former states of mind as insanity, which recovery gradually replaces with new levels of open-mindedness. We accept with gratitude every "growing experience" along that path.

This "growing clean by growing together" is definitely a factor that binds our Fellowship together. Resistance to recovery gradually fades in the light of the openness and acceptance shining at N.A. meetings. We are a diverse Fellowship. Our common survival depends upon valuing this diversity. Our love cannot be selective. It must grow beyond the fetters of selfishness to become unconditional.

A second "tie that binds us together" lies in our phrase, "principles before personalities." Individually we must learn principled living so that collectively we can experience harmony. The key to understanding this

point, as our Twelfth Tradition states, will be to grasp the spiritual significance of anonymity.

Anonymity is much more than confidentiality and far less than secrecy. The "spiritual foundation" of our Fellowship lies in an inner current of spirituality flowing in the heart of each member in equal measure. By stripping away the outer layers of self-centeredness, this "inner sanctum" of serenity can be reached. In this light, there is a simple core to the principle of anonymity: it is not my name or status that defines success in N.A., nor is it my employment, my record or my story; what really counts in N.A. is my willingness to surrender my self-serving, self-willed impulses and tendencies, and become guided by that inner, calm connection to the universal spirit of our Second Tradition. In our discussion of anonymity, that point is often missed.

A third tie, which flows naturally from the first two, is service. When service is a "labor of love" which springs from our spiritual foundation described in the previous paragraph, it becomes a vital and necessary part of our common survival. When we are free of envy and personal power struggles, we are free to allow each member to do what he or she does best. Our feelings of uniqueness or differentness use to alienate us from the world and keep us sick. In service to N.A., individual differences are our greatest strength. When the feelings of isolation and separateness have been eliminated by our growing sense of our universal spirit, service highlights our individual strengths and teaches competence and self-esteem.

We must be cautious, though, of allowing our desire to serve eclipse our need to recover. It would seem to me that the first priority is the reduction of "self," and the growth of spirit (the Twelve Steps). Only then are we ready to serve N.A. without bringing with us a hidden agenda of selfish motives. If service is to be a "tie that binds," it must be a flow of spirit, not of self. Service, in its healthiest form, is gratitude made visible.

What happens when we are bound together in spirit? We provide an arena into which a suffering addict can step and find recovery. We have no higher priority than that. For the first time in history, there is a program of recovery for addicts that unifies us all under a single umbrella of spirit. We are that program! We must rise to this historic call by surrendering self-centeredness and striving for an always greater unity. We're well on our way now to the maturity of spirit we'll need to pull this off. I hope you're in there pitching. We need you.

From the heart of an addict who loves N.A.
Iowa

3RD ANNUAL VIRGINIA CONVENTION

The 3rd Annual Virginia Convention will be held at the New Marriott Hotel in Richmond, VA on February 4, 5, & 6, 1985. The theme "Spirit of Unity—Foundation for the future" will set the tenor of the convention. For registration write:
PO Box 25285, Richmond, VA 23260.

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL LEARNING CONVENFERENCE

The Little Apple Area is hosting the Mid-Atlantic Region's first "Convenference" at the George Washington Motor Lodge in Allentown, PA. The lodge is located directly off the 7th Street exit on Rt. 22.

The theme is "Unity Through Service—What Can I Do? The Convenference is March 1, 2, & 3, 1985. For further information or registration forms call: 215/439-8440 or write LAASC, PO Box 4475, Allentown, PA 18015.

We Do Recover

As my fingers were walking through the pages of our Basic Text today, they stumbled over a passage that I had highlighted earlier in my recovery. It was a paragraph that put all the horror, hopelessness and despair of my addiction clearly into focus, and then began erasing that gloomy picture I had penciled in for myself by offeirng an encouraging glimmer of hope; "If we learn how to live, we do recover." Here is that passage, taken from the book, Narcotics Anonymous:

> We know that we are powerless over a disease which is incurable, progressive and fatal. If not arrested, it gets worse until we die. We cannot deal with the obsession and the compulsion. The only alternative is to stop using and start learning how to live. When we are willing to follow this course and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life opens up. In this way, we do recover.

Thinking back, I see how I fought off the awareness of my own powerless over such an appalling form of illness. Sure, I used too much, and I weathered abuse from well-meaning dunderheads who said I had a **problem**, and I paid fines for violating silly regulations that prohibit tax paying citizens from drinking and driving at the same time, and, in fits of desperation, I went to meetings of Narcotics Anonymous and admitted that I was a "dope addict." But I was fine: there was no problem.

I knew that I was killing myself, or, at the very least, going insane. I had no choice—using was a necessity. Insanity is scary. How close did I come on how many different occasions to killing myself? And what choice did I have?

One day, after nine months of going to meetings stoned (so I could "show those guys") I found myself languishing in a treatment center, and I heard for the first time the final line of "Who is an Addict?": "We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death." Well! I really had the world beat now.

Treatment was thirty-seven days of clean-time at the cost of $130.00 per day to my insurance company. I became able to admit that I am an addict. I had been saying that all along, but without the correct definition of the word. I learned that I am a person who is powerless over a disease which is incurable, progressive and fatal. Untreated, I die. I learned that alone I cannot deal with the obsession and compulsion. I was presented with an alternative: stop using and start learning how to live.

Actually, it was pretty ironic. Ever since I was about ten years old, I had been insisting that I knew how to live, and had been fighting for my independence. Ten years later, after nearly four years out from under the protective wing of the family, I learned that I know nothing about living, and to top it off, my life is unmanagable! I was beginning to regret those years of rejecting parents' attempts to teach me how to live.

I found, much to my chagrin, that I had to humble myself at N.A. Help was freely offered, but to make use of it, I had to change my attitude and accept it.

At one time in my recovery, I believed that the hurdles I had to overcome were insurmountable. Thank God I found a good sponsor. The things he had gone through! I realized that I probably wasn't so bad off after all. He stepped out on a limb to share some of the deep dark secrets of his past with me, and after solemnly swearing I'd never violate his trust, I promptly shared some of the deep dark secrets of his past with

some associates of mine. Instead of harshly judging me though, he embraced me with his unconditional love, and shared more with me.

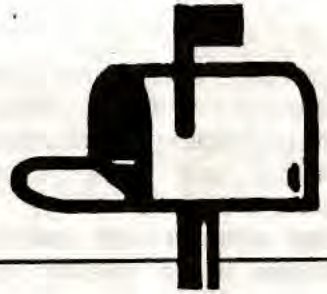
By watching my sponsor and others in the N.A. program live happy, joyous and drug-free lives, I began to see how I could live also. As much as I detested the thought, I dropped the old using buddies, and I managed to do so without twisting a knife in their backs. I stopped hanging out in bars, "just to hear the bands, Mr. Sponsor." I started clearing up some of the relationship problems, first by developing new, healthy relationships, and second by making amends in relationships that were ailing. I started to work on my tendency to throw money at any target that I impulsively deemed worthwhile. I've been working on those character defects that cause me to be out of sync with the real world. Most importantly, I have involved myself in a program of spiritual growth, an effort at staying in touch with the ebb and flow of a Universal Spirit.

What a drastic change my life has seen! I have been clean long enough for people to trust me again. I've quit plotting against a world that was "out to get me." I'm no longer sulking around, hiding myself behind "a mask of false bravado." I'm free to be myself.

Even though this article is entitled, "We Do Recover," I've been talking about myself. The "we" comes in because anybody who is truly benefiting from the spiritual answer that is N.A. can be found passing that answer on to other addicts. "We keep what we have only by giving it away." My sponsor has given so freely of himself that the benefit to both of us is obvious. It is now my turn to give. "In this way, we do recover."

R.W.
North Dakota

Letters from Our Readers . . .



Dear NA Way,

RE our Basic Text "NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS".....from the heart of one who cares.

Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results! We will improve our literature, our personal programs and our services when we are capable of stepping away from these things and viewing them dispassionately. In my opinion, real recovery and honest service demands acceptance of reality and no compromise on spiritual principles.

Let's look at reality and compare our book to that:

1) What is ADDICTION and what is RECOVERY? The reality I perceive is as follows; Addiction is the disease that caused me to use drugs. That fact got me to NA (before we had a book) and our First Step allowed me to abstain from drugs. Recovery becomes possible when someone with the disease accepts their powerlessness over addiction not the symptoms of addiction. Our book is the first piece of literature in the history of mankind that has ever, in my experience, stated this reality, HOWEVER, it is not stated clearly or consistently enough! Recovery, in my experience and observation, comes from acceptance of personal powerlessness over the disease addiction and from living the following eleven and one half steps **on that basis.** Reality tells most of us that "recovery is more than simple abstinence" and "denial keeps us sick" yet we demand as a Fellowship to live in the limitations of the past. Perhaps, in the past such concepts as: "highly susceptable to alcoholic addiction," and; "emotional sobriety ... is our goal," and; "we are powerless not only over drugs, but our addiction as well" were considered valid. Today we know they are expressions

of denial with the power to keep us sick...as a Fellowship. These 'half-truths' compromise our most basic principle—powerlessness over addiction. Let's stop confusing our newcomers. Let's get honest about addiction and recovery. I submit that: **for us addiction to any drug equals addiction to all drugs; recovery from addiction is in reality our goal; and we are powerless over addiction not powerless over drugs; addiction is the disease that caused us to use drugs.**

At the 1984 World Service Conference we voted "as a Fellowship" to forever enshrine that "sacred cow" the "Little White Book". According to the collective decision of WSC'84 it can never be revised. Until we reverse that "decision" we will be locked into the denial of our self-deception.

2) On Spirituality: although many sought to keep our Book dogma-free, a disspassionate observer can still clearly see our Judeo-Christian bias.

3) On Readability: Some say our Basic Text is choppy, incoherent, awkward, redundant, and sometimes confusing or even misleading and self-contradictory... I agree.

Some say it is inspired, useful, correct, and the only reality-based guide to recovery from addiction... I agree with them also.

Readability and truthfullness, coherency and spirit, validity and public appeal are all compatible. We have the talent and experience within our Fellowship to combine these elements into a revised basic text—a true second edition—that will more fully serve our needs. We also have the collective resources to hire ourselves some professional writing help if that is what we want to do. Why don't we do something?

Lest someone becomes disillusioned... remember, it's better than it used to be! Our only enemy is the disease, and the solution is recovery and recovery begins with each of us, personally, right at home.

J.M.,
Ohio

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AUGUST 30 - SEPT 1, 1985
15th Annual World Convention
WCNA 15, PO Box 2232,
Washington D.C.

GEORGIA REGIONAL CONVENTION OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS—see page 16 for details.

3RD ANNUAL LOUISIANA CONVENTION OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS—see page 7 for details.

1ST ANNUAL HAWAIIAN WEEKEND ROUNDUP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS—see page 5 for details.

JUNE 21, 22, & 23, 1985 6th East Coast Convention for Narcotics Anonymous Towson State University PO Box 26513, Baltimore, MD 21207

MARCH 22, 23, & 24, 1985 3rd Annual Mid-America Convention will be held at the Sheraton Inn, Tulsa, OK. For Info. call: Bob R. 417/623-1225 or Mark T. 918/749-2045.

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL LEARNING CONVENFERENCE—see page 19 for details.

JANUARY 4, 5, & 6, 1985 3rd Annual Virginia Convention, AVCNA Richmond, VA. The Marriott Hotel 804/264-3910