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

THE NA WAY

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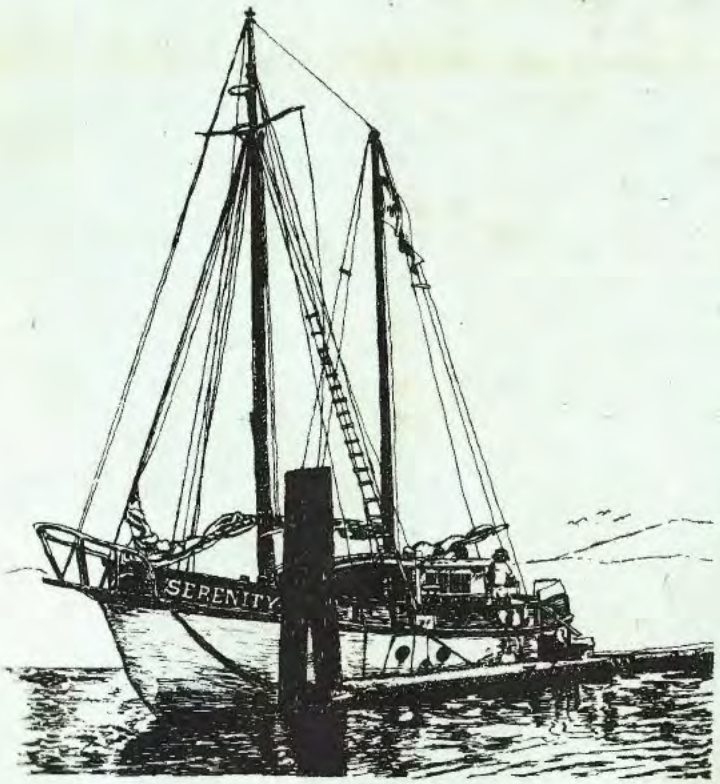

THE NA WAY

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide 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. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover. It costs nothing to be a member of N.A.—there are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. 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*. For more information about the N.A. groups nearest you, write us at the address below.

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*

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. ***We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.***

2. ***We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.***

3. ***We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.***

4. ***We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.***

5. ***We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.***

6. ***We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.***

7. ***We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.***

8. ***We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.***

9. ***We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.***

10. ***We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.***

11. ***We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.***

12. ***Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.***

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FROM THE EDITOR

It's the end of another year, and another volume of the *N.A. Way* is completed. We started Volume Three in January of this year only a few hundred subscriptions strong, but we were growing very rapidly. We needed almost ten times as many subscriptions as we had then for the magazine to be self-supporting. We set a course to reach the goal of 3,000 subscriptions by the end of the year. At that point the magazine would come close to paying its own bills.

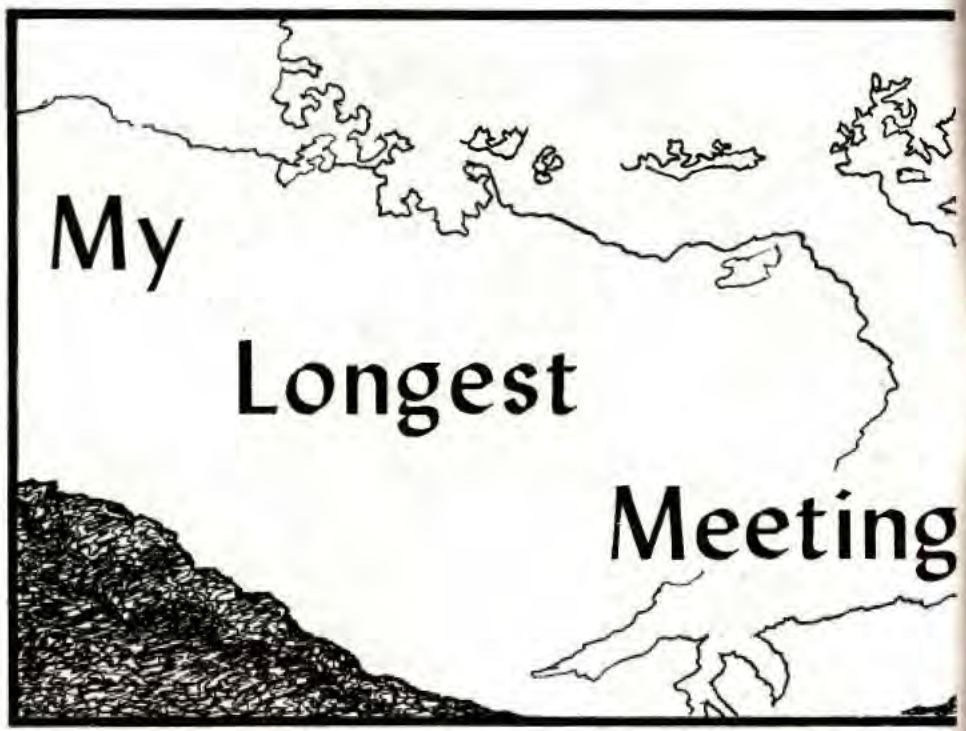
We are short of that mark, but not by much. At this writing (mid-November) we have about 2,400 subscriptions and we're growing every day. We may come close to the 3,000 mark by January first. All of us who work on this project wish to thank all of you who participate, either by spreading the word, writing input or subscribing—especially those of you who do all three. It is apparent to us all that without that kind of support, we would never have been able to keep up the tremendous growth rate necessary for this magazine's survival. It looks like we're going to make it!

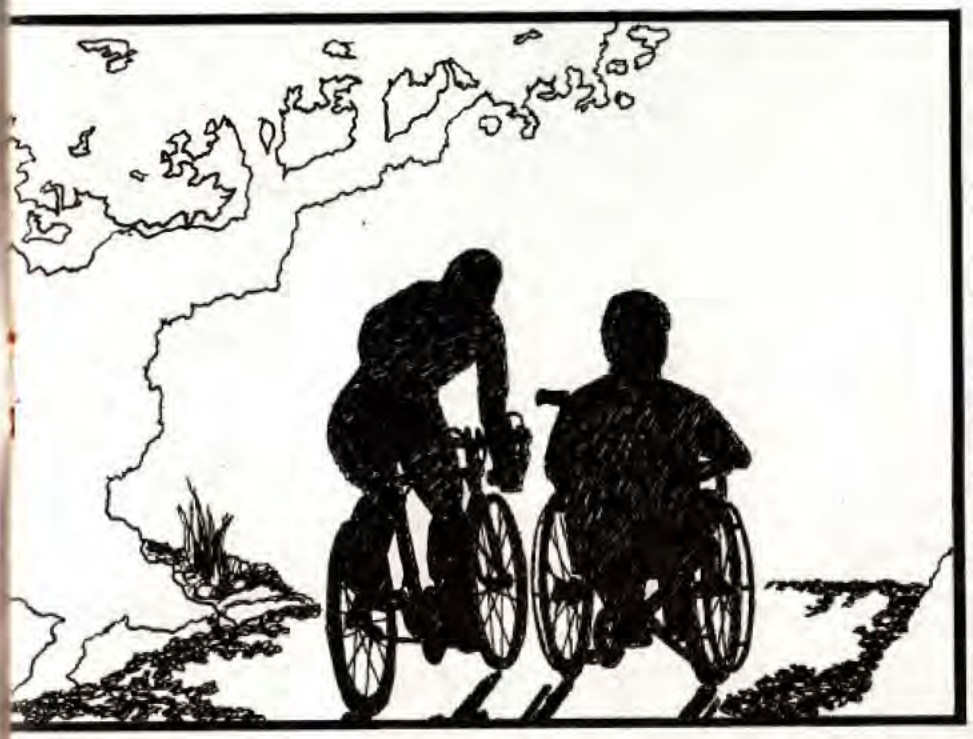
We are running another holiday special this year. It's different from last year's, so you'll want to look closely at the subscription form in the back of the magazine. It is designed to be ideal for our regular subscribers to give a gift subscription to someone else. If even one fourth of you do that, we will easily exceed our goal for the year's growth.

We still have large display posters available that have a copy of the magazine attached along with a tear-off pad of subscription blanks. These are available free for the asking. Just write to us to let us know how many you need. We have plenty to go around. Refills of the subscription pads are also available at no charge.

We always need new stories and articles. Please send us your experience, strength and hope. Share with us in writing as you would at a meeting, or with a sponsee, or among other recovering addicts. This magazine is being widely used today in institutions, as an extra boost for newcomers, as a P.I. tool (leaving a copy in hospital emergency room waiting areas, for example), and our overseas mailing is growing each month. There has never been a better time to use the *N.A. Way* to carry the message.

R.H.
Editor





I really don't know how to express the feelings I wish to convey with this letter—feelings about the caring, sharing and love that has been a part of my life the last month—so I will start at the beginning and give a brief account of my longest meeting. I met a very special person one weekend at a campout. He was thirty years old, the same age as I. At our meeting I could feel my Higher Power at work. The feelings I felt then are the same as the feelings I have now writing this for you.

"Poor little old me" was the way I had been feeling, but here was this guy in his wheelchair planning on doing something I could not see myself doing with two good legs. He planned on pushing his wheelchair nearly across the state of Arkansas to raise money for an organization that had been there when he needed it. He was going to do something to pay them back for their help.

Well for the next few months Terry's life and mine crossed many times, and we became fast friends. My life will never be the same. My Higher Power was determined to do something I could not, he arranged for me to be on that trip. I was laid off of my job three days before the walk was to start. My life came to a stand still. My Higher Power put me on hold to make my excuses nil, and I was invited to come and attend the send off ceremony. I had planned to spend the first day riding a ten speed and walking with him.

The trip from the first became quite emotional—I cried at the beginning, the love was so thick in the air. A Higher Power's presence was felt by all. In the afternoon of the first day it became apparent to those around my friend that something was wrong. About then he told me that he did not know what was going to happen after sundown when most of the people were going back to work. The friend who had helped him train, and who was going to help him, had gone back out and started using again and left him two short on a crew to go all the way with him. He asked me if I could stay. I did not remember even considering if the words came out of my mouth, they were words, it was my mouth but the answer was not mine. So began the longest meeting I ever had fifteen days hard, soft, hot, and cool; they all seemed like one long day.

The help turned out to be abundant, but still I stayed. People came, made friends, helped, left, and others came and replaced them. Many of them were brothers and sisters from the big family I have now. N.A. is my family. Sometimes as many as fifteen people on the side of the road but the sharing went on every waking moment. I thank my Higher Power. By His grace, after fourteen months in the Fellowship, I can now say I know the feeling of unconditional love.

W.H.
Arkansas

The Trip has just Begun

One day last winter I got a notion that I would like to jump in my car and see the U.S.A. I sent off to the WSO for a *World Directory* of N.A. meetings, and proceeded to put away all the money that I was able to save for the next few months. This gave me time to really get excited about a trip that was definitely going to happen.

I left Atlanta at 11:00 p.m. with a wide grin and a spirit of adventure that was to lead me to the coolest experience of my life. Only H.P. and the roads would guide my path. I just had a direction: west, via N.A. meetings.

The dawn seemed to come quickly as my mind raced through the night with an uncertain reality and the anticipation of the journey that lay ahead. The sun was high by the time I passed through the Ozarks. The excitement, the music from my tape deck, and of course the coffee, would stave off the impending snooze.

The mountains around Santa Fe were beautiful. The first night in the wilderness was special, as a clean addict laid eyes upon city lights thousands of feet below and stars light years above. The next night I would feel the warmth and love of other addicts around a candlelit room among those lights below.

The drive up the California coast was awesome. How special a treat it was for an eastern addict to experience the likes of western N.A. recovery in places like L.A. and San Francisco. The motorists driving by must have wondered about me riding across the span of the Golden Gate Bridge with a constant smile from ear to ear that I could not wipe off of my face.

I found myself alone in a redwood forest one morning, as the gray misty fog blanketed the lower half of the grove. Turning around, I noticed distinct angel rays suddenly unfold across the forest from the incoming sunlight. For what must have been about five minutes, a tingle went across my head and down my back. My whole body became numb. The small figure in these woods began to cry as the magnificent spirit of the moment overwhelmed him. He was not alone.

Driving down the road I thought about what had happened. I was clean, and had just experienced one of the neatest feelings and most beautiful sights of my life. This is one of the greatest things about recovery. I can feel and see. Before, I could pretty much predict how I was going to feel, depending on which chemicals I was into that day. I am glad that they brought me to a point where, through N.A., I can see that being clean can yield experiences far greater than I ever could have imagined.

Miracles do happen. I found myself in Pendleton, Oregon on a Sunday night at 7:00 p.m. The *World Directory* pointed me to a meeting that I just happened to find in the nick of time. About twenty-five addicts showed up in this tiny town for a weekly meeting that was simply dynamite.

Addicts were not the only ones I met. Montana introduced me to deer, antelope, coyote, moose, wild turkey, a bald eagle, mountain goats, and two bears. The mountain goats had their meeting on a ledge in Glacier National Park. As I understand it, they are powerless over bears.

It would be hard to express all of the many instances of joy, fun and serenity that this trip unfolded. It is only because I am clean that I could enjoy such a trip, and it is because of the Fellowship of N.A. that I am clean today. I am very thankful for that.

On a Sunday morning six weeks and 12,000 miles later I arrived back on the expressway which circles Atlanta. Tears filled my eyes because this "trip of my life" was over. This was a time to call my sponsor. At that moment his experience, strength, and hope helped me to understand something. The trip has just begun—welcome to N.A.!

E.O.
Georgia

Fare Well, Love Well, & You'll Be Well

I didn't come into this program brimming full of love. I did not know what love was. Addicts do not take spouses or lovers, we take hostages. I was a taker. I was self-centered and dishonest, and from this spiritual disease stemmed a hundred forms of resentment, anger, and fear. I was not content with what I owned, so I sought to take what you had. And when I could not steal what you owned, I tried to prevent you from ever acquiring more than I had. I caused a lot of violence, suffering, and unhappiness.

Today, I am grateful to this Twelve Step program of recovery. I have changed. I no longer seek to take from you nor do I seek to cause you harm. I have a program that teaches me to give unconditionally. I can only keep what I have by giving it away. If I give away my recovery, I'll recover. If I give away my disease, I keep my disease.

I'd like to share one of the most positive aspects of my recovery—that I have become willing to learn what love is and to practice the principles of love (acceptance and giving) in my recovery. I have come to believe that unless I care and share my thoughts, my feelings and my experiences concerning love, I cannot keep the warm comforting effects that loving produces.

For love to be effective in my healing process, it had to touch my body, mind and spirit with two spiritual principles: unconditional acceptance, and unconditional giving (acceptance and giving are what caring and sharing are all about for me today). My body has to accept the fact that love is more than being warm in bed, more than individuals seeking a hostage, even more than wanting to share. Love for me today is giving what I need to get. Today I seek rather to comfort others than to be comforted, to give rather than to take, for it is in self-forgetting that I find.

Acceptance is the key to mental freedom from the prisons of resentment, anger and fear. Unconditional acceptance of God's will for me gets rid of my pride and ego that comes from self-will and self-deception. The Twelve Traditions also help to keep my pride and ego in perspective, in keeping with my primary purpose—to stay clean and carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

I cannot be free of my self-made prison of obsession until I accept that I have the right to be wrong, that I don't have to be right all the time. Then I can accept that other people have the right to be wrong and the right to be right. I accept the fact that people have the right to be, and to express who and what they are at the time. I also accept that I have the right to associate with people whose positive way of thinking and living attracts me. Honest love comes from my accepting people, places and things the way they are, and from knowing that trying to change them would make my life unmanageable. Today I feel a lot of serenity from accepting the things I cannot change. My mind has been touched by the principle of acceptance.

My spirit has been made whole again by the principle of giving. Physical love for me is giving what you need to get. If I need to be comforted I seek rather to comfort, and the kind and loving God of my recovery always comforts me.

Spiritual love is giving away what you need to keep. This is my favorite way of hiding myself from the bondage of self. As I have stated earlier, my two problems are that I am too self-centered, and I am dishonest to myself. Twelve step work helps me to recover the fastest, because it keeps me honest, and it keeps me giving away the message of recovery that was freely given to me. It also keeps me in the here and now.

I am learning to practice the character building virtues of patience, tolerance, hope, trust, compassion, empathy, and obedience to God's will. I am learning to forgive and to forget, and to forget that I forgave. I am learning to become assertive, not aggressive. I find that it is in forgiving that I am forgiven, and that when I give peace, God makes me feel peaceful within. I am learning that I am working the steps and traditions today because I thirst and crave for the mood altering affects that they produce. I crave to be more happy, more joyous, and more free—and I get more and more each day! I thirst for the knowledge of God's will for me, and I seek through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with Him every day.

Let me end by sharing two important things that were revealed to me recently: It doesn't matter *who* you love or *how* you love, but *that* you love. Unless you love someone, nothing makes any sense. The Twelve Steps of N.A. are a guide to living, giving and loving. I want to thank all of you whom I may have touched by this message. You have already touched my life and have given me another opportunity to give, and for this I am very grateful.

Farewell, love well, and you'll be well!

I love you!
Anonymous
Hawaii

"We Admitted

We

Were Powerless"

The meaning of the First Step has changed for me since my introduction to a Twelve Step Program. I was about fourteen then, and attended an open A.A. meeting with a family member. I'm not sure of what was said that evening, but I am fairly sure that what I came away with was a distortion of it.

After identifying with the speaker's thoughts and feelings, I believed that if I watched myself closely and didn't use alcohol "too much," I'd be okay. I'd never have to suffer the ill effects of "alcoholism" as that speaker and my parents had. I believed I could possibly have this disease, but if I were aware, I could arrest it or avoid any progression of it. I watched myself very closely. I read articles on alcohol addiction and shared the horrors of this disease (which I thought I knew so much about) with anyone who would listen.

My caution with alcohol led me to experiment with other drugs. I used them carefully at first, stopping for short periods of time to make sure I was still doing okay. I watched closely for physical dependence, and since I was certainly having no problems I began to use the drug alcohol again ("carefully," of course). I continued to check myself, and to assure myself that I wasn't physically dependent, that I wasn't "powerless over alcohol" (or any of the other drugs I was using, each in turn, continuously). I could and did quit using them repeatedly. I did of course pick them up again after assuring myself I was okay.

I watched for the other things I heard about that First Step. My life certainly wasn't unmanageable; I was managing very well, considering the bad luck I kept having and the way the people who surrounded me kept involving me in their problems. It was obvious to me that the people around me had the problem, certainly not me. I was too aware of addiction to alcohol for it to ever happen to me.

When my only friend was sent to a treatment center, I was reintroduced to the Twelve Steps and began to see evidence of a problem of my own. I couldn't comprehend, though, how I could be "powerless over alcohol/drugs" as some members suggested I change that step to fit me. I could quit using any drug so easily whenever I wanted to or needed to (and I didn't even really want the pills I had in the glove compartment of my car, "just in case"). And wasn't I managing quite well? Considering my circumstances, of course.

I abstained from drugs and attended meetings of that Fellowship. The necessity for abstinence was reinforced when my only brother died from an overdose. I could identify with many things, especially the way I heard members of that Fellowship talk about how they felt about themselves. But there was always a nagging doubt in my gut when I thought about "powerless over drugs."

An out of state trip to a convention for N.A., and my first look at the Basic Text, gave me further identification. That experience gave me the ability to begin a surrender to powerlessness over my disease, addiction.

Upon opening the text, the first line I read contained the words "we can't save our face and our ass at the same time." I turned to the introduction, and with my heart racing, read: "our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance. 'Alcoholism' is too limited a term for us; our problem is not a specific substance, it is a disease called 'addiction.'"

That was it!! My problem was not due to any particular substance, I'd switched substances enough so that physical addiction to any particular substance didn't occur. I realized I was powerless over the disease itself, addiction. Not addiction "to" any specific drug. *ADDICTION*, period. I realized I didn't have marijuanaism, cocainism, amphetaminism, sedativism, or anthingelseism. I had the disease, addiction. While I was watching for "addiction *to*" substances, I avoided looking at the dependence on *avoidance of reality, however I could manage it.* I hadn't realized previously that my watchfulness itself was a symptom of this disease. I began to see that my will was a part of the way my disease expresses itself, and began to believe in my need to "come to believe in a Power greater than myself," and later to actually believe in that Power.

As I continued to learn about and apply the Steps of N.A. with the help of a sponsor (I believed by then that I needed

one of those, too). My awareness of the extent of my powerlessness continued to grow.

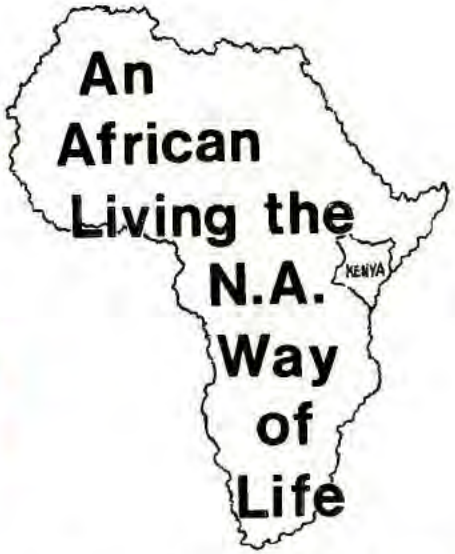
I saw that focusing on *not* being powerless over drugs kept me in denial of the unmanagability of my life. Focusing on what was not happening helped me ignore my addiction, and to rationalize and justify situations that had continued to "happen to me," such as emotional and physical abuse from men I had kept choosing to be with, prostituting myself to doctors, then to a husband, despising myself for doing these things, then doing them over again. No job problems? My apathetic attitude and refusal to take on any added responsibility, doing just enough to get by at work, were indeed job problems. I was powerless over the whole thing—my denial, over the rationalization and justification, over doing whatever I had to do to make things okay in my mind when they definitely weren't okay in reality.

That was the past, and with the First Step of N.A., I began to see my past for what it really was. Today, I'm still powerless over my (our) addiction. (Mine is no different from anyone else's). I believe I'm powerless; I believe in the unmanagability of my life, and that my life will never *become* manageable by me. It never was. I believe in my need for other people who are recovering from the disease addiction, and I believe that the God of my understanding works through these people. I believe I can't recover alone, but that we can—together. I can see things that others need help with, and those others can help me to see things that I need help with. I believe all these things, and still I attempt, at times, to have power over these things, to have power over my addiction. THAT'S POWERLESS!!

I find myself (or others find me) isolating myself, when I need and want others around me. Self-sufficiency for me is an illusion, a deadly one. I believe that. And still, my ego craves it and I find myself attempting to create it in my life. THAT'S POWERLESS!!

Although my understanding of the First Step has grown, I remain powerless. Knowledge and understanding of my disease do not equal power over my disease. I believe that. And yet sometimes, when I'm tired and don't want to do the things I believe I must do to recover, my mind tells me that because I know and believe these things, because I have a few years of clean time behind me, I can relax—I have (just a little) power. THAT'S POWERLESS!!

Anonymous



An African Living the N.A. Way of Life

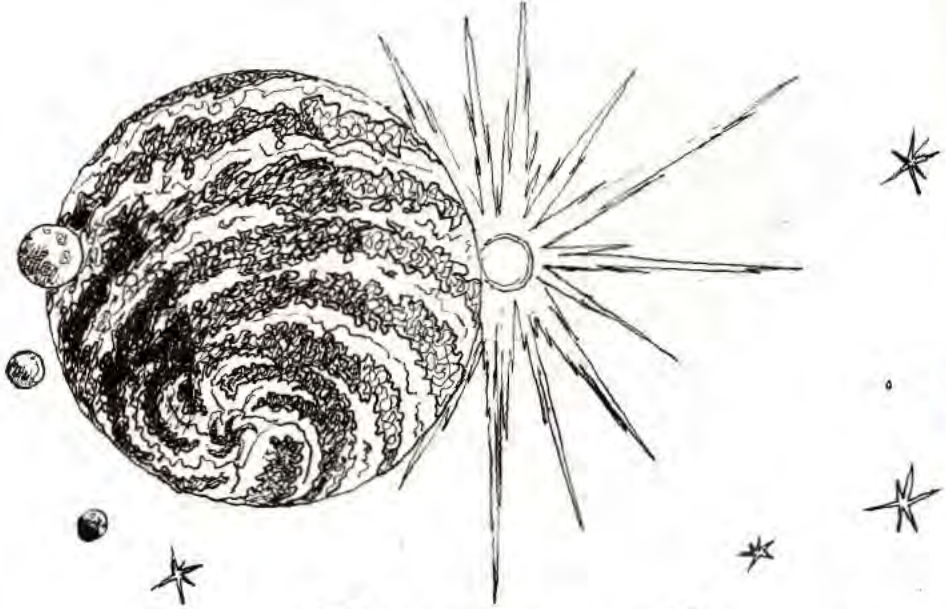
Now, as I sit and look at the way I had been living before joining this spiritual Fellowship, I really wonder and remember all that I had lost due to my addiction. I spent all the money I made on cigerettes, alcohol, and other drugs (Including drugs designed to change my skin color—I had been born Black, but could never accept myself that way).

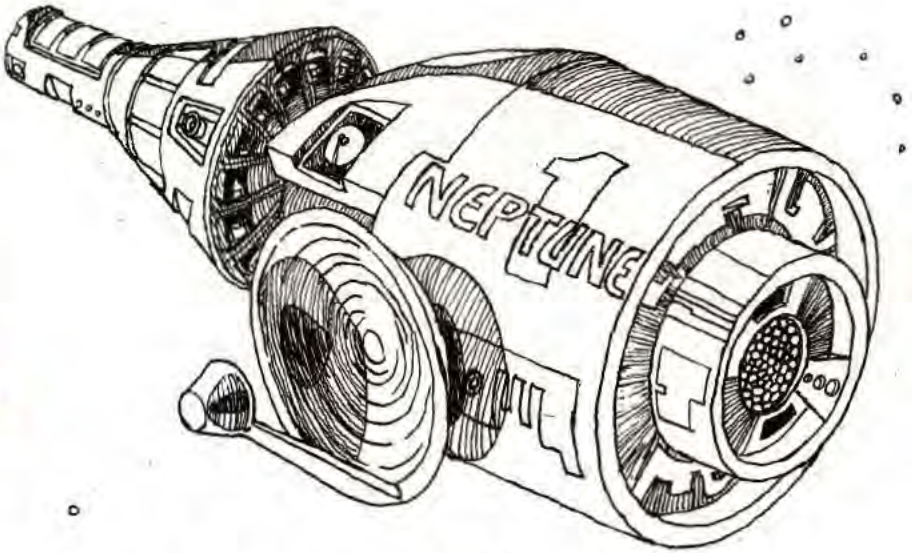
As it always does with addicts sooner or later, it came to me that I lost my wife and two children because I didn't take proper care of them. I didn't see to it that they had the right things to eat—and my wife too was more concerned with getting drugs than vegetables. She took the kids and moved back into her father's house.

Then in early April of last year, shortly after I had been introduced to Narcotics Anonymous, I talked to her about the Fellowship, and how it works. How you people really accept one another, and deeply share what you have with your fellow members. I told her she could come home and we'd try this N.A. program, if she could give up the drugs. That maybe we could remain as we had been born—*clean.*

My wife stayed away for a time—she was not yet ready, I guess—but fianlly decided to come home. At that time we started our home groups, two separate meetings. We live clean today, with the help of the N.A. literature which we have gotten from the WSO. And now we live together as one family: myself, my wife, and our two tots Erick and Martin, my mother, and mother in-law, my four brothers and others. And we are definitely an N.A. family, one and all!!! Thanks a lot N.A., my friends, who were there to help us come across this wonderful Fellowship.

Thanks
P.O.
Kenya, Africa





Restored to Insanity ?

Maybe I should call this "Rebellion Strikes Again," or better yet, "Spiritual Relapse." One way or the other, about two months ago, I was jogging in the woods here in Florida, and it came to me, "I have a few major resentments here; maybe what I need is another mini-Fourth Step." Upon reaching the word "Step," something snapped inside me. You see, I am a counselor. I work "in the field," so I have all these other *great* answers available to me, a lot of which lean to the side of science, or at least away from God, in a way—and in the direction I had always believed was "better." Good old counseling theory, good old science, just what I demanded the day I went into treatment myself. When the staff came to my room in detox, and spoke to me about the treatment program, all I said was, "I want scientists... you're not about to offer me any religious stuff now, are you?" They assured me there would be no religion, and I figured, I'm home free. After all, I'm the guy who reads and writes only science fiction, and who found this statement in a story: "We found God's body floating out by Neptune somewhere" and fell in love with it. The counselor who came to see me didn't mention anything about spirituality, but the way they eased me into it was so simple, I suppose I never had a problem after that—until it was time to give up pride, and over-sensitivity.

My launching pad was resentment, against the other Fellowship and some people in it, who I believed were cruel, and on top of that, utterly phony. And co-incidentally, they "overused" God a lot when they shared, so I said, as I reached

the word "Steps," "Steps, bah! Rubbish! If you look at the record, nobody stays clean anyway. All that spiritual stuff is just social reinforcement for self-hate anyway. All we do is talk about how sick we still are! If the Fellowship worked, we'd all be staying clean. It's just a little verbal contract we sign, right? Just to mumble and babble about God, when we know the REAL answers?" Realizing what I'd said, I got on my knees and prayed for forgiveness, and received it. Until I had to hear my sponsor say, "When I have pride, I take away from my Higher Power." I got furious. And more so when he smiled and said, "Your wife is going to her meetings, right? And you want to take some credit?" I swore to fire him. After all, hadn't I hated myself for forty years? Did I now have to pass on being proud of my achievements? And just be what my friend in the step workshop refers to as a "clear channel?" Clear channel? No pride? What is that, I cease to exist? Am I a block of clear glass? Hey, God, if that's all I am, then you just go and get you that clear glass. Me, I'm human. I exist. I am proud of it!

And with that in mind, on the way to work one day, I realized I had been cured, and restored to sanity, because I had the same attitude and internal feeling I had before I became active in my addiction. Cured!

What I was allowing to ease me along in getting cured was going to meetings for my wife's co-dependence, where we talk about growing up in addictive homes. And because it was all new, I figured, this is the answer, and N.A. is boring me these

days anyhow. I go to meetings, I hear one person all night say one thing I need to hear. I am not getting fed in N.A. spiritually any more, I said. Of course by that time, I was moving away from caring much about being or feeling spiritual, and as a result, I didn't hear myself forget the reason I go; to share with the addict who still suffers, the new person. The dreaded newcomer, who had more at that moment to teach me about spiritual principles, H.O.W., than I dared admit.

What brought this all in front of me was a beautiful letter from a dear friend who was at the first meeting I ever went to. This dear person pointed out that in my letters, I had been spiritually isolating, talking like I was in a "mental relapse." I have never argued with this person, because she taught me how to pray, and how to know God's Will, and because I so completely trust her, I took her words home with me. I realized I had perhaps blown two job interviews. I blew them by sounding so utterly psychology-oriented. In fact yesterday, I received a call saying one place could not use me for that very reason. Oddly, I had already gone home—I had gone back to N.A., and been on my knees, praying just for strength, guidance, to stay clean and keep it simple. To be truly restored to sanity.

As it happened, I was at work, interviewing a family member when that phone call came. And I just smiled, and said, "Thank you for being honest, is that all?" and hung up. I don't think it even showed on my face, but right then there was no anger inside, or hurt. Perhaps at that moment I believed I was just being "professional," but where had that peace, that serenity, and that acceptance come from? That humility?

This morning, like last night, I felt good again. Peaceful, and back on the track. And I thank God I know today where that peace comes from. I know I am an addict first, and if I don't stay clean, what I learn other places does not matter. Through the Fellowship of N.A., I found myself, and I found my God, and I am grateful that I had gone to enough meetings to hear myself pronounce me cured, and know what I was saying! The most beautiful part of this is coming home and finding God still there, and N.A. still there. I just wonder, how does He feel when He goes looking for us, and WE are not there?

In loving gratitude,
J.H.
Georgia

Personal Experience

with

Step Three

When I first accepted a Higher Power into my life, I felt that I had at last found a "Sugar Daddy" who would unconditionally grant all of my requests. I was sorely disappointed when I discovered that this was not so. Nevertheless, I have tried at various times in my recovery to use God's power to fulfill my own desires. But I have learned that when I do that, it is always wise to qualify my request with the words "Thy will, not mine, be done." If I truly mean these words, I can feel safe in going to God with my wants and needs. Whether or not I get what I want, I know that God does take care of all my needs. I have my own experience to look at in this regard. I think about how many times, since I entered the Fellowship, I have missed meals or gone without a roof over my head. The answer, of course, is almost never. Although I frequently confuse my needs and my wants, an honest look usually reveals that I have had everything I really needed, and often a lot more! With such a loving and generous friend for a Higher Power, I can feel confident in turning my life over to His protection and care.

Sometimes my requests to God are not met. Does this mean that I was wrong in making the Third Step decision and that I should resume control over my life? I don't think so! In fact, my experience has shown that many times I do not necessarily

know what is best for me. In some instances, I have been able to look back and say "Thank God, I didn't get what I wanted, it might have killed me!" I believe that my Higher Power knows what is best for me, and is interested in my happiness and success. Sometimes my requests and desires are not granted because they would prove harmful to me in the end.

I must also consider what is best for everyone concerned. Although it is somewhat of a new concept to me, I am becoming aware of the fact that I am not the only human being on earth. There are many people on this earth, and it is possible that my request would be harmful to someone else. When God reveals these truths to me, I begin to acquire the rudiments of unselfishness.

When I think my desires are not met, I have to be careful to see if perhaps I am mistaken. There are times when I ask God for something in particular, and then sit and wait for my wish to be granted. In this instance, I was told to consider the analogy of driving a car. I ask God to direct my life and give me guidance. I therefore find myself driving on the right road. However, if I stop the car and don't move forward, I will be run over. Similarly, even when I feel I am "on the right track" in life, I must continue to move forward. I cannot ask God to give me willingness, patience or abstinence and then simply wait for the endowment to come. I have to go out and actively seek it. Perhaps I will find the gift at a meeting, in the N.A. literature or in sharing with another recovering addict. In many cases, as I carry on "acting as if" I have already received the desired gift, I realize that God has already given me the ability to attain what I desire.

If I ask God to give me a good job, I thank Him for the abilities I have, and then I go out and look for a job. If I want good grades in school, I thank God for the intelligence He gave me, and then I begin studying. And if I ask God for a spouse, I thank Him for the friends who love me, and then I get busy trying to love others. These are only a few examples of the many ways I find God working in my life. I know that I have to "do the footwork" to achieve my desires, but I can also ask my Higher Power for the strength and courage to do it.

When I'm feeling that God is not providing me with something I truly need or desire, I consider that He knows better than I do what is best for me and my fellows, and it may be that He has already granted it by giving me the ability and resources.

G.S.
California

No Reservations

I'm writing this letter with hopes that it might reach another addict out there who has doubts or reservations. See, I used to be one of those types of addicts. I started using when I was nine. It didn't take long before the drugs had totally taken me over. My addiction was on a downhill path with no brakes or hopes of slowing down or finding help. But me? I didn't need help. I was fine! That shows you how our disease lies to us! Anyway, I did anything and everything I could to get my drugs. By the time I was fifteen I was in prison, but that didn't stop me. I continued to use, and when I got out three years later I was even worse off than before! It didn't take long and I was back to jails again.

This time someone else saw my problem and tried to force me into treatment. Being an addict I couldn't take someone else's thing to run my life. The treatment centers didn't work for me then, and didn't work later in my addiction. So after a few more years, I was back into prison again. I started to realize that maybe I had a little problem, but it wasn't anything I couldn't handle on my own. I ended up getting in more trouble for drugs while in prison and caught more time, but this unmanagability in my life seemed real normal for me. I couldn't face being powerless, not me! So after four more years I got out and I came to Hollywood, Fla. I figured a change would be all I needed. I know today that it was my Higher Power's will for me to come here to Florida.

After being out for about a year I met a woman who looked like walking death. What I really saw in her was me, but one thing was different; she had heard of N.A. before, but chose to try it her way one more time. It's so hard to admit we are powerless and can't run our own lives. So after a month or so she started to go to meetings and I followed. My disease brought me there, but in the form of jealousy, self-centeredness, and me trying to control her!

This was about eighteen months ago. She got clean about a month before I did, then I finally decided to try and listen. I had heard so many other addicts sharing my pain, loneliness, all of my private feelings, and I found a real love and caring that I had always been searching for. I tried to work my program the best that I thought I could, but see, I was still doing my will. I thought I only had to give up drugs and

everything would be okay. What a mistake!! I did manage to stay clean, but I didn't give up my reservations and totally surrender my life over! I still stole to support myself and it caught up with me again.

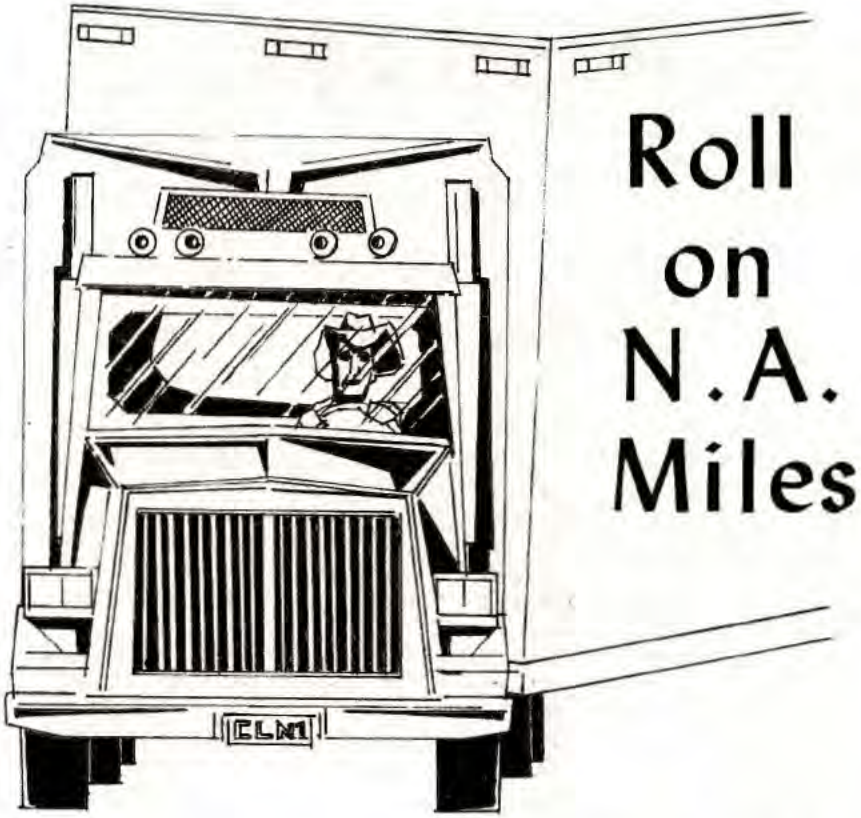
I was placed on probation this time. I know today that was by the grace of God, but at the time, my disease still had control over me. After a couple of months I stole again and was violated. I was scared for the first time I could remember. I couldn't face myself or others in N.A., so I ran, but you know, I couldn't run from me! No matter how far I got, I still had to face me. I turned around and came back to N.A. It was my only home. I knew I finally belonged somewhere! I started my steps all over again and began to give up all my reservations. I finally began to honestly surrender my life and will! After about seven more months, my past caught up with me again and I was once again sent to prison. I was then and still am clean today.

This time I want this program and what it has to offer freedom from active addiction and from myself. I'm finally admitting that I cannot run my life. I've really had to reach out for help this time. I know today that no matter what else, I never have to use or practice active addiction in any form. Today, I'm letting God as I understand Him run my life. See, for the last three months I was without any type of meeting. I received all my recovery from writing other addicts in recovery, and from all the literature I received through the mail. I tried to start meetings, but I couldn't get the ball rolling.

Today I'm now transferred to a work-release center which holds N.A. meetings. It's even in my own town, and I get to see other addicts who have been with me through this all. These people never gave up on me! That never would have happened if I had to rely on active users! I know today that this is a God-given program, and there is hope where there is faith. Today I have faith in N.A., the people in it and my Higher Power. Today I'm home again! N.A. is my home, and no matter what else, I know that I will never have to use again! Today I'm learning the word gratitude. I hope that if there's another addict out there who's not sure about our program and the fact that there really is help for us—well I'm living proof there is! We never have to end up back in prisons or institutions again, and we don't have to die from our disease.

There is hope for us addicts and there is a a real love in this Fellowship unsurpassed by any other!! All it takes is a desire to try our way, and you have one foot in the door. All you have to do is try and ask for help. Thank you for listening, and I hope to see you in a meeting someday.

T.R.
Florida



Roll on N.A. Miles

I've been involved with the N.A. Program for about three years, with two and a half years clean time, thanks to the Fellowship. I never could have done it alone! N.A. has taught me how to live without the use of drugs. I am very grateful.

Being a trucker, time is valuable to me, and so is my recovery. Since I can legally only drive eight hours a day, that gives me sixteen hours to find meetings and fellowship. Before I got involved with N.A., I would push twelve, sixteen hours or more, pop some pills and roll on down the highway. Today I have a choice I never knew before. Now when I get tired, I find myself a meeting and get some rest after. I usually run from Texas to Florida, sometimes to Oklahoma. When I'm home, I average five or six meetings a week. Where there is an N.A. will for a meeting, there is an N.A. way to get there. So keep the parking lots open. I'm coming in the N.A. way. United we stand, divided we fall.

Roll on 18 Wheeler!
H.T.
Louisiana

The Ego's Place

in

Service Work

During the past year, numerous conversations with other members seem to revolve around the ego and service work, as well as the practice of the Twelfth Step. Having been introduced to group and area service at six months clean, and having remained involved since then, I have had considerable opportunity to watch myself and others mature as a result of service work, and to view its relation to personal recovery based on the principles of N.A.

Practicing the steps in my personal recovery began with little regard for the order in which they are presented. It has since become necessary for me to accept that in order to derive full benefit from them, I would have to practice them again, in order. The decision to follow through on that is also the reason that I have been able to carry on as a trusted servant without losing my sanity.

While serving as secretary of an area, an awareness developed regarding my true desires in acting as a trusted servant of the group. Taking the minutes, organizing mailing lists, helping the other officers all inflated my ego and eventually aided my disease in convincing me that I was the only person capable of getting the job done. This conviction affected every area of my life and I found myself involved in *everything* going on in my area, believing that this must be God's will for me. The result was frustration and exhaustion. While sitting at an area service meeting one day, the realization hit that the main reason I was so concerned about being everywhere and doing everything was that I desperately wanted others to appreciate me. At that time in my personal recovery, I was also ready to backtrack and take the Third Step in its entirety. With that came a new understanding of a Higher Power's place in my life and the opportunity to have the steps work with the greatest benefit. Continuing on with the Fourth through Ninth Steps has granted me the necessary patience and strength to accomplish whatever services are requested of me. Personal recovery through the steps had to happen before I could truly be of service to Narcotics Anonymous rather than to my own ego and self-will.

The surrender I made at that time came after being involved as a trusted servant for about three years. It took that period of time for the maturation process to evolve that finally let me see myself as an instrument of God and not as a person who had the right answers for Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. The further result of it was that practicing the last three steps led into an understanding of the traditions. Just as the steps are an ongoing ego deflating process as the only means of establishing a close contact with a Higher Power, so are the traditions a continuation of that with greater emphasis on the group, N.A. as a whole, and my place in it as a trusted servant. In other words, my ego will get in the way of my ability to be of service unless I am ever vigilant and aware of the traditions working within the service units.

It's no surprise to me when other people share similar experiences with service surrenders and that the time period involved has always been between three and three and one half years of *service experience*, not necessarily just three years of clean time. The learning process that takes place during the practice of the steps and traditions cannot be rushed. There is only so much we can do, and for some reason, that three year time span seems to be what it takes to see ourselves in the big picture of service to N.A., rather than as that lone member who has all the answers and tries to be involved everywhere all the time.

The traditions are presented in order for the same reason as the steps and they *must be* practiced in their entirety in order for a member to function responsibly as a trusted servant.

D.B.
California

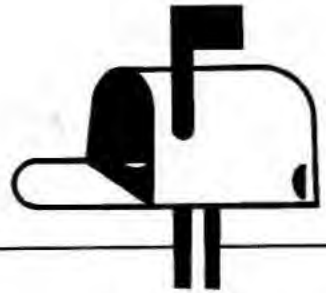
To My Sponsor

Occasionally in life we find people who we instinctively know we can trust—one who seems to understand us with little explanation. We find we can trust people, even if at the time it is only one, but this is comforting, when we have started to doubt that there would be anyone who would care. Slowly, we begin to open ourselves up, and share who we really are with confidence and new-found strength. In loving another person, our whole world takes on new light. We find we are not alone.

With the greatest respect, I can say I am grateful to you, my friend, for you have given me back my courage to love. You have touched my soul immensely. You are one of those "occasionals" I did not even know I needed. Through opening up I have found myself vulnerable. At times being vulnerable has been scary, but deep inside I've always felt I'd be safe with you there. And so if being open and vulnerable is what it takes to remain soft and pliable, instead of being hard and jaded, I will be forever grateful that there are people like you to steady my fears.

L.R.
California

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear *N.A. Way*,

I just finished reading the October issue from cover to cover and had to write this letter before I could go to bed. Three cheers to the *N.A. Way* or as they say in London it was brilliant.

I was delighted to see so many articles about recovery from addiction. Articles filled with insights into the ongoing process of addiction and recovery which continues long after we put down the drugs. I saw the articles as a bold statement against the denial that our problem was drugs and that once we put them down we have worked the First Step. It's wonderful to see our literature maturing in this healthy way, lets keep focusing on powerlessness over our addiction and not just powerless over drugs.

The article entitled "You arx Nxxdxd" was informative, enlightening and most of all hysterical. As Regional Secretary I have nightmares about typing the wrong letters and then sending the minutes out unedited. I chuckled all the way through the article and was really moved at the end by the feelings generated.

Overall there was a very strong message of hope. This I feel is the key ingredient that makes a meeting "a real meeting." The October issue was a real N.A. meeting in written form and it was a damn good one.

In loving service,
Anonymous

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.

CALIFORNIA: Mar 7-9, '86; 8th Annl Northern California Convention, Monterey Conference Center; 8th Annl N.C.C.N.A., P.O. Box 223115, Carmel, CA 93922

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al 203-347-7856

HAWAII: Feb 14-16 '86; On the ocean at Camp Himelani on Island of Oahu, N.A. Round Up, P.O. Box 23436, Honolulu, HI 86808; Mark (808) 373-9774; Richard M. (808) 261-1037

MICHIGAN: Jul 3-6; RCNA of Michigan; Freedom II; Mich. Inn, Southfield

MISSISSIPPI: Apr 4-6; MRCNA IV; Hilton, Biloxi, MS; Lisa (601) 392-7267; Renee (601) 362-0897; Donna (601) 862-7334

OHIO: May 23-25, '86; ORCNA IV Convention; Hollenden House, E.6 + Superior; ORCNA IV, P.O. Box 29517, Cleveland, Ohio 44129

PENNSYLVANIA: Jun 20-22, 86; 7th East Coast Cenvention; Bloomsburg University; 7th E.C.C.N.A., P.O. Box 211, Taylor, PA 18517; Ron D. 717-457-9751; Frank G. 717-457-0587

VIRGINIA: Jan 9-12, 86; Fourth Annl VA Convention of NA; Omni International Hotel; P.O. Box 3903, Charlottesville, VA 22903; (804) 979-8298

WASHINGTON: Feb 28 to Mar 2, 86; First Annl Washington Northern Idaho Regional Convention; Sheraton Tacoma Hotel, 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402; US 1-800-325-3535; Canada 1-800-268-9330

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. ***Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.***

2. ***For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.***

3. ***The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.***

4. ***Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.***

5. ***Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.***

6. ***An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.***

7. ***Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.***

8. ***Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.***

9. ***N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.***

10. ***Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.***

11. ***Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.***

12. ***Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.***

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