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

THE NA WAY

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Life Beyond N.A.?

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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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*.

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; *World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409*

From the Editor

There is a lot of ground to cover this month to update you on developments with the magazine, but first, welcome to all our new subscribers! Since December, the magazine has been growing at the rate of several new subscribers per day. Our total subscription list included about 400 just a few months ago. In February we sent 1200 copies to paid subscribers. The issue you are now reading should go to about 1400 or so. That is the kind of growth we need to see to keep the magazine alive. It is very moving to feel the Fellowship rally behind this magazine.

There has been some interest expressed on the part of the Fellowship in back issues of the magazine. Most of those who contacted us were interested in buying an entire collection of back issues dating back to September of 1982, the first issue of the magazine. We have explored that possibility, and have found that it will be expensive to have many of the old issues typeset again, but have elected to absorb some of that cost to make available this piece of N.A. history. This will be a one-time offer, and the number of collections we have printed will depend upon the number of responses we get this month. See the enclosed flier for details.

There are several plans afoot to continue to make better use of the magazine in the various service areas within the Fellowhship. I will introduce a few of them here, and you will hear more later. The most important plan is not a new one. We need group level exposure. If each of our subscribers would talk about the magazine at meetings, encourage your group to subscribe, reproduce our subscription blank and keep a pile on the literature table, our most important goal would be realized: the magazine would be well known within the Fellowship. We've made great gains toward that goal in recent months, but we still have a long way to go.

We would like to expand our relationship with H&I committees. Many of our current subscribers are

hospitals and institutions of various kinds. Some of those maintain several subscriptions for their clients' use. We are asking H&I committees to encourage the facilities they service to do the same. When that is not possible, the H&I committee can itself subscribe and bring the magazine in for the addicts inside the facility. We realize that committees may not have the money to pay for several annual subscriptions at once, so we are prepared to bill monthly or quarterly for bulk purchases. To make those arrangements, write the WSO in care of Ron and leave a phone number, or call (818) 780-3951 during regular west coast business hours.

P.I. committees may want to consider a similar plan for using the magazine. A single issue may be dropped off in a hospital emergency room, a dentist's office, any type of waiting room where addicts or their family members may find it. A stamp or sticker listing a local N.A. phone number, meeting time and place, etc. can be attached to each copy. The same offer of monthly or quarterly billing applies.

Before I close, I make yet another appeal for input. Those of you who have writing skills, here is a service to N.A. in which to put them to good use. Those of you who don't feel that you are skilled as writers, I emphasize once again that you are strongly encouraged to write us anyway. We edit the stories on this end, so you need not be particular about the technical details. The addict who still suffers needs your experience, strength and hope. Give it a shot—it might be fun.

Thanks again to all who have sent us material. All the comments we have been getting by phone and mail, as well as the rising number of subscriptions, suggest that you're doing a good job. A growing number of N.A. members are finding that the N.A. Way is becoming an important part of their personal recovery progarm. There is quality recovery in N.A. all over the world. Let's continue to share it!

R.H.
Editor

Life Beyond N.A.?

My first N.A. meeting was in a mid-sized city in the southeastern U.S. After a relapse I returned to find the tiny Fellowship there disbanded. I moved to the desert resort town I've lived in now for the past two years. Everything I owned had been either sold or stolen. Neither parents nor friends back east would have anything to do with me—trying to fix a far-gone addict was just too frustrating. I hadn't held a job in two years and had no prospects for one in the foreseeable future. I couldn't take care of myself. I couln't kill myself, though I had tried. The only thing that numbed the shame and depression was dope, and even that wasn't working anymore. As I later discovered, I was one day away from involuntary commitment to an asylum.

I came to this city because my brother and his wife, members of N.A., told me I just might find a way to stop using and learn how to live clean. I didn't come for the gambling, or the shows, or the women, or the skiing. I came because I was dying, and N.A. was here.

My first eight months were lost in a fog—sometimes pink, sometimes grey, or black, or dazzlingly white, but a fog nonetheless. I didn't take anything. I went to lots of meetings. I worked the steps to the best of my ability, but they weren't entirely real to me. It wasn't until I became involved in N.A. service for the first time that the fog began to lift. The features of life clean took on some vague definition; I had a direction and a purpose, people to share those with, and something of my own to apply toward them. I had been wandering for many moons like a little lost boy, but now a place in this world had been found for me. Recovery became more than just not having to

use. I was recovering <u>something</u>: a life I'd never had nor even dreamt about.

My involvement in service grew. Sometimes my service activities themselves were possessed by the disease. I grew as self-centered, obsessive and compulsive in abstinence as I'd ever been while using. I hit the same bottom of depressive hopelessness as before. But this time I wasn't alone. I was surrounded by a sponsor and friends, people who knew and loved me, who'd gone through it themselves and understood. In varying combinations of tough love and gentle empathy they helped me work a personal program. Before long my perspective had returned: a Power greater than myself would restore me to sanity if I would practice daily what had worked for others.

I've stayed in service. I've contributed to the welfare of fellow addicts, helping maintain and improve the services available to me when I first needed them. In doing so, I've been of significant value to society in general. The rush I get from being used for some necessary job in N.A. is better and more consistent than any rush the dope ever gave me. I like it.

But is that all there is to recovery: just <u>furthering</u> recovery? I mean, sure, it's in my own self-interest to do what I can to make sure N.A. stays alive. I know from experience what it's like to have it one day and find it gone the next. And since my own growth is stimulated more readily in a growing Fellowship, it makes the same sort of sense to apply my energy to that too. The satisfaction of seeing someone even newer to N.A. than myself come alive before my eyes is amazing. Knowing they heard about us at an H&I meeting or through a radio announcement or from a counselor on our P.I. list makes the committee work worthwhile. Experiencing the growth of our base of recovery and the rising peak of freedom from addiction assures me that <u>it works</u>! But isn't there life beyond N.A.?

Sure. There always has been. And the disease of addiction has always prevented me from taking part in it, <u>any</u> part—I just <u>took</u>. It is not entirely incidental that as my service involvement grew so did my employability, my capacity for love, and my sense

of belonging in this world. Where I was unable to accept responsibility, I've learned that my financial well-being depends upon that of the enterprise employing me. Where I could not deal with co-workers and job situations as they were, I've learned to address principles instead of personalities. I'm not necessarily right all the time, and I don't have to pretend that I am; I can be anonymous. I've learned that I cannot find my way alone, that I need people in my life. Where I've been afraid of emotional involvement, I've learned that honest attraction rather than self-promotion negates that fear—nothing hyped, no manipulative webs woven, nothing to hide or defend. I'm rejoining the human race.

I didn't become alienated from society in one day. Neither am I going to find full, healthy integration into the mainstream of things at once. But little by little I'm learning. N.A. traditions and service are teaching me how to live with others. The Power in this program is restoring me to balanced living (a.k.a. sanity).

But am I avoiding the question, this matter of life beyond N.A.? Addiction and its radical self-centeredness is still with me and needs regular treatment in order to stay in remission. Working a personal program, carrying our message addict-to-addict, and helping maintain the services that do that on a broader basis takes me away from me. My personal recovery depends on N.A. unity. If I wish to continue recovering, then there is a continuing role I must play in N.A.'s unity. Life goes on all around my involvement in this Fellowship. Service provides it with focus, identity, balance, and a center. For me, today, life isn't something waiting out there beyond N.A. I'm living it, here and now, because of N.A.

L.M.
Nevada

Once a Junkie...

My addiction began before I started using. As far back as I can remember, I wanted to fit in somewhere, but I felt lonely, angry, afraid and different, like I just didn't fit in. Drugs relieved a lot of those feelings.

I grew up in San Francisco in the sixties. Somehow I managed to graduate from high school in 1964. After a short bout with college and the Marine Corps, I moved from my middle class home to the Fillmore, a black ghetto that sat adjacent to Haight Ashbury.

Alcohol had been a problem since I was 15. At the ripe old age of 18, street drugs and ghetto life were my new home. My story is like so many others I have heard in N.A. It's a standard progression for many of us—weed, pills, psychadelics, shooting speed then heroin. Heroin became my "drug of choice." It, along with the other drugs, kept me living in ghettos for years, from Manhattan's lower east side to Miami to New Orleans and up and down the coast of California. Buying, selling and using drugs became the center of my life for the next eight years.

Along the road I checked out many things: jails, cities, countryside, beaches, Mexico, religion, poetry, jazz, rock-n-roll, ol' ladies, girlfriends, fathering a child, burglaries and armed robberies, welfare, methadone, communes, panhandling, a halfway house, doctors & psychiatrists, and finally a nut house drug program.

After spending six months in this drug program, I returned to the streets with four other "recovered addicts." We all got jobs, lived together, drank and smoked weed together. I had promised myself, "No more hard drugs."

I had never worked before, and now I was going to keep a job. My drinking got worse, but at least I had a job and wasn't "fixing" anymore. Somehow I managed not to fix for almost six years; then I started messing around with cocaine. At first I "only" snorted the coke, but within nine months I could no longer work and was back shooting heroin again. I was devastated inside—a junkie again. My wife and two children did not understand. How could I do this to myself? I had worked so hard these six years to get myself together, and now a junkie! I figured that it must be true, once a junkie always a junkie. Within two weeks my heroin habit was as big as it had ever been! I couldn't stop the pain with drugs. Out of desperation I checked into a dry out center.

This was August 1978. They let me know that if I wanted to go to an N.A. meeting, someone from N.A. would pick me up and take me. I said, "OK, why not." At this time that N.A. meeting was the only one in San Diego. Today I thank my Higher Power that meeting was there. The seed was planted—addicts not taking anything—I wanted what they had! I had tried another Fellowship before, but this time I really identified. Unfortunately I didn't get completely clean until March, 1979; it took some more pain and using to convince me. When I went back out I kept remembering those addicts in that Thursday N.A. meeting—they didn't know it, but they helped me come back.

What has happened in N.A. never ceases to amaze me. Just last week I was in San Diego visiting

my daughter. I went to the N.A. office to visit, and later that night to a meeting. I guess they have 60-70 meetings a week down there now. Where I live we now have 24 meetings a week. A little over five years ago there were none. I am grateful to be a part of this wonderful Fellowship. I finally "fit in" just for today.

For this addict, it is important that I don't fall in love with my own story. My past was degrading and painful! I have been taught that I must stay spiritually fit to stay clean one day at a time. I have been given a tool box full of things for me to do, depending on the situation I'm in. First, I must continue to surrender not only to drugs but to my addiction. Even though I've been clean now for a while, my addictive thinking has told me all sorts of bizarre things. When I'm confused or going through pain, I need to inventory how well I'm using the tools that have been given to me:

What step am I on?
Am I praying enough, and for God's will?
Am I really using my sponsor?
What am I doing of service to N.A.?
Have I become complacent in any area?
Am I going to enough meetings?

My life is full today, and I owe that to the N.A. program. Today I have hope; today I have love in my heart; today I have commitment to myself and others; today, no matter what happens, I don't have to take drugs to solve my problems.

D.D.
Nevada

N.A.

Has Worked

for Me

I have always had an awful lot of pride and confidence in N.A. Since my first meeting in Alaska, three and one half years ago, and through meetings in 17 states and at 15 conventions, I always knew that what I needed was what N.A. had to offer.

Unfortunately, I seem to hear a lot of speakers at N.A. meetings who have quite a different feeling. It is only rarely that a speaker meeting will go by, where the other Twelve Step Program doesn't get a major credit for the speaker's recovery. That seems quite curious to me.

I have been very aware of the negative attitude that many regular N.A. members seem to have toward the N.A. program as a whole. I have felt quite angry, and once, while sitting at a popular and intimate N.A. discussion meeting recently, I wrote the following note to my friend, seated next to me:

It's really funny to me, but it seems that the N.A. program is just not enough:

not good enough,
not large enough,
not stable enough,
not famous enough,

It's just not enough, to go to N.A.! Everyone has to mention other recovery programs as a preface."

I would like to make a firm and confident statement: N.A. HAS WORKED FOR ME. I have found very significant advantages in N.A. When I was new there were fewer meetings, but that inconvenience was far outweighed by the fervent commitment to carrying the message that I found in N.A. The less famous name of N.A. was more than compensated for by a predominance of recovering addicts who were more of my generation, and whom I could better talk to and relate to.

But, moreover, N.A. is a program that takes the absolutely necessary stand, that "THIS IS A PROGRAM OF COMPLETE ABSTINENCE FROM ALL DRUGS!" which is stated quite clearly at the beginning of most N.A. meetings. This was a position that made the N.A. program the right one for me. I was so troubled with being asked to leave the other Fellowship's meetings, and so confused about what "dually addicted" meant, that N.A. made my initial recovery all that much more simple. I have always appreciated the N.A. literature's effort to explain the program in a very honest, straight forward manner. If it's complete abstinence that is the basis of N.A. recovery, FINE, LET'S SAY IT! If valiums, poppers, beer, cocaine, heroin, and pot are all essentially equal as far as getting clean and starting to recover are concerned, then let's say it.

And finally, if N.A. is a complete and self-contained program for recovery from the disease of addiction, then let's say it—in meetings, in our literature, and from our podiums.

Thank you for letting ME say it!

P.S.
California

Coming Into My Own Through Him

The word "God" is only a word. It is but a symbol that must correspond to some reality before it has true substance. To say that I fully understand that word would be to claim that I am super-human. But to say that my understanding of God is growing and developing is to say that I am recovering from addiction through the Twelve Steps of N.A.

The phrase, "God, as we understood Him" can seem like a stumbling block when you know inside that you don't understand God at all. My sponsor helped me through that by explaining that an honest desire to develop an understanding was all I needed. None of us has complete understanding of God, so my hazy understanding was enough for a beginning.

That desire has since blossomed into a concept of God that is very real to me. It is my source of inner strength. I try to let that Power guide me in my daily life. How did I go from seeing "God" as just an empty word to having a relationship with the reality beyond the symbol? By practicing the principles of N.A. with honesty, open-mindedness and willingness.

I believe today that my spiritual awakening began when I expressed the willingness to grow in my understanding of God. From there, God nurtured me along. He gave me the freedom of choice, and the ability to learn from the consequences of my choices. Sometimes that's great, other times it's painful, but with each choice comes an opportunity for growth.

Those "coincidences" that seem to keep happening in recovery have also enriched my concept of God. As so many others have said, I now see those as little miracles. My faith and trust are reinforced each time I see the hand of a Higher Power in the circumstances of my life.

Another important sourse of my growing understanding of God is all the other members of N.A. My sponsor, my friends, people who share at meetings, newcomers, old-timers—everyone who is trying to grow spiritually and is willing to share honestly about it—all play a role in teaching me more about God. As long as I stay teachable, I grow.

Maybe the hardest obstacle to get over in my spiritual awakening was that I tended to blame God for my living problems. My father left me when I was seven, my mother died when I was eighteen, I felt abandoned and isolated; how could a loving God allow all that? Today that whole issue has simply lost its importance for me. God is not some vengeful being bringing bad stuff down on people, He is a loving Power who offers relief from all that. I take responsibility for my own behavior today, and I choose thoughts and actions that give me a greater freedom. It's all in the Twelve Steps.

I thank God today that I was taught that stopping using isn't enough. Stopping using is only the beginning. For me this program is about grasping and developing a spiritual way of life. That quest gets richer as time goes by. The word "God" becomes full of rich meaning. I now see that there is a harmony to all things that I either choose by my thoughts and actions to flow with, or I choose to violate. If I choose not to harmonize with what I deeply know is right, then my misery is my own problem. What a simple lesson! Someone once said, "If God is the answer, what is the question?" I may not have the words for it, but I know. Do you?

R.H.
New Jersey

Mother,

Grandmother,

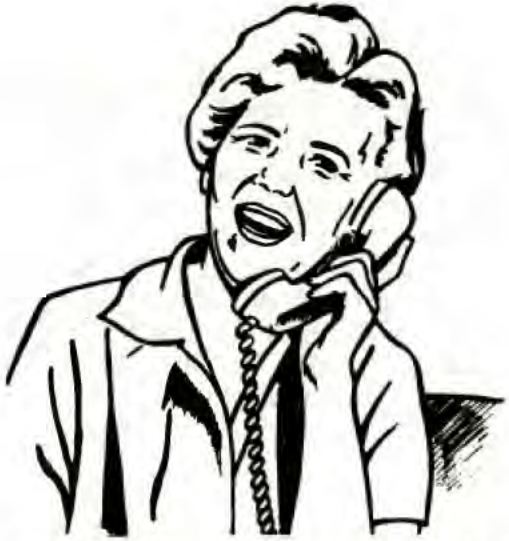
Addict

For the past 21 years I have been a drug addict. I was put on mandrox and purple hearts when I was in a maternity hospital, six months before I had my fifth child. When I came home I stopped the purple hearts, but for over a year I took the mandrox at night. One morning I got up and I didn't feel too good, so I took a couple of pills. I was on the way back to bed when I began to get high. I cleaned the house instead, and everything started to get great. I learned that with the help of the pills I could clean and look after my family, and I was happy!

Of course as all you addicts will know, I was going down-hill but didn't know it. I had a friend who sold me mandrox for the price he bought them, so I thought I was just fine.

Anyway, to make a long story short, about 12 years later I was in a mental hospital having my sixth child and detoxing. My treatment for withdrawls was two mandrox four times a day, and they cut them down. In that twelve years I was also on many other drugs but didn't have any idea I was an addict, because they were all on prescription.

When I came out of the hospital I said I wouldn't take another pill, but I wasn't sleeping, so someone suggested that a wee nip at night would relax me. I hadn't been drinking 'till then, and wasn't too keen on the taste. Just as I had with the drugs, I took a wee one in the morning, and before long it was a bottle.



I went into a mental hospital again—this time it was for booze—and the withdrawls were hell again. But when I came out I was addicted to a new prescription drug! While in the hospital this time I came in contact with A.A., and I thought this was the answer. But I had another child by this time, I was happily married with seven kids, a job, nice house and hadn't been to jail, never had the DT's, the sweats or convulsions, so really I couldn't identify that much. I was only taking my pills at night as prescribed, so maybe I wasn't a drug addict or alky. I still went to one meeting a week, just in case.

During Christmas of 1983 they took my son away. I thought everything was finally finished. My husband and the older kids had left, and they had taken the youngest. The people in A.A. said I would have to get honest and work the programme. I was trying, so I thought, but I was still on the pills. I thought the best day's work was done when I'd gone to the city of Dundee, visited six doctors and came back with 300 pills. I'd been in jail twice, had convulsions, was dirty, and a stone nervous wreck. I belonged to anyone who would get me a drink or give me a few pills.

I really tried A.A. I finally got a sponsor who thankfully told me, "Do something about those damn pills outside of A.A." I heard about N.A. in London. I travelled over 1,000 miles in two days to get to a meeting, and was too late to get to one. I met a

couple who went to the meetings, and they were a great help, but when I tried to phone one of them later, he said he had quit going. I got in touch with the A.A. GSO in America, and they sent me an N.A. address. I wrote, and they sent me the Basic Text and a lot of literature, and I joined the Loners Group. I started my own N.A. meeting in Fife Scotland last July, but I still haven't got anyone clean; this month's Loners bulletin had a copy of the December '84 N.A. Way in it. You printed a London phone number, which I tried for a week but it was the wrong number; I finally got the right one, and have been in touch with them. I'm so very grateful.

I tried to "sober up" and keep clean the A.A. way, but because I was still using pills, my addiction beat me. With the help of N.A. and my Higher Power, and by living a day at a time, I have so much to be happy about today. I have just moved to a new house. I have the love of my family back. I was babysitting for five of my grandchildren, and I'm looking after two of them for a week. I was at the birth of my granddaughter—my daughter wouldn't have wanted me at the hospital if I had been using. I have started work. I keep myself clean, washing myself and my clothes. Without the help and friendship and love of the people in the Fellowship who believed in me, I would never have been sitting here writing this to you. If any of you over there are coming to Scotland, please get my name and address from the N.A. Way!

J.R.
Scotland

He Kept Comin' Back

A short while ago, I was listening to one of those radio phone-in programmes, where people share their problems over the air. A young lady phoned in to say whe was worried about her friend, who was using heroin. The lady taking the calls was an American, and although very sympathetic, did not seem to be able to offer much positive help. She said that although some addicts do recover, they are notorious recidivists. On hearing this, I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck, and have to admit to more than a little anger. The modern meaning of the word "recidivist" is "one who continually returns to crime." This was very true for me from 1962-1982. I had been in so many so-called "cures" that I have forgotten the names of some of the hospitals. Each time I returned to the needle, things got worse. My life became more unmanageable and my physical and mental health got progressively worse.

In 1982, I was forced to admit that I was powerless over my addiction—that I could not safely use any mood-altering chemicals. Through a mixture of fate and curiosity, I attended a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. In that meeting I learned something quite remarkable. There I met many addicts who were not continually returning to their personal crime of uncontrolled drug abuse. So what was so special about those bright-eyed, clean-living people? What did they have that had eluded me for twenty years?

It was all amazingly simple. First of all, I was told just to keep coming back and I would always be welcome. This I did, and it was true. There was a heartfelt welcome at every meeting. The next thing they said was not to take any mood altering chemical one day at a time. This I tried, but at first a day was too long, so I had to try it an hour or a minute at a time. The people in the Fellowship told me that I need not carry the burden of pain on my own. Just as they all had been willing to share their experience, strength, and hope with me, they were willing to share my pain. All I had to do was open my mouth and let it out. Wow! What a relief! Outside of meetings, I could do this on the phone; what a brilliant, simple idea. Why hadn't I thought of it?

I also learned that by praying to God as I understand Him, I could unburden myself of all the guilt and remorse that goes with living in self-constructed hell. If I kept this up one day at a time, I was told, I need never go back to drugs again.

All this was a couple of years ago now, but I still follow this simple pattern, and the promise that it gets better and better has been fulfilled a thousand times over.

Because of N.A., which started properly in England in 1980, addicts no longer need to die of this illness. When I attended my first meeting, I was the most important person in the room. Today I am a very small bug in a very large and ever-growing bed, and it's extremely comfortable. The proof that miracles happen is that I am alive to write this today.

J.V.
London

The Voice

I still have a little voice inside me today; it points me in positive directions. I attribute this to an honest effort to apply the principles of Narcotics Anonynous in my life, namely the steps, for they produce a relationship with a God of my understanding.

But remember how it used to be? That little inner voice was down right nasty and insidious—the voice of compulsion and obsession that we call the disease of addiction. Oh, it still comes around from time to time. I just thank God I don't listen long enough to relapse today.

I figure that recovery is a day at a time for the rest of our lives; if we put effort into it, sooner or later we become what I call "program instilled." That little voice begins to point us in positive directions. All this leads to our being responsible for our own recovery. There isn't always a meeting to go to or another member to be there or someone to call up; in other words I can't rely on outside things to do it for me. I can get support from other members, meetings, etc. but I have had times when those things just weren't available.

One thing I know for sure is that all this takes time—I know it's taken me several years clean to realize. I guess that's why we newcomers are always in meetings (I still hit, oh, about twenty or thirty a week —well maybe not that many but I go to a bunch).

Well, I'm gonna go out to the pond and do some pole fishin' and some listenin' to what God has given me—The voice of N.A.

E.A.
Alabama

Some Personal Experiences with the Traditions

TRADITION THREE

At my first meeting I had the misfortune of meeting a couple of overzealous members who ridiculed the way I was dressed—I was wearing a business suit. I felt intimidated; maybe I was not ready to clean up, maybe I hadn't lost enough yet, or hit my bottom. In any case, I took the comments of these addicts at face value. Therefore, I did not feel entirely welcome at my first meeting.

It got a little better at meetings after that, but because I had no understanding of the differences between financial and emotional bottoms, I wasn't sure that my life had become unmanageable. I began excluding myself from the Fellowship. I had unconsciously bought what those two memebers had said, and had created some unwritten requirements for membership. I'm sure I was suffering from a loser complex, but nevertheless, I believed that I wasn't as bad as those I'd met at my first meeting. I hadn't been to prison or an asylum, nor had I been a prostitute or committed any felonious acts. On the other hand, I had gone far beyond the level of pothead or pill freak, and took great pride in being a street

junkie. I was caught in the trap of seeing only the differences, and none of the similarities with other addicts.

It seemed obvious to me that I didn't belong in N.A., because I had little desire to be like some of the people I had met in N.A. In retrospect, I realize that I wasn't ready at that time. I guess I wasn't desparate enough. It was only after a few more years of doing it my way that I got to a point where my way just didn't work anymore. I knew there must be more to life than the meager existence I was living.

An accident got me back to meetings. It was at a time when fear and self-loathing made it easy for me to accept any offer of help or friendship. I was greedy for acceptance, and I found it at my next first meeting. I was surrounded this time by addicts who didn't seem to care how I was dressed, what I had used or how much. They only wanted to know if I had a ride home, or if I needed a ride to the next meeting. In their introductions and offers of phone numbers and assistance, they accepted me at face value. Through their tone and manner, they demonstrated a desire to help me which I had not experienced the first time around.

I felt the first faint hope for myself, and felt that someone cared. In fact, it wasn't just someone, but three people—three people like myself. They weren't tough guys hung up on their past, but rather three addicts trying to change. They were trying to deal with the disease of addiction in all of their affairs, and to accept life after drugs.

In their behavior there was no hint of requirements for membership or acceptance. For them, my simple act of being present was enough. Now it becomes obvious why we have no written rules or requirements for membership in the Fellowship. However, we must always guard against those subtle requirements created through being insensitive to the newcomer, especially the newcomer who appears to be different. First impressions are so important. I know I will never forget my two first meetings.

The one requirement we do have in N.A. is difficult to fulfill. Desire doesn't come easily. How

many times have we wished someone we cared for would have a desire to stop using? The desire to quit is the greatest gift of all, for without it we have no starting place. Who would take the Twelve Steps without some sort of desire? I will never question another person's desire to stop using. When I'm sharing with other addicts, I must always remember that my actions speak louder than my words.

S.B.
California

TRADITION TEN

My experience with the Tenth Tradition involved a phone call from a District Attorney. I was still a little worried about the statute of limitations on some of my past crimes, so I ignored the message for a few days and received three more calls. Finally, it looked as though I could not ignore the matter any more.

I had a friend who worked in the legal community so I called him and explained my situation. My friend laughed and reminded me that in the past the authorities had never called me when I was wanted for my crimes. They simply came and got me. I laughed too, and with his encouragement, I returned the call.

The reason this person had been calling me was that an Assistant D.A. had made the public statement that alcohol was more dangerous than marijuana. The D.A. wanted me to state the opinion that marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol. He knew that I was an addict and a member of N.A. He needed a repudiation from some organization, and he wanted me, as a member of N.A. (therefore an expert) to publicly repudiate the Assistant D.A.'s statement.

I explained to the D.A. that I could not give him a repudiation as a member of N.A., because no one speaks for N.A. I told him that N.A. has Twelve Traditions which govern the Fellowship, and that our Tenth Tradition states that "N.A. has no opinion on outside issues, hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." Based on what he had

explained to me, I felt this situation constituted an outside issue.

He then asked me for my personal opinion. I again explained to him that I would not give him my personal opinion either, for fear that it could be misconstrued as an opinion of N.A. I was therefore unable to help him. I thank God that I had some understanding of the Twelve Traditions of N.A., because by stating my opinion, I might have put N.A. in the middle of a public controversy.

H.M.
California

The "Comin' Up" section of the magazine has been expanded. Our goal is to list every event, large and small, going on within the Fellowship at any given time. We will expand that section until it is three pages long, and then begin to limit by date. These events can be workshops, learning days, conventions, banquets, etc. When space permits, we also do a more detailed write up of major events happening during the current month. Let us know—we'll tell everyone else.

The Seventh Annual Northern California Convention, entitled "A New Beginning," will be in Sacramento this year. The program includes the usual variety of speakers, workshops, meals, dances and good fellowship. This convention is very well attended each year, so be prepared for lots of clean addicts having lots of fun. See the "Comin' Up" section for more information.

Also in that section you will find details of the Third Louisiana Regional Conventon coming up in Baton Rouge in early March. The plans include workshops on Hospitals and Institutions, newcomers, and the Twelve Traditions, along with all the usual convention festivities mentioned above. Make hotel reservations directly by calling toll free: within LA 1-800-272-8300, or national 1-800-535-8481.

Fear of Success

Our Basic Text tells me, "We weren't oriented toward fulfillment; ...we could not deal with success, so failure became a way of life." That sure hits home with me today. Before coming to N.A. and being gifted with recovery, my life was totally unmanageable: I was homeless, broke, physically deteriorated and spiritually bankrupt.

Looking back on my life, I can see I was never oriented toward success. People told me how much "potential" I had, but I did not feel that way. Before I surrendered and was given recovery two years ago, there were times when I could somewhat control my using and achieve forms of success, but then my using flared up and I lost each achievement. Each repeated attempt at "getting my life together" was harder and lasted a shorter period, always ending in disaster.

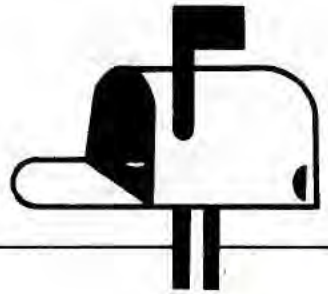
Now that I've put some "just for todays" together with your help and my Higher Power's help, I need your guidance to help me deal with my new life. Going to meetings, asking for help, helping others, and not picking up are still my priorities; but by doing these things, I have been blessed with a broader horizon of life. All these things are totally unmanageable for me without help. Sometimes the new responsibilities seem to overwhelm me and I want to run. (I feel silly talking about not feeling good about doing good, but as our Basic Text says, I can't save my face and my ass at the same time.) I have learned by working this program that the queasy feeling I get when things are going well is fear. That is hard for me to understand. I know fear, it's the feeling I used to get when the money and drugs were running out, when I got arrested, when someone shot at me. I can identify fear where negative events are concerned.

Now I am learning that I am afraid of nice things that my recovery allows me to obtain today. Perhaps I don't believe I deserve them. The feelings are somewhat similar to those I had when I first came around N.A. this time and stopped using. I was afraid because not using was new to me. I knew abstinence was correct and necessary for me, but it took me a while to enjoy it. That's the way any new thing is for me today—frightening. Since I was never "oriented toward fulfillment," nor could I "deal with success," I am tempted to make "failure a way of life."

Any day I have clean is a success. Just as it took me a while to realize that, so it is taking me some "just for todays" to accept other physical, emotional and spiritual successes. So I need N.A. and my God to get me through. True joy does not come from material things. Like most human beings, I want things from life: peace of mind, security, healthy relationships. I believe those things come to us in our Higher Power's time so long as we work the steps to the best of our ability. But I have to remember one thing as these "wants" become reality: keep my program first (including helping others). That also means I have to talk about how success makes me uneasy, and I shouldn't worry about sounding ungrateful. When I think, "they won't understand," I am forgetting the "WE" of N.A. I hope I remember it the next time a good event makes me feel crazy. If I ask for help, stay clean and go to meetings, I know I'll be okay.

Anonymous
Pennsylvania

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

I am a member of Narcotics Anonymous with just over a year clean. I really enjoy your magazine, The N.A. Way. I got the November 1984 and January 1985 issues. I can really relate to the story, "I Felt Alone in a Crowd," because that is how I feel in maximum security in jail. They have put me in three different dorms, and in every one of them I got myself into trouble because I am hyper-active and I feel all confused. I might get released soon to a drug program for one year or more.

I am a loner and I need a lot of help, but I cannot get out to Narcotics Anonymous meetings to get it, because that is how I screwed up. Through working the Twelve Steps of N.A., I'm learning that I'm actually a neat person deep down inside. I have found some peace of mind, thanks to reading N.A. literature and sharing with members from the Reno/Sparks area through a visit N.A. gave me.

Thank you all for being here when I needed someone to write to and listen to my story. I may never be totally honest, but I will say this much: I am a sick pup who is doing my best to be the best C— that I can be today.

C.E.
Nevada

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Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

ARIZONA: Jun 21-23, 85; Western States Unity Convention-2; Phoenix Hilton; Phoenix, AZ; Write WSUCNA-2, Box 13311, Tucson, AZ 85732

CALIFORNIA: 1) March 22-24, 85; 7th Annual Northern California Convention; Red Lion Motor Inn; Sacramento, CA; Nancy 916-456-4481; Steve 916-344-8968; Box 60666, Sacramento, CA 95866

2) Apr 29-May 3, 85 World Service Conference of N.A.; Best Western (Airtel Plaza), 7277 Valjean St, Van Nuys, CA; for reservations, USA call 1-800-528-1234; Canada call 1-800-208-8993

COLORADO: Mar 16, 85; Colorado Regional Service Conference; Boulder, CO; workshops/meeting/dance; Colette 303-443-6557, Steve 443-8187

INDIANA: Nov 1-3, 85; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indianapolis IN; write Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206

LOUISIANA: Mar 8-10, 85; 3rd Annual Louisiana RCNA; Oak Manor Hotel, Baton Rouge, LA; call (504) Tommy 675-8118 or Billy 275-2310.

MARYLAND: Jun 21-23, 85; 6th East Coast Convention of N.A.; Towson State Univ., Baltimore, MD; write Box 26513, Baltimore, MD 21207

MICHIGAN: July 5-7, 85; Central Great Lakes RCNA; Valley Plaza, Midland, MI; call (517) Will 684-9168 or Greg 686-7622.

MINNESOTA: June 14-16, 85; Upper Midwest RCNA-II; Moorhead State University, Moorhead, MN; Gary 701-293-7000; Bx 9003 Fargo, ND 58109

OHIO: 1) Mar 30, 85 9am; H&I Awrness Day; Stratford St Paul's United Methodist Ch. in Deleware, OH; Pete 614-387-7788 Mary 513-323-3357

2) May 24-27; 3rd Annl Ohio RCNA; Dayton OH; MORE WILL BE REVEALED!

OKLAHOMA: March 22-24, 85; 3rd Annual Mid-America Convention of N.A.; Sheraton Inn, Tulsa, OK; Bob 417-623-1225; Mark 918-749-2045.

PENNSYLVANIA: 1) Mar 1-3, 85; Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference of N.A.; George Washington Motor Lodge, Allentown PA; 215-439-8440 LAASC, Box 4475, Allentown, PA 18015

2) Apr 12-14, 85; Greater Philadelphia RCNA; Franklin Plaza Hotel; Liz 609-423-0217; Bill 215-893-0867; Box 42629, Phila., PA 19101

WASHINGTON D.C.: Aug 30-Sept 1, 85; 15th Annual World Convention of N.A. (WCNA-15); WCNA-15, Box 2232, Washington, D.C. 20013

WEST VIRGINIA: May 10-12, 85; West Virginia Convention of N.A.-II; Cedar Lakes Camp and Conference Center, Ripley WV; Call (304) Barry 757-7537 or Phil 292-0896