

THE
NA
WAY

JANUARY
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*Just
for
Today*



Happy
1988



THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried 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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From the Editor



Now that you've had a chance to see several different "Opinion" sections in print, it's time to look closer at how you, as readers, can participate in it. We have never had a forum quite like it before. We need to learn together how to best use it.

There are currently at least three ways that you as a reader can get involved in worldwide Fellowship dialogue on "inside issues" through this magazine. One, and perhaps the simplest, is to write out your thoughts about the issues discussed in a given "Opinion" section and send them to us. If ongoing discussion develops on a particular issue, or we receive several different letters on a subject, we'll devote a section in "From Our Readers" to that subject. Your reaction may then be to an original editorial, or someone else's response printed in the "Readers" section.

A second way you may participate is to send us an essay on an issue that may or may not have been published in the *N.A. Way* in the past. Your essay may then be selected for publication as an original editorial in the "Opinion" section.

A third option you have to make better use of this aspect of the *N.A. Way* is to call or write us with an idea for an editorial feature. Spell out what you think the important aspects of your issue are. You may or may not choose to include your own views on the subject. We could then solicit editorial statements from various viewpoints and publish them together as one

feature. The discussion could then continue in "From Our Readers" as responses begin coming in.

We are currently working on a few projects of that nature. We are preparing essay questions which are designed to elicit a broad discussion of a given topic from various viewpoints. We're sending them to people in the Fellowship who we know have expressed views on the subject in the past, or whose World Service position is most closely related to the issue. These can then be published together as a single editorial feature.

Our greatest need is always for regular articles to be published in the "Experience" section, but since our "Opinion" section is new and different, perhaps it merits some careful consideration by all of us at this time. I hope we can develop it into a useful communications tool for the Fellowship as a whole.

In this month's "News" section there is a feature article on the Fellowship in the Australasian Region. We used an interview format for this feature. We plan to use this format as a regular feature of "N.A. News" in the future. Next month we plan to feature a similar piece on the Fellowship in the United Kingdom.

On an only slightly related note, the cartoon which appears in this issue of the *N.A. Way* was taken from the Australasian newsletter, *N.A. Today*. Because we weren't able to reproduce our copy very clearly, our artist redrew the pictures. The wit, however, is pure Aussie.

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.

About this hugging thing: I don't like it. It doesn't bother me at all if that's what you want to do. Just leave me out of it, please. I like having your arms on my shoulders during the closing prayer. Even a little squeeze afterwards feels pretty good. But this automatic hugging stuff is not for this addict.

I have a little bit of history with those hugs. I've been trying to make peace with them for a number of years now. It's not getting much better.

In the beginning, when you hugged me, I froze. I didn't feel a thing. I didn't think much of it at the time. Back then, I froze when you looked at me. I thought I'd outgrow it.

As I worked the Steps, I started to grow. I learned a lot about myself. I learned that even though I hadn't been in and out of a lot of relationships in my addiction, I had traded sex for drugs on a pretty regular basis. I was used to going into a room full of strangers and being touched—only it was to get high, not to get well. No matter how hard I try, I haven't been able to learn to feel good about being touched by people I don't know well. I'm not always sure whether it's my disease or my burgeoning self-respect that makes me ask you to take your hands off of me.

But I always—eventually—recognize my disease when I let myself accept hugs I don't want. It feels like submission, not surrender. Submission to many years of violence at the hands of other addicts—both inside and outside of my home. Unless you've known home to be a hostile and dangerous place, it's hard to understand just how deep it cuts.

About this Hugging Thing



That's a feeling I choose not to tolerate in my recovery, on any level.

Today, my home is around tables in church basements and hospital cafeterias. How can I tell you that sometimes I don't feel safe when you touch me? That when I'm afraid, I still can't

feel anything at all? That subtle little things push my physical survival buttons? I need to feel safe in meetings. I've learned to pretty much let go of the fact that people I care about relapse. I'm doing better with the sexual stuff, too. I used to feel dirty when you flirted with me. Now I feel flat-

tered—as long as you don't invite yourself to touch me.

Please don't misunderstand. I love you very much. You're the most important people in my life. I just don't know what to do when you walk up behind me and "hug" my arms to my

"Please don't misunderstand. I love you very much. You're the most important people in my life. I just don't know what to do when you walk up behind me and 'hug' my arms to my sides. Or when I offer you my hand and you push past it."

sides. Or when I offer you my hand and you push past it. In some important, fundamental and life-giving ways, I'm exactly like you are. But God as I understand him created millions of individuals. I don't understand why you can't respect my history, the unique combination of experiences that make me who I am today.

Today I try not to do things that make me feel like the person I was when I used. I want to share my experience, strength, and hope with you. And sometimes I want to hug you. But only when I mean it.

Anonymous, Vermont

We Do Recover

For a long time I thought being an addict meant being less than others. Lately I've come to believe that staying clean and working the Steps of Narcotics Anonymous produces recovery—the ability to live a full, normal life. The shift has come at least partly with time, with feeling comfortable with this second shot I've been given. I think it's something I could have accepted earlier, had I heard it shared. But I didn't.

I started using in the midst of the usual crises of adolescence. Drugs gave me relief from the confusion of that time. The relief was welcome—too welcome. I became addicted. Most people grow and become themselves by encountering and resolving those youthful crises. My addiction did not allow me to grow. I never learned to live life on its own terms.

I hung out with others who used as I did—of course. After all, who hangs around with those not like themselves? Consequently, it didn't occur to me to attribute my inability to adjust to the way I was using. My using, as far as I could tell from those around me, was perfectly normal. It was *me* that was all wrong.

I thought I was, at best, just a born loser; at worst, hopelessly insane.



The resulting despair led me to take more drugs, which led to further inability to adjust, which led even deeper into drugs. Every day, the disease spiraled its way deeper into the

fiber of my life, like some kind of parasitic worm digging away until it hits the heart and destroys its victim.

I came to N.A. with my disease and my misconceptions about myself. The constant care of a Higher Power and the example of recovering addicts kept me clean. The worst of the nightmare was over. I started working after two years of unemployment and began to take care of myself. I made friends and found a useful place in N.A. society.

But I had this disease, see, that still controlled my life—or so I was told. It made me less stable, less able to compete, less fit than non-addicts, they said. I heard people with many years clean say over and over that the only thing that had changed was that they had stopped using. The disease still wreaked havoc in their lives on a regular basis.

The message I got was that addiction would keep me a cripple forever, no matter how far I came in comparison to where I'd been. I would think differently, respond differently, emote differently than non-addicts—and mostly not as well. Not nearly as well.

The only place I would ever be truly welcome, the only place where I would function as well as those around me, the only place where I would be understood and forgiven my addict-idiosyncracies would be in the N.A. ghetto. I could make do with life on life's terms, more or less, so long as I had my N.A. womb to periodically return to—and the more frequently the better.

The message I got was that we recovered—sort of. But, just as I suspected before ever hearing of N.A., I

would never, ever be quite good enough.

I made do with “sort-of” recovery for a few years. And to tell you the truth I grew quite a bit. But the time came when life's demands—and the

“Not that I'd become superhuman. But I had become at least human again—not the sad, sorry, sick puppy fresh from the gutter that had initially limped into N.A. on its last legs.”

demands of the God within—to move upward and onward drove me to a situation where “sort-of” recovery would no longer do. I had all kinds of coping tools, all I could ever hope for. But I saw myself as being somehow inherently less capable of using them than normal folk. Ignoring that sense of addicted inferiority, purely on faith, I took a series of steps in my life that scared the pants off me, and I prayed.

What I found was that I was not lame—not anymore. Addiction was *not* the functional equivalent of original sin, forever tagging me as less than I was intended to be, less than fully human. “Addiction is an obsession to use the drugs that are destroying us followed by a compulsion which forces us to continue,” says our Basic Text [3rd Ed., p. 83]. That's addiction.

That obsession, that compulsion

We all remember Gidget!
Those fabulous twin-sets, the beach parties, the boys!

The question on everyone's lips:
Where did Gidget go after Hawaii the summer of '62?



The time came when I got bored with daddy's trips around the world. I just wasn't getting the kick out of pajama parties the way I used to.....



Big Daddy and the gang down at the beach started smoking Wacky Tobbaki and soon we couldn't even get a volleyball game happening!! Before long we were shooting more than the tube and instead of hangin' ten we were hangin' out!!!



I lost all my "girl-next-door" charm overnight and so much weight my

had been lifted from me years before. The first three steps of our program describe my part in the process whereby they were removed. God's part—the important part—is beyond description. A loving Power had seen me without judging me. It wished me nothing but growth and peace. It had done for me what absolutely had to be done—but what I could not do for myself.

The disease itself had been taken care of by the first three steps. And the crippling effects of the disease had been taken care of by the remaining Steps. I had been given the support I had needed to take a look without fear at what had happened to me, inside and out. Rather than hiding what I had found, pretending it wasn't there, I had been made able to admit it—all of it—to God, to another human being, and even to myself. I had been given the opportunity to review what I had found, the space in which to become ready to let go the familiar wreckage.

I had experienced—and continue to experience—the responsive hand of a loving Force removing those things in me that I could no longer live with. It had been made possible for me to review the damage I'd done others and, wherever possible, to make it right again. I had begun to recover my self and my life. And I had been given the use of age-old tools in maintaining that recovery: regular self-examination, confession, restitution, meditation, prayer, and selfless service. I'd been restored to sanity and a way of maintaining that sanity.

Not that I'd become superhuman. But I had become at least *human* again—not the sad, sorry, sick puppy

fresh from the gutter that had initially limped into N.A. on its last legs. With life offering me more challenges, more opportunities to stretch and fill out my niche in this world, I found myself adequate and equipped.

I still have defects to overcome. But shortcomings, if related to the disease of addiction at all, are its results, evidence of the damage it did me in its passing. They are not the disease itself. And more often than not these days, those so-called shortcomings are manifestations of one of two universally human phenomena: either my simple desire to exceed myself, or my human fallibility.

This is not to say that I see no need to continue working the N.A. Program. I want to grow. The principles and practice of our Steps afford me the opportunity to do just that in the company of others seeking the same and the care of a loving God who always wants better for us.

And the disease, though long arrested, does remain a deadly threat. The best insurance I have of maintaining remission of the disease and recovery from its effects is to continue my own program and to give away what I've found in N.A. to those who continue to pour in our doors. What I have to share with them is *not*, "Life stinks but at least I'm clean." My message—and, I believe, our message—is that "an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom." [Basic Text, 3rd ed., p. 63] The disease can be arrested. We can live normal, happy, productive lives. In N.A., we *do* recover.

Anonymous, California

boob tube kept slipping down to my knees!!



I couldn't bear to look in the mirror to put my makeup on!

It took me to all the places Daddy wouldn't let me go!

But I was still bored.....

There had to be more to life than this!!!



Powerless, lonely, defeated, and with no movie offers for over 10 years I ended up in Hollywood 7 detox!!

It was there that I learnt I wasn't as nice as half the world thought I was!!! But the biggest shock was Gidget the Addict!!!!



TUNE IN NEXT MONTH: GIDGET'S 1ST STEP

from the Australasian Region's monthly magazine, N.A. Today

The Three Phases of Service

A while back someone told me about the three phases of service. Since then I've come to a deeper understanding of how they fit in my life and how they relate to our first three steps.

The first phase is the newcomer to service, the wide-eyed addict who is eager to learn all he can about N.A. and N.A. service. It was during this phase that I started to memorize the White Book and learned how to say "anonymity."

In the second phase, I began to get up on my pulpit and preach about The Right Way to do service, and the One True Way to be a member in good standing in N.A. Since I was a leader in my N.A. community (one meeting a week), I had quickly moved from the first to the second phase in a few short months. I really got in the swing of things when I made my commitment to only go to N.A. for my recovery. I became a fervent supporter of the "purist movement" that was taking hold at the time on the East Coast. As the old saying goes, "There's nothing worse than a convert."

This second phase lasted for many years. Looking back I can see just how dictatorial I had become. When we had a group conscience meeting, I would



immediately speak The Truth for all to hear. As the discussion moved around the room and The Truth, My Truth, wavered or looked as if it was going to be altered, I would stick two more cents in and two more and two more to be sure a loving God was heard. I was sure that I knew The Truth since I held positions at every level of service and was sponsoring half the guys in my area.

A member in the third phase of service is the guy or gal with experience who sits quietly in the back at area meetings. After all second-phasers get tired of arguing, they turn to the third-

phasers and ask for help. The older members will usually share a few words like, "If you two would let go of your self-will and trust a loving God as he

"I felt such gratitude about not having to worry where my next drug was coming from, whether the cops were tapping my phone, about probation officers or courts. That was the power of surrender!"

expresses himself in our group conscience, we might just get out of here before midnight."

I have come to understand that these phases of service are truly parallel and intertwined with our first three steps.

There seems to be an excitement and enthusiasm in the First Step which coincides with the first phase of service. During that time I felt such gratitude about not having to worry where my next drug was coming from, whether the cops were tapping my phone, about probation officers or courts. That was the power of surrender! It was this same excitement and enthusiasm that I threw into finding out about N.A. and about N.A. service.

I quickly moved into the second phase of service just like I moved into the Second Step. I had come to believe that a power greater than myself (N.A.) could restore me to sanity. Since N.A. was my lifeline, I was going to do

everything in my power to see that it flourished and didn't go away. My efforts nearly strangled N.A. in my community, but I had a purpose for the first time in my life, and I felt great.

For me, taking the Third Step and entering the third phase has been a long time coming. It was toward the end of my fifth year, at the end of my "five year crazies," that I finally hit my emotional bottom. I could no longer fix myself with N.A. and N.A. service. I had hit bottom on conventions, service and ego all at once. I made a decision to surrender completely to the N.A. Program and stop working my own bastardized version. I surrendered my long-distance sponsor (whom I wasn't calling) and made a commitment to find someone locally to work with.

I got a new sponsor, who immediately put me to work on the Fourth Step. I realized that I was right on schedule. My past inventories had never been as thorough and honest as this new one. With a few years behind me I had become truly willing to *admit it all*.

I am now in the middle of Step Nine and I have found a multitude of new freedoms. One of the greatest of these freedoms is the inner faith that N.A. is a God-given program, and that it isn't going to dry up and blow away just because someone says the "S" word in a meeting or a newcomer makes a few erroneous statements about service or Robert's Rules of Order in the process of stumbling through his or her first area service meeting.

Does this mean I care less about N.A. or that my service efforts are no longer important? HECK NO!! I care more than ever! In fact, I care enough about N.A. to give it the finest gift I can. I care enough to let God run it.

Anonymous, Virginia

Changing Playgrounds

In '81 when I found N.A. I was told to change my playmates, playgrounds and playthings. This stopped me from hanging out with my using buddies. Some of my obsession was removed at that time. I began to work on becoming N.A.-dependent. N.A. became my new playground. I started working the Steps to the best of my limited ability.

After two years of abstinence my boyfriend moved in with someone else. I was so devastated that all I wanted to do was kill him, and then myself. My sponsor told me that when I was ready to listen, I should call her.

Thank God that I started to take at least part of Step One. I called my sponsor and listened. She said, "You need some help." I hurt so badly that I was willing to do anything. After listening and taking an honest look at myself, I decided to check into a treatment center.

Those four weeks were hard and very humbling. There was no difference between myself and the addicts fresh from the streets. I had to start at Step One. Finally, after two years of abstinence, I accepted the fact that I was an addict. Since then I have been able to go to meetings and say, "I am an addict," and not have my stomach fall on the floor.

My behavior had proven that my life was unmanageable. After that the Se-



cond Step was easy. Sane people do not plan homicide. I thank God that he stepped in to restore me to sanity.

The situation with the boyfriend and the humbling experience of being in treatment helped me become willing to change. I made the decision to turn my treatment and my boyfriend over to God. I started to become active in my own recovery. Life all of a sudden became peaceful and pleasant.

There were things that I had never written in my previous Fourth Steps. I could not let anyone know I was such a dirty person. Again pain moved me and I got writing as honestly and completely as I could. Rereading my inventory helped me see the patterns in my life that needed changing.

After facing my inventory with God's help, completing the Fifth Step was not too hard. It had always been harder for me to face myself than to face anyone else. The Fifth Step cracked the door to honest feelings. The "old playgrounds" in my mind were becoming smaller. Happiness and freedom were now possible in my life.

Unfortunately, when I got out of treatment I did not do any more steps. In a short time, my defects and shortcomings started to cause problems at work, at home, and in my friendships. I had to become humble and ask for God's help. I started to change again, but the change was gradual. Today there are still times when I take my defects back. When that happens I have to return to Steps Six and Seven for freedom from self-hatred.

Making the list of amends was easy, but willingness to make the amends themselves came hard. I needed to pray for the willingness to be willing. Humility had become a must in my recovery.

Making appropriate amends will be a lifetime task. I cannot make amends

and then demand forgiveness or understanding. I must do the Ninth Step to release myself from my past.

Continuing to take personal inventory and promptly admitting when I am wrong has not always been easy. Get-

"It had always been harder for me to face myself than to face anyone else. The Fifth Step cracked the door to honest feelings. The 'old playgrounds' in my mind were becoming smaller."

ting wrapped up in self-righteous indignation will stop me from taking an honest look at myself.

The Eleventh Step has become a large release valve. I must be careful to never pray for my wants, because when I get them I might not know what to do with them. Meditation has become very relaxing when I am willing to practice it.

The three parts of the Twelfth Step are playing a large role in my personal recovery. The freedom and inner peace that I have felt at times can only be called a spiritual awakening. Carrying the message and not the addict helps keep me in touch with my early days in recovery. May I never forget where I have come from! Practicing the principles in all my affairs lets me know that I must continue to work the Steps. Today, with God's help, I am staying out of my old playgrounds.

B.G., Virginia

N.A. Language: Four Personal Views

Editor's Note: The material presented on the following pages could have been printed in the "Opinion" section. We have chosen to place these stories in the "Experience" section because they approach the issue of N.A. language in a very personal way. The views presented are those of the individual writers only. They are not necessarily those of the N.A. Way, WSO or N.A. as a whole.

Open-Mindedness

I've used a dictionary to help me sort through this. The definition I found for "open-minded" is "free from prejudiced conclusions, amenable to reason, receptive." Since "amenable" could be the key word here, I looked it up too: "1. capable of being persuaded, submissive. 2. Liable to be called to account, responsible to authority. 3.

Capable of being tested or judged by rule or law."

This principle, open-mindedness, is considered to be one of three indispensable principles for the success of our

"How can a committee or subcommittee of our Fellowship tell us to narrow and then close our minds after the struggle we have made to open them?"

program and our continuing recovery. Most of us really touched base with this principle in our First and Second Steps. The open-mindedness required in the first two steps, coupled with willingness and honesty, becomes the foundation on which we can learn to build a recovery program.

Even so, for some of us it was very difficult to give up self-will and begin to practice this spiritual principle. But those who went ahead of us made it easier for us to learn when they shared how they had become open-minded.

But we don't always see that attitude demonstrated in our service committees. Several months ago while attending an area service meeting it was suggested that the word "sober" be dropped from my vocabulary when I speak, write, or otherwise engage in activities within the N.A. Fellowship.

I listened, and fully understanding the implications of this point of view, I responded that in my own personal dictionary there were five definitions of the word "sober." Only one of these definitions had to do with alcohol and

not being drunk. I went on to point out to the body of the area service meeting that if I were to henceforth ignore the other definitions of that word, I would have to become "narrow-minded," only seeing the one definition. I would have to become "closed-minded" to the other four definitions of this word.

Why is it that after a year in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, learning to practice the spiritual principle of open-mindedness, I was being informed at an area committee meeting to become—in this area of my life—not only narrow-minded but closed-minded as well to the full and complete definition of the word "sober"?

We tell newcomers to practice open-mindedness in their personal programs. The contradiction of seeing the opposite views on this issue adopted and practiced by our committees and subcommittees is much more likely to cause problems in the Fellowship as a whole than the possibility of newcomers being confused over the word "sober."

The Steps work to help us grow and to attain these spiritual principles. We, however, must set the example by practicing them in all our affairs. It is this example of the principles in action that shows our message of recovery to those who still suffer.

How can a committee or subcommittee of our Fellowship tell us to narrow and then close our minds after the struggle we have made to open them? Can they say *honestly* that there is only one definition of the word "sober"? Are they *willing* to let their dictionary and their own conscience be the guide to the language we use in our meetings and in our literature? Are committees and subcommittees responsible to ad-

here to and practice the same principles we have come to find indispensable? Do these principles even need to be considered as guidelines by our committees? After all, these principles are only for individual use, for my benefit—or are they?

"SOBER (adj.) 1. possessing or characterized by properly controlled faculties, well-balanced. 2. Grave, sedate. 3. Not drunk. 4. Moderate or abstinent. 5. Subdued or modest in color, manner of dress, etc.—v.t. & v.i. to make or become sober.

"SOBRIETY 1. The state or quality of being sober. 2. Moderateness in temper or conduct."

G.D., Texas

Accepting the Change

My using progressed to a point where the people I used with arranged to have me Twelfth-Stepped in a bar. The person who Twelfth-Stepped me was a member of Narcotics Anonymous. However, I wasn't finished yet, and it was eight months before I called the local N.A. hotline and attended my first meeting. The members at the meeting realized that I needed medically supervised detox. I hadn't had a clean day in more than twenty years.

Three days later, I entered a treatment center. I am grateful to that center. They locked me up long enough

for me to begin to heal physically and to like the way I felt. They convinced me that if I wanted to remain clean, I would have to go to meetings and work the Steps. The members who came to the weekly H&I meetings were a great help by reinforcing this message.

After my release, I did what had been suggested to me, and it worked. I was careful to do just as I had been told because I wanted to stay clean. One of the things I was told was to introduce myself at meetings as an "addict/alcoholic."

I referred to my recovery as "sobriety" and considered myself to be "clean and sober." There was no N.A. Basic Text yet, and the disease concept of addiction was not emphasized as strongly then as it is today. I also believed that there was good reason for identifying as an addict/alcoholic, because when I entered treatment I admitted to being addicted to some drugs, but denied any problem with alcohol. I was drunk at the time.

By the grace of God I stayed clean. As I acquired more clean time I was asked to speak at meetings. N.A. members who heard me speak would try to talk to me about the way I introduced myself and my mentioning of another fellowship's role in my early recovery. My initial reaction was a hostile insistence on my right to tell my story my way and to introduce myself as I saw fit.

One day I was sitting in a meeting when a newcomer shared about hitting bottom on a drug I'd never tried. It hadn't existed when I'd gotten clean. Suddenly I realized that surrendering to any substance or group of substances was not enough. I was asking for trouble by labeling my addiction on the

basis of a specific drug. If I relapsed on alcohol, it was not going to be because I had stopped saying I was alcoholic. I had to re-examine my basic surrender. If I surrendered to the disease of addiction, then substances didn't mat-

"Suddenly I realized that surrendering to any substance or group of substances was not enough. I was asking for trouble by labeling my addiction on the basis of a specific drug."

ter because they were all included. It took a few days before I started introducing myself as an addict because I didn't want to give people the satisfaction of hearing me admit that they had been right.

My references to specific substances and other fellowships lessened, but they were still present when I spoke. Members talked to me about the Sixth Tradition. I could not see how my remarks constituted affiliation with or endorsement of outside enterprises, but I was troubled by the discussions. Whenever I am troubled about the Traditions, I go back to the First Tradition. I stopped referring to myself as "sober" and to other fellowships after thinking about the First Tradition. I still didn't think I was wrong, but I believed that there was controversy in N.A. about these issues. If I said "clean

and recovering," I was acting on the principle of unity and no one got offended.

Once I had opened my mind to the possibility that I was wrong or at least needed to change, many other things became clear to me. As always with me, first comes the action, then the understanding.

When I had discussed these issues with my sponsor she had told me that every addict has something like this about which she says, "This I will not give up." She also told me that even though we're often not aware of that attitude, and that sooner or later we have to give it up if we're to grow and stay clean. First I changed and then I realized that she had been right.

I also realized that I had not been "walking" the basic N.A. principle that, "we are not interested in what or how much you used..." I had been emphasizing the drugs I'd used instead of taking personal responsibility for our primary purpose of carrying that message. I had been more concerned with my imagined rights than with newcomers hearing clearly that the N.A. Program is about recovery from addiction.

As a newcomer I took the words of members with a lot of time as law. I tried to do what they said. If they mentioned other fellowships, books, therapy or whatever, I thought those things were good and necessary if I was to stay clean. There have been many people, books, ideas, and practices which I believe have enhanced my recovery. Today I will not tell you about them during a meeting. They may or may not help you in your recovery. I don't know. If you suffer from the disease of addiction, I know

the program of Narcotics Anonymous will help you, and I limit my remarks during an N.A. meeting to the N.A. Program.

Like all change, the changes I've shared have been slow, painful and rewarding beyond what I could have imagined.

B.J., California

Opinions or Facts?

It is with great pleasure that I read the article in the "Opinion" section of our magazine. [Though the writer didn't specify, it appears to us that this refers to "From the Trustees: Some Thoughts on Our Relationship to A.A." published in the September, 1987 issue.]

It did strike me that the person or people who wrote the article did not feel it was their opinions that they were stating, but facts.

Our disease is so cunning and baffling that we can forget that our best thinking got us here. God's grace has allowed me to peek beyond the semantics of some of the words and phrases that were so strongly emphasized as needed. Everyone knows what I mean when I say "I'm recovering" in either A.A. or N.A. Alcoholism is an addiction to alcohol. Drug addiction is an addiction to all drugs (including alcohol). Addiction is a word used to describe a dependence on many different things

besides drugs. For me, it is very important that I remember what not to use. That's the one thing I need to do every day. Then I can feel that, with God's help, I have accomplished something today. Emotions come and go. For me, drugs and alcohol kill. That's the first spiritual principle: Don't use! Don't use what? Drugs and alcohol.

Our primary purpose, I thought, was to help everyone and anyone who had a desire to stop using drugs (including alcohol). I didn't *think* that we exclud-

"Our primary purpose, I thought, was to help everyone and anyone who had a desire to stop using drugs (including alcohol)."

ed people who used different words to describe what they desire to stop using. Didn't we all learn this program by example, or is my reality different from yours?

If anyone who used N.A. language wants to go to an A.A. meeting, who is going to stop them? You? God? The hope that those people (myself included) are respectful of the wishes of the people in that meeting is about all anyone here on Earth can expect.

Yes, you are correct about putting into practice the principles of love, tolerance, patience, and cooperation. N.A. is destined to grow a great deal, both in numbers and importance. Let this Fellowship ask God for greater amounts of humility as it grows. God knows we are going to need it.

B.B., Ohio

Coming Home

A little over five years ago, in a small town of thirty-thousand people, I was introduced to the Twelve Steps of recovery. I hung around a recovery house where there were meetings every night, though they were not N.A. meetings. I went to as many meetings as I could and started the road to recovery.

Some members got together and started a Wednesday night Narcotics Anonymous group. We met in the same spot the other program met six nights a week. At that time there wasn't a different language for each fellowship. Everyone in that N.A. group went to A.A. as well. Most people qualified themselves as "addict and alcoholic." The Fifth Tradition was not discussed. Being a newcomer, I was confused, and I did not understand the differences between the two programs.

After three years clean, I moved to a larger town. A friend brought me to the weekly N.A. meeting. I began to attend regularly. I did not understand the difference between the two programs, but I liked the love and the recovery I felt in that room. Our group grew and we split, bringing more meetings and more groups to our town. I became treasurer of the Sunday night group, and I was grateful to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous. I also attended

meetings of the other fellowship. Still I did not understand the difference.

As N.A. grew, there were many people accumulating clean time. A lot of these people were strictly members of N.A. I started hearing more about the Fifth Tradition and how we should use N.A. language. I felt threatened and thought people were putting down other twelve step programs. I became angry because I was grateful to another program for giving me back my life.

N.A. was growing very fast. Our town became a new N.A. area. A person could go seven days a week to N.A. meetings. More people were talking about the Fifth Tradition, and I was getting angrier and angrier. I began to have personality problems with other N.A. members. At area service meetings I would voice my feelings about this problem, but nobody did anything to correct it. I was hurt; after all, wasn't I a member of N.A. too? Why wouldn't people listen? I did not understand the Fifth Tradition.

Angry and disappointed, I stayed away from meetings and spent most of my recovery time with my other program. I had had enough.

This last September I had the privilege of attending our World Convention in New Orleans. I was surrounded by 3,500 addicts. I was astounded by the love and recovery I felt. I had come home. After being around both fellowships for five years, and thinking I had all the answers, I learned something. I learned the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery from addiction. I learned there are clearly two messages, two programs. I learned we needed our own language to carry our message. I learned both programs had a Fifth Tradition. I could feel gratitude for the

other program giving me my life and my start on recovery. I did not feel fearful or threatened. I could let go and grow in whatever my higher power brought me. I could be comfortable

"The personality conflicts are not a problem any more, not because N.A. has changed but because I have changed. Today I am a member of Narcotics Anonymous who is involved in the solution, not the problem."

with the old, yet grow with the new.

I am grateful to WCNA-17 and the N.A. recovery message it brought us. I finally realized, as I usually do, that the problem was mine. The personality conflicts are not a problem any more, not because N.A. has changed but because I have changed. When I stopped going to N.A. I only hurt myself. Today I am a member of Narcotics Anonymous who is involved in the solution, not the problem. The Fifth Tradition makes sense to me now. I'm grateful to let go of my fear and step forward into growth. As always, I have not grown by myself. A lot of people have helped me and continued to love me, even when we were in conflict. In New Orleans, they welcomed me back home.

A Grateful Addict, Texas

Steps Six and Seven



This year in my recovery I have come to a more in-depth understanding of Steps Six and Seven. I already knew that my defects of character could hold me back and prevent my growth. I already knew that I could spend a lot of time needlessly spinning my wheels and not surrendering. Now I have seen a need for a new level of humility. I have come to a point in my personal program where I have had to "hit my knees" and humbly ask the God of my understanding to guide me.

I found that I was not honest about what humility really was. I had forgotten that when I begin to think that I have some, it is actually slipping away. I had also forgotten that in the earlier

days of my recovery, my Higher Power had put me through some real periods of acceptance. I somehow thought that simply because I had amassed some years of clean time the road should

"What I really needed was to go through another surrender to the program. I learned that my disease had gotten smarter."

have gotten easier. I began to look for a guarantee.

I finally realized, with the help of my sponsor, that what I really needed was to go through another surrender to the program. I learned that my disease had gotten smarter to the point of inflating my ego in some very subtle ways. I began talking one-on-one with members with less time, hoping that would get me in touch with the kind of acceptance that I had been so willing to practice in my earlier years of my recovery. It worked! I began to feel more comfortable with myself, and was able to stop fighting again.

I kept reminding myself that I still had it in me to surrender on a deep level. And that will happen with the help of a loving God, coupled with my willingness to reach out to other recovering addicts.

I know that today my life can continue to have the kind of quality in it that I believe we all deserve and are capable of having. It is just up to me to keep an open mind and remain teachable.

Anonymous, Georgia

N.A. News



You can imagine the ensuing problems when we visited other facilities—people going into detoxification units and passing drugs around!

Q: Was there a specific point when an essentially new N.A. Fellowship was formed?

A: In New South Wales [a state in the southeast of Australia, the most heavily populated area of the country], one group broke away from the older N.A. community in 1980; another group was started in 1981. There was an attraction there, and a lot of addicts started to attend these two meetings as opposed to the others (there were seven meetings affiliated with a particular rehab). The Fellowship grew from there.

As the growth in that one spot began, people involved in service realized the importance of reaching out to all the other N.A. groups that existed in that part of the world. Communication was a top priority even though the cities were thousands of miles apart. We considered it very important that we hang together, united. Our isolation from the rest of N.A. made us want to gather as many recovering addicts around us as we could.

That attitude dominated the meetings where the Fellowship grew most quickly—in Sydney. (Most of the meetings in that part of the world were just in that one city.) When they had an

N.A. in Australasia

An N.A. Way staff member spent some time recently with a member of the World Service Board of Trustees from the Australasian region, which includes Australia and New Zealand. They talked about the region's past, present and future. We thought you might like to share in their conversation.

Q: Prior to 1980, N.A. had a pretty rough time in Australia, didn't it?

A: Yes. N.A. didn't work before. We started up and died out quite a bit in the late 60's and 70's, and that inconsistency gave us a bad name. Early N.A. broke Traditions: they accepted government grants, had direct affiliations with treatment facilities, had bosses—strong personalities pretty much in charge of it—things like that. They unfortunately were sick personalities, and the end result was that there wasn't any recovery in N.A. Most of the people attending N.A. were still loaded.

excess of funds from contributions, they used it to help spread the message in other cities. They invested heavily in free literature for other areas, flying people to those cities, flying people from other cities to area service meetings in Sydney, and general communication. They invested all their spare cash in that. The results paid off everywhere.

Q: Work in hospitals & institutions also had trouble getting started in Australia, didn't it? Have those problems been resolved?

A: When the new N.A. started doing H&I work, it had to begin all over from scratch. At first we ran H&I meetings the same as regular meetings. We weren't aware that H&I panels were supposed to be presentations of N.A. recovery in places where you couldn't have regular meetings because of institutional restrictions that conflicted with our Traditions. We had to pretty much re-invent the panel and committee system on our own in Australasia.

The other thing we had was a lot of mistrust from the authorities, particularly from the prisons, because of the bad taste N.A. had left in their mouths from previous experience spanning back maybe ten or fifteen years.

Q: Has the mistrust eased?

A: Yes. As a matter of fact, it's pretty much turned around to where *they're* approaching *us*! As far as government institutions go, it's a very different thing than what's in the States. A majority of treatment centers are government funded and run. There are not too many private enterprises in the

rehabilitation business. That's made the job easier, having just one central treatment administration to deal with.

And the government has begun to see the value of N.A. They have begun

"Most of the people attending N.A. were still loaded. You can imagine the ensuing problems when we visited other facilities—people going into detoxification units and passing drugs around!"

to believe we have changed for the better, and are willing to back the idea of us being involved with their treatment facilities. Some of the state governments are openly admitting that N.A. is the vehicle of long-term recovery for people who go through their detoxes and halfway houses, and they're very keen to get these people exposed to N.A. N.A. has gained a lot of credibility in most of the Australian states.

Australasian N.A. held its first convention in Sydney late in 1984. The theme, "Living Proof," was taken from a unique public information presentation made at the convention. Judges, psychiatrists, jail officials, treatment professionals and community leaders were invited to a huge open meeting held to introduce our Fellowship to the Australian authorities.

Two big conventions have been held every year since, one in the Sydney area in October, the other located on a rotating basis throughout the region each spring.

Sydney's central office eventually became the Australasian Regional Service Office. It prints N.A. literature for sale to the Australian and New Zealander N.A. communities under license to the World Service Office. Besides making literature much more readily available than when it had to be ordered from the U.S., locally published literature can be sold at a much lower cost. Prior to the WSO licensing agreement, a Basic Text cost the average member between twenty and twenty-five Australian dollars (about U.S. \$14.00). "Most members," says an Australian trusted servant, "never had a Basic Text. It was considered a luxury that you only considered after having five years clean." The cost of producing literature locally is much less than purchasing it from overseas. The Australasian RSO receives enough excess income from literature sales, even with new lower prices, to be able to pay a part-time special worker. That special worker makes literature order processing for Australia and New Zealand even more efficient.

By early 1985, Sydney's N.A. community had grown to the point where its area service committee was forced to split in four. Five other area committees formed at the same time in New Zealand and in other parts of Australia. In May, 1985, the Australasian Regional Service Committee was formed. Since then, five more areas have formed. The RSC has meetings of all its members only once every three months. Distances within

the region make the cost for any more frequent travel for that many people prohibitive. The distance from Perth, on Australia's west coast, to Sydney in the east is about 3200 kilometers (about 2000 miles); from Sydney to Auckland, New Zealand, is approximately another 2200 kilometers (about 1200 miles) over the ocean. Between full RSC meetings, an administrative committee pays the bills and deals with whatever emergencies come up.

"The number of meetings in the Australasian Region has grown from twenty-four in February 1984, to ninety-eight in September 1985, to almost 200 today."

Q: What's next?

A: Next comes the dividing into smaller regions and the formation of some sort of regional assembly, similar perhaps to what they've done in England—in concept, at least. That will form in the next few years.

In March 1987, N.A. in the United Kingdom formed a National Assembly. The assembly is composed of all the areas and regions in Great Britain. It supervises services performed on behalf of N.A. nationwide, including administration of the U.K. Service Office and the national Fellowship

magazine, Clean Times. More discussion of the national assembly idea can be found in the December 1987 N.A. Way and the September 1987 WSC Fellowship Report. We also plan feature articles on both the assembly concept and British N.A. in coming issues of the N.A. Way—so stay tuned!

Q: Are firm plans actually being laid for an Australasian Assembly, or is it just an idea being tossed around that everyone assumes will happen?

A: It's always been assumed that this will happen. New Zealand will probably form its own region pretty shortly—as soon as the country has fifty meetings, or when it feels ready to after that (the way it's growing, that won't be too long). When that occurs, the next step will be an assembly. It will be absolutely necessary to maintain some sort of joint service body for the two countries because New Zealand and Australia share—and will continue to share—the regional office facility, which prints and distributes N.A. literature for both countries.

Q: Does the Australasian Region have contacts with other countries in the South Pacific?

A: We know of a meeting in Malaysia. We have heard on and off of a meeting in Thailand and one in Indonesia. The growth potential in that part of the world is phenomenal. You're talking about societies that throughout their histories have had open access to narcotics that weren't even introduced into our country until much later, access even prior to the opium trade. One letter I've just received from

Malaysia refers to a U.N. report stating that in his country of eighteen million people there are something like 500,000 heroin addicts alone, let alone addicts of other descriptions.

"People involved in service realized the importance of reaching out to all the other N.A. groups that existed in that part of the world."

Q: It sounds like you have your work cut out for you. Do you believe Australasia will be able to play a part in future outreach to other South Pacific nations?

A: Australia and New Zealand will probably play a pretty key role in the development of N.A. in Southeast Asia because of proximity, and because there are regular social and trade relations between those countries anyway. Australia can act as a major resource in helping develop the Fellowship in those countries. Who knows? We'll just have to wait and see.

OPINION



The following article was submitted to us a year ago. Like some other editorials we have printed recently, it was placed in the file of stories to be looked at after we received the go-ahead to develop an editorial section. We presented it to a member of the World Convention Corporation recently, and he wrote a companion article which appears immediately after this one.

What Message Did We Carry?

I am an addict recovering from the disease of addiction in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The people and principles of N.A. have given me back my life. You loved me when I could not love myself. I am clean today even though I had no desire to stay clean when I got here. I have been clean since that first N.A. meeting I attended. Today my commitment, dedication, and love for Narcotics Anonymous are usually apparent.

I have been of service to N.A. throughout my recovery. My most recent position was as chairperson for our regional convention committee. There is nothing like an N.A. convention, where the verbal message is a

clear message of recovery. Ours was a Narcotics Anonymous convention at which I believe that the recovery of those members who participated has improved.

But the convention committee has asked me to write about another message that was carried there. It is our belief that denial of what occurred, or a continuation of what some tend to see as a "conspiracy of silence" as it relates to the rest of this letter, could prove to be crippling to our Fellowship. I am fully aware of the fact that it is me who is writing this letter, therefore it may be seen as being one-sided, but the members who served with me have placed their trust in me and I will do my best to live up to that trust.

One member of our convention committee stated (after it was over), "I'll never take another convention for granted." I sure won't either. Hosting one takes a lot of hard work.

We, the convention committee, feel the need to confront the membership of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole about the behavior displayed at the hotel by a few members. I don't believe that the sort of things that we experienced was unique. I believe that this sort of behavior occurs at most, if not all N.A. conventions, but no one ever says anything about it. Denial is such an insidious thing.

As usual (I would guess) there were a

substantial number of missing ashtrays, towels, wash cloths, etc. from the guest rooms. This was an expense for the hotel. But what does this say about the concept of honesty, or living the program?

There were cigarette burns in the carpeting, on bedspreads, and in other hotel accessories. In a number of rooms the carpeting was soiled to the point where it had to be shampooed. What does this say about respecting property?

A number of members travelled to various events by passing through the hotel without either a shirt or shoes. In our state there is a law which states that people must wear shirts and shoes in public establishments such as hotels, stores and restaurants. When asked that they wear the necessary apparel, many members appeared insulted, as if we were imposing on them.

Some members slept where they wished during the late-night hours. One addict went around the hotel knocking on the doors of guest rooms seeking a place to sleep. She was politely turned away by the general manager after she reportedly woke him and asked, "Can I sleep with you?" What does this say about the addict recovering in Narcotics Anonymous? Did she wake any other hotel guests who were not connected with the N.A. convention?

Finally, the behavior that I and other members of the convention committee found to be the most unacceptable and incomprehensible came when the hotel's sales representative came to me on the day following the convention and stated that there was human waste in the bathtub in two different rooms. What does this say about basic human dignity and respect for the hotel cleaning staff?

It is our belief that the answers to the above questions not only affect our group, but other groups and N.A. as a whole as well. These items need to be addressed. We cannot continue to act as though they didn't happen. "We keep what we have only with vigilance, and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps, so freedom for our groups springs from our Traditions." The purpose of a convention is to celebrate recovery, not to sabotage the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous.

If you attended this or another convention and have done some of these things, take a moment and think about your actions. Take a personal inventory. If you have attended a convention and have seen these or similar actions occurring, what have you done about it? What will you do next time? The personnel at this worldwide, highly respected, first-class hotel were not pleased by the way that some of our members behave when they gather in a celebration of their recovery. They clearly stated that the N.A. convention was not profitable for them, either financially or socially, and implied that as a convention we would not be welcomed back.

I feel both hurt and saddened by this, and would guess that many other members of N.A. would feel the same. "We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become *acceptable, responsible and productive* members of that society." We need to face this problem. If you care about the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, please avoid doing these things.

If you see or hear of people doing

these things (or similar things), take the time to say something to them about it. The implications of further inaction are too great.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to air my feelings. I love N.A. "As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well."

Anonymous

Fellowship Behavior at Conventions

The following article was written by a member of Board of Directors of the World Convention Corporation for Narcotics Anonymous at the request of the N.A. Way.

There has been a growing concern about the behavior of individuals in the Fellowship at conventions. Recently N.A. has grown to the point where almost all regions are having conventions to celebrate their recovery. This has resulted in problems when members have shown more concern for their own freedom to act as they please than for the unity of our Fellowship.

Experience has shown us that when the profile of the convention committee is lax and non-confrontive of the membership, more incidents occur than if a stricter posture is maintained.

The question has been raised when discussing this issue: "How can we confront a member? Wouldn't that be

standing in judgment of another member?" This question presents the issue that is the basis of the problem. Convention committees must be prepared to ask themselves, "When is it appropriate to hold a member accountable for affecting N.A. as a whole?"

Our experience in working with conventions indicates that the actions of one member can affect N.A. as a whole. This can be seen when, because of damage we have done, we are asked not to come back to a hotel, or not use an entire hotel chain.

The N.A. message becomes blocked when we can no longer have a convention in a certain city, or when hotels are unwilling to negotiate with us. Addicts who might otherwise have found recovery at a particular convention or workshop are robbed of this opportunity. Based on this concern, we have encouraged convention committees to maintain a high profile in confronting members who act inappropriately, deface hotel property or in any other way blatantly disregard our Traditions. In conjunction with this, it is strongly suggested that conventions issue a statement within their printed program explaining the need for appropriate behavior.

Looking at this from the perspective of an N.A. member, there are several concerns. One is the question, is a convention really N.A.? And if it is not (if it is called a Convention *for* N.A. rather than *of* N.A.), then some members feel our actions will not reflect back on the N.A. Program. There may be philosophical disagreement on this point, but one thing is certain: A hotel executive would definitely attribute the vandalism of a hotel hallway to N.A. if it occurred the weekend that one of our conventions was held in the hotel.

That simple reality speaks much louder than any philosophical position one may take about it. For example, let's say an N.A. member draws the N.A. logo with spray paint in a hotel hallway. The hotel presents the convention committee with a bill for the damages to their property. The committee could argue from the philosophical position that this member is not a representative of N.A., or that the committee is not responsible for the member's actions because the convention is *for* N.A., not *of* N.A.

What would you say the truth is? Do we use a "philosophical" position to deny responsibility, or do we admit that we owe the hotel for the damages caused by the individual member?

Picture this scenario as if you were the convention committee representative: The hotel convention services representative walks into the banquet meeting and asks if he could talk to you outside. Outside he informs you that there has been some damage discovered on the fifth floor of the hotel; he wants you to go and look at it with him.

Upon exiting the elevator on the fifth floor you look down the hallway and see the N.A. logo spray-painted on the wall. Ask yourself at this point, "Is N.A. responsible for this?" My spiritual principles tell me that we owe the hotel an amend for the damages caused by that member, and that for me to try to convince the hotel representative otherwise would be dishonest and irresponsible. This arises out of my personal commitment to recovery.

The technicalities of whether or not we owe an amend is one consideration. The other is that the program I love and that has saved my life has been reduced to a spray-painted logo on a hotel wall. This is the simple truth: we

as members of N.A. reflect the message of our recovery and truly express the working of a Higher Power by the way we live in this world.

So what will be your response to the hotel representative? Will you look up and say to him, "This is not N.A.," or will you amend the wrong?

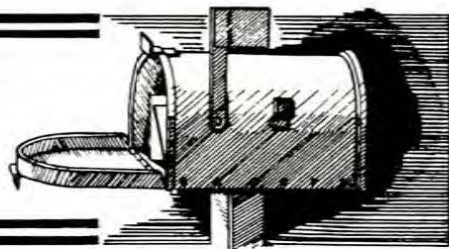
As members of N.A. we must consider our actions as they directly affect our Fellowship. Are they the reflection of our Higher Power? Of course, we are all in different stages of reflecting our Higher Power in our everyday actions, and we all require assistance and guidance on the road to establishing that conscious contact.

As a member attending a convention, if you see someone acting inappropriately, you must be responsible to your fellow member and take the time to talk to him about it. We are all connected as members of this Fellowship, regardless of our disapproval of another's behavior. Don't wait for the convention committee to act on these problems. This is your program that is being displayed, not just the convention committee's.

A celebration of recovery has great power in carrying our message to the addict who still suffers. We hope all addicts receive the best message possible when attending a convention. We hope to make that message obvious too to those hotel staff members who come in contact with our Fellowship.

Depending on what the public sees displayed in the message we carry, all individuals may someday come to know that no addict need die from addiction, that there is a place and a way to recover. Let us never do anything to obscure the fact that the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is that place and that way.

From Our Readers



Letters and reflections from N.A. members worldwide.

Dear N.A. Way,

It has occurred to me that sharing is a part of my spiritual recovery. Perhaps writing to you can become a beneficial habit, too. There is one experience above all that I need to share. The one time I had to "come back" to the Fellowship was the clincher to my belief that service work saves lives—not just the lives of others, but the lives of the addicts who serve.

It's like this: At six months and ten days I was "cured." My first sponsor had nine months clean and went back out; my second sponsor was male, and fired himself before his wife fired him; my third sponsor was half my age and never called me. So I figured I was different, that all those disappointments hadn't gotten my "program" messed up; I could handle it.

Attending the area meeting was something I saw from Day One as a means to attain power, prestige and acceptance. My first sponsor dragged my reluctant hind parts to the first one, and asked me to spend the whole meeting with my mouth shut. All the oldest and most vocal members were there with some kind of title or position, but I noticed that several positions were open and nobody was available to fill them. So that became a goal. I wanted to be important. I'd stick around long enough to qualify.

Two days before I attained six

months I was asked to take notes for the area meeting. This was my big chance to show everyone how responsible I could be, my ticket to win an election.

Loneliness hit especially hard one day shortly after that. I hadn't made it a habit to get on the telephone when I hurt, so I reflexively turned to the people and places that had "fixed" me in the past: the medical profession.

The next morning my sponsor wasn't home, and I couldn't get anyone to listen to my incoherent ramblings unless I decided I wanted to get clean again. But the most vivid memory of all is of sitting cross-legged on my bed while trying to rewrite those area meeting notes through the fog.

You see, I had to get clean again, because the whole area was depending on me; they had trusted me with an important responsibility, and no one had trusted me for so long that it was too painful to even consider letting them down. I couldn't violate my own morals again after regaining that one shred of self-respect; it would have been too painful.

Service work brought me back to N.A., and I serve today to the best of my ability. Withdrawal from the rewards of service is too painful. I speak in some meetings today and listen in others, but because I share experience, because I hold a position today, be-

cause I have shown my willingness to serve, those I sponsor will find self-respect through service work too, H.P. willing.

Dear N.A. Way,

I just received my first copy of the N.A. Way magazine, and I had to respond and let you know that I think it's really great! The stuff I read is real, and I'm grateful to the people who are sharing and making this magazine possible.

Thanks to "Anonymous" from Arizona who shared "Melting" [September, 1987]. It hit home; it was so real to me, it was intense! I related to the entire thing. Some of the things I read really helped open my eyes to where I am at and what I have made it through. Thanks for helping me. Thanks for sharing!

P.G., Pennsylvania

Dear N.A. Way,

It has occurred to me that sharing is a part of my spiritual recovery. Perhaps writing to you can become a beneficial habit, too. There is one experience above all that I need to share. The one time I had to "come back" to the Fellowship was the clincher to my belief that service work saves lives—not just the lives of others, but the lives of the addicts who serve.

It's like this: At six months and ten days I was "cured." My first sponsor had nine months clean and went back out; my second sponsor was male, and fired himself before his wife fired him; my third sponsor was half my age and never called me. So I figured I was different, that all those disappointments hadn't gotten my "program" messed up; I could handle it.

Attending the area meeting was

something I saw from Day One as a means to attain power, prestige and acceptance. My first sponsor dragged my reluctant hind parts to the first one, and asked me to spend the whole meeting with my mouth shut. All the oldest and most vocal members were there with some kind of title or position, but I noticed that several positions were open and nobody was available to fill them. So that became a goal. I wanted to be important. I'd stick around long enough to qualify.

Two days before I attained six months I was asked to take notes for the area meeting. This was my big chance to show everyone how responsible I could be, my ticket to win an election.

Loneliness hit especially hard one day shortly after that. I hadn't made it a habit to get on the telephone when I hurt, so I reflexively turned to the people and places that had "fixed" me in the past: the medical profession.

The next morning my sponsor wasn't home, and I couldn't get anyone to listen to my incoherent ramblings unless I decided I wanted to get clean again. But the most vivid memory of all is of sitting cross-legged on my bed while trying to rewrite those area meeting notes through the fog.

You see, I had to get clean again, because the whole area was depending on me; they had trusted me with an important responsibility, and no one had trusted me for so long that it was too painful to even consider letting them down. I couldn't violate my own morals again after regaining that one shred of self-respect; it would have been too painful.

Service work brought me back to N.A., and I serve today to the best of my ability. Withdrawal from the re-

wards of service is too painful. I speak in some meetings today and listen in others, but because I share experience, because I hold a position today, because I have shown my willingness to serve, those I sponsor will find self-respect through service work too, H.P. willing.

Thank you, N.A., for life today.

B.H., North Carolina

TRADITION SEVEN

"Every N.A. group ought be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

I am told that the Steps and Traditions are *spiritual principles*, and if I want to recover I must put them into practice.

Recently, I heard a speaker talking about the Seventh Tradition. He said, "I'm certain that each and every one of you puts in the basket exactly what your recovery is worth!" This, of course, was a light-hearted statement, but it carried a very strong message.

I hate to bring up the subject of money, because it is in short supply and is a sore spot with most of us. But let's face it: money is a reality. We use it to run our groups, and send what's left over to support our services to the Fellowship and the addict who still suffers (the very reason I am alive today).

But, in my mind, money is only a part of the Seventh Tradition, and quite possibly the easy part! The other is physical and mental dedication—work, in other words. During my three year involvement in Narcotics Anonymous, there have never been enough people willing to do the work. I see it getting better, but we still have a long way to go.

For me, it has always been easier to sit back and let someone else take care

of my responsibilities. Today I'm to change that by depending only on the God of my understanding and the love of our Fellowship.

I am incapable of even conceiving what my recovery is worth, and even less capable of giving it back. Still, I can make some sacrifices today. Another short note on money: Today I realize that anonymity is the foundation of all our Traditions. Thus, no individual or group has the right to know how much I give or the right to put a limit on the amount that its members give (it may sound funny, but it has happened in our area before). Part of my personal program is not to let the size of my donation be known. I no longer give by check or deduct my service expenses from my taxes. This helps me keep my motives for giving pure. I don't give enormous sums, but I don't just drop a buck a week in the basket at my home group, either. I think that the word "give" implies sacrifice, whether it be in terms of money or time.

In short, the principles set forth in the Seventh Tradition have worked for me when I have worked them, not to mention what they have done for N.A. and the addict seeking recovery. It is truly a gift to be allowed to give.

D.D., West Virginia

GOD'S WILL

As I sit here waiting for my husband to come out of surgery, I'm reading my N.A. Way for comfort. My fix.

God has been good to my husband and me. He has blessed us with two beautiful children.

Through the grace of God our first-born, a daughter, was born healthy. She survived the daily using of her mother before her birth. She made it through the insanity and unmanageability of living with two active addicts her first

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sixteen months of life, and of living with parents trying to get clean. That was over two and a half years ago. Since then, my husband and I have gotten clean, lost the desire to use and started living. Yet that past insanity and unmanageability often expresses itself in our daughter's behavior.

Six weeks ago we were blessed with a beautiful, serene baby boy. He did not have to suffer the horrors of addiction during his beginnings as his sister did. He attended his first N.A. meeting at four days of age. Recovery shines brightly in him.

I shared with my sponsor about the surgery, which will leave us unable to have any more children. She said, "You guys have become such responsible people." That's only true thanks to H.P. and Narcotics Anonymous. I used to say we've been lucky; now I say we've been blessed. Our home used to be full of anger, hatred, and stoned addicts. Now it is full of love, serenity, and joy.

My husband is out of surgery now. He is alive and well and we are both clean. I sure hope this surgery was God's will for us. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous, for guiding us through it.

Anonymous

INTROSPECTION?

June 1, 1971... What a day! That was the day I was introduced to the Fellowship (albeit unknown to me). That was the day I stopped using all drugs.

I found meetings where topics were discussed that were strange to me then, but I understand them today. These odd items were called Steps, Traditions, coping with living day to day, love, caring and sharing.

Within a short period I had found not one but two sponsors. These sponsors guided me on my first few Twelve Step

calls. They provided me many options to use in understanding an entity called God. They lived their programs successfully, and they died clean!

I grew, sometimes easily, sometimes painfully. I sometimes forgot that following my own path will eventually lead to a single lane. When I catch myself going off on a side road, I pray for guidance, for I know what my best thinking did for me: it got me loaded. I need always remember I could not run my own life, so how can I tell you how to run yours?

What saddens me is that today, sixteen years later, I hear sponsors in meetings demanding that newcomers to do it their way. Twelve Step calls are relegated to phone calls, if convenient—or if at all. Newcomers are exhorted to seek outside counselling. Traditions are passed over. Newcomers are judged by their clothes, car, companion, social bearing, treatment history, prison, ad nauseam.

I am sad and somewhat bitter, still attempting to live the life the Fellowship gave me years ago, a Fellowship that has evolved into something I cannot understand.

Where did it go? What happened to the unconditional love?

Pray for the newcomer who comes in the door with tombstone eyes, who has nowhere to go because they have already been everywhere else. Accept newcomers as they are: addicts looking for a way to live clean and free. Let us, you and me, keep our judgments out of carrying the message. Let's simply say to them, "Welcome home. We've been waiting for you!"

J.M., Oregon

MY WILL TO LIVE

When I was young and didn't know a lot, I was full of hurt, anger and pain. I didn't know what to do with these feelings, so I kept them inside. Then I tried drugs and discovered that I didn't need to hurt anymore. Drugs became my best friend. I found with drugs that I didn't need to feel anymore. Drugs were all I needed, and addiction became my way of life. Using drugs became the only way I knew how to live. Then the drugs turned on me.

What drugs had given me for many years, my addiction took away. It took away my will to live. All I wanted to do was die and leave this insanity behind. Then I found N.A. Slowly, over time, a lot of good times, and a lot of hard times, I have found a program that has done what drugs could not do anymore: it has given me back my will to live.

C.B., North Dakota

TODAY IS GOD'S DAY

Dear God, there are so many things I want from this new life you have given me. Some are material and some are spiritual. I have proven time and time again that I don't know what I need or what is best for me. That is why I so often invite you into my life and ask you for help. Your plan has proven to be far more wonderful than I ever imagined. The life I lead, the joy and love I feel cannot be described. So just for today, I trust you with all my life and pray for your will to be done.

If today is my day to feel pain, then it is a good day to feel pain. If today is my day to die, then it is a good day to die.

You have done so much for me for so long, and I have given so little in return. I ask that whatever today brings, I may remain clean and grateful.

Anonymous, West 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

CANADA: May 13-15, 1988; 1st Ontario Regional Convention; Toronto, Ontario; Rachel (416) 789-0264; Susan 252-6686; Community Centre, 5597 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario, CAN M4E 2V6

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

GEORGIA: Feb. 25-28, 1988; GRCNA VII; Hyatt Regency Ravinia, 4355 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, GA 30346, (800) 228-9000; Shirley (404) 535-1626; Mitch 264-9540; Rhonda 252-7137; GRCNA VII, P.O. Box 2226, Gainesville, GA 30503

HAWAII: Feb. 12-14, 1988; 4th Annual Fellowship Weekend; Camp Erdman, HI; Tom C. (808) 262-4631; George K. 262-4394; C.C. 261-3869; Regional Office 533-4900; NA Fellowship Weekend, P.O. Box 27909, Honolulu, HI 96827

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

2) Apr. 1-3, 1988, KRCNA II, Evansville, IN--see under INDIANA

LOUISIANA: Mar. 4-6, 1988; LPRCNA VI; Holiday Inn, Covington; Hotel res--Cheryl Hunt, (504) 893-3580; Info--Peter or Mary, (504) 626-7298; John or Kat, (504) 893-9265; LPRCNA VI, P.O. Box 1693, Covington, LA 70434

MAINE: Sep. 9-11, 1988; We're A Miracle V; Bruce & Kim (207) 772-4558; Stan & Jane (207) 784-5863; Bill (617) 563-5885; ASC of Maine, Convention Committee, P.O. Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

NEVADA: Feb. 5-7, 1988; SNCNA II; Las Vegas, NV; Debi A. (702) 453-6653; Dave T. 452-6938; Nancy T. 451-0899; SNCNA II, P.O. Box 4771, Las Vegas, NV 89127-0771

NEW HAMPSHIRE: June 24-26, 1988; "Vision of Hope," 9th ECCNA; University of NH in Durham; Jay N. (603) 437-5501; Brian 452-7875; Shirley 458-4808; 9th ECCNA, PO Box 388, Pelham, NH 03076

NEW ZEALAND: Jan. 15-17, 1988; 1st New Zealand Area Rally for N.A.; Shirley Community Centre, Shirley & Slater Streets, Christchurch; Chris or Dave 859-738; Chrissie 883-544

OHIO: May 27-29, 1988; OCNA VI; Holiday Inn Eastgate, 4501 Eastgate Blvd., Cincinnati, OH 45245; Carolyn R. (513) 863-9870; Buck F. 752-8281; send speaker tapes; OCNA VI, P.O. Box 9234, Hamilton, OH 45014

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

PENNSYLVANIA: Feb. 26-28, 1988; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference IV; George Washington Lodge, Allentown, PA, (215) 433-0131; Bill A. 398-8438; Lou or Mike 432-8719; Dave or Brenda 437-3285; 24 hour helpline 439-8440; MARLCNA4, P.O. Box 4475, Allentown, PA 18105

RHODE ISLAND: Apr. 1-3, 1988; NERC III; Marriott Hotel, Providence; Info--Steve (401) 789-2569, Ken N. 728-2714; NERC III, Attention, Mishell L., P.O. Box 3009, Newport, RI 02840

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jan. 22-24, 1988; 8th Annual Upper South Carolina Convention; Holiday Inn Haywood, I-385 & Roper Mountain Road, Greenville, SC; Mark (803) 244-1621; Bob 271-6542; 1988 NA Convention, 205 E. Hillcrest Drive, Greenville, SC 29609

TEXAS: Mar. 25-27, 1988; LSRCNA III; Rodeway Inn, Hwy 360 at Six Flags Drive, Arlington, TX 76011, (817) 640-7080, (800) 228-7080; Vince 924-0939; Don 738-5329; Rick 573-3201; LSRCNA 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, 1988; 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

WASHINGTON: Apr. 8-10, 1988; 3rd Annual Washington-Northern Idaho Regional Convention; to submit a tape contact Rhonda A., 6622 W. Yellowstone, Kennewick, WA 99336



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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
6. to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than
11. promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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