

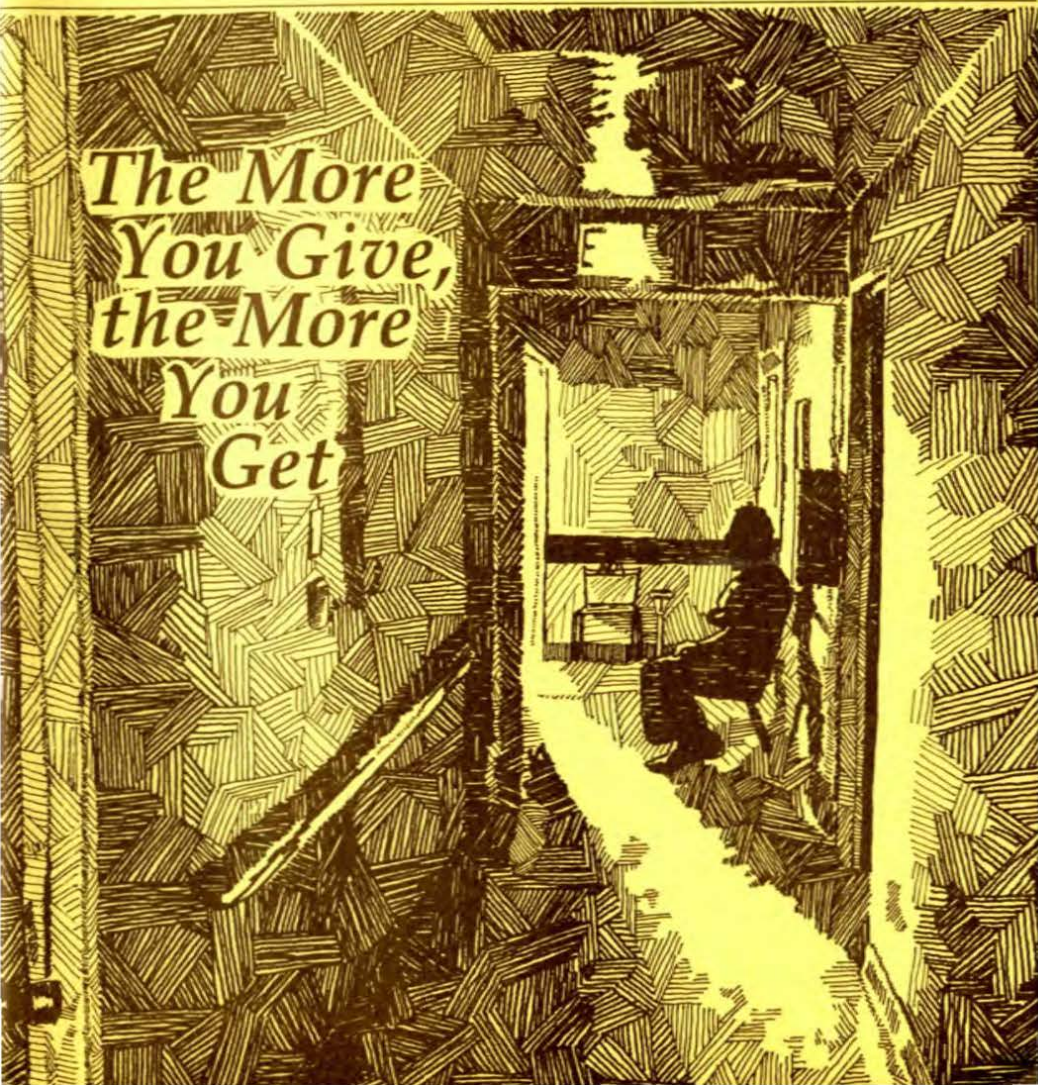
THE
NA
WAY

NOVEMBER
1987

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NUMBER 11

*The More
You Give,
the More
You
Get*





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

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THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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From the Editor



With this month's issue, all new sections are in place. The Opinion section this month presents two sides of an issue that we as a Fellowship have struggled with for some time—use of medication in recovery. We have had several articles on that subject in the past—in fact we close this month's Experience, Strength and Hope section with one. If you wish to contribute to this discussion, now is the time to write.

The News section is composed of two articles. One is regarding a local P.I. effort, and the other is regarding the H&I panel system. Both articles are examples of the direction we currently see that section going. We would like to print N.A. news as submitted by World Service boards or committees, and features submitted by areas or regions. It has occurred to us that printing local features in this international forum will be a good way to spread our learning experiences throughout the Fellowship.

This is an open invitation, then, to world level trusted servants to submit news articles, and to regional and area committees to submit features. If you have an idea for either type of piece, write us or call (818) 780-3951 and ask for Ron. The more lead time you can give us to let us know an article is coming the better. We could also do a phone interview for either type of article and write the piece ourselves. Is something inspiring or educational go-

ing on in your area or region? Pass it on!

As promised over the last several months, our price has now gone up to \$15 per subscription. As you get used to exercising your option to participate in the News and Opinion sections, we expect our size to continue to increase too. See the subscription form in the back of this magazine for the new price breakdown.

On another topic, it has not been the policy of the N.A. Way to send out notices telling you whether an article you sent us has been rejected or accepted for publication. At this point we do not have plans to do that because of the time involved. We would, however, like to invite you to write or call to inquire about the status of an article if you would like to know.

When we reject a piece, we keep the notes on file that were taken during the Review Panel and Editorial Board conference calls. If you wish to have another run at it, we'd be glad to share with you what the problems were in the piece and invite you to try again.

It does take quite a while for each article to pass through the editorial process, so your if you haven't seen your article, it may simply be moving through the system. If you write to ask about it, we could let you know that too.

R.H., Editor

Experience, Strength & Hope



This section of the magazine is an international monthly Narcotics Anonymous meeting in print. All members of N.A. are invited to participate. Share your "experience, strength and hope" on any topic related to your recovery from addiction through the N.A. program. Please include a signed copyright release form (inside the back cover), and send it to:

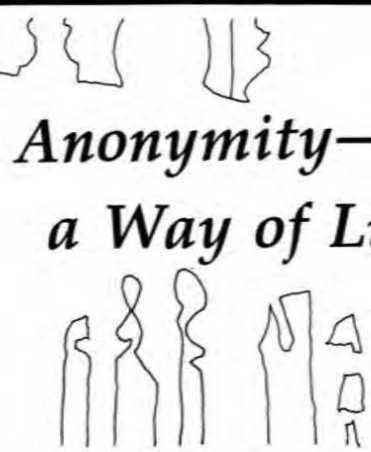
**The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.
P.O. Box 9999 Van Nuys, CA 91409**

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.



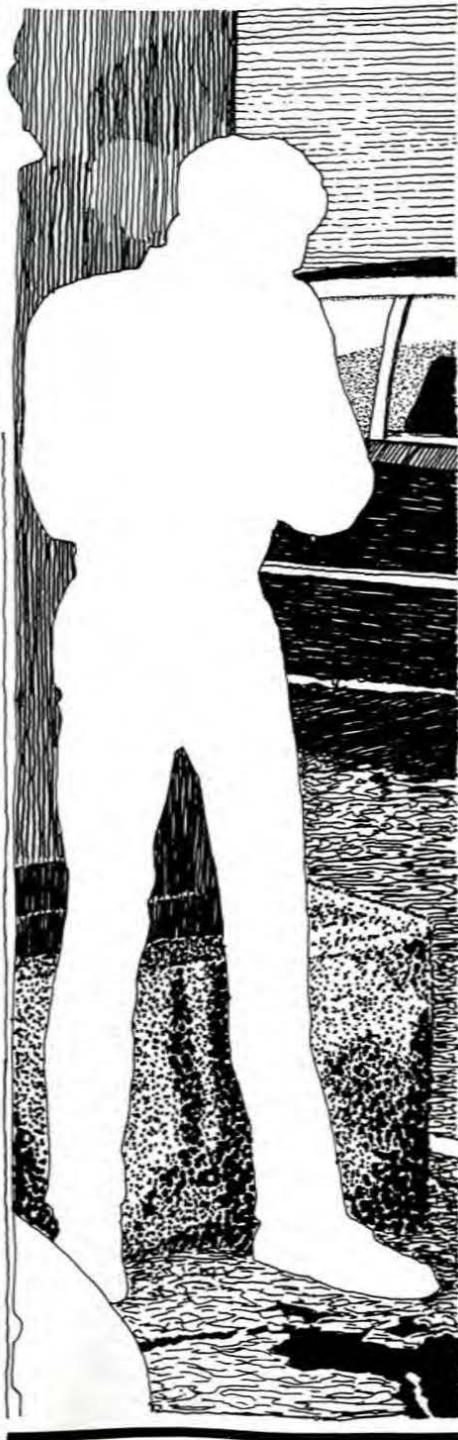
Anonymity— a Way of Life

The word so many of us can't pronounce is a whole lot more than just using my last initial. It is a spiritual principle, synonymous with humility.

Anonymity is where purity of motive belongs, the source of empathy and love. It's when I take one of my talents and use it for the Fellowship, and they wonder, where did this come from, to whom does this belong, why was this done? Anonymity is when my God smiles upon me and I remain selfless.

Anonymity is a feeling inside me. When I break my back trying to run an H&I group, then one newcomer from that facility returns to meetings on the outside, my heart leaps for joy. When I realize I'm only one of many instruments which my God uses for N.A., I hug that newcomer.

Give, give and give, and when it hurts, give more. I have traveled far and wide taking addicts to meetings. They offer gas money, but anonymity for me is suggesting to them that there's only one way to repay me: One day, just as I and those before me have done, take a newcomer to a meeting, no matter the distance, and make the same suggestion I have made. In my



heart I remember when I was a newcomer, and I ask my God to stay near those who once did it for me.

Anonymity brings to light the fact that I am not just one individual person with a name. Every value, belief, thought and action was created in me. The person I am today is a multitude of addicts before me. If I wanted what they had, I did what they did.

Today I see those results in my own life. Anonymity is never forgetting that the paved road I followed was also paved for those who taught me by those who went before them. And so we all in turn continue to lead, and continue to follow, serving as a continuing link to a family.

It took a long time to finally understand the paradox of anonymity. It is true, no one addict or group of addicts will ever build my self-respect in the way my God does. There isn't a better feeling than having only His approval.

So many times I have been hurting for time and money when I've been asked to be of service to N.A. Anonymity is finding the time and money, no matter what. It is not letting the Fellowship see that "I am too Busy." I can always improvise. Even if I have to count pennies for gas, I will drive a newcomer and mention nothing about it. I have an advantage—a car. If it weren't for N.A. I never would have had one. My first year clean I saved as much as I could and paid cash for an old rusted out, floorless, no brakes, no wiper or side-door jalopy.

Even in that case N.A. was there for me. The guys came over, and one fixed my muffler, another my brakes, another the door. After all the hours the N.A. guys spent slaving on it, making it road

worthy, my only payment was to do the same for another—that's anonymity.

My first year clean I owned eight recovery texts! They kept disappearing. If an addict can't afford \$8.80 for a book and they need it, let's hope it keeps them clean. Just buy another book.

*"Anonymity is when
my God smiles upon
me and I
remain selfless."*

If it weren't for N.A. I wouldn't have had my part-time minimum wage job to afford to buy a new recovery text every now and again.

Then there's area and regional service. Trying to practice anonymity is a little harder there, but not impossible. As an ASC Chair, I sometimes think my area, my sub-committees, my responsibility. "My" area doesn't belong to me, it belongs to us. And we belong to God.

My opinion is that Narcotics Anonymous saved my life, so I owe it my life.

Maybe I'm a masochist, but there's no greater feeling in my life than the pain of exhaustion due to service work. I know in my heart that my God is pleased, and that's all that matters. No addict's approval can match His.

I would like to say I practice humility as I understand it often. If I did it would be a lie. I work towards it, sometimes faltering, but I try.

Anonymity. The Spiritual Foundation. I finally found something I can believe in.

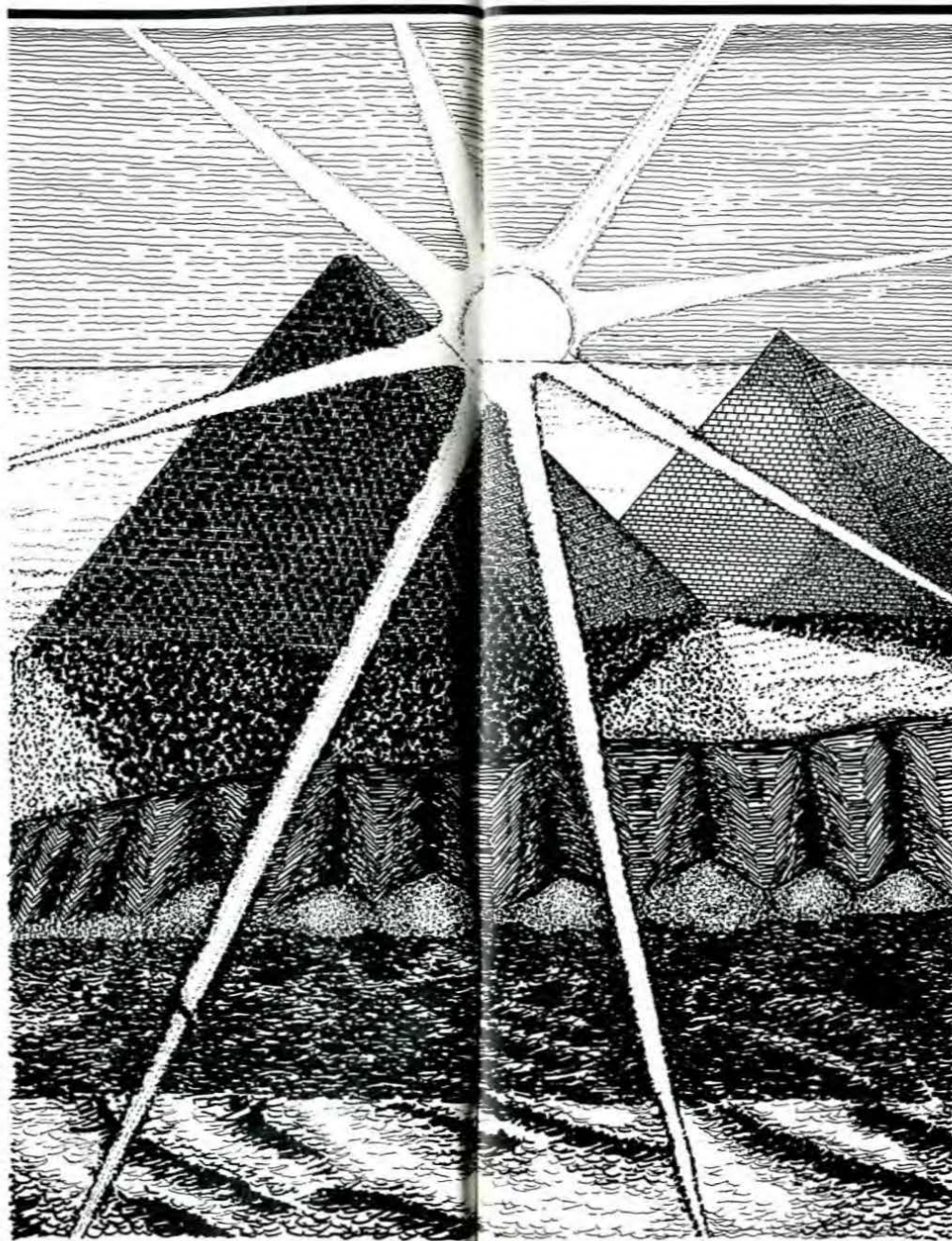
Anonymous
N.A. Way • 3

Things I Don't Want to Do

Recently I was asked to be a member of the panel in one of the workshops at our regional convention. I didn't ask what the possible topics were. I just said I would be glad to be on panel. I never really gave any thought to what that topic would be. Somehow it seemed that whatever it was, if it was N.A. it would be okay and I would have something to say. When I arrived at the convention I was told that I would be on the panel in the workshop called "Denial." I thought about that and my thinking was, "What a topic." I didn't really want to be on the panel of a workshop called "Denial."

I tried to think about what it was that I knew about denial. The first thing that came to mind was that I have met a lot of people who have it. Really useful stuff to share, I thought. But what about denial in my life? In my program? In my recovery? I really couldn't find much to share about my denial.

Twenty years of denial prior to my seeking recovery. Pretty obvious stuff. All of us had years of denial prior to recovery. But that hadn't really interfered with our recovery,



because we weren't recovering.

Denial was the name of the game, not an element in it. Basically I was drawing a blank. Someone had writ-

ten next to "Denial" on the list of workshops in the lobby of the hotel, "Not just a river in Egypt," and I walked around saying, "Denial is a

river in Georgia." I felt there was nothing I could offer, and that was as far as I got.

I realized about twenty minutes before the workshop that I had not prayed in the morning. A lot of things can go undone in my life, but that is not one of them. I pray in the

"Being a member on a panel discussing a topic on which I have only the most useless kind of material is something that I don't want to do, but I sat in my seat just the same."

morning. It is ALWAYS important for me to get out of my own insanity first thing in the morning and look for guidance outside of me. Without that morning prayer I wake up thinking, and it is a downhill stream of consciousness into the day.

I went up to my hotel room and said the prayer I say in the morning, ending as it does with "Please guide me in my life and in my recovery, that my will and my life might come closer to Your will for me in my life." With that done I went back downstairs to arrive just in time for the workshop.

The longer I am around this program, the longer I am recovering, the less sure I am that I have the answers. The cockiness that I had

early in recovery has been replaced with a genuine hesitance to claim to know what is what. As it says in our Basic Text, everything does seem to be open to revision, especially what I know about the truth.

I sat down at the front of the room feeling confident that I do not have the bottom line on denial. For whatever reason, the only thought I really had on denial was that I see a lot of it in other people. I see the denial of those who do not believe that they need recovery, when it seems so obvious that they do. I see the denial of those who believe they can reinvent recovery and succeed. I see the denial everywhere but in me, and I knew that this was the most useless kind of material. Being a member on a panel discussing a topic on which I have only the most useless kind of material is something that I don't want to do, but I sat in my seat just the same.

The addict that made up the other half of what turned out to be a two person panel arrived. I asked her to chair the discussion. I hoped that when she shared, something would happen in me. I hoped I would think of something to say about denial. She opened the discussion and went on to share about the various ways she saw denial manifesting in her life, in her recovery. In all of the variety of ways she saw her denial, she did not mention denial of her disease. She knew she was an addict and that most devastating form of denial wasn't on her list. But she did see denial affecting relationships, affecting her life, and affecting her recovery.

After briefly touching on the areas of her recovery that denial has and continues to affect, she said she

would like to give me an opportunity to share before opening the floor for participation. I got up and stood behind the podium. I introduced myself as an addict, and then—I started to talk about the ways that denial was affecting my recovery. I talked about the pain I had been feeling these past few weeks, and how that pain grew out of my denial.

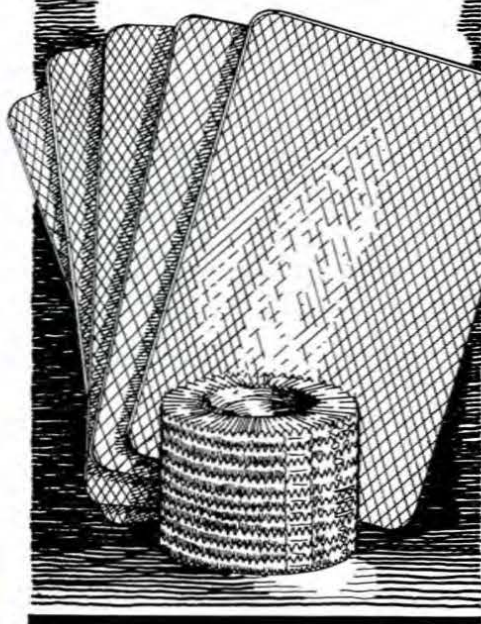
I talked about denying the need to take care of basics; denying the need for an active relationship with a sponsor; denying my need for meetings in the quantities that I knew helped me to feel comfortable in my life; denying the need to continue to follow the suggestions that had made it possible for me to get two years clean in the first place. Denial is alive and, unfortunately, well in my life, and it has been stealing my peace of mind.

What came out of me was the issue I have been searching for. I know that something is wrong usually long before I am able to identify what that is. Denial, in all its many forms, is the issue I have been searching for. It appears to me now that denial is at the bottom of most of the issues that I confront in my recovery. I cannot afford to deny reality, and I have a tendency to do that. If I deny my need for meetings, or for the help of a Higher Power, eventually denial will not be an issue in my recovery. There won't be a recovery to affect.

I am consistently amazed at the results when I do the things that I don't want to do. The gifts are many, and the disappointments few. I do get what I need and what I needed today was a workshop called "Denial."

Anonymous, Michigan

The Poker Game



When I first got clean I had a terrible time trying to understand the principles of acceptance and surrender. I came to the program and many people talked to me about concepts—Higher Powers, spiritual principles—all of which meant nothing to my one-dimensional street mind. I needed something practical, something that I could understand in street terms.

Do you like games? I always have. One of my favorites was poker. Now, imagine that you're playing the game of

life, and you lose, every time. Every time you walk away from that table you're beaten, stripped naked, powerless, insane, and completely unmanageable. But there you are walking away from that table thinking, "Next time, if I do this and that, the results will be different."

"I never knew I had a choice, that there was another way. I never knew that the way to win the game was not to play."

That's reservation, and that's what kept me out there for so long, hell-bent to prove to myself that my way was going to work, even when all experience was to the contrary.

The whole magic of this program is that by realizing I have no power, I am free at last to receive power.

The trick was to be able to walk away from that table and at last realize that I didn't have to go back. I never knew I had a choice, that there was another way. I never knew that the way to win the game was not to play.

How's that for a paradox? All those ideals that I'd held onto for so long, I had at last found a way to let them go when I decided to. I didn't have to fight anymore. Surrender meant to let go and listen to another person's advice. I didn't have to be my own Higher Power anymore.

Just for today, I never have to play that game again.

A.S., Florida

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As recovering addicts, the N.A. rooms are all we have to keep us clean and to help us change. When I walked into my first meeting, the first thing that hit me was the unity—thirty recovering addicts all pulling together towards one common cause. The love and the caring was very apparent, it was why I “kept coming back.”

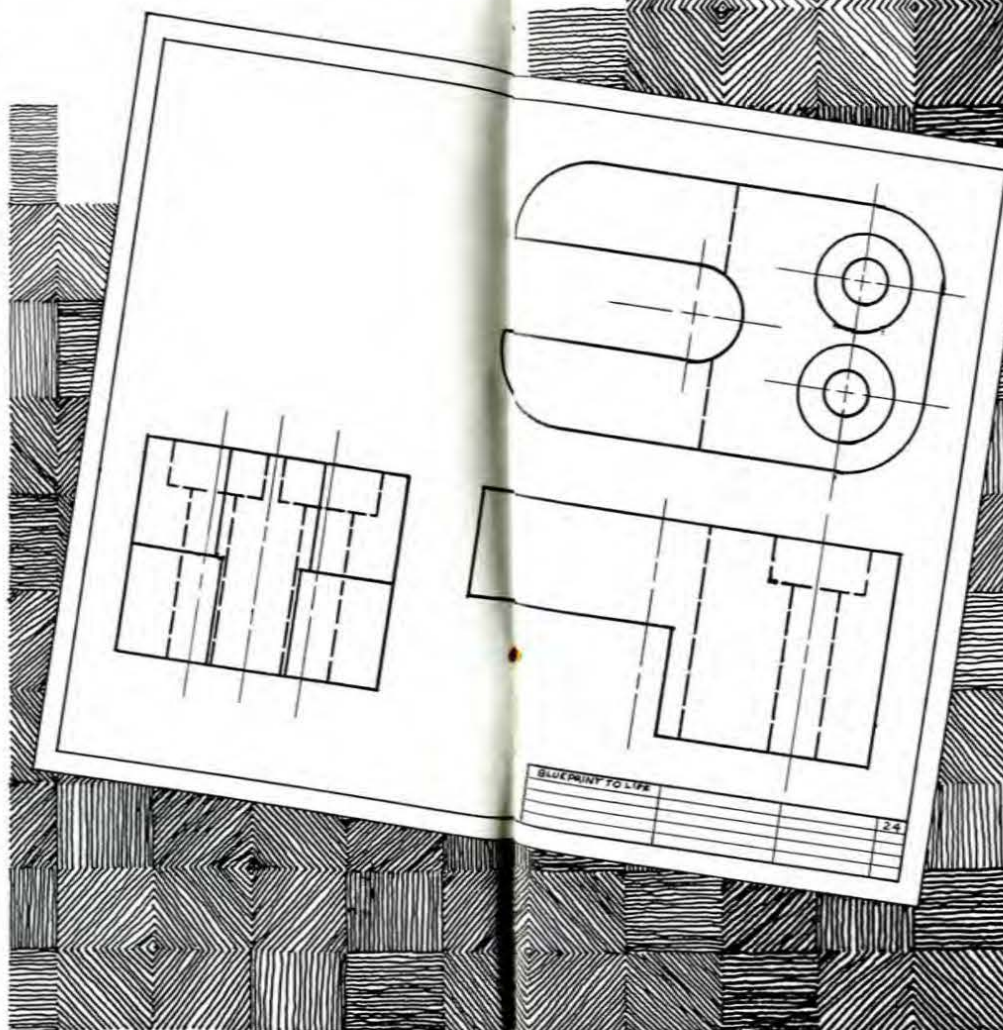
On and off I had heard people complaining about things leaving the rooms, or people judging others. But it never affected me personally so I never really gave it any thought. My response to things I heard was “We’re all recovering addicts, not perfect addicts.”

Then one day gossip hit home with me. Someone who had a different concept of their Higher Power than I did, said something to someone I sponsor. This person brought religion, rather than spirituality, up as an issue.

I was very hurt; my contact with my Higher Power, as I understand “him” was being attacked. I did what the program teaches us, I called my sponsor. I asked some fellow addicts to spend the afternoon “babysitting” me, and I spoke to H.P. I shared about my feelings in a meeting, and I got some great feedback, and a lot of support. I considered myself very fortunate to have the First Step to remind me that I am powerless.

I went through a brief period where I questioned how and why anyone would gossip like that, especially since what the person was saying wasn’t based in truth—and then an interesting thing happened (there are no coincidences!). Someone came to me with a “moral” issue involving another recovering addict. I gave some advice that I felt I had a right to give, thinking I was “pro-

A Lesson Learned



tecting” my friend. He said he couldn’t believe what I was saying about an-

other member, but I said I had it “almost” from the person involved.

I decided to check out my information from the person I had gotten it from, and I was wrong! I called the person I had spoken to, made my amends, and learned a very valuable lesson! I could have been the one to start rumors about an innocent person.

“It’s hard to always be aware that what comes out of our mouths can have a devastating affect on someone else.”

I realized that I had done nothing malicious, but out of concern for someone I love. But still...

It’s hard to always be aware that what comes out of our mouths can have a devastating affect on someone else. But I know for myself that even though the lessons are sometimes hard, they are more than worth it. To be able to change myself into someone I like is one opportunity I never thought I would have. I’m very grateful to be a recovering addict.

I used to walk around looking for a “blueprint” to life. I didn’t know how to live “the right way.” I found that blueprint in the N.A. rooms. I have never been happier than in these past thirteen months; my life is full where it was empty before, I have love where there was hate and anger, I have a Higher Power where there was fear. I thank my H.P. daily for the rooms, and I thank the rooms for introducing me to H.P.

D.H., New York
N.A. Way • 9

When I arrived at the tables in my town, there were four other addicts and an A.A. Twelve and Twelve at the three weekly meetings. Today there are still three weekly meetings, but we average twenty addicts per meeting, and we use our own Basic Text. We now also have an activities committee and a literature committee. Growth...

After three months clean, I found myself secretary for the Wednesday night Book Study. I really didn't want the responsibility, and I wasn't nuts about making the commitment, but I did it. And it was okay! I opened that meeting for over a year until I was elected to an area position.

Prior to my election, I went to area service committee meetings for several months with my partner, because he was involved in area service work. So I tagged along to get out of town for a day, maybe attend a sharing meeting, and I'd sit around at the business meeting afterward and listen until it was time to go home.

One day I found myself "volunteered" to stand in for our absentee GSR at a business meeting and I felt nervous and ignorant. I didn't really know how the ASC worked or anything else. But I figured, what the hell, I'd take a notepad, a pencil and do my best, however limited that may be. It couldn't kill me.

Well, that meeting was a real revelation. I asked questions (real basic "dumb" questions) but no one acted as if they were dumb questions—amazing! I listened, I took notes, and I got real comfortable real quick. Being a temporary GSR alternate was no big deal! I acted as GSR alternate whenever our GSR couldn't attend the ASC meetings, and I got to like what went on at those meetings.

The More You Give, the More You Get



I learned that the primary requirements for ASC work were honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. My Higher Power showed up with everybody else's at those meetings, and while many of us were inexperienced and unsure, we got better. And it was *fun!*

I still don't know *lots* of things about the N.A. service structure, but that's okay, because I get to learn at my own pace and in my own way, and there are lots of people willing to share their

experience, strength and hope anytime I want it (and sometimes when I don't know I want it).

Service work on this level is on-the-job training in the finest sense. And I know for myself that I'm keeping what I have because I've learned how to give it away; and I get more to give away because these addicts keep giving me more and more!

For me service work is step and tradition work. And the way I feel about it today is that it's Seventh Tradition work. I give money when I

can, and I give of myself all the time. It's the least I can do after what's been given me. For me, "The survival of N.A. depends on us all. That little something we don't give might be the difference

"Area service work is on-the-job training in the finest sense. And I know for myself that I'm keeping what I have because I've learned how to give it away; and I get more to give away because these addicts keep giving me more and more!"

between one addict dying or surviving." That addict could be me, or it could be you, or it could be the one on the streets who hasn't gotten to the tables yet.

There are more than ten meetings in our area. If only ten different addicts attended each of those meetings, that's one hundred addicts. I *know* in my heart that some of those one hundred addicts are willing to carry the message of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous on the area level. I want to tell those addicts that service work is a kick-and-a-half, it'll enhance your recovery, and it'll save addicts. We *need* what you have to offer. The more you give, the more you get.

In loving service,

V.G. Oregon
N.A. Way • 11

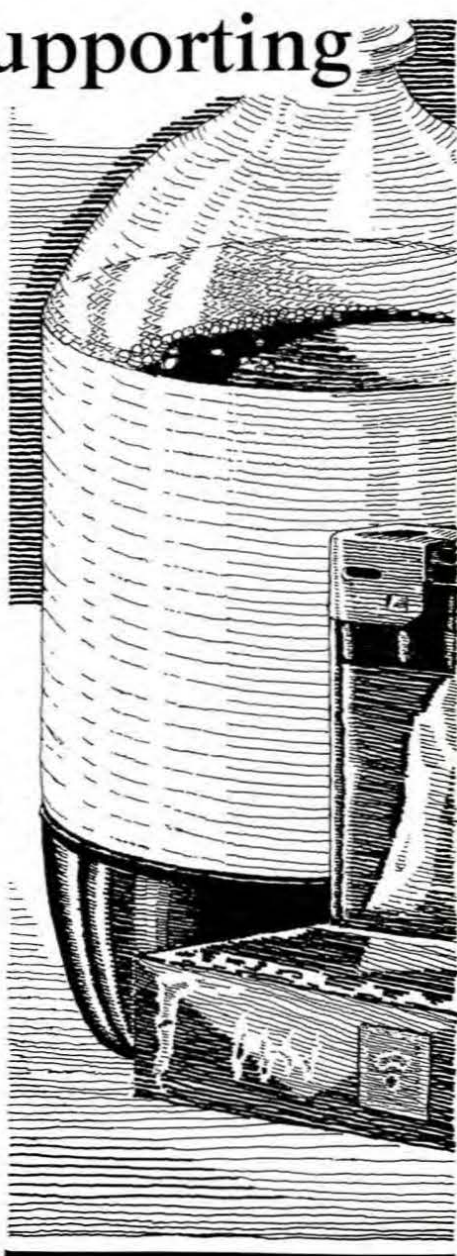
Fully Self-Supporting

In my addiction, I spent a good deal of my time seeking a way to support my habit, to support my very existence. "If only I could find someone to take care of me..." Such were the sick and self-piteous thoughts that I lived with. I ran from the process of learning how to grow up; I didn't learn how to support myself either financially, by securing an education and a good job, or emotionally, by learning how to cope with life on its own terms. My addiction cruelly interrupted that process.

In my recovery, I have learned about being self-supporting; I've had some practice at it. The first thing I learned through a long series of mistakes was that self-reliance did not equal self-support. The seeming contradiction here is that if I can't rely on myself, how can I be self-supporting? Relying on myself for support only gives my ego license to begin again to churn out illness and destruction. Instead, I have learned to rely on the program of Narcotics Anonymous, a loving, caring Higher Power, and a sponsor.

Still the question: "How are we self-supporting?" I have discovered that in my life, the way that I am self-supporting is through willingness. I am self-supporting, indeed, self-enhancing, by the degree to which I strive to work our program.

Pursuit of a learning relationship with a sponsor has taught me other ways to become self-supporting. "Get a job, work the Steps, learn a trade, get to a meeting, get involved in service." These are all things I have heard my sponsor say. My willingness to follow



through on those and other instructions from experienced members defines my degree of self-support.

Our Seventh Tradition says, "Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-

supporting, declining outside contributions." My willingness is demonstrated by how I work this Tradition in my life, and I extend that willingness into this Fellowship.

I do that in at least two ways. First, I am sure to always have a few dollars for the collection basket. I used to come to meetings with a half-gallon of orange juice or a two-liter bottle of soda, and three fresh packs of cigarettes. Today I find it much more useful for myself and for Narcotics Anonymous to drop the five that I dropped on junk food and cigarettes into the hat.

Don't get me wrong, I can't afford to drop five into the hat every time it goes around, and sometimes I haven't had a chance to eat until on the way to the meeting, so I do sometimes show up at a meeting with a fistful of food, but I also show up with a decent, useful contribution to the Fellowship which makes real life possible for me. I contribute a few dollars each time that hat goes by. Several years ago, when I first got clean, a dollar was certainly welcome, but is it still adequate for our needs? Well who will be the judge of that? Don't call on me. But to feel self-supporting, it is necessary for me to let go of a few dollars at every meeting.

At times I question what happens to my dollars after they slip from my grip and fall into the basket. This brings up the second way that I work the Seventh Tradition in my life—through service. Not only is it my responsibility as a Trusted Servant to add my conscience to decisions about the use of the funds we lovingly donate, but it is also the responsibility of all of us, as recovering addicts, to support Narcotics Anonymous service efforts.

Our area and region have suffered forever from a lack of warm bodies to

fulfill our needs as a Fellowship; we have only a small part of our membership to rely on, and for whatever reason, only a small part of our membership becomes involved. If we are to be truly self-supporting, those of us who have decided to carry more than

"I used to come to meetings with a two-liter bottle of soda, and three fresh packs of cigarettes. Today I find it much more useful to drop that money into the hat."

our share of the load solely because we are willing need to somehow excite those who aren't active by enthusiastically setting an example. Maybe then we will be able to let go of some of the load. In letting go of some of the load, maybe then we will also generate enthusiasm.

We step out of the way and trust that what needs to get done will get done, that God, as expressed through our group conscience, will take care of us. By stepping aside, we make available some of the positions we hold, opening the doors of service to those for whom they may be closed due to our belief—perhaps formerly true—that we are the only available trusted servants, and if we want it done, we have to do it ourselves. Those days are ending as the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous matures.

R.W., North Dakota

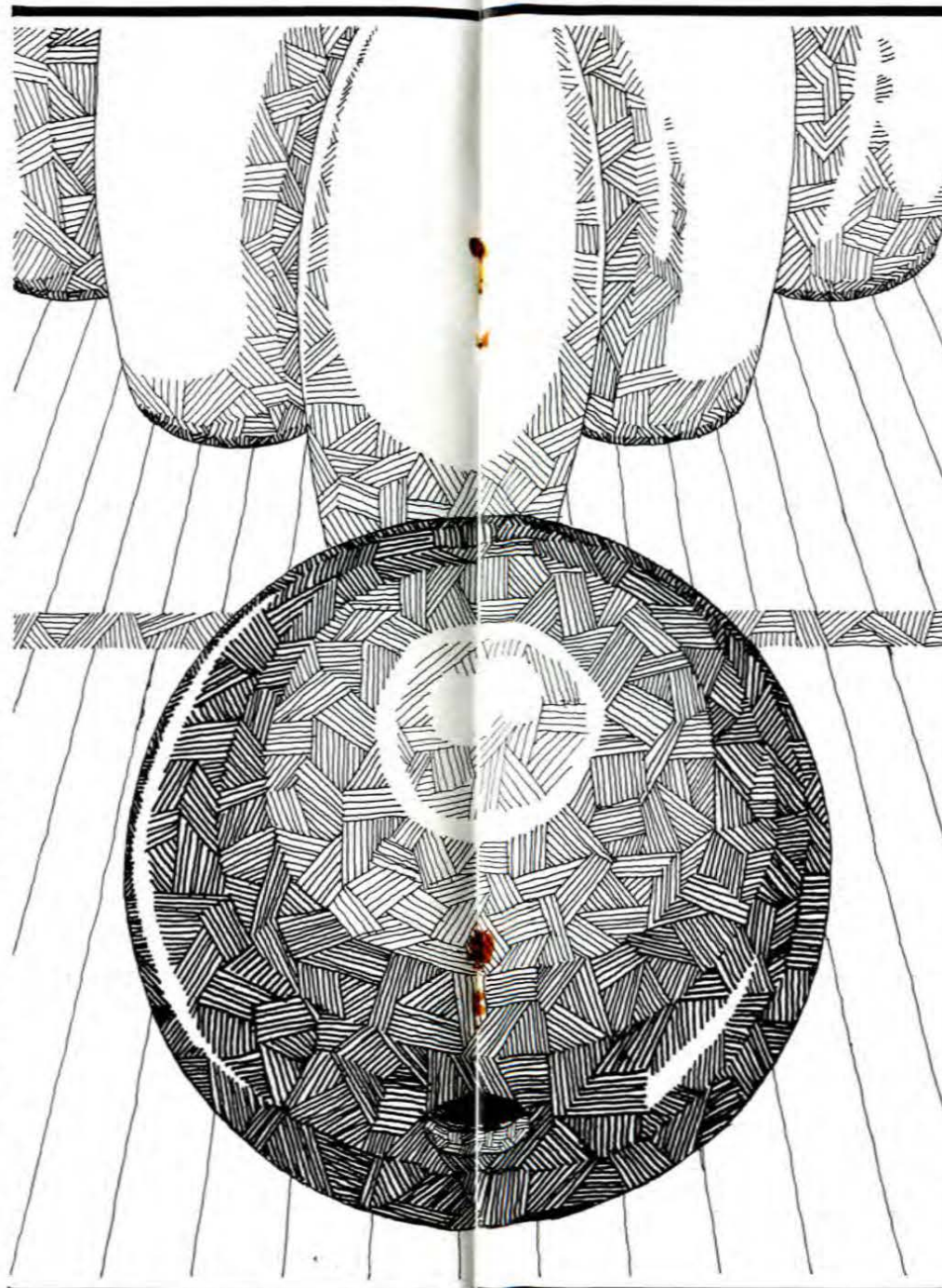
Medication: Some Personal Experience

I am writing because I need to share about my experience with using medication in recovery.

The first time I had surgery was last year when I had a hernia repaired. The first important thing I needed to do was to be totally honest with my doctors. We talked about the disease of addiction, and what my choices were. I chose to have a local anesthetic during surgery, instead of being "knocked out."

I've got to be honest. The reason I chose to remain awake during this was that I was afraid that they would give me something I didn't want, that I would want more pain medication afterwards, and wouldn't be able to stop taking it. During the surgery, I felt everything they were doing, as far as pulling on the muscles and such. All during this, I kept repeating the First Step in my mind, and praying to be able to leave it all in God's hands.

After it was all over, and I went home, the anesthesia wore off and I hurt like I had never hurt before. Yet,



by having recovering people around who understood what I was going

through, we got through it. Neither my friends nor God could take the pain

away, but they sure helped take my mind off it so that I didn't feed into it as much. What I learned from this experience was that I don't have to go through anything alone if I choose to share it. Also, by having faith in God

"I chose not to take pain medication, even though the doctor I had at the time recommended it, and pushed me to take it. I believe too strongly in the principle of total abstinence to compromise myself that way."

and myself, we can make it through anything, CLEAN!

This year, I again had surgery. This time was a whole lot different. First, I was in intense physical pain for three months before the operation. Second, I handled the situation differently.

Back in March, I hurt my back bowling. I started feeling better a couple of weeks later, so I started doing my normal stuff, like working (which involves a lot of bending and twisting), walking ten to fifteen miles a day, and riding my motorcycle.

The point is I refused to be patient and let my back heal. I ended up with a ruptured disc in my lower back. Rest, traction, an injection to dissolve the disc, and three months later I was

worse than when this started. There was no end to the excruciating pain I was in. I chose not to take pain medication, even though the doctor I had at the time recommended it, and pushed me to take it. I believe too strongly in the principle of total abstinence to compromise myself that way. Besides, nothing takes care of the type of nerve pain I was feeling.

Throughout all this, I was calling people and praying to be able to handle the pain. I went to meetings when I could, but as time wore on, and my disease wore me down, I stopped doing enough to get through. I denied this to my wife and everyone else. Looking back, I had stopped praying, I had completely stopped going to meetings because I couldn't sit for long, I was too proud to ask people to bring a meeting to me, and I was unwilling to share what was really going on inside me.

One of my major defects was rearing its ugly head at this time as well. Between the physical agony and my denial, I got really sick. I started feeding into my lust. I was looking for that instant gratification—you know, that instant feel-good—just like drugs gave me when I was using. I started calling a porn-a-call place, and got sicker with each call. By choosing to run with my defects, I isolated myself from the people who loved me and could help, and from a loving and caring Power greater than myself. Towards the end, I just wanted to die.

When I finally got into the hospital, I wasn't in the best spiritual frame of mind. Even though I hadn't put a whole lot of action into the Third Step, God was still there, and so was my family in Narcotics Anonymous. Today, I am

very grateful for this. I was honest with myself, with God, and with the people caring for me. I needed to take pain medication after the surgery. My new doctors were very supportive of my decision to use a minimal amount and to stop taking it while I was still in pain.

What I've come to believe through this is that once we live the principles of the program, they don't disappear just because I choose not to work them in every area of my life. I can't forget that they are there, no matter how hard I try. It's real nice to know that when I get off Recovery Road and onto Self-will Alley, there is always a Power greater than myself to turn me around and get me going the right way again.

Today, thanks to God and the Fellowship of N.A., I am able to sit and share this with you, to share the pain and the fear that I've felt when I was not reaching out. I am still recovering from surgery, and can't get to meetings yet, but I talk to a lot of people every day. Through my reaching out to my N.A. family and asking for support, the members have agreed to hold meetings here at the house. Through applying the principles in every area of my life, and through coming to trust and having faith in God, I am back to where I need to be.

I am not sure how much sense I've made; I just pray that sharing what I didn't do for my recovery will help someone not make the same mistakes I made. I know that writing this has helped me, at least, and I understand myself a little better.

In closing, I just want to say thank you for teaching me how to live and for sharing in my recovery today.

P.C., Pennsylvania

N.A. News



Public Information

The following article describes a P.I. presentation made at the International Conference on Drug Abuse held in Hawaii recently. The article was sent to us from Hawaii, and was originally published in P.I. News, a WSC P.I. newsletter sent to P.I. committees within the Fellowship. We have available at the World Service Office the format and materials used for this presentation.

On May 28, 1987 the Hawaii Regional P.I. Committee gave a presentation to the International Conference on Drug Abuse held in Hawaii. Involved in this conference was a large number of public servants sent by their countries to share and gather information about what the rest of the world is doing about the growing drug abuse problem and some of the solutions being utilized. In all, there were over eighty participants representing thirty-three countries as well as representatives from the United Nations, the U.S. White House and various national organizations dealing in drug prevention and education.

We, in Narcotics Anonymous, had the distinct honor of being the only recovery program that was invited to participate. An entire evening in a dinner setting was set aside for the purpose of our presentation.

Fortunately, in the previous year, our region had developed a format for doing an N.A. presentation to a large group of people. This format was inspired by some of the P.I. presentations that the Japanese members have done in Tokyo, and also by following the formats described in our guidelines.

An official in Hawaii had attended an N.A. P.I. presentation a year ago and was impressed with the N.A. Program. It was through him telling many of his colleagues about us that the invitation to the International Conference came about.

The community awareness day held by Hawaii's Public Information Committee a year ago was a tremendous success, so we were confident in following the same format with only a few minor changes to enable us to present N.A. to an international, rather than regional audience.

Knowing this would be an event that would affect N.A. as a whole around the world, we communicated with the WSC P.I. Committee and the WSO. The WSO communicated with the

organizers of the conference, prepared an opening letter to all the conference participants (the letter can be found after this article), and provided enough literature to present a P.I. packet to all the participants. A trustee residing in Hawaii served to coordinate much of the logistics and details of the agenda and communications between everyone involved. This trustee also attended the conference for the entire week, which enabled us to have more of a "feel" as to where all these representatives stood in regards to addiction and the addict.

The opening evening of the conference involved a session with a lot of media, and was attended by many people from the Hawaii community. This session was followed by a reception. This was all very impressive as the representatives arrived in three buses, some dressed in sarongs and turbans. The conference room itself was set up like the United Nations, with microphones at each seat along with the name of the representatives and their countries.

Our trustee participant was asked if he might be willing to accompany two of the participants for an evening. With members of the P.I. committees, one from Amsterdam, and the other from Australia, they were brought to an open N.A. meeting.

In preparation for our presentation on Thursday night, our P.I. committees met several times and determined that only twenty-two members would be able to attend. The process of choosing those members was probably the hardest part of the entire planning stage. Age, gender, ethnicity, sex and clean time were things we had to consider in giving a balanced picture of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. Also

of particular importance was the ability to articulate well, since all of these representatives were highly educated people, including many cabinet-level government officials, psychiatrists and other professionals. With much good will within our Fellowship, we were able to fulfill this balance.

To say we were nervous and a bit overwhelmed at the prospect of putting on a P.I. event such as this would be an understatement. The rest of this report is a God shot.

Our members had gathered N.A. T-shirts from around the world and created a collage-like display of N.A. This we felt, would visually tell a story in itself.

With the literature the WSO had sent us, we created packets consisting of the letter from the WSO, several pamphlets, a *Group Starter Kit*, a copy of the *N.A. Way* magazine, a copy of our new catalog, an order form, and our Little White Booklet. We also had examples of our translated literature available.

The evening of the N.A. presentation began with a dinner. Two or three of our members sat at each table to talk more informally with the representatives during dinner. In adherence to our Seventh Tradition, we had made arrangements to pay for our own dinners.

After dinner one of our members, who acted as an emcee for our presentation during the next two hours, began with a moment of silence for the addict who is still suffering. There was a hushed presence in the room.

We started by reading from our literature, followed by someone reading the letter from the WSO. We then had our trustee give a fifteen minute talk about our history, our international

growth and the importance of our Twelve Traditions, particularly highlighting our Eleventh, Tenth, Seventh, Sixth and First Traditions.

A demonstration of our recovery followed, with our members introducing themselves and stating their clean time. We had an evenly spaced count from four months to eighteen years.

Our first speaker was of Chinese ancestry who grew up here in Hawaii and spoke Chinese. Although he now lives in Los Angeles, California, he traveled to Hawaii just for this presentation. He shared a powerful message as an addict growing up in an oriental culture. Many of the representatives were from Asian countries and were very moved by his talk.

Our second speaker was a female member from Ireland who got clean and had experienced her recovery there. We were very fortunate to have her in Hawaii at this time because she was able to share our message on an international scale that truly demonstrated what recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is all about.

Our third speaker was a member who was sixteen years old and had three years clean. He was raised here in the Hawaiian Islands and was able to share a perspective of youth in recovery.

The impact that this personal sharing had on these people was very visible. They had spent an entire week in general conference and workshops listening to one presentation after another. It was very refreshing and tangible for them to experience Narcotics Anonymous in action, to see our principles and recovery demonstrated, and to share in the

intimacy of our personal lives.

When we opened up the floor for questions and answers, the room was buzzing with energy. We had planned for a fifteen minute question and answer period, which lasted almost an hour, most of which consisted of discussion concerning recovery and enthusiastic statements about N.A.

Any of our twenty-two members were free to respond to the questions. Questions that related to the traditions or our world services were referred to our trustee.

One man from the Dominican Republic told us that he was going to bring this information back to his country. He said he knew of many addicts in treatment facilities and he was sure they would start N.A.

A doctor from Hong Kong who had started a treatment center over twenty-four years ago said he thought that their program was the largest in the world, having treated over 40,000 addicts. He said, "...but obviously this Narcotics Anonymous is by far the largest and surely the only international one." He later extended an invitation for N.A. to attend the Ninth Annual Conference on Drug Abuse to be held in Hong Kong. He also wanted us to visit the island and share with the addicts there.

The man from Amsterdam, whom we had taken to the open N.A. meeting, had told us that he was an atheist and didn't understand the God stuff and was skeptical. At the end of our presentation, he stood up and announced to all his colleagues that this was the best thing he'd ever seen.

We could go on and on with all the feedback we received. So many of the comments were affirmations of encouragement and support. The

warmth we felt from everyone there was something very special. We hope this event will result in our message reaching around the world, to places where addicts currently know of no other way of life than active addiction.

It seemed very natural and in character to present our Fellowship and the message of our recovery in the way we did. None of us are professionals. What we know is N.A. and the disease of addiction. What we do best is just be ourselves. It was quite obvious that they liked what they saw. People from those countries have now become familiar with us. They have first hand knowledge of us and confidence in our approach.

We felt that, through the spirit of attraction as stated in our Eleventh Tradition, many of these countries will become well-wishers of us wherever we are in the world. This can only make it easier for all of us to fully focus on our Fifth Tradition and our primary purpose.

Letter written for purpose of Hawaii's Conference:

Dear Conference Participant,

The rising toll of drug addiction is a well-known problem in our society today. The seemingly hopeless progression of addiction ravages individuals and families every day. We want to inform you of one alternative that has worked for hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Narcotics Anonymous is an organization made up of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other remain drug-free. There is only one requirement for membership,

the desire to stop using drugs. 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*.

Narcotics Anonymous can be a valuable resource to those who work with addicts. At Narcotics Anonymous meetings, addicts meet others who understand addiction and who know, from their own experience, what to do about it. The personal identification among addicts which takes place in N.A. provides a powerful message of hope. Examples of our literature are enclosed. N.A. has also developed a book, entitled *Narcotics Anonymous*, which we call our Basic Text. We also publish a monthly journal, the *N.A. Way*. Our literature is currently available in six languages, and Braille. We also produce audio tapes. Hundreds of thousands of addicts are recovering in Narcotics Anonymous today.

Narcotics Anonymous is based on the belief that all drug addicts, regardless of the specific chemical substances they used, suffer from the same disease—addiction. Our experience has taught us that in order for addicts to recover, they must completely abstain from all mood-altering drugs.

Many people make referrals to Narcotics Anonymous when someone they know is seeking help for a drug problem. It is not unusual to find addicts of many different ages and occupations in Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

N.A. groups are not started, conducted or funded by professionals, government officials, or any non-addicts. N.A. meetings are voluntary self-help groups, held by and for

addicts. Caring community members can help facilitate the growth of Narcotics Anonymous by providing information about the existence and nature of N.A. to addicts and to those who are in direct contact with addicts, such as staff members of treatment hospitals. Many N.A. groups have been formed when a person who knows addicts, such as a counselor, doctor or church worker has brought together a small group of addicts and told them about Narcotics Anonymous or given them Narcotics Anonymous literature. Group starter packets are provided freely by the World Service Office upon request.

Narcotics Anonymous exists in approximately 40 countries. In some countries, the N.A. Fellowship is small and young; in others it is well established. In some places, suspicion or distrust has been aroused when addicts first attempted to form N.A., due to disbelief that a group of addicts could independently meet for a good purpose, or due to anonymity being seen as secrecy. In some places, laws against the gathering of addicts have severely restricted the ability of Narcotics Anonymous groups to exist. We hope that a better understanding of our program may lead to help becoming available for many people in places where our unique, life-saving recovery program for addicts has not yet become well-known.

We wish you success with your conference, and we send you our warm regards. Narcotics Anonymous is available to respond to inquiries at the address on the letterhead above, attn: Public Information Department. Please let us know how we can be of assistance to you.

Hospitals and Institutions

The following article was submitted to the N.A. Way by the World Service Conference Hospitals and Institutions Committee.

THE PANEL SYSTEM:

The Panel System is recommended in the WSC H&I Handbook for use by all H&I Committees as a way to best organize H&I workers. Members of the WSC H&I Committee are often asked about this system when they travel around the Fellowship. There seems to be a need for a more detailed explanation of the panel system, and for a clarification of the panel system versus the panel meeting format. Hopefully, this article will be of help.

For purpose of this explanation of the panel system, we will assume that a meeting is being taken in to a facility once a week. The H&I Committee appoints a member to be the panel chairperson for the facility. This person is responsible for the meetings and for contacts with the facility. The panel chair should find out who the contact person is on the facility staff or establish one if there has been none. Communication between the facility, the H&I Committee, and the members going in to the facility is handled by the chair.

The panel chairperson will need to find four members to serve as panel leaders. Each panel leader is responsible for one week's meeting. Usually this is done by having one panel leader take the meeting for the first week of each month, one for the second week of each month, and so on. In smaller or newer areas, it may not be

possible to have four panel leaders at first. If there are only two panel leaders, they can alternate weeks. The panel chairperson may or may not also serve as a panel leader.

Each panel leader is responsible for getting additional members to attend the meeting he or she leads. Facilities which require clearances are usually best served by a group of regular panel members. If a facility's requirements are less rigid, a panel leader may use some regular panel members together with changing panel members.

If a panel leader cannot attend his or her meeting, the panel chairperson should be informed as soon as possible. If a panel member cannot attend, the panel leader should be informed. The panel chairperson is responsible for knowing what the requirements and restrictions are for the facility. It is best if these are in writing. The chair sees to it that each panel leader is informed about the facility's rules as well as the guidelines of the H&I Committee. Panel leaders are responsible for informing panel members and making sure the panel members meet the requirements. The panel chairperson may also be involved in checking the qualifications or clearances of panel members. The panel chair may maintain a list of N.A. members who wish to serve on a panel in the facility.

The panel system allows the responsibility for an H&I meeting to be shared. It helps prevent meetings "going dark" because one person cannot attend. The panel system will help you utilize the members who are willing to do H&I work. Instead of sending the same person to the same meeting every week, that person can be sent to different meetings. This allows the addict inside to hear a greater

variety of members. It also helps prevent "burn out" and too-strong attachment to a meeting by H&I workers.

Often, a panel leader will rotate into the chairperson's position when the chair's commitment is completed. Panel chairs are usually required to attend all H&I committee meetings. They serve as members of the committee. Panel leaders may or may not be required to attend committee meetings as each area H&I committee sees fit.

Newer or smaller areas sometimes seem to feel that they aren't large enough to use the panel system. While some modifications may be necessary, this system will help establish an organized network of H&I workers, get the most out of them and serve the addicts inside.

It is often easier to get N.A. members involved in H&I work if you are asking for a once (or even twice) a month commitment as a panel member rather than asking for a weekly commitment. You may even ask members for a one-time commitment. If the N.A. member has never done H&I work, getting him or her to go one time may be all it takes to get another member willing to be more involved.

The panel leader, with the help of the chairperson, may select the meeting format which seems most appropriate for the facility. The WSC H&I Handbook mentions a variety of possible meeting formats. The panel leader may take a speaker in each month and use either the speaker or speaker-discussion format. The leader may have panel members participate in a topic discussion involving the addicts inside or a question-and-answer meeting.

The panel format is another alternative. In a panel format meeting, the panel members share their experience, strength and hope. Often, the panel leader will select one aspect of the N.A. program, or of recovery, and each panel member will share. A brief question and answer period may or may not be included at the end of the meeting.

Additional information on the panel system and panel meeting format is contained in the WSC H&I Handbook. If you have further questions about this, or any other issue concerning H&I work, please contact the WSC H&I Committee through the H&I Project Coordinator at the World Service Office.

OPINION



MEDICATION IN RECOVERY: TWO VIEWS

The two articles that follow were received separately by the N.A. Way within the last year. They were held for some time, awaiting the development of this section of the magazine. It should be noted that neither writer had any knowledge that the other article existed, but we felt that together they represented a good "point/counterpoint." The opinions of these writers do not constitute the positions of Narcotics Anonymous, the World Service Office, or the N.A. Way.

Responses we receive to any N.A. Way article are printed in the "From Our Readers" section.

Staying Clean and Following Doctor's Orders

During my thirteenth stay in a mental hospital, doctors told me I was an alcoholic, asked me how soon I wanted to die, and agreed to release me only after I had enrolled in a daytime treatment program. Earlier hospitalizations included warnings to cut down on the use of drugs, including alcohol. One doctor told me I did not have to get arrested to get back into the hospital. That was the first ongoing intervention

I experienced, and it included mandatory attendance at meetings of twelve step programs.

After several months of Narcotics Anonymous meetings introducing me to the various aspects of addiction including the concept of drug substitution, I admitted I was an addict and gave the last of my dope to my brother. I still kept taking lithium, however, which I had been taking for fourteen years.

In the next year my family got back together, I quit drinking caffeine, quit smoking, and cut down on my sugar. Though friends in the program warned me against it, I decided it was God's will that I quit taking lithium.

Even though I was coming down with the flu, I kept cutting down on the lithium. Soon I felt like I had cosmic consciousness, that God was singing to me on the radio, and that I was on a secret mission from God. I could not tell others what I was experiencing. I was irritable, hostile, paranoid, and I was unable to sleep.

I did not seek medical help. Instead, I tried to "manage" it. After my family disappeared for safety reasons, I contacted my sponsor and then my other friends in the program. I was after some sort of faith-healing miracle cure. It was like hoping herbal tea would cure Gonorrhea.

After more than a week of running away from people or wearing them out, I admitted myself into another state hospital. After several weeks of antipsychotic drugs, major tranquilizers, sleeping pills, lithium, and enforced boredom, I was released.

I was living alone. I was depressed, and I felt different. My sponsor pointed out that my life was not that different. I

had similar goals, similar frustrations, similar experiences with my emotions, especially anger. He pointed out that I might be better off if I did not use my differences as excuses.

I have been hospitalized two more times since then. While manic during the second time, I ran a stop light and ran into two vehicles, injuring a woman.

"My sponsor and my psychiatrist have pointed out that when I contribute to the onset of my mania, that is a form of using."

I pleaded guilty to a reduced charge. I have been on probation since then.

My sponsor and my psychiatrist have pointed out that when I contribute to the onset of my mania, that is a form of using. I certainly "get off" and have used insanity as an excuse. I have to take a whole series of drugs to return to reality.

I have written out a First Step for mania. I continue to go to meetings to continue life as an addict, including the mood swings, the frustrations and the successes.

Last month I realized I was manic. I took what I needed to take and contacted the medical people I needed to. I was able to stay out of the hospital and stay at work. I had watched other people do it, but it took four years in the program to get me that honest with myself.

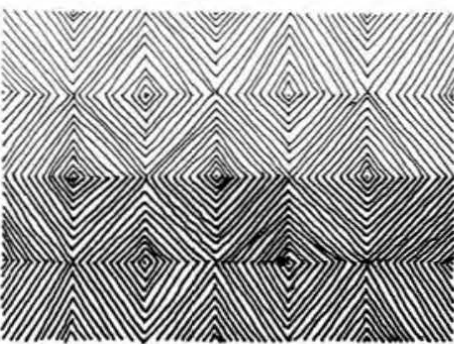
My psychiatrist said I have broken my addiction to mania. I may feel the physical symptoms again, but I do not

have to lie to myself and get caught up in it. Mania is not fun anymore. I know I am not God, and I do not want to play the game of waiting for someone to guess I am nuts. If I continue to respond to the mania quickly, I can cut down on my use of lithium the rest of the time.

"I kept cutting down on the lithium. Soon I felt like I had cosmic consciousness, that God was singing to me on the radio, and that I was on a secret mission from God."

I no longer feel that I need to qualify my coming to believe that a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity as just applying to the abuse of drugs. The honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness I have learned in Narcotics Anonymous has helped me shed my uniqueness and realize I am powerless and unmanageable with all aspects of my addiction.

Anonymous, Oregon



Complete Abstinence Is Self-Explanatory

We recently faced a situation in my area that resulted in disunity. Just for today it has faded on the surface. However, it is certain to resurface somewhere until we, as a Fellowship, state the obvious through our group conscience—N.A. is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.

A close friend of mine, clean three years, felt the need to seek psychiatric treatment for an omnipresent ringing in his ears. This treatment involved taking mood-altering medication on an indefinite, maintenance basis. At the same time this was developing, he was

"A person who had to take mood-altering medication that day to deal with his emotions is no inspiration to me."

asked to be the speaker at a large N.A. meeting and at two group anniversaries all within one month.

It was suggested to the home group members (through sponsors and trusted servants) that this was not the appropriate time to ask my friend to

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share. It was inappropriate because of our principle of complete abstinence from all drugs.

Two members called WSO, but it seems the members gave an incomplete report to their groups or misunderstood what the WSO staff member/addict told them. Basically he said: Complete abstinence is our principle; read the WSC 1986 Board of Trustees Statement regarding people on methadone, discuss these things in a group conscience.

The groups, not having the above information, voted to allow my friend, to speak. Some felt that asking him to cancel would hurt his feelings; some misguided members even felt that his medication somehow "did not count" because it was prescribed. My friend refused to disqualify himself unless the groups asked him not to speak. Many people even "boycotted" the first celebration, refusing to participate in a meeting with a clouded message. What a mess. I was scared.

I really did not want to go either, but my sponsor suggested that I could go to share my opinion in a loving way with anyone who was confused by this situation. I did that and I was able to talk to some people about it. Personally, I go to N.A. to hear clean addicts share about recovery through abstinence and N.A. A person who had to take mood-altering medication that day to deal with his emotions is no inspiration to me. Worse, they give the "monkey" something to chatter in my ear about like, "go ahead, take something. It's only a salt..." That terrifies me with forty-five months clean.

I shared all this with my friend prior to his speaking. I risked hurting his

feelings, but he did understand my point, although he still was unwilling to cancel. Risking hurting his feelings was hard, but the principle of complete abstinence and the Fifth Tradition had to take precedence over his personality. I did not play doctor and tell him

"The definition of 'recovering addict' that N.A. teaches me is a person who survives his emotions by not taking the first drug and working the remainder of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous."

not to take the medication. I simply suggested he not speak.

The definition of "recovering addict" that N.A. teaches me is a person who survives his emotions by not taking the first drug and working the remainder of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. The sole exception to complete abstinence is set forth in our book as "... a minimum amount of medication prescribed by an informed professional for extreme physical pain." (Emphasis added).

No one can tell anyone else whether they are clean or not. I realize the text says that "if a newcomer claims to us that they can continue to use drugs in any form and suffer no ill effects, there are two ways we can look at it. The first is that they are not an addict. The other is that their disease has not become

apparent to them and they are still denying their addiction."

So, although I have no business interfering in the patient-psychiatrist relationship, I believe that if a person cannot recover from whatever problem they have by not taking any chemicals, they are not a recovering addict. They are either not an addict at all, or in denial. If they have problems other than addiction, N.A. cannot be all things to all people. Our common welfare must come first.

I feel that those of us who sponsor and who are entrusted to provide other services need to share our experience with those not yet understanding that this principle of complete abstinence is the cornerstone of our Fellowship. Further, we need to send input to our Trustees on this issue. Complete abstinence is part of our message of recovery as stated in our Fifth Tradition. It seems to me that any group who asks a person to share, serve, or chair while he is taking mood-altering medi-

cation is probably not carrying that message.

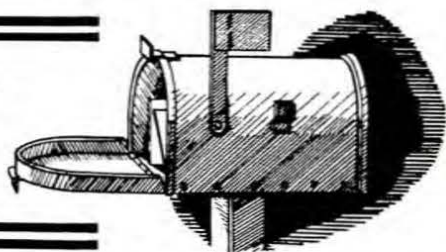
We need to be loving and patient with each other, especially if one of us with some time in the program is faced with this crisis. We must never make anyone unwelcome to attend N.A. Nevertheless, I do not want to see this program become a forum for people who take medication to tell abstinent addicts how they are recovering. We need to state the obvious, as stated regarding methadone in the Trustees report at WSC 1986.

In closing, my friend is back on inpatient status because the meds quit working. No surprise to me. I feel like crying, but I pray for him and his recovery. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs, and I need to hear the WE of this program state through its collective voice. I love N.A. and I really pray I do not offend anyone. I guess it just really frightens me.

Anonymous



From Our Readers



Letters and reflections from N.A. members worldwide.

Dear N.A. Way,

I have just finished reading the July Fellowship Report, and I am disturbed to learn of the financial status of the WSC treasury. As a concerned member of Narcotics Anonymous, I have advocated the increased financing of our service boards and committees. Both our area and regional guidelines state that all funds in excess of our prudent reserves be passed on down the service structure. However, with the rapid growth of our Fellowship, and with the increased activities of our area and regional service committees, the need to retain funds locally has increased.

We, like the world level service boards and committees, must set our priorities for the best possible use of our limited funds. The Volunteer Region of N.A. tries its best to supply financial support to the WSC, but what I find disturbing is that approximately sixty per cent, or two out of every three dollars donated to the WSC last year, was spent for travel and lodging.

I understand that these expenses are necessary, however one questions the proportion of these expenses to all others. I feel that these expenses should be closely examined to ensure that all possible discounts are being taken advantage of, and above all, that all of this travel is truly justified. When

I sit in a local service committee meeting and vote my group's conscience on whether to fund a local project, or see those funds flow through the service structure, these thoughts are on my mind. Developing faith and trust in my higher power and in other people is a large part of my personal program of recovery, but being responsible is also a part of that program. Perhaps through these financial difficulties our higher power is trying to tell us something.

N.K., Tennessee

COMPETITION

I'd like to talk about the statement made in the introduction to our Basic Text concerning competition:

Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

There is no individual member, group, area, region or committee that has a monopoly on recovery.

Sure, I've had times when I've felt like moving to another area because I heard that that area or region had "better" recovery. I forget that problems tend to be universal and not confined to one particular geographical portion of N.A. Some just have more problems than others.

When, as members of N.A., we begin to compete with one another, we many times find ourselves alienated. We begin to compare instead of identifying. We fall into tombs of differences, placing personalities before principles. Soon we become crippled, blind, and we die. Competition diverts us from helping each other stay clean, and from giving other addicts the same opportunity to recover that we've been given.

I ask, "What are we competing for in N.A.?" Like, what's the prize? Is it honor, glory, prestige, money, property? I don't think N.A. awards anyone with an Oscar or an Emmy for the "Best Recovering Addict" of the year. If so, don't include me, because I would relapse for sure.

So, what to do with our competitive urges? Well, maybe when we begin to feel a part of humanity, of society, we can choose to enter into the outlets that society provides for competition, such as cycle races, cake baking contests, the best dressed or worst dressed, jobs, best producer, best actor, best writer, etc. Society provides more than enough outlets for competition.

I like to see my college football team beat the socks off our state rival on Thanksgiving Day. What a feeling. When my team wins I may just find one of the rivals and give my rival a hard time. But when my team loses, you can

rely on the fact that they will be looking me up.

So, to keep everything in perspective, competition has a place, but please folks, not in N.A. Our recovery may just depend on keeping competition out of our spiritual Fellowship.

C.B., South Carolina

THANKS, OLDTIMER

Thank you, oldtimer, for sticking it out. Thank you for staying with N.A. Thank you for paving the way, sharing with me your mistakes, in order to help me not to make the same mistakes you made. Forgive me for not always listening and learning, sometimes making the same mistakes you made. Forgive me for my hidden resentments toward you, my anger and my envy toward you.

Oldtimer you've helped me to see that I don't have to use, no matter what. I've watched you go through so much, times of pain and times of joy. Through it all, you've stayed clean. You've helped me to see that, yes, oh yes, I can too.

So, oldtimer, please keep coming back, we have so much to learn from each other. Thank you much.

C.B., South Carolina

EXPERIENTIAL INVENTORY

The other night I received a call from someone in N.A., and he asked me to speak at a fundraiser for another member who is dying of AIDS. Earlier that day, at a meeting in the New York Region, I recall some mention of a fundraiser for this purpose but I didn't think too much about it—though I can empathize because I have AIDS myself—as I've been pretty tired lately and must keep the focus on my own medical situation first.

I explained to the caller that I

couldn't really understand the need to have a fundraiser for this purpose because there are agencies which provide help, and that I couldn't speak at this fundraiser in good conscience. "I am a trusted servant of another area, and wouldn't feel right about blatantly violating traditions in Narcotics Anonymous," I added.

I felt badly that I had to say "no," but today I have a conscience. Narcotics Anonymous helped save my life and I am grateful for it. I was taught spiritual principles—twenty-four of 'em—by which to live, and I couldn't do anything (not today) that may jeopardize what I am living for: "To carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

The miracle is simple: Today I've got a purpose for living, which is one of the benefits of RECOVERY. I was never told that N.A. would pay my bills, medical or otherwise. I was never promised anything, except that if I didn't pick up I wouldn't get high. It was never implied that I could use my meetings (all the meetings belong to the "we" of our Fellowship, each and everyone of us) to sell life insurance, used cars or pay my back rent. But I guess that when I was in early recovery I heard what I wanted to hear . . .

It's time we had a group conscience from the Fellowship as one, so any confusion about outside issues can be arrested and we can go on with the recovery process. In fact, I honestly believe all such controversial issues ought to be addressed in the loving and caring way that our Fellowship teaches, "one day at a time."

I am coming up on five years in recovery, but I now find that although I am learning to live my life I may be dying as well, from AIDS. I'm just

grateful to N.A. and my Higher Power for Chapter Ten in the Text, "More Will Be Revealed"; it has helped me deal with my reality today. I've learned quality in living, and that NO MATTER WHAT, I DON'T HAVE TO PICK UP—NOT TODAY. I've learned to live THE N.A. WAY.

A.S., New York

MESSAGE FROM WITHIN

Brothers and Sisters in N.A.:

Once again I come to you from within these four walls of my prison cell. I'm a recovering addict, clean today by the grace of God the N.A. way. I would really like to talk about feelings, and about giving of oneself to N.A. completely, wholly.

Before I was incarcerated, I had eleven months of pure bliss from N.A. Since my confinement, a lot of my brothers and sisters have met me more than halfway. They have accepted many of my phone calls when I just wanted to hear their voices, or to share my beliefs and needs.

Through this I've learned of the unconditional love and caring that's shared by the Fellowship of N.A.

I used to sit in meetings and the chair would ask, "Is there any topic that you wish to talk about?" or, "Does anybody have a burning desire to share?" Being the scared addict I was, I would let my gut sit and churn, being eaten alive, because I was scared that my brothers and sisters wouldn't understand or accept my feelings. And as I sit here now, I wish I would have spoken up or taken that extra hug, now that I know that we each share that common bond of being an addict.

I figured I was always supposed to

live up to this image of being big and bad, but that was a only mask to hide my fear of not being accepted, loved and cared for. I'm writing now to let you know that I'm scared, but it's okay to be that way. It's even okay to feel hurt, sorrow, pain, love, joy, happiness and all the feelings that come with being alive. To be able to laugh and cry, these things come with growing. It's only when we sit and let it churn inside us that it stops us from growing.

When I choose to sit and let my feelings churn, a darkness and despair comes over me. I feel lost and alone, and that's not a good feeling. That's what sharing in N.A. is about: the joy and happiness of giving and having it given back.

Don't stop your growth. Talk about

your feelings, share wholly, completely with your brothers and sisters, and you'll be answered. And keep coming back, because each and every one of us loves you and cares for you.

It's not always easy, but it does get easier with each step we take and each time we share a part of ourselves with one another. Remember it didn't all come to us at once. Our addiction didn't come to us over night, and neither will it end that way. But you're out there and you have that chance through your meetings. I beg you, don't waste it.

B.C., Virginia

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 three months in advance. Include title, location, P.O. box, dates and contacts.

ALASKA: Mar. 11-13, 1988; ARSCC IV; Wasilla, AK; Michelle (907) 745-1052; ARSCC IV, PO Box 874935, Wasilla, AK 99687

CALIFORNIA: Mar. 4-6, 1988; NCCNA; Oakland Hyatt Regency Hotel & Convention Center, 12th & Broadway, Oakland, CA; Steve (408)446-4445; NCCNA 10, PO Box 59114, San Jose, CA 95159

CONNECTICUT: Jan. 1-3, 1988; CRCNA III; Stamford Sheraton Hotel & Towers, 1 First Stamford Place, (203) 967-2222; Info: Judy 229-0019; Dave 342-4708; 3rd CT R.C.N.A., PO Box 697, New Britain, CT 06051

FLORIDA: Nov. 12-15, 1987; Serenity in the Sun; Palm Beach Airport Hilton 150 Australian Ave., W. Palm Bch, FL 33406 (305) 684-9400; Gloria 471-9560; Kathy 586-7356; Jack 471-9560; Dwayne 641-0506; Recovery VI, c/o Palm Coast ASC, PO Box 3151, W Palm Bch, FL 33402

INDIANA: Apr. 1-3, 1988; KRCNA II; Executive Inn, 6th & Walnut St., Evansville, IN (800) 457-3841; Mike W. (812) 424-1672; Donnie A. 422-5815; Bernie T. 426-0357; KRCNA II, PO Box 3184, Evansville, IN 47730

KENTUCKY: Feb 12-14, 1988; 3rd Annual Traditions Workshop; Days Inn 101 E Jefferson St., Louisville, KY 40202 (502) 585-2200; Ro S. 935-2481; Steve D. 937-1760; KRSCNA, PO Box 72305, Louisville, KY 40272

LOUISIANA: Mar 4-6, 88; LPRCNA VI; Holiday Inn, Covington; Hotel res: Cheryl Hunt, (504) 893-3580, Info: Peter or Mary: (504) 626-7298, John or Kat: 893-9265; LPRCNA VI, P.O. Box 1693, Covington, LA 70434

2) Nov. 6-8, 1987; 4th Annual Anniversary Campout; Burns Point Park (318) 836-9784; For info Howard T. (318) 836-5161; Sara C. (318) 828-3488; Steve M. (504) 384-5196;

NEW HAMPSHIRE: June 24-26, 1988; Vision of Hope; 9th ECCNA; University of NH in Durham; Laura B. (617) 521-1142, Fran S. (603) 382-9058, Karen K. (617) 521-2116; 9th ECCNA, PO Box 608, Plastow, NH 03865

OKLAHOMA: Apr. 1-3, 1988; Oklahoma Regional Convention; Camelot Hotel, 4956 S. Peoria, Tulsa, OK 74105, (800) 331-4428, (918) 747-8811; Leo S. (918) 664-4883; Sarah L. (918) 742-4816; Chuck G. (405) 372-4007 Tonja H. (405) 787-4007; OKRSC, PO Box 52465, Tulsa, OK 74152

2) Nov. 18-22, 1987; 3rd Annual Fall Spiritual Retreat; Camp Takatoka on Ft. Gibson Lake, Choteau, OK; Sondra L. (918) 743-1276; Susan K. 587-5572; Fall Retreat, 1117 E. 48th St., c/o De Ville Apts. #42, Tulsa, OK 74105

RHODE ISLAND: Apr 1-3, 88; NERC III; Marriott Hotel, Providence; Info: Steve: (401) 789-2569, Ken: 849-5602; NERC III, P.O. Box 3009, Attention - Mishell L., Newport, RI 02840

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 13-15, 1987; Serenity Festival V; The Landmark, Best Western Resort Hotel 1501 S Ocean Blvd, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577 (803) 448-9441; Jeri S. or Tony W. (803) 237-9649, Donna P. 722-9090, Andy A. 626-7006; Serenity Festival V, C/o Sun City Area, PO Box 7718, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

TENNESSEE: Nov 25-27; Volunteer Regional Convention 5; Knoxville Hilton (615) 523-2300; Buddy A. 691-6931; Wade A. 675-9233; Allison C. 383-8417; VRC 5, PO Box 12467, Knoxville, TN 37912-0467

TEXAS: Mar 25-27, 1988; LSRCA III; Fort Worth, TX; (817) Vince 924-0939; Don 738-5329; Debbie 599-3475; LSRCA III, Prog. Committee, PO Box 5540, Fort Worth, TX 76108

VIRGINIA: Jan. 8-10, 1988; 6th AVCNA; The Hyatt Hotel Richmond; Interstate 64 at Broad St. & Glenside Dr., Richmond, VA; Mel 644-9143; 6th AVCNA, PO Box 13087, Richmond, VA 23225

2) Mar. 4-6, 88; 2nd Annual Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Convention; Stouffer Concourse Hotel, Arlington, (703) 979-6800; Lonacia C. (703) 437-6433; Dave H. 860-2880; Kevin A. 941-7474; Registration Committee, P.O. Box 6821, Arlington, VA 22206-0821

WEST VIRGINIA: Nov 6-8, 87; True Colors, an Autumn Convention; Jackson's Mill, Weston, WV 26452; Registration: (304) 269-5100, Danny (304) 925-7088, Jim (304) 525-8411



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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.
- 11.
- 12.

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