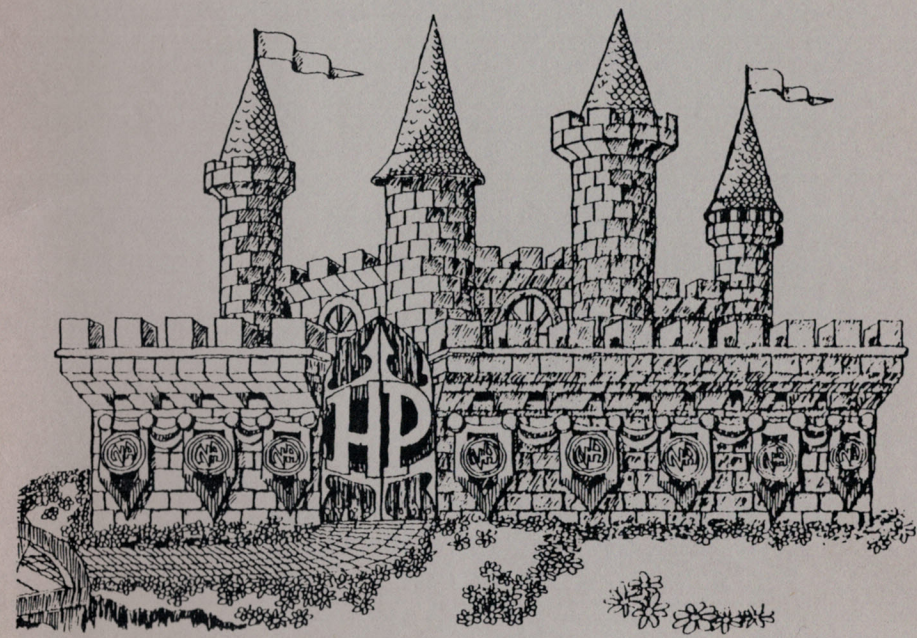
My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE NA WAY

JUNE
1986

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A Spiritual Fortress



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

This year's World Service Conference addressed the issue of whether it is appropriate to read the *N.A. Way* magazine during meetings. The decision of the WSC was that it is not appropriate to do so, because the *N.A. Way* is not Conference-approved literature. In support of this WSC decision, we would like to clarify the role of the magazine within the Fellowship.

The *N.A. Way* is a publication of, by and for Narcotics Anonymous. It does not fall into the category of Conference-approved literature, but that doesn't mean that it is not truly an N.A. publication. It is. Both the WSC and the Board of Trustees participate in the editing process, and it is produced and distributed by our WSO. It is an N.A. meeting in print. So why, some ask, should we not allow it to be read in meetings? A closer look at what "Conferenced-approved" means provides the answer to that question.

In N.A., we have a lengthy, careful approval process for literature. Before something is Conference-approved, it is distributed widely within the Fellowship during a review and input stage, then compiled into a draft that is again circulated for one year before final approval. In that way we ensure that there is ample opportunity to weed out inconsistencies with the fundamental principles of our Fellowship, and to truly consult the group conscience of N.A. as a whole. If we only read material at our meetings that has gone through that process, there can be no confusion about it. Our unity and our focus on our own primary purpose are protected by that practice. What is read is then not the opinion of a few, but represents the experience of the Fellowship. The Conference felt that reading the *N.A. Way* at meetings might confuse that issue, since it expresses personal experiences and opinions.

Be assured that the *N.A. Way* can still be distributed at meetings, and announcements about it are fine. The issue never was whether the *N.A. Way* magazine was a part of Narcotics Anonymous. The only issue is the preservation of the importance of reading only Conference-approved literature at meetings. Feel free to use and distribute the magazine freely within the Fellowship, but please refrain from reading it during meetings, in keeping with the Fellowshipwide group conscience.

R.H.
Editor

Ten Reasons Why I Attend N.A. Meetings

In no particular order of importance.

1. In order to feel the atmosphere of recovery. Nine times out of ten, I feel much better after attending a meeting than before I came—no matter where I'm at before going to a meeting.

2. To learn how to apply the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in my daily life. Meetings are a good place to learn about practicing these principles in all of my affairs.

3. To share my experience, strength and hope in order to help others, just as others sharing their recovery helps me.

4. To watch others grow in their recovery and to grow in my recovery. One of the most beautiful experiences life offers me today is the joy of watching a newcomer grow right before my eyes. A loving God as I understand God, working through clean N.A. members, brings about many miracles in all of our lives. This is proof of the fact that N.A. works—if we work it!

5. In order to spend time with other recovering men and women. I've found more caring and sharing people in my recovery than I at one time believed existed. I can recall very well a time in life (quite a long period of time) when I believed very few people cared about anyone but themselves. HOW WRONG I WAS!

6. To be reminded of where I came from, and what awaits me if I pick up that first drug. "If we use, we lose."

7. To be with men and women I truly love and care about, and who love and care about me—and show it.

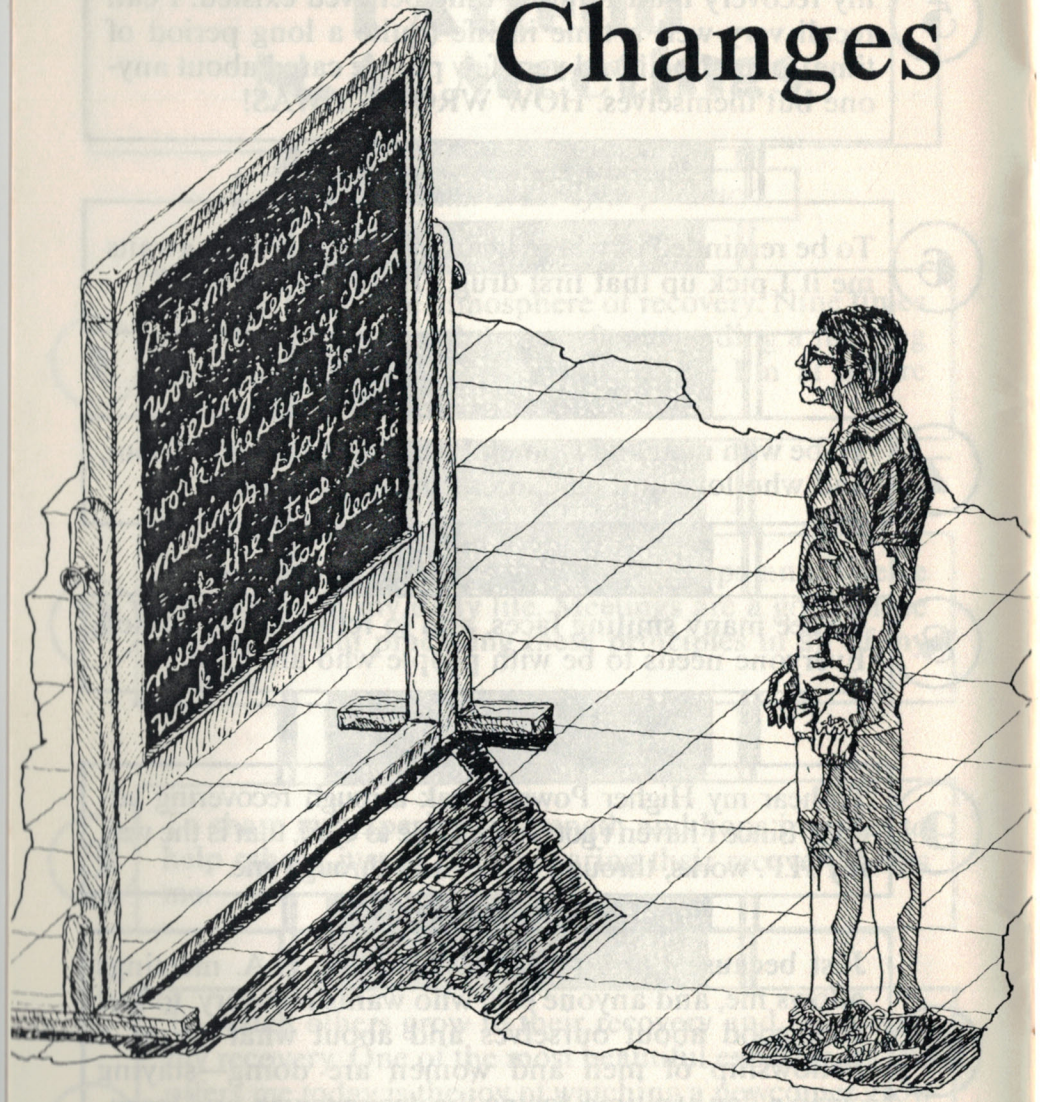
8. To see many smiling faces, and to return those smiles. Everyone needs to be with people who are happy.

9. To hear my Higher Power speak through recovering addicts. Since I haven't got a direct line to God, that is the way my H.P. works, through others and through me.

10. Just because I'm an addict. Attending N.A. meetings allows me, and anyone else who wants recovery, to feel very good about ourselves and about what we as a Fellowship of men and women are doing—staying clean a day at a time, losing the desire to use, and learning a new way of life.

I love N.A.
J.B.
Wisconsin

Changes



What a relief to allow others to be themselves. I then have time to work on me. This is a freedom the N.A. Program has given me.

I spent most of my life trying to change reality. People, places and things were my problem (I thought). If only people would behave the way I wanted everything would be okay. Of course people rarely cooperated, and I became

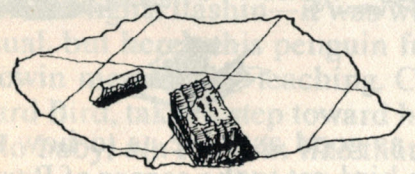
frustrated. I blamed them for my frustration and increased my efforts to change them. This effort ended in even more frustration. I became extremely confused, angry and resentful. I was a victim, helpless against a hostile world. My only escape was the false sense of security I found in drugs.

When I became involved with N.A. I was beaten. I surrendered to my addiction. I was taught that I could not change reality. I could only change my perception. I was willing to try. A journal of my first year of recovery may have gone like this:

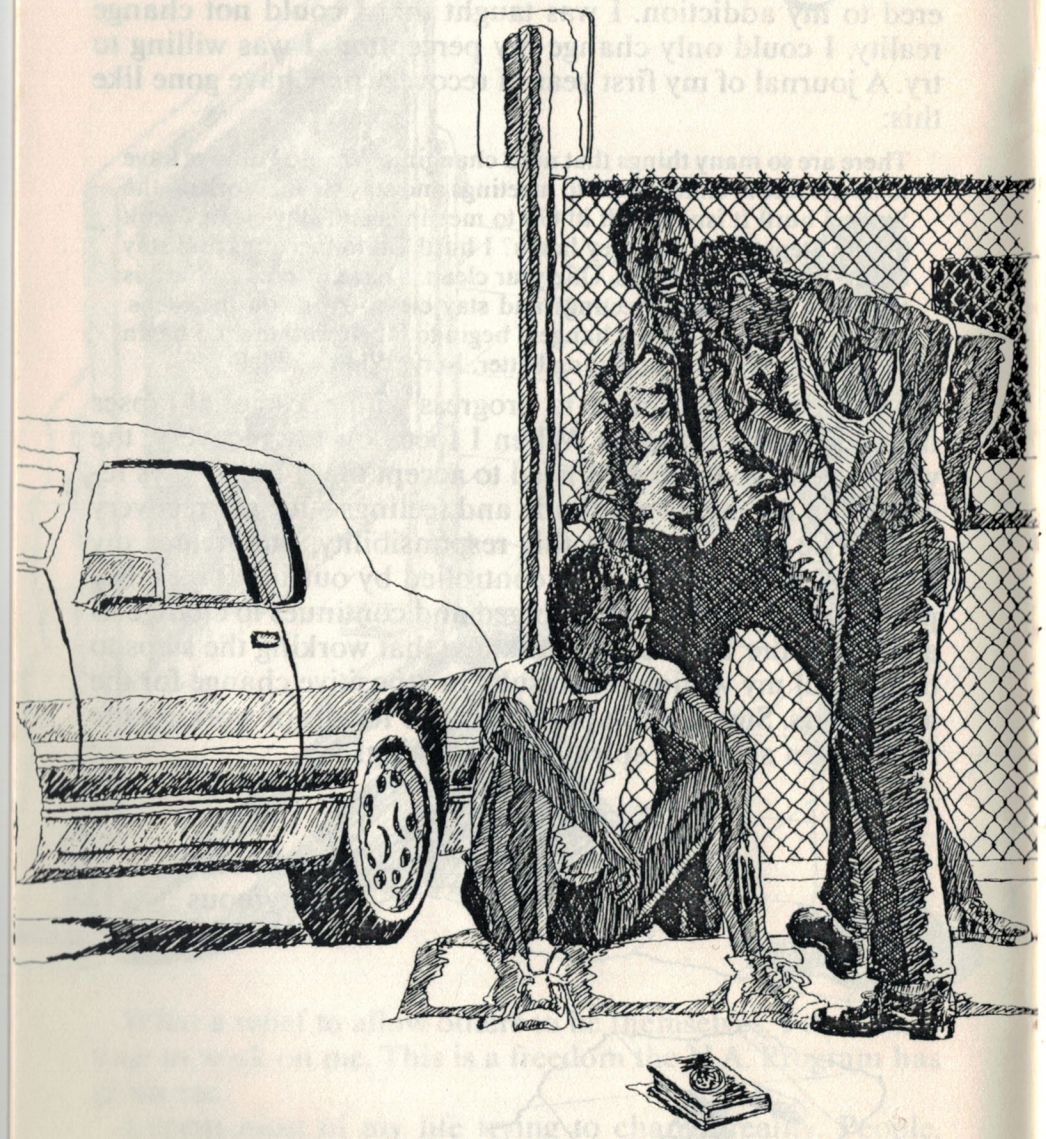
> There are so many things that need changing. Why do I always have to be the one to change? Go to meetings and stay clean. Work on the Steps. I hurt! It isn't worth it! Go to meetings and stay clean. Work on the Steps. How can they laugh? I hurt! Go to meetings and stay clean. Work on the Steps. One year clean. I have worked so hard is that all I get? Go to meetings and stay clean. Work on the Steps. People are beginning to change. I begin to laugh with them. I begin to laugh at myself. I'm getting better. I cry. What a relief!

My recovery continues to progress with occasional lapses in my spiritual program. When I focus on my recovery, the world seems to be okay. I need to accept that I am always responsible for my own attitude and feelings—for my recovery itself. The more I accept this responsibility, the greater my freedom. I don't have to be controlled by outside forces. My perception of reality has changed and continues to change as a result of the Twelve Steps. I know that working the steps to the best of my willingness results in a positive change for me and others. Step Twelve points out the results of working the first eleven steps—a spiritual awakening!

Thanks N.A.
Anonymous
West Virginia



A Penguin in the 'Hood



First of all, your guess is as good as mine as to how this cute little tuxedo wearin fish bird got to the corner of Paxton and Glenoaks Blvd. But his Comforts togs looked like mirrors and his tuxedo trousers had been replaced with the filthiest, blackest levis since Willy the Wino was found rotting in the fields. Cool? Ice cold-blooded frozen was this bird.

After a big crowd of women cleared from around him, with him remaining ever aloof, one of the "veteranos" approached him, handed him a short dog, sounded him down and asked him if he wanted to cop. Chilly Willy was so cold, he blew hard on this reg and said, "Get up off me, baby bro—what you talkin bout ain't nothin. Cop a squat and check this out. Like I was tellin those young la—"

"Yeh," says the reg, "I peeped you talkin to them b—!"

"Don't say it, man, I know where *you're* comin from. As I was sayin," says Short Pengy, "I was layin down strong game to these women; you think you and the fellas here can hang?"

"Can we hang!" Big Vet says, "Man, I been on this corner since 1959, cept for time spent behind the walls." He stuck his chest out proudly as he downed the short dog this queer bird had shunned, "And it ain't nothing me and the boys here can't handle. Why between all of us, probably ain't no game on earth you can teach here. Why we can..."

"Yeah, I'm hip baby, you guys can rape, rob, steal, lie, pillage and plunder, but tell me, are you 'here and now'?"

"Huh, what you talkin bout boy? What you been takin?"

"That's just it my man, I ain't on nothin."

"Wait a minute man, what're you tryin to say?"

"Well, tell me—are you still gloryin in 1959 or times on the yard? Makin up for lost time or livin 'what I'm *gonna* do'?"

"Yeah baby, we're down for all of that—so what, ain't you? That's why we're here on the corner—*our* corner. Why are you here? You a snitch, the man or something?"

Those that had been finger-poppin and gay boppin now stalled to pay close attention to the scene under the streetlight. An ordinary Friday night, all the regulars were out. But instead of the usual fightin, cussin, drinkin, usin, and red lights flashin—it was weird. There's big Yard Bird as usual, but here's this penguin from parts unknown and he's blowin mean jack—teaching. Cool Penguin looks up at Big Yard Bird, takes a step toward him and begins to lay it down. "No baby, ain't nothin like that. Fact is, I'm 'clean and free' and you guys are all locked down."

"What?'s" popped up all over like weeds in granny's garden.

"Now radio, my fellows, and let me run this to you. There's a big world out there and you're missin it. Quiet as it's kept, it's missin you too. Now let me finish. First, I know this is strong, but you gotta take charge of your lives and be responsible for your actions."

"Hey, I ride all my own beefs!" they chimed out in unison.

"Yeah, good—but it ain't about that. There's lot's more to it. What I'm talkin about, you can't do alone."

"Who's gonna help us, our mommas?" somebody whined.

"Get serious—your momma wouldn't help you if she could. No, I'm talkin about a Power greater than your mama, man."

"Hey, he's a preacher, I knew it, couldn't fool me."

"Them Comforts and Levis didn't fake nobody," another voiced.

"Hey, check this out, I'm no preacher and today I'm no longer a fake. I'm for real today and I'm tryin to hip you brothers. Now I'm damn near done, so a shake and a tick more of all our precious time and I'm outta here."

"Go ahead bro, I want to hear some of this stuff," said Big Yard Bird.

"Well, first I want you all to check this book out." This "bird" places a book at Yard Bird's feet.

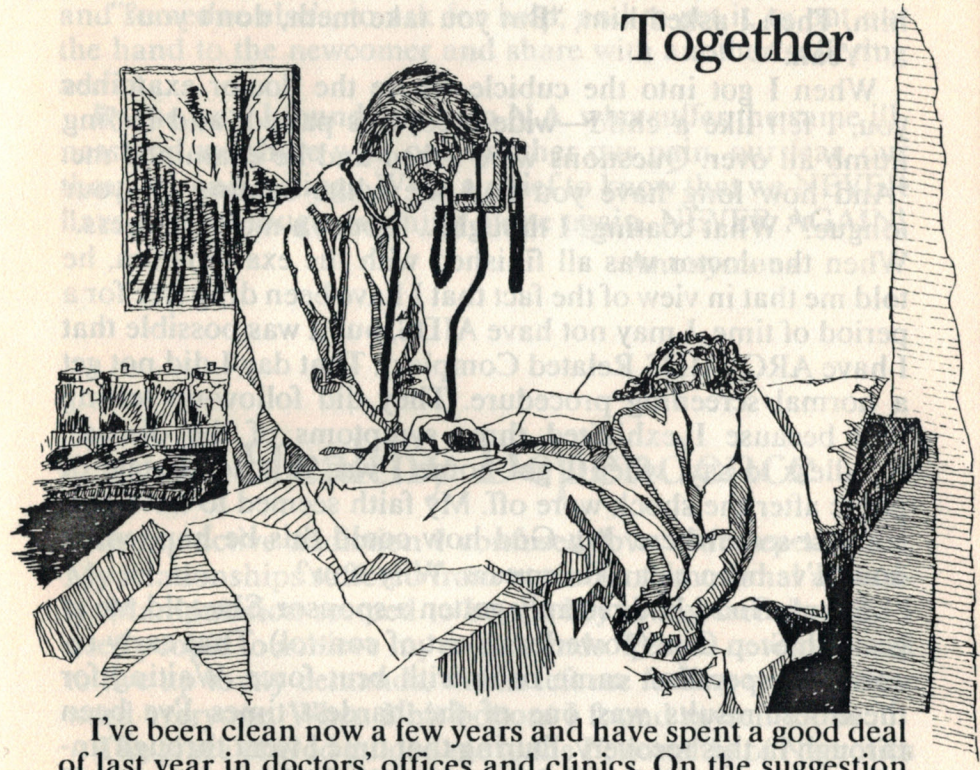
"What's 'NAH' ?"

"Before I run that, or instead of me runnin it—why don't you fellas take turns readin it—those of you that can read—to each other. That little blue book there has a Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and life game too tough, so check it out.

"Hey y'all, honestly," says penguin, "I don't know how I got here—I'm just as surprised to be here as you are to see me—but I'm from a place just like this and I like to revisit neighborhoods every now and again. But it's time for me to get gone, so pick up on some real livin, put some Twelve and Twelve on yours and do what the book says—keep comin back—one day at a time."

R.M.
California

We Can Make It Through Anything... Together



I've been clean now a few years and have spent a good deal of last year in doctors' offices and clinics. On the suggestion of a respected professional, I went to a city hospital for an AIDS screening because I'd been fearing that disease for some time. I thought I had one of the symptoms, chronic swollen lymph nodes.

The waiting room in the hospital was full of active addicts. Thinking, "I can handle this," I went alone. I prayed before I got there and I had my Basic Text with me. As I sat there pretending to read, I listened to the conversations going on and thought to myself, "Oh, that's what I must've sounded like too!" How sad, I thought, as one part of me wanted to share recovery and another part of me wanted to feel what they felt. No pain!

An opportunity for me to share came when one of those addicts asked me what I was reading. "This? It's my

Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text," I said (as the little girl in me giggled inside, how corny!) "Have you ever heard of N.A.?" I asked. And I went on to share how I got clean. "That's great," he replied. "I've been off drugs a while too, but now they tell me I have this AIDS thing."

"Clean to me means no meth or any other drug," I told him. Then I asked him, "But you take meth, don't you?"

"Yeah."

When I got into the cubicle where the doctor examines you, I felt like a child—wide-eyed, lips parted, and feeling numb all over. Questions were asked and he examined me. "And how long have you had the white coating on your tongue?" What coating? I thought... "about a month I guess." When the doctor was all finished with the examination, he told me that in view of the fact that I have been drug free for a period of time, I may not have AIDS, but it was possible that I have ARC (AIDS Related Complex). That day I did not get a normal screening procedure. They did follow-up testing first because I exhibited three symptoms of the disease. Needless to say, when I got home I was in a total state of panic after the shock wore off. My faith seemed to have gotten lost somewhere. My God how could this be happening now? I've been clean four years. Why now?

Thank God I had recently gotten a sponsor. She told me to get with Step One (powerless—out of control). That early recovery desperation came back with brut force. Waiting for these test results was one of the hardest times I've been through in this recovery. During that time I went through anger, self-pity, and denial. My prayer life had urgency now. I cried to God about the pain I was suffering. The answers came—in God's time, not mine. The test results came back like I thought they would, but hoped they wouldn't. I shared about my fear and anger at a few meetings. I also needed to dump, without mentioning AIDS or ARC. I came to realize through error that I could not share about it too openly or at open meetings. It wasn't just my own feelings involved, my husband also had feelings. When I married him I promised to obey and honor him. He had asked me not to tell so many people, so I found another way.

After the final test results came back positive, I was so relieved. No more waiting, my life could go on now. At times fear creeps up on me and I give in to a bit of self-pity. I'm so

grateful to God for the foundation I have, the faith that God will help me through this, whatever it is. He always has in the past. The feelings come and go now. And I can accept not just my disease of addiction, but anything life unfolds to me—anything!!! I'm a survivor like most people in N.A. All I have is this one day to get through, to help my own recovery and someone else's, to ask for help, and to get it, to put out the hand to the newcomer and share with another suffering addict.

By the way, I found others in N.A. who suffer the same illness and we share with one another our pain, our fear, our thoughts and feelings. What a relief to know that we NEVER have to go through anything alone again. NEVER AGAIN!

Anonymous

A Healthy Dependence

In my active addiction I confused love with dependence. My relationships suffered from my lack of emotional maturity. Manipulation seemed to be the key to my security, and I used people to achieve my selfish ends. People never seemed to live up to my demands, which left me feeling resentful toward everyone. When I hit bottom I found myself alone.

The grace of God guided me to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I attended ninety meetings in ninety days, got a sponsor, began working the Twelve Steps, and didn't use drugs. Slowly, I began to feel better. The program was working for me and I wanted to share my recovery with others.

I wanted my parents to show their approval of my efforts. My anticipation of their approval proved to be unrealistic. They remained suspicious of my motives for several months. My dad said he was glad I wasn't using drugs, but added that he didn't think I had changed at all! My mom accused me of being loaded! I was hurt! Gradually I learned that my recovery was not dependent on the approval of my parents.

I developed a more understanding attitude as a result of the Fourth Step. Manipulation was a tool I had used against my parents for many years. The lack of trust in our family would take time and effort to change. N.A. taught me to take care of my recovery and leave my parents to my Higher Power. This philosophy has proved helpful in all my relationships.

I began dating my girlfriend from my using days. Now that I was clean things would work out for us, right? I took her to meetings with me and gave her literature to read. She was sick too, and I was going to help her.

I continued working the program, but the relationship didn't seem to be working. She seemed resentful of my help. Why didn't she appreciate all I was doing to help her?

When I got honest, I could see my self-centered motives in the relationship. I wanted to help her to relieve my guilt. Thinking I was responsible for her problems created a desire in me to fix her. The Basic Text states that we are responsible for our own recovery. This does not mean I am responsible for the recovery of others. I had to let go of this relationship. I made amends for the harm I had caused and left the results to God. I pray for God's will to be done for her.

I lacked a feeling of self-worth. I was dependent on other people to provide positive feelings for me. This caused me to have unrealistic expectations for everyone and they always let me down. Then I would blame them for the way I felt. They were responsible for my problems, not me. Painful and valuable lessons were being learned, though I didn't know it at the time.

N.A. taught me that I needed to accept responsibility for my problems and solutions. My feelings to a large extent are determined by my actions. When my actions are selfish, the results are negative feelings about myself and others. When I act in a kind and loving way, I am blessed with positive feelings. Check your feelings sometime after a Twelfth Step call well done.

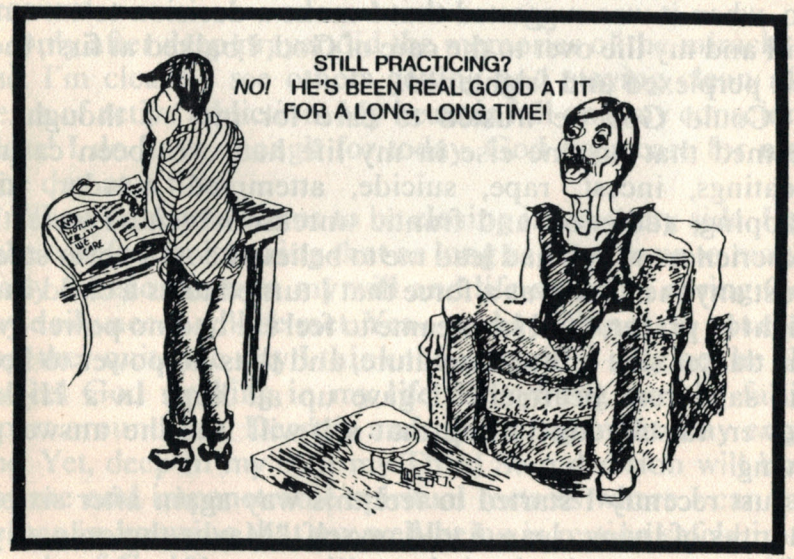
N.A. is teaching me to love myself in an unselfish way. I seek to relate in ways which encourage the well-being of others and myself. Though at times I make poor choices, N.A. has given me the freedom to admit when I am wrong. I can learn from my mistakes, but if I don't learn the lesson from my experience, then I will have to experience the

lesson again.

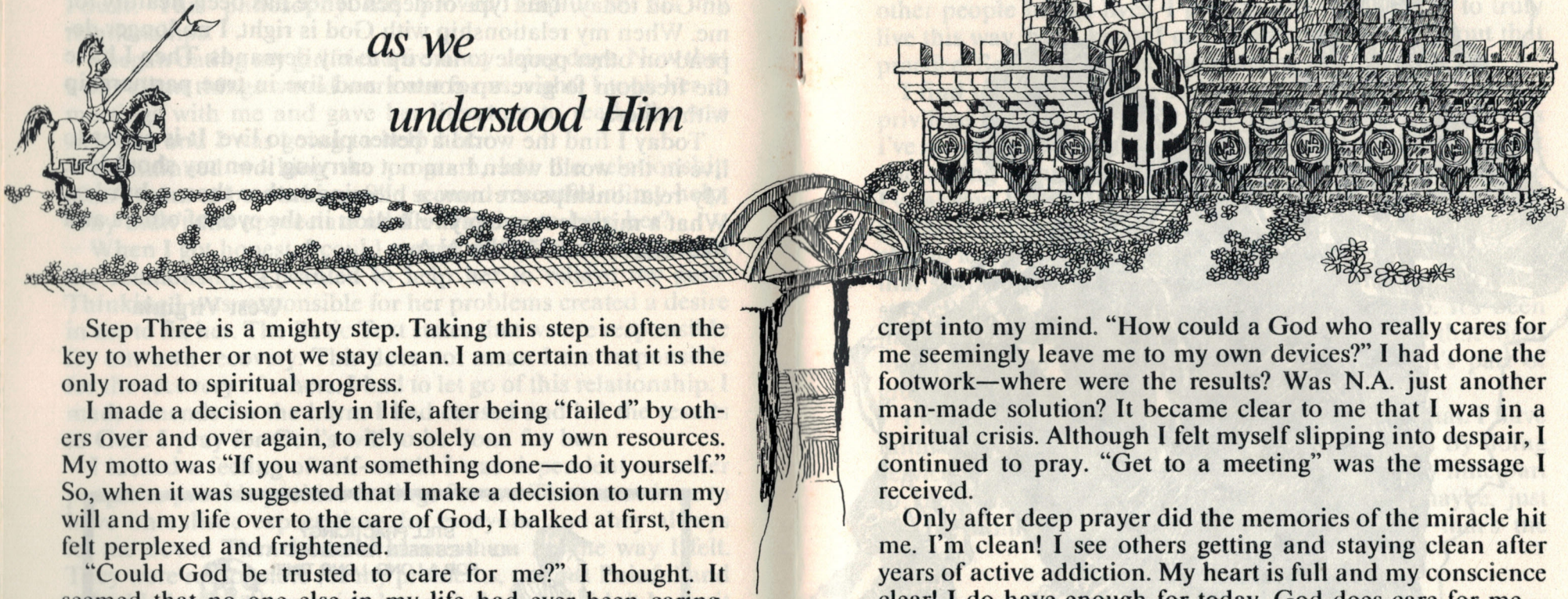
The Twelve Steps have been a process of spiritual growth. This has enabled me to feel the love of God. I am dependent on God today. This type of dependence has been healthy for me. When my relationship with God is right, I no longer depend on other people to live up to my demands. Then I have the freedom to give up control and live in true partnership with others.

Today I find the world a better place to live. It is easier to live in the world when I am not carrying it on my shoulders. My relationships are now a blessing rather than a burden. What a miracle to see my reflection in the eyes of others and like what I see! Thanks N.A.

J.S.
West Virginia



God *as we understood Him*



Step Three is a mighty step. Taking this step is often the key to whether or not we stay clean. I am certain that it is the only road to spiritual progress.

I made a decision early in life, after being "failed" by others over and over again, to rely solely on my own resources. My motto was "If you want something done—do it yourself." So, when it was suggested that I make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, I balked at first, then felt perplexed and frightened.

"Could God be trusted to care for me?" I thought. It seemed that no one else in my life had ever been caring. Beatings, incest, rape, suicide, attempted murder, kidnapping, addiction and frantic unreasonableness were the experiences which had lead me to believe I could never safely trust anyone. God was a force that I turned to as a child each night in prayer, but I later came to feel He had no power over the darker side of human nature, and thus no power to keep me safe from heartache. I gave up all hope in a Higher Power, falsely concluding that self-will was the answer to living.

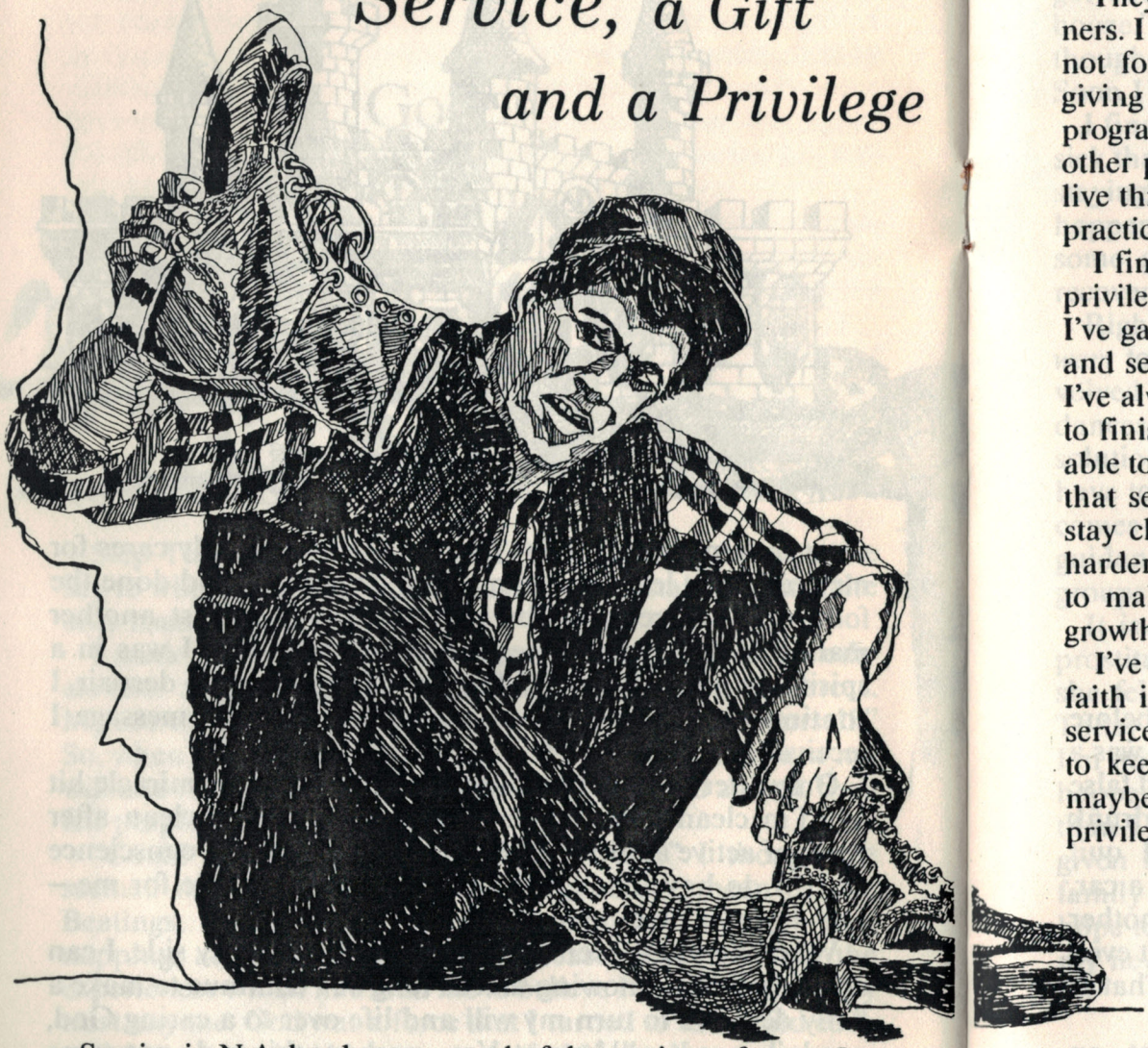
Just recently I started to feel this way again after sixteen months of living clean. I told myself, "Maybe the only way I will become productive is by pulling myself up by my own bootstraps." Life's daily stresses and living near poverty became too much for me. Doubt about the existance of a God crept into my mind. "How could a God who really cares for me seemingly leave me to my own devices?" I had done the footwork—where were the results? Was N.A. just another man-made solution? It became clear to me that I was in a spiritual crisis. Although I felt myself slipping into despair, I continued to pray. "Get to a meeting" was the message I received.

Only after deep prayer did the memories of the miracle hit me. I'm clean! I see others getting and staying clean after years of active addiction. My heart is full and my conscience clear! I do have enough for today. God does care for me—one day at a time.

When darkness seems to be closing in on every side, I can take comfort in knowing that as long as I continue to make a daily decision to turn my will and life over to a caring God, my daily needs will be met. Yes—perhaps things do not come together quite the way I think they should. I may not be able to feel God working in my life. Everything may be falling apart around me. Despair and discouragement may engulf me. Yet, deep in my soul my Third Step decision will build for me and impenetrable spiritual fortress where I can take refuge in knowing that my well-being is resting safely in the hands of God.

T.Z.
Hawaii

Service, a Gift and a Privilege



Service in N.A. has been a wonderful experience for me. In doing service I have gotten to see some very real truths about me. First thing, for me as an addict, is that I hate to make and keep commitments. Keeping commitments today is a direct change from the way I've always been. N.A. is a program of change, and service affords me an opportunity to do just that. Service has been a lesson in humility for me. I am learning, sometimes through wonderful experiences and sometimes through humiliation, just who I truly am today, and maybe who I am not.

They told me when I came into N.A. to stick with the winners. I am finding a lot of those winners involved in service, not for ego and image, but for the principle of selflessly giving to the Fellowship that is saving our lives. Ours is a program of practice—practicing principles and relating to other people in our lives. I pray to one day be able to truly live this way, but I know I can't do it alone and without that practice. Service gives me the practice.

I find today that doing service is not a duty for me, but a privilege and a gift. I can't describe the wonderful feelings I've gained through cooperating with others on a given task and seeing it through. These are new things for me because I've always been self-centered, uncooperative, and unwilling to finish anything. God's gift to me through service is to be able to learn and grow. By doing this, I am beginning to gain that self-acceptance I've always sought. I know that I can't stay clean on service alone, but it sure can help. It's been harder to relapse if I had to be at my home group that night to make coffee or at a subcommittee meeting. It's part of growth though keeping a commitment.

I've heard it said that faith is action. I believe that. I have faith in the steps and principles of this program. By doing service I am strengthening that faith and doing my little part to keep this program alive in my heart. And maybe, just maybe, I might be able to help someone else—that's the privilege.

A.S.
Florida



New Perspective

I am a junkie from the word go. I was messed up far before I used drugs, though. I would run away, steal and lie. I was a very scared and abnormal kid. I was full of self-hate and false pride. When I was about twelve, I started to drink, got drunk and ended up in the police station blacked out. I quit drinking for awhile because of that. Soon I got hit by a car, which got me on "hard drugs." I started to go to another doctor to get speed. I got a habit by fourteen, and didn't even know it. I then switched from one drug to another. That is how I started using the needle.

I got introduced to heroin at sixteen, and got on methadone on and off. I kept getting arrested and overdosing, but still couldn't quit. I always wanted to stop but couldn't. I got real burnt out from a variety of drugs, and moved to Virginia to quit. When I got there I started all over. Soon I was dealing, and got busted.

I went to prison this time. I went to N.A. before court for about seven months, then went to jail for eight months. I stayed clean but was not working a program. I was just going to get out of trouble. I figured as long as I just drank when I got out, I'd be okay. Because "my problem was drugs, not booze." That led to another run of trying to use only drugs I thought were not my problem, and my addiction progressed. Soon I was back on heroin and didn't stop for three years.

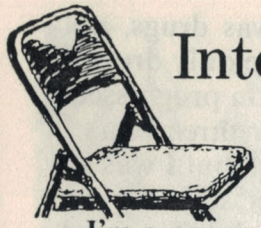
I finally got "tricked" into going to treatment, but I was so sick that I didn't know if I wanted to stop or not, so I was just staying until I got better physically. Well, I don't know what happened, but I left that place and called the N.A. helpline, some guys brought me to a meeting and got started in recovery. I decided to try to stay clean for awhile anyway.

Right now I have my own place, a job, a car and I actually *want* to stay clean. I still go to meetings every day. I am involved in our groups, doing service where I can. I go to dances, I meet people and I talk about my problems and our solution. I have found I am not perfect in my recovery—I have to work on it. I need daily support, or my old thinking comes back hard. I need God today to give me strength and guidance. I feel it's real important to get involved in the groups and work the steps with your sponsor.

It is great to be a respectable person today instead of a prostitute and junkie who didn't know what she was or how she felt. I would be so high I covered up all my feelings. Today I feel joy, pain, love, and it's great. I don't hate myself. I'm not afraid of life. There are more and more good things happening than ever before in my life. I have more friends than I ever had. I am real glad I decided to try N.A. It has given me a new life. I am very grateful to all of my N.A. family for being there when I needed help the most. Now I hope to be here when the newcomer needs help. I truly love my new family—Narcotics Anonymous.

R.C.
Florida

Into that Vacant Chair





I'm a newcomer to N.A., so many concepts and slogans are unclear. Each day of my recovery I am full of questions. The more I let people into my life the more I learn to work my fledgling program.

I have had trouble understanding the word gratitude, and I just keep asking myself HOW? How did I find all these caring people? How was I so fortunate as to find N.A. in the first place?

Today I have enough gratitude to make up for those confusing minutes when the addiction controlled a very special emotion called *love*. For the first time in over a decade I don't have to dwell on the loss of people I once loved. Above all I need not keep wishing for tomorrow. Today is here, and again I am grateful that I'm actually living in today.

I made a choice. I had to either accept the progressive pain of our disease or start recovering. Every time I see the empty chair in the middle of the room I know how I got into our Fellowship. Each time I suffered the defect of addiction I'd cry for help. Just when I thought there was nothing and no one to live for I convinced myself there must be a reason why I am still alive.

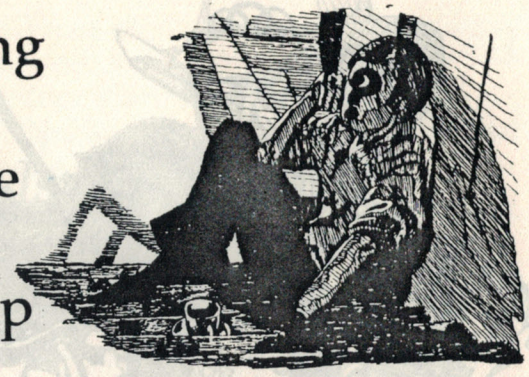
Today I know the answer as to how I found my way into our Fellowship. I admitted to someone I was indeed powerless over my addiction and life was unmanageable. Today I believe something greater than I let the prayers of recovering addicts place me into that vacant chair.

Now when I pray with this understanding that together we can do something we can not do alone, I can see how it works. The bigger and stronger we grow, the more I know I am winning.

The only thing I need pray for tomorrow is that another suffering addict also makes the First Step and joins the ties that bind us together. Today I understand gratitude and how it works. Today I live.

A.R.
New Jersey

Struggling with the First Step



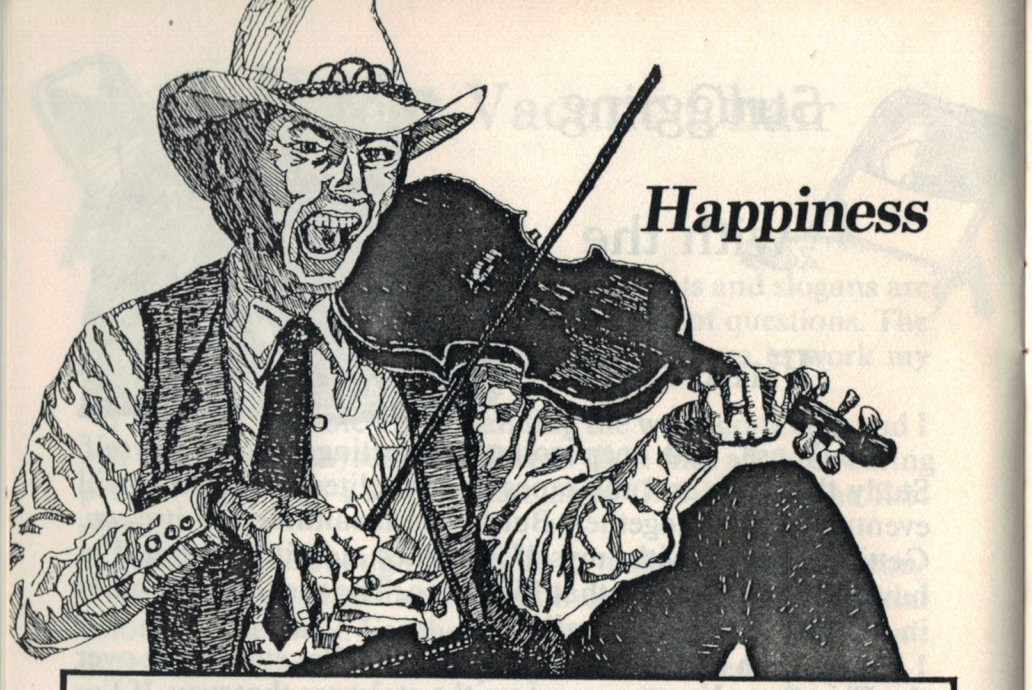
"Don't use, and keep going to meetings," I tell myself. Study the book and the tapes and the literature and it will eventually come together. But in the meantime, do it *clean*. Getting honest with myself includes admitting that I'm having a struggle with that First Step. The dishonesty comes in if I use *while I'm struggling*.

When I am having trouble identifying, I'm stumbling over the First Step. You never get up the staircase that way. If I'm having trouble admitting I'm powerless over my addiction, I will set myself up to try it on again. At nine months clean, only one meeting a week doesn't add up to a lot of meetings. It makes Step One a long drawn out process, a real struggle with trying to be honest—not just in admitting my addiction, but also honest in sharing about my doubts with other members, looking for that identification which I need in order to recover and proceed to the other steps.

Let's reason this out: If I'm not sure that I'm an addict, then that means I either am, or I'm not. And I'll find out sooner or later if I keep working a spiritual program.

If I am, it is obviously better to not go back out there while I'm still in the process of discovery, because that would rob me of even the capacity to *get* honest. On the other hand, let's suppose that I'm not really an addict. In that case, I should feel no real need or compulsion to use until I've finished the process of discernment which I've set for myself, right? It shouldn't bother me. And if it does bother me, what does that tell me? Maybe I'll stop being obsessed by it when I finally accept it and can get on with the rest of the program—and the rest of life.

M.M.
Canada



Happiness

I am a recovering addict with one year clean. If not for N.A., I would be dead. Through practicing the spiritual principles, I have found happiness. I would like to share this with all recovering addicts.

Happiness is a funny thing. You can't see it, or hear it, or touch it, and no one has ever really defined it. But those who possess it treasure it, and those who don't, often spend their lives searching for it. Happiness comes, not from receiving, but from giving of love, faith, understanding. The more we give, the happier we can become, and the happier we become, the more we have to give. Happiness is a state of mind that depends on me (or you). We talk of others "making us happy," but this is seldom the case. We make ourselves happy or unhappy by our attitudes toward ourselves. Our work, our neighbors, our world. The truly happy person is one who can be enthusiastic about the things he has to do, as well as the things he wants to do. Happiness is a wonderful thing, it is the one gift we can give ourselves—and the most precious gift we can wish for others.

Thanks, N.A., for making my life full of happiness.

T.P.
Ohio

Who Is an Addict?

I am.

This is strange. I was just reading "Who Is an Addict?" out of the Basic Text and got some strong memories of my using.

I started using when I was twelve and quit at fourteen. I had "found religion." It kept me clean but didn't change my behavior much.

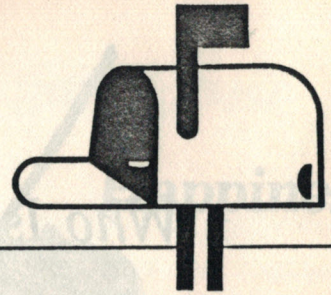
I stayed clean until I was nineteen, and then started using again. I had turned my back on the God that had kept me clean all that time.

When I started using again I was in the Navy. I had fun using at first. It was new and exciting. I had written to my mother and told her I used marijuana because it allowed me to "think." I was like a kid in a candy store who had never eaten candy before. I wanted to try every drug I could get ahold of. The only one I had reservations about was LSD. Those reservations didn't last long though. Later that drug shouwed me how powerless I am over my addiction. The reason I say that drug is because it was the first one I tried to quit using. I didn't like the effects it had on me, but when it was placed in front of me I would eat it or "drop it" telling myself, "this time I can handle it. This time I won't freak out. I know it will work this time..." Famous last words.

How many times did I think "they" were going to put me on a psycho-ward for life? How many times did I think "I'll never find my way back to reality?" I thank my Higher Power, God, as I understand him, that he led me to the doors of Narcotics Anonymous. It took about five years of using everything and anything, but He got me here. I also thank my Higher Power that it has been a short lived using career, and it can stay that way—*one day at a time.*

N.W.
Minnesota

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear *N.A. Way*, **FROM A YOUNG MEMBER**

Hi, my name is Glen and I have been in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous for ten months now. I have managed to stay clean ever since the very first meeting I went to. I am very involved in the Fellowship and really like what I am doing with my life today. I used drugs for ten years of my life, from the age of nine to the age of nineteen. I am now twenty years old. I am writing this letter because of something I read in the April edition of the *N.A. Way* magazine.

I like the *N.A. Way* very much. I read an article called *Regardless of Age*, and liked the concern, but I can honestly say that it is very, very hard for the young addicts in the program to stay clean. I know this from my own experience. In the ten months I have been coming to N.A., I have seen many young addicts come and go very fast. I believe younger people are more fortunate to be getting clean, but when an older addict gets to N.A. he or she has used for many years and seen many things. By the time they get to N.A. they are usually ready to get clean. I feel that it is harder for younger addicts to stay clean because they didn't go through as much pain. I would like them all to know that they don't have to go back out there. We, as young addicts, have our whole life ahead of us and that is why it is so important to live *just for today*.

G.R.
Maryland

Dear *N.A. Way*, **N.A. WORKS IF I WORK IT**

Drugs turned me on; then drugs turned on me. I took a hit; the hit took a hit: then the hit took me. I got into the program a human wreck. The extent of wreckage was not clear to me until I was straight for about two or three days. Had I recognized the damage earlier, I may have gotten into the program sooner. Then again, I may not have been ready to stay.

I was toasted on both sides when I arrived; all I could do was give up and struggle and go along. I attended meetings, listened and shared, got a sponsor, and began working the steps. At first there was confusion, resistance and pain; in time, I felt hope, relief, and gratitude; later I saw growth, love, and peace. N.A. gave me back my life; moreover, it gave me a life worth living.

M.N.
Utah

Dear *N.A. Way*, **SLIPS**

The following slips of the tongue were heard as "How It Works" was being read at meetings in Manhattan and Junction City, Kansas:

Step Two: We came to believe that a *powder* greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Eleven: We sought through prayer and *medication*...

...just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and *reproductive* members of that society.

S.T.
Kansas

Dear *N.A. Way*, **ROAD TO RECOVERY**

After reading the "Addicts on Asphalt" piece in the September, 1985 issue, I decided to use the idea as a way to get the message of N.A. to places that sometimes need support.

We here in Newton have been traveling for sometime to give support to the Fellowship as a whole, but now I believe it may work better through a group effort. On January 19th we took our first meeting of Addicts on Asphalt, Newton Chapter, to Dodge City, Kansas for their first area meeting for Western Kansas.

To see, hear, and feel the hope and joy that these few addicts have for their recovery made me know in my heart that every mile was worth it.

As before I'm hooked on this and look forward to many miles of meetings and am grateful that God has used another miracle to show me a new road to recovery.

I want to encourage any addict to start their own chapter of "Addicts on Asphalt." It's worth the trip.

Addicts on Asphalt
Newton Chapter

Dear *N.A. Way*,

At a time when our program appears to be placing increased emphasis on removing wording that specifies what our specific drug was; there remains one glaring inconsistency, our name. I am a grateful member of Narcotics Anonymous, but none of my drugs of choice were narcotics. For many years I avoided N.A., in part because I did not feel I qualified. Our literature made it clear that I was accepted once I arrived here in N.A., but our name is often the first exposure many addicts have to our program and it misrepresents us. I am not an anonymous narcotic. I am an anonymous addict.

The problems with selecting a new name are numerous. 1) We would present a picture of being confused to the outside world. 2) It may cause disunity in the Fellowship. 3) Those who are addicted to narcotics may not find us as easily. 4) Addicts Anonymous shares initials with another Twelve Step Fellowship. 5) Users Anonymous is ill defined and UA is a movie theater chain. 6) Our logo is plastered over everything; and the money lost changing our name should be spent helping the addict who still suffers.

Maybe we could call ourselves Addicts Anonymous and abbreviate our name AdA or AdAn or AddA. The name misrepresents us and I have learned here the importance of rigorous honesty.

C.P.
California

THE NA WAY

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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 N.A. 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 non-professional, 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 *N.A. 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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