

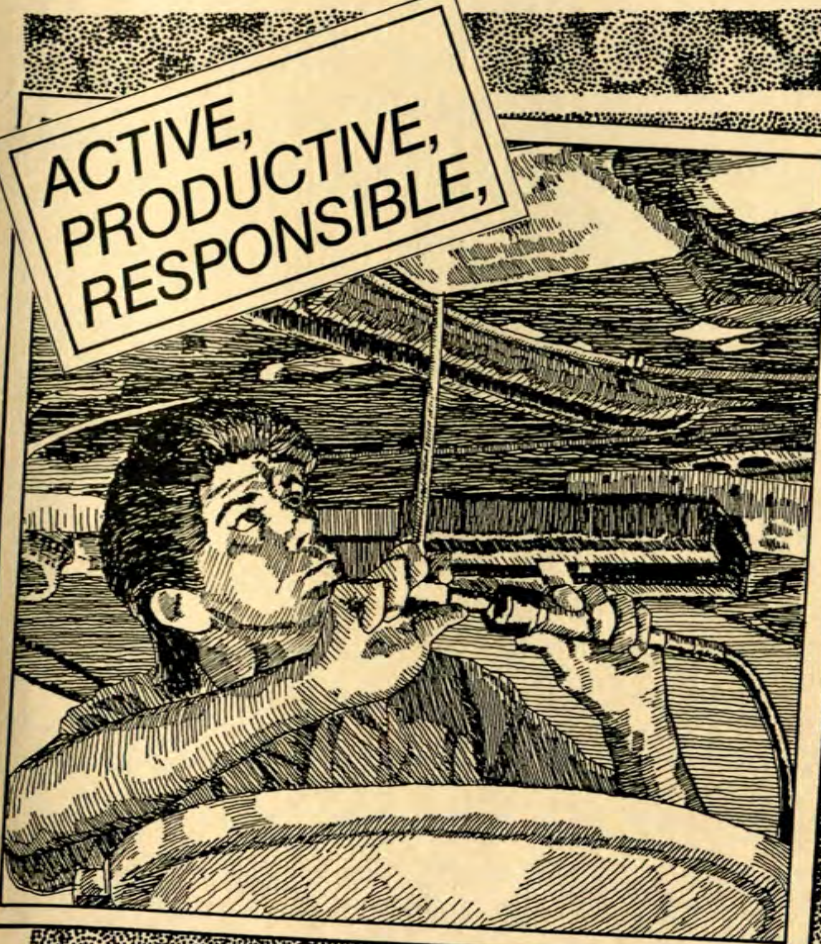
THE NA WAY

May
1987

VOLUME 5

NUMBER 5

ACTIVE,
PRODUCTIVE,
RESPONSIBLE,



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.*
We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious
11. *contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried
12. *to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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Experience, Strength & Hope



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

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 above.



From the Editor



It's May again already. The World Service Conference is meeting or has already met as you read this. Since we went to press well before the Conference got underway, we don't know at this writing whether or not the Fellowship elected to change the format of the magazine to include the new sections we have spoken about in the past. Next month we'll fill you in on the decision made at this year's Conference. If this discussion is new to you, stay tuned. Next month there'll be a full discussion.

We need your help in a couple of areas. First, our growth rate has slowed in the last couple of months. We could sure use some help from our regular subscribers in encouraging others to subscribe. Every once in a while we do a mailing of letters or subscription pads in an effort to encourage a larger portion of the Fellowship to join us—and we'll be sending pads out to more people in the next few months—but we are certain that word-of-mouth from our supporters is always the best, healthiest method of increasing our circulation.

As always, we also wish to encourage you to write articles and letters for publication. We're interested in views and experiences from N.A. members on any subject related to recovery from addiction through N.A. Ideally we like articles

that fill two to four pages in the magazine. If you're an experienced writer we can only say, what are you waiting for? Put it to good use. If you're not, don't worry about that; we'll sweat the details on this end. It's your message that's of value to fellow addicts and others who read this magazine.

We mentioned in the March issue that we invite you to send us artwork in addition to stories. That offer still stands. Send us your original recovery-oriented pen-and-ink drawings and we'll send them through the same review process that the stories go through.

There's some good material in these pages. A "recovering purist" reflects on his past and present views on our ongoing identity development controversy. You may recognize yourself or other local members in that piece. The usual variety of insights and experiences come through all the other articles throughout. We hope you read the magazine, enjoy it, talk to others about it and share it with a friend. This is your "meeting in print" to participate in fully and pass along what you get.

R.H., Editor

Sitting here this morning, drinking my coffee, spending some time with my Basic Text and H.P., the thought comes to me that it makes absolutely no sense that I am clean today and have sixteen months worth of todays behind me. I used for a long, long time and I had been getting beaten badly by the disease for the last eight or nine years.

But the last couple of years were a real nightmare. I hated waking up. The millisecond I opened my eyes, I got hit by a sledgehammer of fear. Paralyzing fear. I knew I had to get up and do it again.

Why couldn't I at least get one day off? Just one day where I could relax, catch my breath, not have to do whatever it was that I had to do today to get well. And it wasn't even about that. It was about trying to fill up that hole in my gut that kept getting bigger and bigger screaming for more and more.

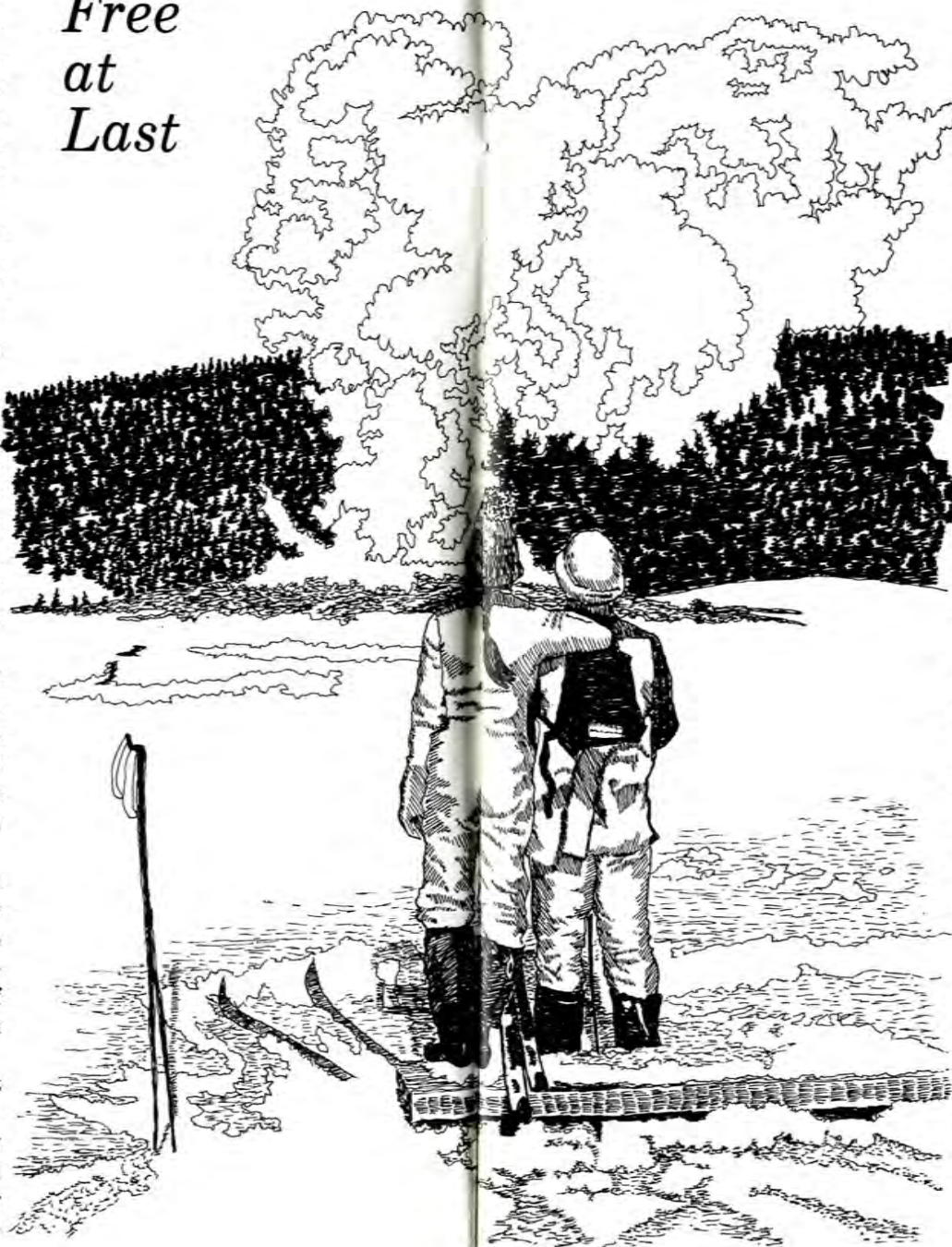
Finally through a power greater than myself I ended up in an N.A. meeting. This guy with some time was sharing. I wasn't in real good shape, and there was a tremendous amount of rebellion still going on inside me (amazing huh?).

But these recovering addicts intrigued the heck out of me. Anyhow he was sharing that he wasn't so afraid of jails, institutions or death—he'd seen those—he was afraid of being out there on the streets for ten more years!

I about fell out of my chair. It hit me just how tired I was. Bone tired.

On my eighteenth birthday my mother said "We can't believe you made it to eighteen, now we'll try for twenty-one." So I used like a mad-

Free at Last



man, hurrying along waiting to die. And at thirty-one years old it hadn't

happened yet, and I was crushed in all areas of my life.

Step One tells me that I am powerless over my addiction, and that my life has become unmanageable. When the book talks about the horror of addiction, what I think about is that I might stay out there for ten more years.

So is this a story of doom and gloom? Hell yes. But that was the past. Is it the same story today? Hell no.

Today, I look forward to waking up. To looking at my Honey and see the love and warmth there. To feeling good about myself and not having to be in control of my life. That is H.P.'s job, and he sure does a better job of it than I ever did.

Today I say stuff like "I rejoice in my recovery," "I love being clean," "Can I help you?" All that stuff is a pretty major change for me.

All it took was a lot of pain, a real honest look at myself, and then an admission and acceptance of defeat. "To surrender is to win." I surrendered to my disease for years. Today I surrender to recovery.

STEP 1: "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction and that our lives had become unmanageable."

I am not concerned about being powerless over drugs today because I don't use drugs today. Am I powerless over addiction making my life unmanageable? Hell yes. This disease still kicks my butt around the block, even in recovery. With Step One still so real in my life, I thank God for Steps Two through Twelve.

A.G., Hawaii

A Letter from a Recovering Purist



I am an addict, and one of the problems I have as an addict is interacting with other people. There are two personalities inside me: The spiritual recovering person and the diseased addict person. I can be com-

passionate, understanding, and nurturing. I can also be insensitive, obnoxious, and judgmental.

How well I am working the N.A. program is what determines my words and my actions. I have learned

to check my motives, and I try to keep in my mind to seek to understand rather than to be understood.

In my love for and pride in N.A., I have been a big pain in some of our members' behinds. In dealing with what I have considered tradition violations, and in differences about opinion of N.A. philosophies, I have been confrontive, agonizingly persistent, and over-bearing.

At these times I considered myself vigilant and concerned about the well-being of N.A. as a whole. Looking back now, I can see that I was self-righteous and radical. This letter is not a confession or admission of guilt, it is simply the truth as I see it today. Hindsight is 20/20.

I have calmed down a lot, much to the dismay of some of my radical friends. My beliefs have not changed, but my methods have become refined. I have found that tact and diplomacy work much better than threats and antagonistic confrontation. I have learned these lessons painfully by making many mistakes and some enemies within our Fellowship.

I still believe in carrying a pure, undiluted N.A. message, I believe in using N.A. language, I believe in the concept of "one disease-one program," and I believe that N.A. is the only place I need to go for my recovery.

Today, however, I am willing to let other members have their own opinion. I still cringe when I hear someone in an N.A. meeting talking about their "sobriety" or about their gratitude to another Fellowship, but I

do not verbally take their inventory during the meeting nor do I tell them after the meeting that if they can't share the N.A. way then please do not come back. I have done both of these things in the past.

Today, I do not have to "protect" N.A. from anyone. I am not responsible for what anyone says at a meeting. At one point in my recovery, if someone said that they needed to go to another Fellowship for any

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anymore!"***

reason, I would give a number of reasons why I did not need to go anywhere but N.A. for my recovery. I would not allow any newcomer to leave any N.A. meeting that I was at thinking that they had two diseases or that they needed anything else but N.A. to recover. I could be brutal in my sharing and I often was.

When I first got wrapped up in this "purist movement," it was at a time when there were very few N.A. members that I knew about who only went to N.A. for their recovery. None of these members were near me. There was only two N.A. meetings in my area when I first came around, and I helped start three more within the next year. I was going to all five of them and traveling around the state going to others.

I knew that I did not need to go anywhere else but N.A., but no one

else in my area believed that they could. For me, making that decision to go only to N.A. when no one else believe in it was very scary.

In my fear I became very proud and very self-righteous. I became extremely outspoken about N.A. and extremely critical of other members who went to other Fellowship meetings.

I intentionally tried and in a few cases succeeded in driving certain "cross-addicted" and "sober" N.A. members out of N.A. I don't feel good about the way I acted but I am not sorry for what I did. I did what I did because I thought it was for the good of N.A. I do not know where those addicts are now; I hope that they are still clean and recovering somewhere.

I designed the "purist" T-shirts and bandanas. I had them printed up and sold them at conventions. I printed the purist newsletter and the O.D.O.P. (One Disease One Program) newsletter.

I did these things because at the time I needed to do them for my recovery. I did these things because I thought that they needed to get done. Somebody had to stand up for N.A. and this was my way of doing it. Thank God that I don't have to do these things anymore!

Today I can be a member of N.A. instead of being one of the "guardians of our traditions." My message hasn't changed; the way I share it has. I find that my message is much more accepted when I share it in a loving and caring way.

I don't waste my time trying to get anyone to do things or to say things that I consider are the N.A. way of

doing and saying things. I share my experience before, during, and after meetings with whoever will listen to me. I try to focus on newcomers.

The purist movement is not over, and it will never be over. There will always be newcomers, fresh out of rehabs talking all the "cross-addicted" language and concepts that they were taught in rehab. They don't know any better, and it is our responsibility as N.A. members to share with them about N.A. language, N.A. philosophy and N.A. recovery.

There will always be members from other Fellowships who will find their way into N.A. They will use terminology from whatever Fellowships they come from and they don't know any better either. It is our job as N.A. members to share with them about N.A. and our program of recovery in a loving, caring and noncombative way. I am trying to do this today.

I don't need to write purist newsletters anymore because I can write for the N.A. Way and our other Fellowship newsletters. My articles are often viewed as antagonistic, and I am working on that.

I don't need to wear purist T-shirts anymore because it doesn't help anyone; it only creates disunity within our Fellowship. I do not intentionally try to drive anyone out of N.A. for any reason today. I am trying to accept all of our members as they are—as recovering addicts just like me.

I am deeply grateful to all those other N.A. purists throughout the world, because without them I doubt that I would be clean today. Without

their love and support, N.A. here in my home town would not be where it is today. We have grown from two meetings per week to twenty-three meetings per week. I am grateful to be a part of the growth of N.A.

There are eight thousand N.A. meetings in the world today; when I got clean there was less than one thousand. Chances are that many of those who are reading this article got clean in a local Fellowship that was started by a purist, someone who believed in N.A. and who was willing to go through the pain of keeping it alive when other recovering addicts would not.

There is nothing wrong with being a purist if you are one, and there is nothing wrong with going to other Fellowships for recovery if that is what you choose to do. There is no right or wrong when it comes to N.A. membership. We are all N.A. members and we are all equal. It took me a long time to realize that we all belong here regardless of how we identify ourselves or what terminology we use.

As we grow in recovery and in our understanding of the N.A. program, most members find themselves using N.A. language because that is what is most appropriate. We learn to separate the different messages that we carry and when we are in an N.A. meeting, we carry the N.A. message only. It is so simple to understand when we become openminded. It is a matter of personal awareness and growth.

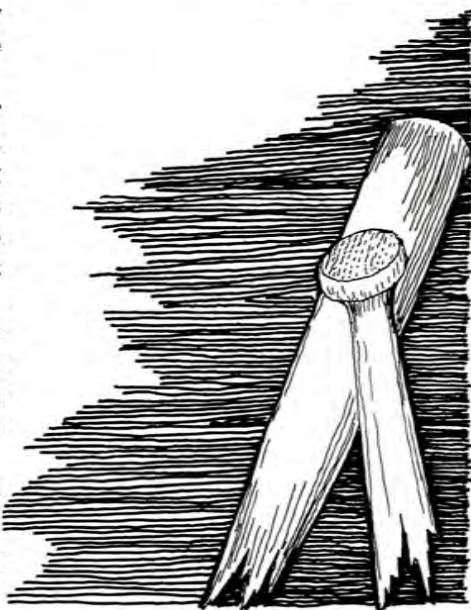
It is also easy to understand that none of us has the right to intimidate or criticize any other member. I understand this very well today. When I

am sharing with other members about language or traditions, I keep in mind that no member ever intentionally tries to harm the Fellowship. I really try to understand where this member is coming from and I share in the most loving and caring way that I can.

I have grown a lot since those first purist T-shirts made their debut in Chicago at WCNA-14, and so have many of us who call ourselves purists. We have been blessed (or cursed) with the burning desire so help N.A. grow. Sometimes our methods are wrong, but our motives are not. We are human and we are recovering addicts.

I have no regrets about the past, only hope for the future and I intend to keep the N.A. message alive, pure and undiluted, just for today, wherever I am. Thanks for letting me share...I do hope you print this one.

J.D., New Jersey



Beyond My Wildest Dreams



I cannot stay clean by myself; I need your help! I did not know how much I needed you when I first came around, but I know now. I need you more today than ever before. I cannot recover from this disease without you. I am an addict, and an addict alone is in bad company. I need you!

When I first started coming to meetings, I hated myself and I hated everybody else too. I wanted to like myself and I wanted to like you, but I did not know how. You reached out

to me. You hugged me. You told me I was home and that I was welcome. You made me feel like I was welcome.

You listened to my war-stories; you listened as I cried the blues. You understood me and you shared your experience, strength and hope with me. You did not judge me; you did not tell me what to do. You gave me suggestions and you let me learn at my own pace. You allowed me to become myself. You loved me until I

was able to love myself.

I do love myself today, most of the time anyway. Sometimes I fall back into my old self-hating, self-destructive ways, and this is when I need you the most. You help me up when I fall down and you knock me off my pedestal when I climb up on it.

You compliment me for jobs well done and you tell me when I'm full of crap. "We are each others eyes and ears." I need you to help me cut

through my own B.S., and I am so grateful to you. My ego and my denial could destroy me.

I need you to listen to me when I share; I need to know that you care about me. It is okay if you don't care about what I'm saying as long as you care about me.

I need you to invite me out to what's happening after the meetings.

"I need you much more now than I did when I first came around because I have so much more to lose."

I need you to tell me where the dances and conventions are. I need to know how I can be of service to you. I need to feel that I have something to offer, something to give back to this Fellowship that has given so much to me.

Most of all, keep me in mind when you pray for the still-suffering addict. Sometimes it is the member with the most clean time who is suffering the most.

Narcotics Anonymous, you are the best thing that has ever happened to me. I need you! I need you much more now than I did when I first came around because I have so much more to lose. I am learning about myself and I am enjoying the process of becoming who I am today. I love myself today and that is a miracle—beyond my wildest dreams.

I need you to help keep that dream a reality. I love you!

Anonymous, New Jersey

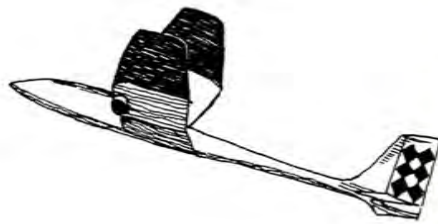
Five,

This Secret Place

I enter into this with one thought in mind; dealing with the Secret Place. The corner of my soul and mind where I held rendezvous with my disease, and carried on the most intimate of relationships with it. Where I planned the most evil forms of destruction, shafted my bitterest enemies, consummating my hatred for them by smashing their kneecaps and gloating mercilessly while they limped painfully through life, well-aware of, but unable to prove, my connection with the ongoing pain of their existence.

The Secret Place is where I plotted to destroy their most cherished possessions in such a way that they themselves were involved in the destruction, and were unable to pin it down to me. The place where I now rendezvous with a Loving God. This place, where there is no room for both God and disease.

I am devoted to cleaning it out, evicting disease, and making my



relationship with God as intimate and devoted, as dedicated and passionate, as the one I had with disease. A relationship I have felt for some time was destined to consume me when I was able to allow this to happen.

I will try to share this Secret Place with you, the one where God lives. I have never done this before, never even let on to another human being of its existence. I was afraid it was part of my raging insanity, ashamed of it as part of my disease.

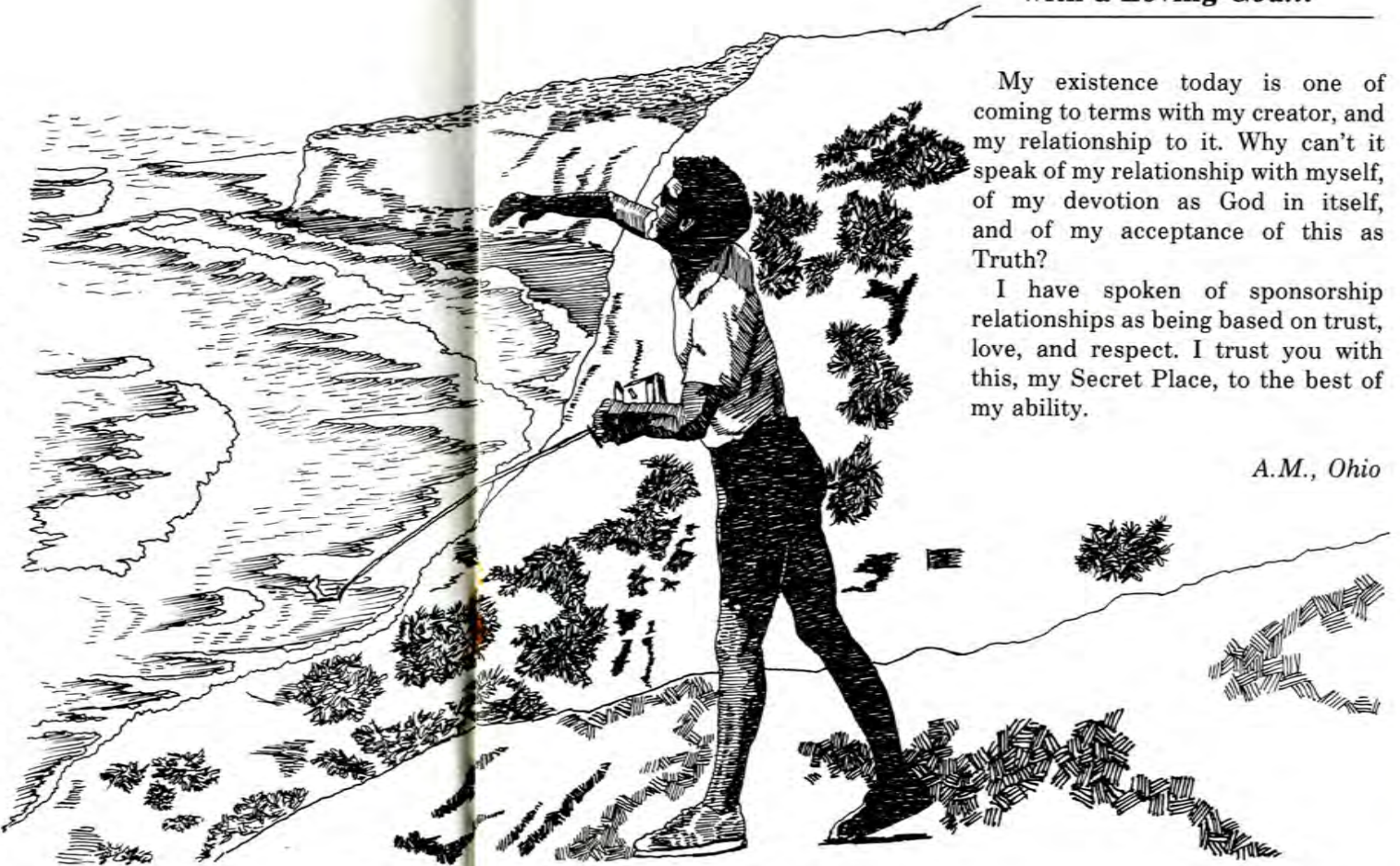
At this point too much is happening to me not to consider its hidden existence as part of my denial, part of my false modesty, part of an overwhelming character defect inexorably welded to my only shortcoming—the lack of faith that denies me a fulfilling relationship with my creator.

“The corner of my soul and mind where I held rendezvous with my disease, where I now rendezvous with a Loving God...”

My existence today is one of coming to terms with my creator, and my relationship to it. Why can't I speak of my relationship with myself, of my devotion as God in itself, and of my acceptance of this as Truth?

I have spoken of sponsorship relationships as being based on trust, love, and respect. I trust you with this, my Secret Place, to the best of my ability.

A.M., Ohio



"That Our Lives Had Become Unmanageable."



I've just come home from a meeting of my home group. I've been working a second shift job, so I haven't been able to be there for a while. My sponsor told me that phone calls, visiting members, and going to out-of-town meetings wasn't enough. As so often happens, he was right. It was really good to see the familiar faces, get lots of hugs, and see the newcomers. Most of all I'm grateful that I got to share with the people who are closest to me.

It was a First Step meeting, and since I sure was feeling powerless, I felt very comfortable. I began to feel uncomfortable as I heard more and more people around the table share how their lives were becoming more manageable. They felt that having jobs, or doing better in school, or any of the many ways our lives improve in recovery, meant a return of manageability.

The dictionary defines "manageable" as the ability to control. When I think about the second part of the First Step, the words "had become" mean *forever...* to me. I spent all the

"I began to give myself credit for the success; after all, I was doing the work."

years before I surrendered trying to manage, and failed every time. To keep the first three steps simple, I try to remember that I will never be the manager of my life, my higher power is the perfect manager, I think I'll let him do his job.

All of us who stay clean experience success in our lives. I remember the promise I received at my first meeting, "keep coming back, it gets better." Narcotics Anonymous has been faithful to that promise. My life today is more than I could have ever imagined it would be.

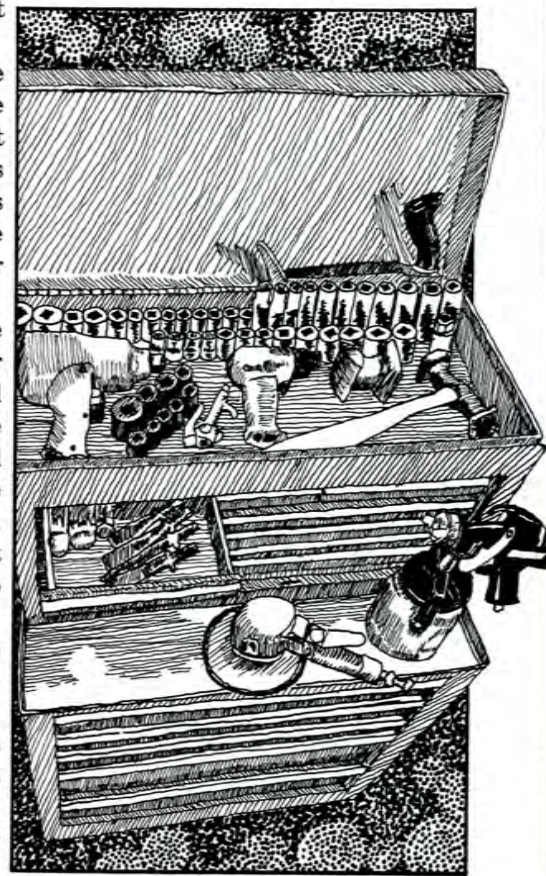
Like many of us, I began to give myself credit for the success; after all, I was doing the work. As I stayed clean my life was becoming more manageable, yet every time I stepped out confidently I'd fall on my face and be embarrassed by my mistakes. I began to see that I was fighting, not surrendering. I wanted the ability to manage to come back.

The Basic Text says, "When we admit our powerlessness *AND* inability to manage our lives..." [emphasis mine] I'd found yet another truth in our program that could help me in my daily life, another freedom. I could let go without fear.

It's no wonder I felt uncomfortable hearing "manageability" from other members. It was a reminder and a chance to share the lesson I'd learned.

I'll be off second shift soon, and I look forward to more meetings, regular service work, and lots of fun with my recovering family. Thanks to you all for the gift of a new life, the N.A. way.

M.B., Wisconsin



On Service Work:

When I first encountered N.A., I began to immediately hear about a thing called "service work." At that time, the only service committee that existed in this state was the New Jersey Area Service Committee. It met once a month at a small, annexed student center at Seton Hall University in South Orange.

It was 1981. Early spring. There were about twenty meetings in the state. I remember my first experience of "area service." All the regulars were there. Two of them were arguing over the number of scoops of ground coffee to put in the pot.

It was hectic! Recovering addicts were all gathered around in a smoked-filled room, jockeying for comfortable seats. I sat on the radiator and mentally took all their inventories.

I was not really sure what was unfolding there that day. Many of these people, only months before in the depths of active addiction, were debating arcane points of parliamentary procedure and vigorously contending about some "agenda," whose every item seemed to hinge controversially on the revealed will of God! WOW! I was hooked. It was the most expressive political event I had seen since Krushchev pounded his shoe on the table at the U.N.

I had always been a political person, but never in a way that had my practical application or discernible impact on my life. My idea of political activism was scapegoating Richard Nixon as an excuse for taking drugs. But this was different! Area service offered me the singular opportunity of participating directly in the shaping of structure and policy in local N.A.—a social force as relevant as my next heartbeat.

But what was service all about? The last six years in N.A. have helped to answer this question, yet the story continues to unfold. I'd like to share some of these thoughts with you.

Service work is justified by one simple phrase: "As you have freely received, freely give." But it is not an entirely selfless act because we know that as we give away what we have received, more is added to us. We become richer through service. Our recoveries are deepened and secured through the giving.

Service work comes in two different but related forms: personal service and committee service.

Personal service is the kind which we perform spontaneously, informally, and personally. Examples of personal service include picking up ashtrays after meetings, sharing our individual experience, strength, and hope in a meeting, and going on a Twelfth Step call. Sponsorship is also a form of personal service work.

Committee service work, however, arises out of the spirit of the Ninth Tradition which states, "N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

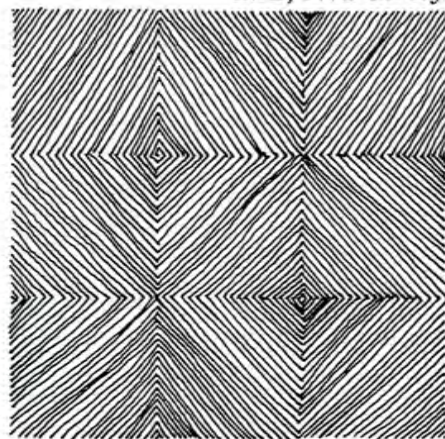
I have come to believe that personal service is for everyone—but not everyone is cut out for committee service. And that's as it should be.

"Recovering addicts were all gathered around in a smoked-filled room, jockeying for comfortable seats. I sat on the radiator and mentally took all their inventories."

Here's an easy way to decide whether committee service is for you. If your recovery has been sustained and enriched by the efforts of committee service (such as conventions, dances, workshops, etc.), then maybe you owe the Fellowship a commitment or two.

Remember, you don't have to be a politician to love "Robert's Rules." Come on and join the fun. We're still debating God's will for the Fellowship on a regular basis! Where else can you get all that plus free hugs for under a nickel? See you at area service...

L.A., New Jersey



My Own Person



The very first time I drank, I blacked out, I don't remember any of that whole night, but I must have really liked numbing out, because I continued to do it for the following eighteen years.

I was born the third child in a religious home. I was taught never to show my feelings. I started to do diet pills in the sixth grade because I was overweight, and that was no way to go into junior high.

They made me feel like I was someone, like people accepted me. They gave me the courage to do all this. God, I loved the feeling they gave me, a feeling so Powerful!

My addiction grew through the next six years but now that I look back on it, it never started progressing until I graduated from High School.

I moved away with five other girls, and started doing just what I wanted to do. I got pregnant and gave the baby up for adoption. By this time my self-worth was zilch. Nobody knew about the baby, I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone, but I knew it.

After I came back from the unwed mothers home, I began to prove to myself I wasn't worth much. I began to run with the people my folks had always warned me about. Started doing street drugs and loved it.

These were the Hippy Days, man, I loved those days. There was so much love, honesty, good friends, and talking feelings between people. But at sometime or another the drugs quit being fun. When I started doing drugs they were all a new experience, a new high, every drug was a new answer.

Soon all those neat hippy friends were lying, thieving, non-feeling, miserable junkies. The disease took over. We had all become dependent on drugs for our mere survival without even realizing it. We were powerless over the drugs that used to make us feel so powerful.

I use to pride myself in not being a garbage head. Once I overdosed, and when I woke up from being in a coma for three weeks, they told me I

had died three times and they had brought me back to life.

I lived on machines for the following month, got out of the hospital, went home and got high. But that overdose taught me never to do garbage drugs again. My denial and insanity were already working then.

I still thought I had only overdosed because I didn't know exactly what the drug was, not because I had a problem with drugs. So from that day on all I did was class-A narcotics, besides cocaine once in a while.

At this point in my life, my very best friend and lover was the needle. I had an ongoing relationship with it, I loved it more than life itself, I worshiped it, but at the same time I hated it, because I realized even back then just how much power it had over me.

When I came to Narcotics Anonymous I heard someone say, "You don't have to live that way anymore! God, I didn't know that. I have found another new answer for me like I use to think I found in drugs, but this is working. I sure have to put some work into it, but this program has given me willingness to do that.

When I first came into the program, my husband and I wanted to start a meeting in our home town. There were several people who said we were too new in the program to start one, but we had enough people from a group in a nearby town who were willing to help us get it going. And we did it.

God is really working in that group today. We have had up to one hundred people in attendance. We now have three meetings a week.

Service work has played a big part in my recovery, and still does. It stopped me several times from taking that first drug.

I have been with my husband for seventeen years. But this is just the second year of our new life together in recovery. It hasn't been easy working through all the pain we put each other through. The program has taught us how to talk feelings, and there is trust in our marriage today. God, that is so neat.

"Soon all those neat hippy friends were lying, thieving, non-feeling, miserable junkies."

It is an ongoing process. We will have to work at our relationship daily for the rest of our lives. God willing, we are still together, but we spent seventeen years destroying it before recovery.

I am my own person today, I don't depend on other people for my moods, or my feelings. I am able to make decisions on my own. Some of them may be the wrong ones, but they are mine, and I can change my mind, and learn from my mistakes and still not be afraid to make another one.

Life is sure worthwhile today—Thanks God for talking to me through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous—I am truly a chosen miracle.

S.H., Kansas

Principles before Personalities

When I walked into my first N.A. meeting I really didn't notice anyone's personality. I was hurting so badly that all I saw was clean addicts reaching out to me. I loved them all, I didn't care about their personalities. I just wanted what they had to offer, and they were giving it to me. They didn't care about my personality either.

Well, time passed. I got a little clean time under my belt and started doing some service work...EEEEK! My sponsor told me to pray for them and myself, I prayed a LOT.

Today I hear people saying they stay away from service work and certain N.A. meetings because there is someone there that they don't like. They stay away because of the "personalities" they can't handle. They say "this is a selfish program, and I have to do what I have to do for MYSELF."

Who started that rumor? I've never read anywhere in our literature that this is a selfish program. If anything it's a *selfless* program. People caring, giving of themselves.

I thank GOD as I understand him for those addicts who were at my first meetings, the ones who didn't stay away because of personalities, the ones who remembered that the newcomer is the most important person at any meeting.

Today, whenever I start to miss a meeting because of ole So and So, or because I'm tired of hearing a particular person talk, I pray that God will gently remind me that the newcomer *IS* the most important person at any meeting. I thank God this

newcomer had plenty of recovering addicts around to share with me. I know that, "I can't but *WE* can."

I try and remember to say the Serenity Prayer. I even say "God Grant *US* the Serenity to accept the things *WE* cannot change" I also say that this is a *WE* program. I'm trying to forget about selfishness.



I love my fellow addicts for being there for me. It's not necessary for me to like everyone, or to think that everyone has to like me. It *IS* necessary for me to remember to place principles before personalities, for my own recovery as well as the newcomer's.

I hope and pray I will never forget to Love my fellow addicts, to carry the message, *NOT* the disease. I love you!

C.Y., Mississippi

Listening



People don't do enough listening. We get so busy with our own lives and material things that there just isn't enough time. I myself am guilty of this, but recovery has taught me to look at myself and say, "Hey, take the time; what really matters is people."

Sometimes the most you can do for anyone is just to be there for them and to look them in the eye and see the pain behind the words. We all know when someone is just listening half-heartedly, afraid to hurt our feelings by walking away.

In those situations, if I am unable to concentrate and someone really needs to talk, I let them know that I'm in a bad place and maybe they could get more help from someone else. If you handle it with concern, people will understand and God for sure will have someone who could really help them. It all works out!

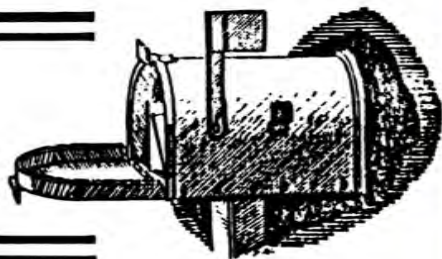
One thing I feel very strongly about is not letting someone's length of clean time affect my judgment of them. If I think of a person as someone with sixty days, six months, or six years, I tend to place expectations and judgments on their behavior and attitudes.

We all have come from different places, hardships, and upbringings, and there is no way we can compare each other. People with time do not know it all, and newcomers have just as much to offer. After four years in the program, I still get crazy with problems, but most of the time I handle them better.

I try today to see people as they are at that moment, for I believe God puts them in our lives to teach us the lessons we need to learn.

Anonymous, California

From Our Readers



A STAR FOR THE N.A. WAY

Dear N.A. Way,

I'm writing to you once again to say thank you.

I sit here day after day in this cell locked away from the world. But each month your magazine brings a little light into my dark world.

I've been clean now for seventeen months. Each and every day has been a fight for freedom. I'm at peace with myself and the world and I have N.A. to thank for that for showing me the way.

Your magazine shows me that there is still hope left in the world, and that's something a lot of us clean addicts in our state prisons were lacking when we got here.

Once again N.A. Way, thank you.

F.F., Oregon

THE HOME GROUP

Dear N.A. Way,

I would like to share some of my personal opinions regarding the concept of "home group."

I believe that choosing and supporting a home group is an important part of recovery. A home group should be a group that you are

comfortable with and whose meetings you will attend regularly.

Once we have made a commitment to that group, and and if we are absent for some reason, we will be missed. This is a real benefit to our recovery. It helps us in making a commitment to the N.A. program and teaches us about responsibility and consistency.

I also believe that having a home group is important when voting on matters that affect the area, region and the N.A. Fellowship as a whole. In our area, all recovering addicts who consider themselves members of the group and attend that group regularly may vote on matters which affect that group, or matters affecting the rest of the Fellowship. These may include approving new literature, suggesting or approving actions for Area, Regional, or World Service committees, or a variety of other questions which come before the group. In the interest of equity, each member votes only in his/her own group.

Although Narcotics Anonymous is not built on the democratic principle found in the one man/one vote concept of voting, there is an application of that concept in the spiritual development of group conscience. A loving God will express himself through group conscience, and every

member should have an equal opportunity to allow that to happen through his/her own participation. If we feel that an issue is so important that we must vote more than once, we are not trusting in a God of our understanding.

Common welfare is that which is best for the group, not just for one individual (Tradition One). Before deciding on something, we can first think, "Would this help the group as a whole, or is it just to fit the needs of one person?" (Tradition Two)

Anyone who is willing may involve themselves in service. If, by chance, one finds himself trying to control the group or attempting to conform the group to his will, he will receive a rude awakening. The beauty of the group conscience is that anyone may voice feelings and/or opinions, but in the final analysis, decisions are reached by the group as a whole. No one person or group of persons can control N.A.

J.T.F., Washington

TEEN'S CAN MAKE IT TOO

Dear N.A. Way,

I'm Allen and an addict and I'm fifteen.

When I was introduced to N.A. I was getting paroled from an institution in Tulsa. I tried to go to meetings but it seemed my friends had more power than the meetings, so I would get high with them and not worry about the N.A. program.

When I finally came to my senses and got serious about the N.A. program was when I was kicked out

of a group home and told, "When you straighten up then you can move back in." So I went to treatment in Oklahoma City for two months, then two to three months in Tulsa.

I met a nice person in Tulsa and I asked him to be my sponsor. Since I got a sponsor I have not used.

Without N.A., I would be dead.

I made it.

A.T., Oklahoma

GRATEFUL IN T.J.

Dear N.A. Way,

I live in Tijuana and sometimes it's hard for me to cross the border and go to meetings in the U.S., so sometimes I go to the other Fellowship's meetings. But I feel I need the identification (that reminds me I am an addict) of the N.A. meetings. The N.A. Way magazine arrived just as I was in the middle of a painful obsession to use. The N.A. Way magazine reminded me I was not alone. I think my higher power had something to do with this.

M.C., Mexico

SPONSORSHIP

Dear N.A. Way,

Through Narcotics Anonymous many special relationships have developed. One in particular is vital to my recovery—her name is SPONSOR.

My sponsor has no whips and chains, never makes my decisions, nor does she have unrealistic

expectations of me. The qualities that attracted me to her as a sponsor was her honestly sharing experience, strength and hope, and the interest she took in me as a confused newcomer.

When I came to Narcotics Anonymous, expressing my feelings to another woman was hard. I, like so many others, made the statement, "Other women just don't understand me; it's easier to talk with a man." Through recovery and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, no longer am I bound by living by my old beliefs.

My sponsor is not my Higher Power, but time after time I knew where her sharing from the heart comes from. Through the grace of God I hope to have celebrated my third birthday by the time you are reading this.

Thank you for my life, Narcotics Anonymous.

L.J., Alabama

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Dear N.A. Way,

I was recently looking through a past issue of the N.A. Way. In the "From Our Readers" section, there was an article about the ambiguity of our name. The writer also mentioned the problems with the idea of "sober" living.

I am on the literature committee in our area, and am starting to sympathize with people hung up on words.

Four years ago, when I first got clean, these little semantic battles used to really upset me. I have always enjoyed a good fight, but these people were arguing about words I needed to save my life. I was ready to do anything to stay clean when I came to the program, and any controversy scared the heck out of me.

I ran from all controversy, disagreement or debate for the first two-and-a-half years. It worked. I have not used. I have also had time to see that it is God, and principles that get us to work together, not words. Words are tools for communication of my experience with recovery and living a spiritual life. I haven't had to run in a year and a half.

I have seen N.A. meetings go through periods when all the trusted servants were relapsing. I have seen friends and family reject this way of life. I have even gone through times where I could not talk to God. I have not had to use. Those meetings are still going strong, and now have a good chance, with over a year clean.

I am powerless over addiction. My life is unmanageable. I love the creative process of working together to find the right words to help the still suffering addict. I no longer run. I no longer believe in a "good" fight. "Sober," "Recovering" or "Being," this is my life...*clean*.

L.G., Michigan

Comin' Up



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

ARIZONA: May 22-24, 1987; 1st Annual Arizona Regional Convention; ARCNA-I; Doubletree Hotel, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711; (602) Jeff 841-0046; Connie 398-9442

CALIFORNIA: July 10-12, 1987; San Diego Imperial Regional Convention III; Holiday Inn at Embarcadero, 1355 Harbor Drive, San Diego; (619) Elisa 563-1759; Olga 296-2920; Ron 282-6777

CANADA: June 12-14; Edmonton 2nd Annual Convention; Garneau Community Hall, 10943 84th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta; (403) Neil 465-5424; Sue 464-2805

COLORADO: Oct 23-25, 1987; CRCNA-I; Antler Hotel, Colorado Springs; (303) Julie 321-8930; Jeff 755-6813; George 830-7811

CONNECTICUT: June 5-7, 1987; G.W.A.N.A.'S 1st Annl Family Campout; Lone Oak Campsites, Route 44, East Canaan, Ct.; (203) Jim 264-0911; Ken 734-2416; LuAnn 792-6643

2) July 10-12, 1987; 3rd Annl N.A. Campathon, Seaport Campgrounds, Route 184, Old Mystic, CT; (203) Sonny 233-0936; Bob 233-2567

ENGLAND: May 30-31, 1987; 4th N.A. West Country Convention; Knightstone Pier, Weston Super Mare, Bristol, Avon; Ben (W.S.M.)635301; Cathy (W.S.M.)635117; Toby (Bristol)739819

FLORIDA: July 2-5, 1987; FRCNA 6; Diplomat Hotel, 3515 South Ocean Dr., Hollywood, FL 33019, (305) Mike 564-1262; Chris 891-1867; Bee Gee 565-7312

2) May 7-10, 1987; 11th Annual Panama City "Fun in the Sun" Weekend; Gulfside Miracle Mile Inn, 9600 S. Thomas Dr., P.C. Beach, FL; Zannet 497-1727; Kim/Andrea 392-0016

HONDURAS: June 13, 1987; 1st Annual Birthday Celebration and Open Meeting; Hotel Prado, Tejucigalpa; Jean D 22-38-63

ILLINOIS: June 26-28, 1987; 3rd Annual Flight to Freedom Campout; Coy's & Wilma's Campground, Rend Lake, Sesser, IL; (618) Vicky 242-5968; Mark 532-1327

2) July 24-26, 1987; 3rd Mid-Coast Convention; Holiday Inn, 7550 E State St., Rockford, Ill 61107; (815)398-2200; Greg 963-5811

IOWA: July 3-5, 1987; IRCNA IV; Civic Center Holiday Inn, 4th & Commercial, Waterloo, IA; (800)465-4329; Don (319) 233-2906; Paul (515) 274-4347

LOUISIANA: Sept. 3-6, 1987; World Convention; WCNA 17; Sheraton New Orleans Hotel & Towers, 500 Canal St., New Orleans, LA 70130; (504)525-2500

MICHIGAN: July 2-5 1987; Freedom III MRCNA; Hyatt-Regency, P.O. Box 525, Flint, MI 48501; (313) Jim 233-4704; Mike 232-7490

MINNESOTA: May 15-17, 1987; 2nd Annual Brainard Pig Roast; Fishtrap Lake, Motley, MN; (218) Scott 828-1518; Kerry 829-0379

2) Aug 7-9, 1987; Willmar Campout; Willmar, MN; (612) 253-

MISSOURI: June 5-7, 1987; 2nd Annual Show-Me Regional Convention; Ramada Hotel, 2431 N. Glenstone, Springfield, MO; Bob R. (417)358-5800; (800)781-0500

2) July 17-19, 1987; 8th Annual High-on-Life Picnic; Stockton Lake, MO; (417) 782-1467

NEBRASKA: May 12, 1987, 7 P.M.; 15th Annl Anniversary Potluck Dinner, South Minster United Methodist Church, 2915 S 16th St., Lincoln, NE

2) May 22-25, 1987; 7th Annual Run for Fun Campout; Alexandria, NE

NEVADA: July 10-12, 1987; 1st Sierra Sage Regional Convention '87; Peppermill Inn & Casino (702)826-2121; (800)648-6992

2) Aug 27-30, 1987; 5th Annual Stampede for Serenity Campout; (702) 322-4811

NEW JERSEY: May 8-10, 1987; 2nd Regional Convention; The Sheraton Tara, Parsippany, NJ; (201) Nancy 223-2909; Karin 483-0310; Interested Speakers submit tapes to Program Comm, Rd 1, Box 222, Pennington-Mt. Rose Rd., Pennington, NJ 08534, Tom (609) 737-8791

2) July 17-19, 1987; 4th Annual Powerless in the Pines Campout; Sonya F. (609) 227-2319

NEW MEXICO: July 3-5, 1987; WSUC IV; Marriott Hotel, 2101 Louisiana Blvd., Albuquerque, NM 87110; (505) Ron 294-4808; Peter 344-6490, Julie 983-5171

NEW YORK: May 29-31, 1987; Freedom Three; Third Annual Greater NY Reg Conv; Stevensville Country Club, Swan Lake, NY; (718) Danny 347-6643; Tina 342-5233

NORTH CAROLINA: June 26-28, 1987; Carolina Regional Convention; Marriot Executive Center, I-77 & Tyvola, Charlotte, NC; David (919) 847-5682; Rich (803) 235-7485; (704) 527-2091

OHIO: April 4, 1987; Buckeye Region Unity Day; St. Patricks Ch. W. 38th & Bridge, Cleveland, OH

2) May 22-24, 1987; Ohio Reg Conv; Holiday Inn Cascade Plaza, Akron, OH 44372; Please submit speaker tapes for consideration to ORCNA V; Box 5837, Akron, OH 44372; (216) Meredith 832-5361; Curt 453-1758; Gary 864-8175

3) June 12-14, 1987; 8th ECCNA; Kent State University, Kent, OH; P.O. Box 1492, Youngstown, OH 45501; (216) Bob 545-4387; Laura 898-2176; Roy 638-7895

4) July 17-19, 1987; 3rd CCANA; Camp Vention; Summit Valley Park, Summitville, OH 43926; (216) Rusty 385-5761; Bill 424-7681

OREGON: July 24-26, 1987; 2nd Annual Oregon & Southern Idaho Reg Conv; Black Angus/Executive Inn, Salem, OR; (503) Barry 371-7928; Larry 371-7782

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct. 9-11, 1987; T.S.R.C.N.A. V; Hyatt Hotel, Pittsburgh; (412) Ken 521-1086; Roz 361-6250; Rich 371-3891

SOUTH DAKOTA: June 5-7, 1987; Upper Midwest Regional Convention IV; Holiday Inn, 2727 Sixth Ave. SE, Aberdeen, SD; (605) Scott 353-1555; Ed (612) 824-9225

WEST VIRGINIA: May 8-10, 1987; WVCNA-IV; Cedar Lakes Camp & Conference Center, Ripley, WV; (304) 372-7000

WISCONSIN: Oct. 23-25, 1987; WSNAC IV; P.O. Box 1688, Oshkosh, WI 54902-1688; If interested in speaking or chairing workshops, submit speaker tapes for consideration. (414) Gene, Phil or Steve 231-6219



*THE INTERNATIONAL
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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving
2. *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.*
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.
6. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
7. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
8. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
9. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
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.
10. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

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