

THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

October 1988

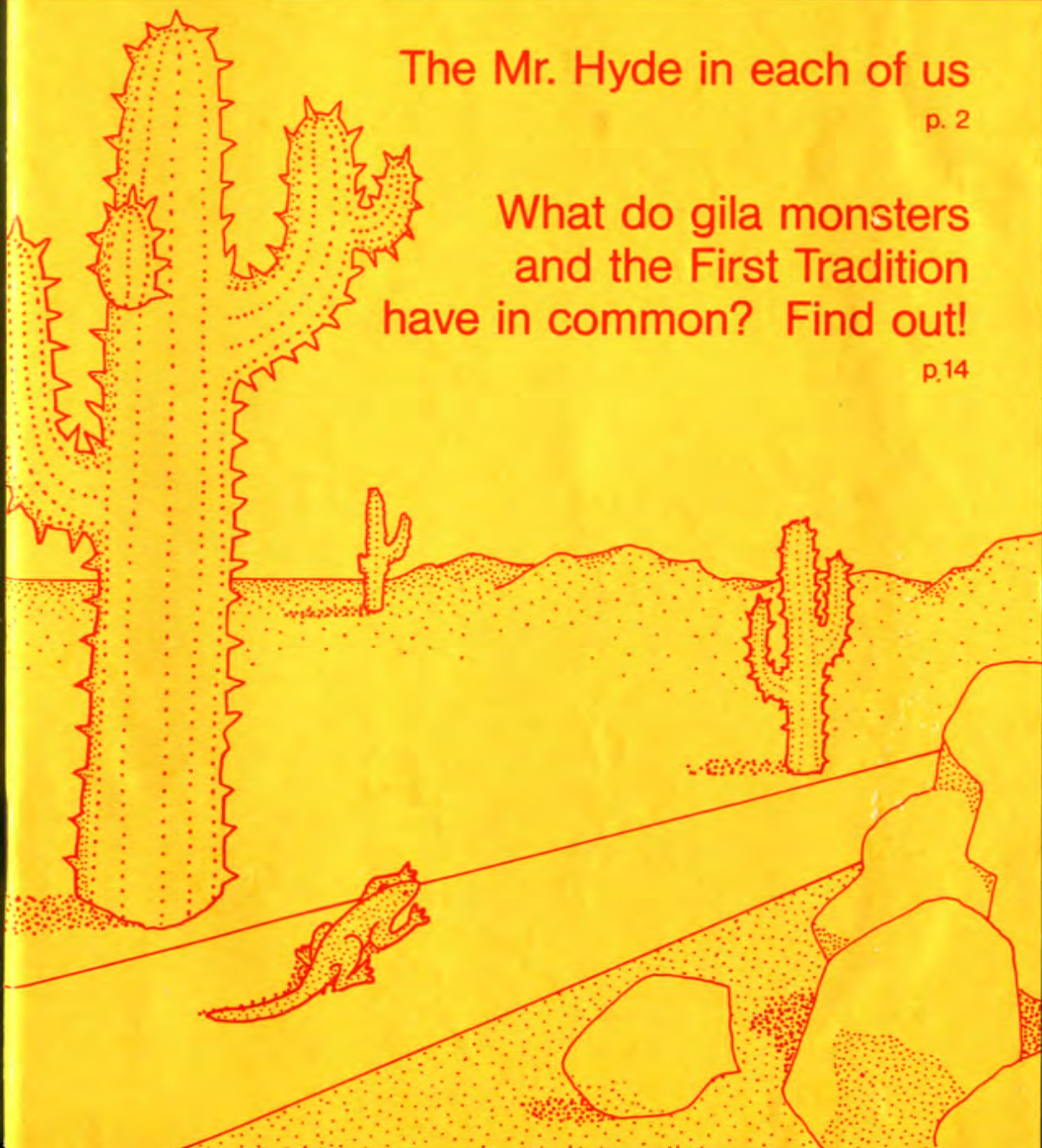
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The Mr. Hyde in each of us

p. 2

What do gila monsters
and the First Tradition
have in common? Find out!

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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.

THE N.A. Way MAGAZINE

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volume six, number ten

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The N.A. Way magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

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Jekyll and Hyde

The night was the same as nearly every other. I was driving home after letting my girlfriend off at her house. It was around 11:30 pm, still a decent hour. Like every other night, I told her I was going right home. And I was. My friends were probably hanging out in the local spot, probably pretty high, probably still planning to get higher yet, but I was going home. I promised.

In front of me was the stop sign. If I turned right at that corner I was headed home. If I turned left I was headed for my friends. Not to get high, just to get a soda. Maybe just one pass through town. But I promised. I could feel Mr. Hyde down inside me as I braked for the stop sign. Work tomorrow. Can't be out all night. But maybe just a soda.

The night was the same as nearly every other. Dr. Jekyll had promised—and meant it—that he was headed right home. So Dr. Jekyll went to take that right turn and go home as the car began moving again, but Mr. Hyde now had control of the arms. The car turned left.

That aching sensation down deep inside meant that Dr. Jekyll still had some consciousness of what was going to happen. Mr. Hyde's insistence that this was going to be one pass through town to get a soda was losing its power to numb that.

The car was coming to a stop again. Through the window I could see my friends playing foosball. A rush of excitement went through me. Hyde knew that wasn't about foosball—or soda. He was regaining full control already. With the blast of sound coming through the door as I opened it, all vestiges of Jekyll's commitments, promises, hopes for a stable life—all were forgotten.

The night was like nearly every other. I was riding around town in the back seat of my friend's car. It was around 2:00 a.m., no longer a decent hour. Down inside the cave of oblivion that Mr. Hyde had lustily stormed into, Dr. Jekyll was stirring.

What am I doing? I promised! I have to go to work in five hours. They're going to know. This is getting old.

The joint started coming my way, and even Dr. Jekyll was eager now. Eager to blank this out. Eager to forget that he was slowly losing the war with Mr. Hyde. Both of me now wanted only oblivion.

That pattern eventually lost me everything. The woman who had fallen in love with Dr. Jekyll had not bargained for Mr. Hyde. She finally had the good sense to get out of that relationship, but not before five years of a very painful roller coaster.

I still remember laying the guilt trip on her: "You'd leave me when I'm down? You think it's hard to live *with* me—imagine living *inside* me!" Somehow that made sense to me. I was stuck with these two people trying to live inside my skin: Jekyll desperate to regain control and get my life on track, Hyde slowly gaining more power.



I despaired of ever finding something that would reverse that trend. I tried different things, from religion to New Year's resolutions, but nothing brought hope. The old familiar cycle kicked in again each time, and I got a little further from the life Dr. Jekyll had wanted. Jekyll's vision of that life grew steadily dimmer.

The day I attended my first N.A. meeting is forever etched in my memory. For the first time in many years, I felt hope that this trend could be reversed. I heard people sharing in a way I had never heard before. I had never related to people on the level at which I related to the people who shared at that meeting. I went home and wrote about it in my journal. The entry for April 22, 1978 starts, "A new

spark of hope has entered my life today..." That hopeful sensation down deep inside meant that Dr. Jekyll had some vague consciousness about what was going to happen.

Just a few days ago, over ten years later, I heard myself talking to a newcomer. He was sounding that familiar lament, "I can't see any change in myself." I chuckled and chided him, "What! thirty days clean and your whole life hasn't turned around yet?" But what I heard myself say that sparked these memories was, "The biggest change in your life is your change in direction. And that's a very big change. Movement may be slow, but the horizon has changed a great

deal for you."

And that's really it, isn't it? Hope comes from the realization that this program has the power to change our direction, a day at a time, so that over time the change is amazing. The horizon full of possibilities beats the hell out of the horizon you didn't dare lift your gaze from your shoelaces to contemplate.

The woman who had fallen in love with Dr. Jekyll had not bargained for Mr. Hyde.

It strikes me that the surest way to get moving along that new path is to start feeding Dr. Jekyll and starving Mr. Hyde. It's not realistic to hope that because we're in a spiritual program, Mr. Hyde is dead. In fact sometimes he's very much alive and well—particularly at first.

I'm a human being, and because of that I may never be rid of the Mr. Hyde that lives inside my skin, but I can sure get him in a malnourished state. And I can sure nourish Dr. Jekyll.

I've learned to act on the Jekyll impulses and not on the Hyde impulses. When I get honest, I know which impulses are which. I've learned that Jekyll is nourished by the steps and meetings and sponsorship, so I give him a healthy diet of those. I've learned that Hyde is nourished by drugs, by dishonesty, by actions based in pride and fear.

I have totally abstained from drugs for years through the grace of the loving God I have come to know through Narcotics Anonymous. That part's now an easy but effective way of keeping Hyde at bay. I've learned to use that same power to avoid many of the other things I may do to feed Mr. Hyde.

Feed Dr. Jekyll and starve Mr. Hyde. It's become a simple guiding principle in my life. And the exciting thing is that at some point Dr. Jekyll became much stronger as a result. There is great joy in the awareness that the war is over, just for today, and that Dr. Jekyll is calling the shots. His vision for what I could become, once only a fading dream, is now being lived out in my daily life. My daily commitment is to feed Jekyll, a spoonful at a time, to keep it that way.

M.E., Minnesota

We goofed!

When we mailed last month's magazine, we enclosed some old "free trial" subscription cards left over from last spring--instead of our regular cards--by mistake. (You'll notice that the card shows the offer expiring *April 30, 1988!*) We will honor any of these "free trial" orders with a 14-month subscription. We're sorry for any confusion this might have caused you.

Editor

Freedom in prison

I'm currently serving two prison sentences for crimes I committed under the influence of drugs to get money for more drugs. Yet I've found freedom through the help of Narcotics Anonymous.

My family lives in a small rural town in Ohio, and I was brought up in a good home. At about the age of eleven I began smoking pot with some of the older kids in school. By the time I was fourteen or fifteen I began dealing to support my habit. Soon after that I started getting into trouble in school and was expelled several times.

I began using harder drugs, to steal from stores and to break into homes to support my growing habit. By the time I turned seventeen the police began to question me whenever a crime happened near my home. I felt as if I had to get away before I actually got caught either for the drugs or for the crimes I was doing. In May of 1979, at the age of seventeen, I talked my parents into signing so I could join the Army.

Well I stayed off illegal drugs throughout bootcamp and A.I.T., but I substituted alcohol for them. I went home after my training to be in a reserve unit and kept on with the drinking and dove right back into other drugs. For awhile, my criminal

activity ceased except for a little dealing here and there.

I married a girl from my home town in November of 1979. I realized I couldn't support her without a good job, so I changed my enlistment from reserve to regular Army. In January of 1980 I was sent to Maryland to begin my four year enlistment.

Upon my arrival I met up with a guy I knew from basic training. He invited me to a party, where I was introduced to intravenous drugs. I fell head over heels.

I found that I could get away from things with less of the drug at first, but eventually my addiction grabbed hold and I couldn't get enough. I got so far into my addiction that I had no control over my life anymore. I began to be rebellious. Over a period of two years I was arrested seven times for drugs or bar room brawls. It ended with my getting a general discharge for apathy and unmilitary-like behavior.

Still my addiction kept telling me that I was the one in the right and that

Still, my addiction kept telling me that I was the one in the right and that everyone else had a problem.

everyone else had a problem. My wife and I were getting along pretty well because we shared the same addiction. In December of 1982 we moved back to Ohio, and that was when my real trouble began.

I didn't have enough practical experience to get a job, so I began to burglarize homes and businesses again. In March of '83 I was caught breaking into a business in Cincinnati. Since it was my first offense, I was given probation and a fine. I continued with my addiction and with criminal behavior, and I was arrested again for a burglary in May of '83.

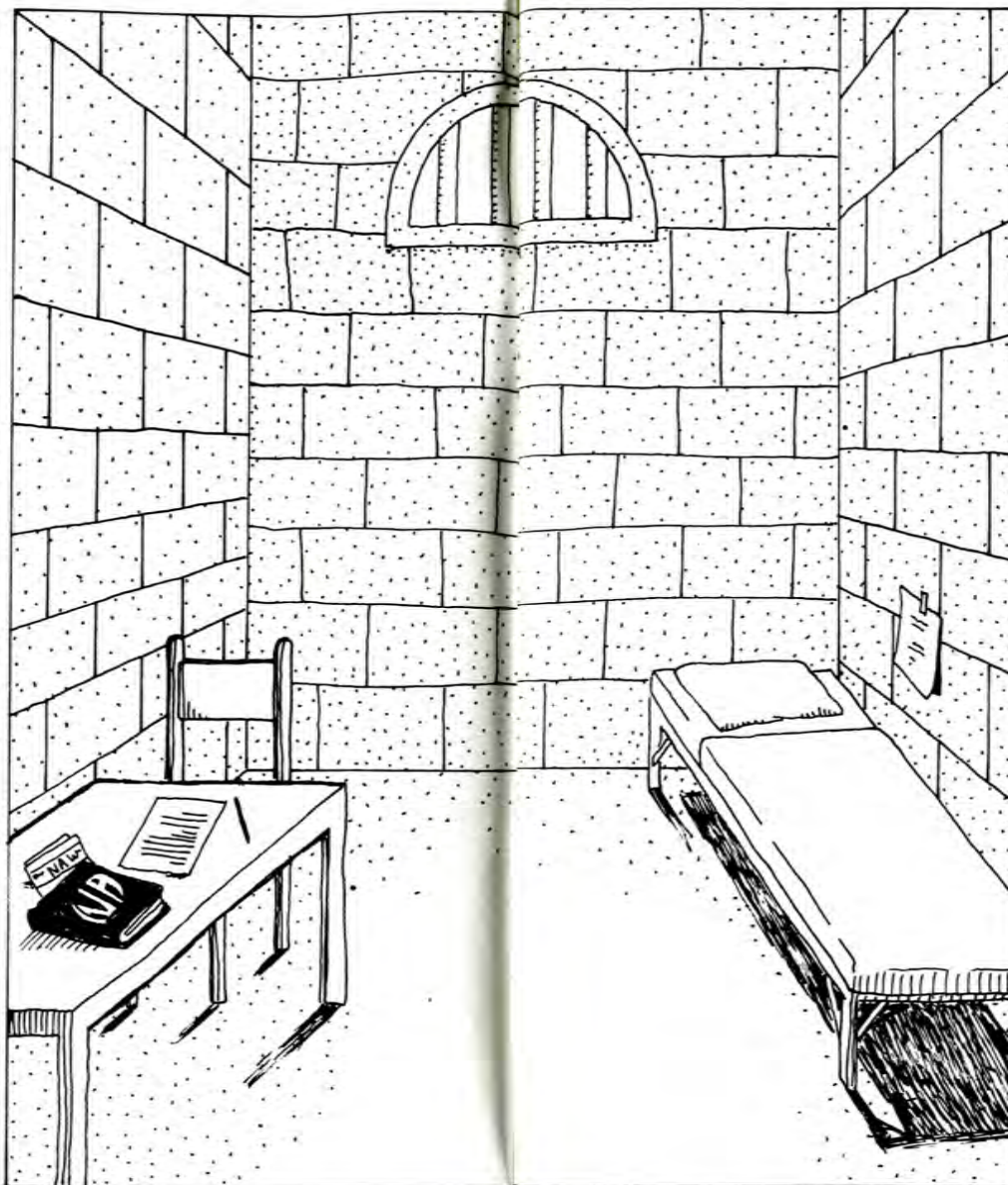
This time my lawyer told me that my problem was drugs, and that I should get some help. Well, I thought he was the one in need of help. After I was released on bond, I started using at a very excessive rate to get away from my trouble. I ended up overdosing on cocaine.

When my father found me I was lying on our bedroom floor with a syringe still in my arm. My wife was out of town visiting with family, so he took me to several hospitals, trying to find one that would admit me. He finally found one which had a thirty-nine day program. I spent those thirty-nine days going through treatment and A.A. meetings, and I hated it all. I had no desire to be helped.

My lawyer found out where I was and came to see me. He said that there was a chance I could get probation. I went for it, but I had to stay away from drugs until my trial.

When I got out of treatment I turned myself over to the police and began my trial. I was given conditional probation: I had to attend drug classes on a weekly basis and stay off drugs. I continued to use drugs, and to steal the money to buy them. It went okay for about a year and a half.

Then one day I was given a urine test. I was found out and went back to court on a probation violation. The



court found me guilty and extended my probation. In 1985 I was convicted of a misdemeanor. My probation was once again violated, and I was sentenced to five to fifteen years.

In the beginning of 1986 I was tried for another burglary, found guilty, and given an additional eight to twenty-

five years. At that time it finally began to sink in: I had a problem and I needed help.

So when I got back to the correctional institution, I looked into their substance abuse program and began attending N.A. meetings. I couldn't believe what I heard in those meet-

ings! Everyone who gave a talk was almost telling me about my own experiences. I related to how their addiction got them into trouble and destroyed their lives. And it wasn't just other inmates, but people from support groups on the streets too.

I found that I could deal with my problem by using the fellowship and the Twelve Steps, and through hearing others' experiences. I met a lot of good people, both inmates and visitors from the outside.

The outside support groups really helped us get our meetings going. They shared their experiences with us, and we shared ours with them. It's been about a year and a half since I first got into the program. I work my program daily and attend every N.A. meeting I can, and I'm a changed person because of it! I am working towards my associates degree in industrial technology, and I can deal with life's problems without drugs.

I use N.A. to help myself when I'm down, and I share my experiences with others in the hopes that they can find what I have: *freedom in prison*. I control my life now—the drugs don't—and my future is much brighter for it. I still have four years on my sentence, but I'm using this time to benefit myself for when I do get out.

I want to thank all my brothers in recovery, both in prison and on the streets, for bringing life into perspective through N.A. Most of all, I want to thank the men and women who devote their time to supporting us addicts behind bars. N.A. can really help us if we want it. It promotes honesty and love in us.

H.K., Ohio

Growing into the steps

It seems that every time I work through the steps I understand more of what they mean. I get closer to myself and find understanding at a deeper level.

I wrote my first Fourth Step in treatment at five weeks clean. I remember thinking, "Is that all?" I simply couldn't remember the past and didn't know the difference between right and wrong. The best I could do at that time was to write about the things that I knew were illegal.

My early Fourth and Fifth Steps were full of *your* fault and *my* fear. It took me six times through the steps before I was able to identify the exact nature of my wrongs. (It's amazing how persistent our denial is!) I finally could see how my character defects drove my behavior. So instead of just writing about the things I had done, I made the clear connections that led me into the Sixth and Seventh Steps.

What it took for me to get there was some time struggling with Steps One, Two and Three. I spent several years haggling with God over my powerlessness before I was finally defeated—in recovery. I bargained by admitting I was powerless in one area of my life while refusing to give up my efforts at control in other areas. I would change

jobs within the same field, but wouldn't admit the possibility that I was doing the wrong kind of work. I stopped living with my boyfriend, but refused to consider ending the relationship. I would change my behavior to *look* like I wasn't trying to control other people; but the manipulation just went underground and got more subtle.

The Second Step was another struggle. It took several years of searching and testing, and ultimately surviving, before I could honestly say I firmly believed in that Higher Power. I tried lots of different "definitions" of God, then measured my guilt feelings when I couldn't live up to the expectations I thought that God had of me.

I had to come to believe in a Higher Power who didn't have a personality like mine—a Higher Power who was always loving and compassionate—before I could trust God and *act* like it. I had to develop a history of surviving my own self-induced insanity. Further, I had to hear that the

*The Second Step
didn't say, "God
absolutely would—
we guarantee it—
restore me to sanity."*

Second Step didn't say, "God absolutely would—we guarantee it—restore me to sanity." It said that He *could*. I learned that the Second Step only works when I have fully admitted my powerlessness so that I can get out of God's way.



It took that depth of belief to fully surrender, not just the parts of my life that I knew were unmanageable, but my entire will and life. Once I had learned to trust God and *act* like it, I could surrender to the path unfolding in front of me.

New career paths opened up in front of me. I no longer had the need to hang onto relationships that didn't work. I could open up to the infinite possibilities of life in recovery.

The result has been that I'm not so firmly tied to my character defects. They're still with me, but I don't just instantly act on them. They seem to appear in my head just a split-second before I start to act. Then I can choose to act differently (or not act differently).

I have recently moved to a new

state, and my thoughts have been full of solutions to my feelings, even with my character defects screaming at the top of their lungs. My head will say, "we need to get into a relationship, then we'll be okay." Or it will say, "boy, a drink would sure be good to relax with!" The thoughts are still sneaky—the denial still hides in them—but they're not firmly connected to my behavior anymore. Today I have more freedom of choice.

Every day that I stay clean is a gift and a miracle. I believe that when I stay clean and work the steps, the gift and the miracle grow and recovery expands. There are no walls around my growth except the ones I put there. Expanded recovery has taken some time for me. Growing into the steps was the path that led me there.

A.R., California

The door's open

There was plenty of snow on the ground. The meeting was scheduled to start at 8:30 p.m. This was a new group, only about six weeks old. Who in their right mind would get out of a warm house, battle the blizzard and the roads to make such a new meeting? After all, there had to be at least one good television show on tonight. Or maybe no one would show up and the meeting would be cancelled.

The truth of the matter was that I had one of the keys to open the door and was trying to rationalize a way out of going to the meeting. Even though it was less than four blocks away, maybe, just maybe, the other key holder would open the door so I could stay home. No? Oh well, nice try. I got my boots and coat on and made my way out the door.

On my way out I thought about standing in the rain waiting to cop dope. And I remembered driving miles around in the snow chasing that bag. Remembering that, I couldn't justify my complaining. The journey to the meeting turned into a joy. I began to smile and felt warm on the inside.

Where else but in N.A. would you go trudging through bad weather just to sit around a table, drink coffee, and

listen to others share their experience, strength and hope? The spiritual values of willingness and enthusiasm were beginning to flourish. I wouldn't trade times like these for any TV show.

There didn't seem to be anyone else outside that night. Cold as it was, my commitment to the service of this group was being fulfilled.

I thought about getting even with the group by letting someone else carry the key next week, and hoped it

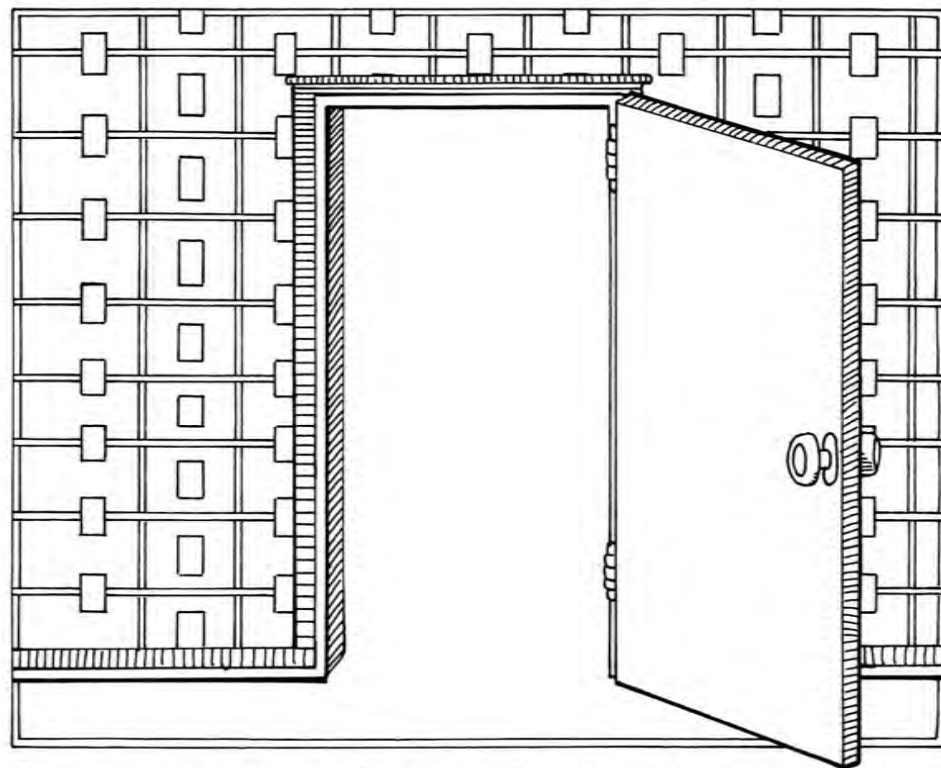
I took a look up at the clock and it read "meeting time." No one here but me and my HP so far.

would snow twice as hard. Did you ever get so wrapped up in your diabolical thoughts you'd wish these kinds of terrible things? Well, I'm just being honest. These are the thoughts that had crossed my mind.

I didn't feel like painting an "S" on the front of my shirt, nor did I feel that N.A. couldn't go on without me. I just felt trusted. The group members had faith in me. I accepted the trust they gave to me with an open heart. I had this opportunity to fulfill that trust, and it felt good. Gratitude is best expressed through service.

My numbing fingers fumbled with the keys and found the keyhole. It was nice to see the inside of a warm and dry meeting place. I opened up the cabinet that stored the group's literature and supplies. The meeting was set up in about ten minutes.

Now it was 8:15 p.m. Well, let's see.



How much coffee should I make? None? Five, ten or twenty cups? Or fill the whole pot? Seeing as I'm an avid coffee drinker I thought about myself for awhile, just to be self-centered, then discarded those thoughts and made fifteen cups.

With the meeting all set up, the coffee brewing and the heat turned up, I sat down at the table and began to read my Basic Text. I read one chapter, then another. I took a look up at the clock and it read "meeting time." No one here but me and my HP so far. I began to read another chapter.

The coffee light turned red, which means it's ready, so I indulged myself in having the first cup. A little sugar and powdered cream. Mmmm! Everything was complete except that I was the only one there. Just then the door opened. Another recovering addict!

We exchanged hugs and smiles, then talked about the effort to get to the meeting. After some very brief small talk, we decided to start the meeting.

I asked him to chair, and he gladly accepted. We went through the entire format: the readings, welcomes, anniversaries, announcements, etc. The topic was "More Will Be Revealed," a chapter from the Basic Text. We read the chapter, had a discussion, took a coffee break, then opened the meeting up again. Believe it or not, we ran the meeting beyond the scheduled 10:00 p.m. closing time by one-half hour! Both of us had that post-meeting attitude of gratitude. We closed in the usual manner, cleaned up and made our ways back home.

Keep coming back: it works!

R.U., Pennsylvania

My gratitude speaks when I shut up

At a Sunday morning meeting I attended about a year ago, the topic was gratitude. All during the "Who, What and How" readings at the beginning of the meeting, many members of the group stood outside. The talking and carrying on was so loud that it was difficult to hear the readings inside the room.

When the sharing started I raised my hand and was the first to be called upon. I shared—in a very angry and sarcastic manner—my "gratitude" that those who had made it so difficult to hear the steps being read were finally just at that moment filing into the meeting. I said that apparently they had some message much better than that contained in "How It Works."

I stressed just how "grateful" I was for the fact that they had deigned to come in and share with the rest of the group whatever message that might be. I really was hot about the lack of respect for the atmosphere of recovery at the meeting.

My emotions were running really high because of the fact that I was right in the middle of making some big changes in my life. I was moving to a different part of the city, moving away from a person with whom I had had a

ten year relationship. It was painfully clear to me that my addiction was manifesting itself in my relationship, and that it was going to kill me if I did not work the steps and change.

I decided that the Ninth Step would involve my getting out of the situation. Even though the situation was unbearable, the fear of letting go was intense. I needed to believe that trusting in God as I understood God and following through with my decision would work.

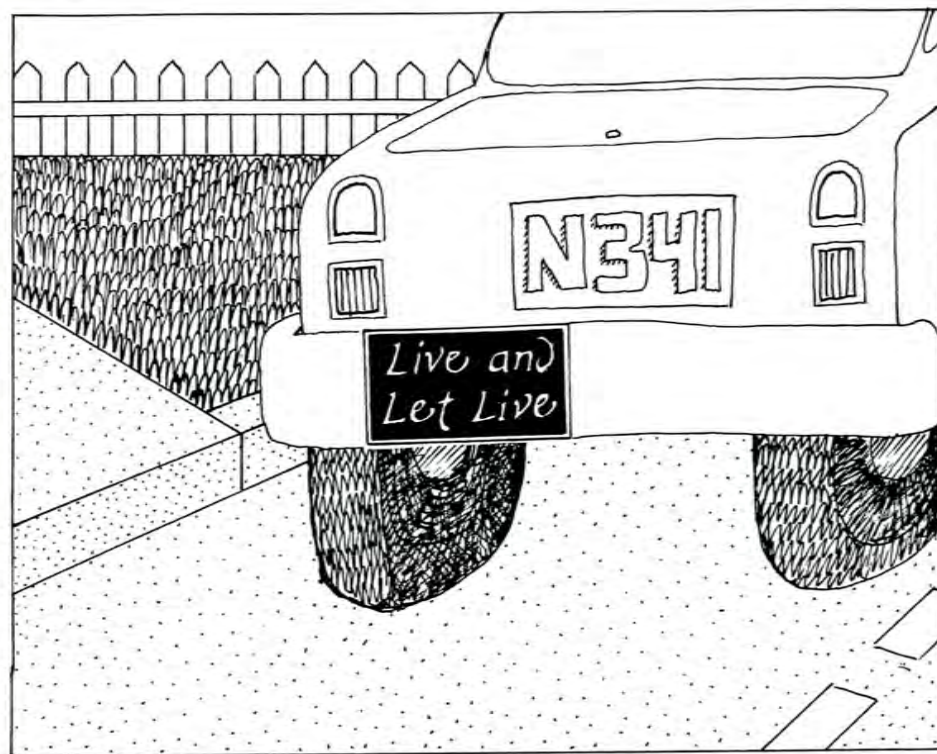
Actually, had I looked closer at the time, I would have seen that the miracles were already happening. Through a friend in the fellowship I had found a house I could live in with my two dogs. I could afford it, and it was much closer to the meetings I attended regularly.

So there I was in the middle of one of the biggest and scariest changes of my life, and totally amazed and grateful for these steps of recovery. More than ever, I needed the fellowship to

There I was, in the middle of one of the biggest and scariest changes of my life.

help me with what I was going through. I needed to hear again the steps that were saving my life. I needed to be in an atmosphere of recovery, and to give back what I had been given.

But what I saw happening around me was so different from what was happening inside me. I wanted to hear



those wonderful words being read and bask in the healing truth they contained. But instead I heard a lot of yakking outside, and then commotion inside as the "cool and hip" finally decided to join the party. It shocked and upset me to be brought down by the lack of respect those people showed for the gift we have in this program. I let my feelings be heard, loud and clear.

Well, as you might imagine, my little spiel went over like a lead balloon. Another recovering addict lovingly reminded me of the saying, "Live and Let Live" (which only happened to be the bumper sticker on my car). I agree with that saying. I know I probably came on way too strong, especially for someone who

isn't always totally attentive or quiet all the time in meetings. I admit that I sometimes don't always do everything I can to foster an atmosphere of recovery, but I'm trying.

For me the "live" in "Live and Let Live" means to follow the spiritual principles of this program to the best of my ability. That means, for one thing, to sit down and be quiet when a meeting starts, and to participate by listening to the readings and the sharing of others.

The N.A. program is life itself for me. I know this today. But before I can "let live," I have to live. How I live is by letting my gratitude speak by caring and sharing with others the N.A. way. Sometimes my gratitude speaks loudest when I sit down, shut up, and listen.

M.M., California

Fighting the gila monster

I was driving one day in rural Arizona, between Cottonwood and Cornville, when I saw several people in the middle of the road motioning me to slow down and pull over to the shoulder. In the middle of the road there were several people with brooms sweeping something up. A wreck, I thought to myself. So, with time on my hands, I fell back on one of my character defects and began to take their inventories.

There was an old cowboy with his jeans hangin' so low that you could see more than you cared to. He was driving a beat-up old truck that was held together with baling wire. Another, newer truck, a four wheel drive with huge tires and a dirt bike in the back,

It then dawned on me: I had been looking only at these people's differences, not at what they had in common.

must have belonged to the two shirtless young studs with sunglasses. They were checking out two well-endowed teenage girls who must have

been driving daddy's caddy. There was also an older couple wearing polyester driving a Travel-All pulling a trailer with Minnesota license plates.

What an odd group, I thought. Ahh, the brooms must have come from the trailer. Wait, they aren't using those brooms to sweep up glass; they are using them to move a gila monster across the road! (For those of you who may not know, a gila monster is one of only two types of poisonous lizards in the world, both of which live in Arizona, and both of which are protected by state and federal laws.)

Here was a group of people who seemed to have nothing in common

but had banded together for a common goal: to chase that gila monster across the road. It then dawned on me just what I had seen. I had been looking only at these people's differences, not at what they had in common.

Narcotics Anonymous is much like this to me. If I seek to find differences, I'll find them. Maybe I don't like this person's tattoo, or their car, or the way they style their hair. No matter what differences we may have, we still have some very basic things in common. First, our disease: addiction. Second, our recovery. If we keep looking for differences, all we will have in com-

mon is our disease and how we feed it.

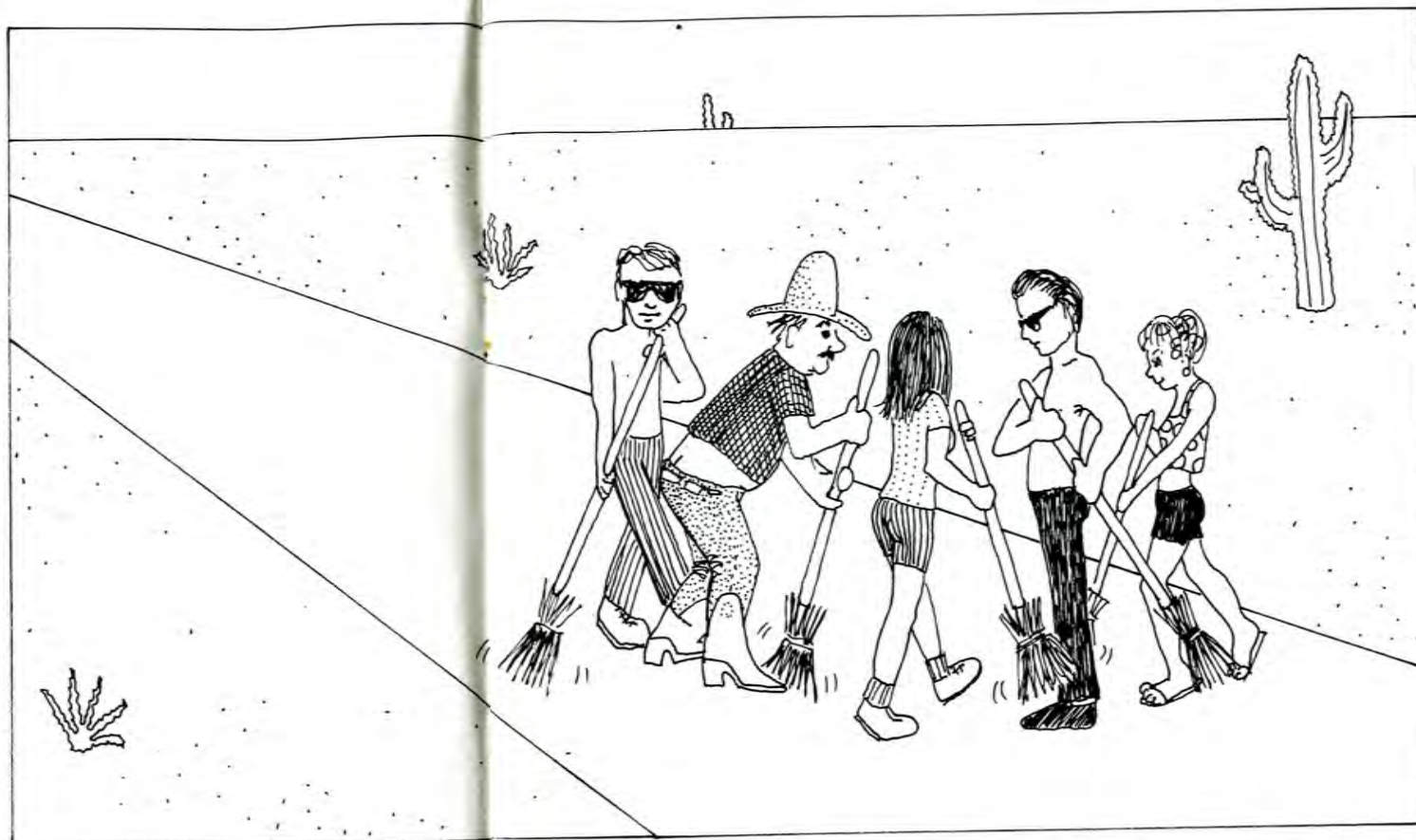
In N.A. we seek each other out; we band together to chase that gila monster (our disease) across the road no matter what other differences we may have. We have a common cause: recovery.

Oh yeah, the gila monster. Well, once those people got it across the road, wouldn't you know, it decided that it liked the other side better and crossed over again.

Remember the First Tradition. Who knows when you might need help getting your gila monster across the road.

D.B., Arizona

N.A. Way • 15



Second Step strength

I'm a strong, hard-headed twenty-eight year old woman who was always taught to stand on her own two feet. But in my first year attempting recovery, going in and out of N.A., I hit about three different bottoms—financial, sexual and emotional.

I first found out that I can't manage money. I blew \$5,000 clean. I almost gave up then, but I kept on crawling because people kept saying, "Keep coming back, it gets better."

Then I got into the relationships. Two of them just about killed me. The men involved would say things nice about me, but I'd only feel worse than before. I hated myself. I kept relapsing, and I couldn't figure out why.

Up until a year ago I was married. For six and a half years that man told me I was ugly and fat. So when these men said nice things, I didn't believe them. Then it hit me: I kept hearing that I should stay out of relationships for a year to get to know myself. HA! I know myself, I thought. If I stay clean I can see when they're no good, then leave.

Well, I saw myself falling apart. I almost lost my daughter, and definitely lost my self-pride. I used men. It really tore me up, what I did to other

people and to myself. I hated myself at almost nine months clean. I used; I couldn't handle the pain and guilt. See, N.A. had been teaching me to love myself and care about others. But I used a newcomer. I tried to sponsor him, and him me, and it all backfired.

So in the end I surrendered to the fact that I'm powerless over my addiction, a disease that tells me to kill anything good, even my program. I had to take four white newcomer chips in a month, but I never gave up. I kept coming back.

Then, finally, I hit another emotional bottom. All the pain got me to where I wanted to give up. I have a two-year old daughter. I felt I couldn't drag her down anymore, so I was going to give her back to her father. Then my sponsor gave me the number of a woman to call in Miami. She said this woman had made it in recovery, even with kids, and that I should call her! I only worked Step One, so I had no hope that I could make it. I knew I wanted to, but that alone wasn't going to do it.

*I had to take
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kept coming back.*

I called the woman. She had the answer. She said that without Step Two at eight months, I was almost guaranteed to fail. She said that without God in my life, what hope was

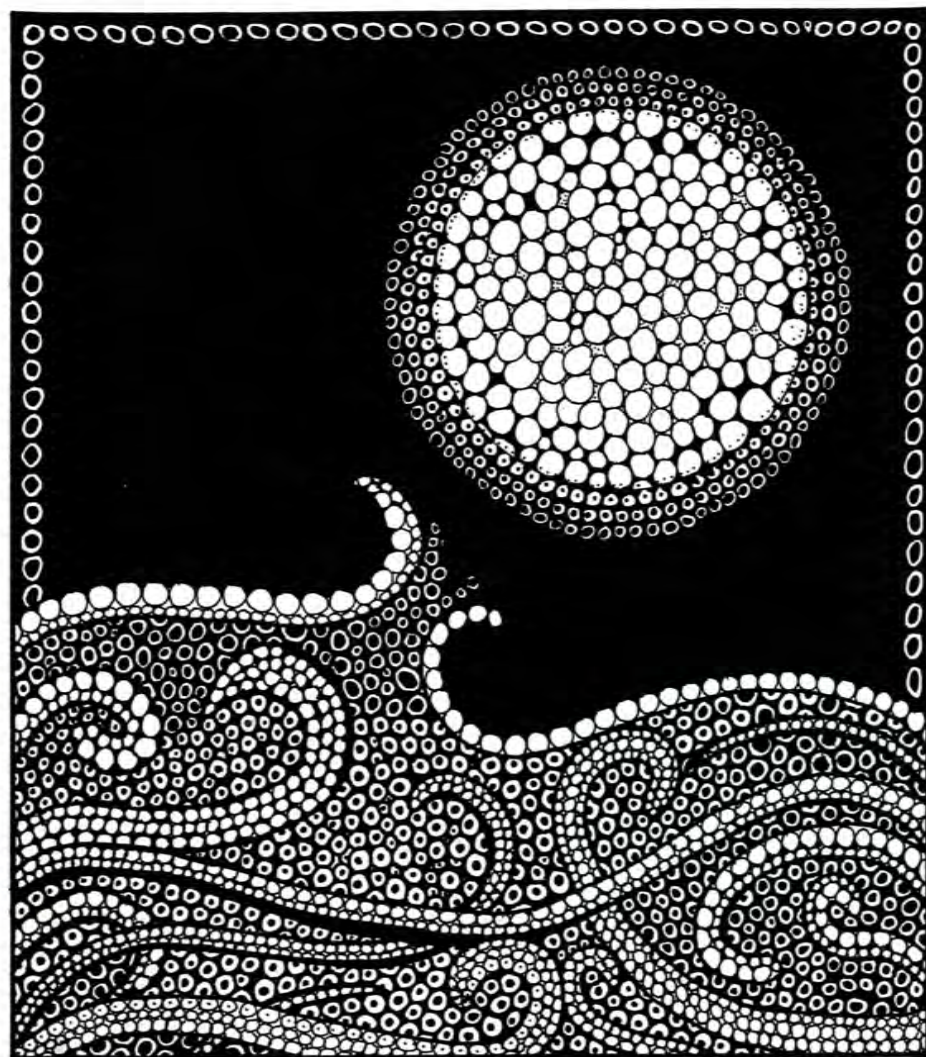
there? She explained why my relationships never worked. Until I had a solid relationship with my Higher Power, God, I had no faith that things would get better. She told me to pray about it all and the answers would come.

Now that I see what I didn't do before, I have so much hope. N.A. has been the only way for me; even when I relapsed, I knew there was hope. I learned through relapsing that I'm not

bad, just an addict doing what any normal addict does without working and living the N.A. program.

People suggest things now, and I listen. I may not like them, but at least they're clean. My way almost killed me. At least I can try doing what they say. I love N.A., and give many thanks to all the members of my N.A. family all over the world for accepting me just as I am.

M.W., Florida



Public
information
committees
carry
the N.A.
message
to the
community

N.A. public information

P.I.—what is it?

Public information work (or P.I.) is N.A.'s way of letting people outside the fellowship know that we're here. P.I. is putting up a phoneline flier at the community center. It's mailing letters to people in the helping professions, speaking to school groups, providing radio and TV announcements about N.A. to local broadcasters, and a whole lot more. P.I. carries the N.A. message to the addict still on the street, and to those in the community at large who may in turn point the still suffering addict in our direction.

Early P.I.

The first World Service Conference Public Information Committee was formed in early 1978. In March of the following year, that committee gave the fellowship a small green-covered booklet, the *N.A. Public Information Kit*.

The purpose of the booklet, as the committee wrote in the introduction, was to "give new and existing groups [less than 400 at the time, over 12,000 today] the information and suggestions necessary for beginning and main-

taining a Twelfth Step phone service, and for getting the word out to the local community about this service."

After that, not much P.I. activity went on at the world level for awhile. Some individual N.A. areas set up phonelines, distributed posters, corresponded with their communities or contacted the local media. But P.I. coordination at the conference level did not resume until 1984.

P.I. reborn

At the 1984 World Service Conference, a new chairperson for the Public Information Committee was elected. We spoke with her recently about the task she faced in establishing a P.I. approach at the conference level.

Kim: Our first feeling was that we should focus on trying to develop tools for the local fellowship to use rather than doing public information at the national or world level. And there was concurrence on this from other members of the committee that I talked to.

We developed an input questionnaire that went out to regions and areas, asking what they needed in the way of public information tools. We gave them a whole list of possible things that they might want to have available. Did they want posters, did they want press releases—what did they want?

From the response that we got, it was real clear that people wanted PSA's [public service announcements for radio and TV] very much. They also wanted a guide to phone services, desperately. It just started getting very clear, what our priorities ought to be.

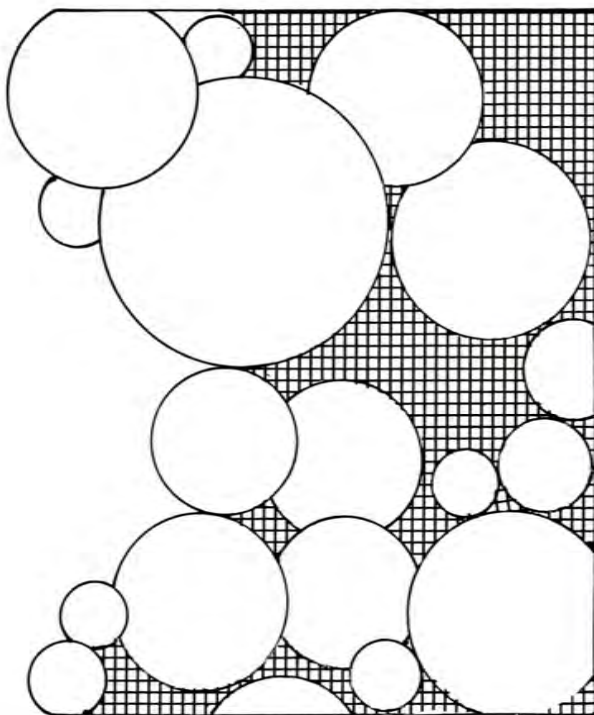
We ended up developing those materials, right down the line, according to those that got the most response from areas and regions. That was really how it happened: we asked the fellowship what they needed; then we did it.

Gathering resources

N.A. Way: In addition to the question-

"People were
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because
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contact
between
them."

"In order to carry the message, P.I. committees needed to establish their credibility."



naires, did you get a look at the materials local committees had developed for their own use?

Kim: Yes. People in the areas and regions were re-inventing the wheel all over the place, simply because they were not in contact with one another. The *Guide to Phoneline Service*, for example, was made from a composite of about three excellent local guides that had been developed in different parts of the U.S. Most of the material was already there, and it was just a matter of getting it in our hands and making it more generic, so that it wasn't specific to just the area that had developed it.

Developing PSA's

N.A. Way: You came on board in April 1984. The committee itself really began its work at an October 1984 meeting in Denver. You presented completed public service announcements (PSA's) just a few months later, at the 1985 conference annual meeting. How was it possible to turn that project

around so quickly?

Kim: I kind of wonder myself! There was tremendous momentum behind us, pushing us to get this done. There was support from the WSC Administrative Committee, from the World Service Office and from the Board of Trustees. It certainly wasn't just the Public Information Committee's effort alone. Everybody really wanted the PSA's. The office was extremely instrumental in facilitating the contract we got with the production company that made the PSA's, and providing the support to make it happen.

It was really an example of what can get done when the incentive is there. I was proud—and I'm still proud—of what the fellowship and world services were able to do in that situation.

The first N.A. census

N.A. Way: Another project that year was the first N.A. census. What was the idea behind that?

Kim: One of the things that every person doing public information heard over and over again when they would approach newspapers or health care professionals was, "Well, how big is N.A.? Are people staying clean in Narcotics Anonymous?" And we'd reply, "Well, of course they are! And gee, we're really growing." "But *how* big are you?" they'd ask. And we wouldn't have an answer.

People working in public information felt it would be very, very useful to have something that would say, we have this many meetings, we have this average clean time, you know, and it's increasing in this way. In order to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, the P.I. committees working at the area and regional level needed to establish credibility, both with the media and with community organizations the committees came in contact with.

N.A. Way: As I recall, the response to the census was pretty good. I read in one of your

The P.I. experience

Steve: My first involvement in P.I. work was when I had about six months clean. I went over to speak at a community center. One of their counselors apparently had some contact with an N.A. member and wanted us to come over and tell them about Narcotics Anonymous. They had a lot of indigents and kids and stuff who came to the community center every day. The staff wanted to know what we could do to help them.

I can still remember it, almost like it was yesterday. There were six of them, and they sat there, and I sat up in the front and told my story, not knowing any other direction to take—I thought that's what I was supposed to do. They were all crying by the end of it, and they all came and gave me hugs and stuff.

With that, I knew that we had a great opportunity. There was just an entire world of people out there who didn't know about us. (cont. next page)

(from prev. page)

And here were people who were in contact with active addicts daily. Some of them had been doing this kind of social work for ten years and didn't know who to look for.

I was just talking today with one of the guys I sponsor. He asked me what the most uplifting feeling was that I'd had in service. I told him it had to have been when I picked this guy up at this phone booth—he'd seen a poster or a PSA or had heard of us somewhere and had called the phoneline.

It was in the early morning hours, about six o'clock, raining, and he was standing there with water dripping off his hair and into his face. I got out of the car, walked up and asked him if he'd had enough. He said yes.

And the best part is that he's clean today, celebrating a couple of years. That first contact with him, that rock-solid proof that P.I. really works in carrying our message to addicts who need it—that was my most uplifting experience in N.A.

reports that almost 8400 individual responses were recorded. All in all, twenty-nine of the thirty-three regions then in existence sent the forms back in.

Kim: Overall, I was very pleased with the response. It was statistically significant, a response that gave us enough information to be able to generalize. In terms of making some kinds of basic assumptions about our fellowship, it was very helpful.

N.A. Way: Were the results ever analyzed?

Kim: Some. But we didn't have the money or the computer resources back then to have gotten as much information as we should have. And just not enough time.

Local P.I.: getting started

Steve, a current member of the Conference P.I. Committee who is also active in his home area's public information efforts, talked with us about what a new committee can start with.

Steve: One of the first things that any committee can do with very few members, even if it's only a group or two, is go out and put up posters providing phoneline or meeting information. They're inexpensive, easy to produce, and anybody can do 'em. All it takes is a little legwork.

Then there's the mailouts—small information packages with cover letters explaining something about Narcotics Anonymous. P.I. committees do mailouts to schools, treatment centers, clergy, judges, like that. But you can't send out two-hundred letters and then not have any sort of follow-up.

Follow-up

N.A. Way: What kind of follow-up?

Steve: Phone calls or personal visits. We found that most of the letters you send go into the circular file. But if you call them and make a personal contact and let them know something's on the way, then they will read it. After it's there, you call them again and ask them if

they got it. They remember you.

The doctors that we got the best response from were those that had been called, and many of them asked on the second call for us to bring by some literature that they could put in their offices. The same thing happened with the judicial system.

Then we started blitzing the radio stations, calling the television stations. We got a couple of PSA's on the radio and a couple on television stations in the area.

And with all the response from the mailings, we started doing more speaking engagements—schools, community groups, things like that. So the mailings—and the follow-ups—really worked well.

PSA's: getting ready

N.A. public service announcements can reach large numbers of people with the recovery message. But there is one thing in particular that must be given attention before a P.I. committee runs PSA's in its community.

Kim: At the time when we first produced the PSA's, phoneline services around the United States were abysmal. They were not really set up in such a way that they could respond to much of anything. And considering that the PSA's were primarily serving as advertisements for the phonelines, that was really a problem. I had traveled around the country and called enough N.A. hotlines and never gotten any answer to know that this could really end up being a black eye for N.A. So that was a real concern of mine.

Swamping the phonelines?

Kim: I was not so much concerned about phonelines being able to handle any tremendous volume of calls as I was that *whatever* volume there was would be responded to, even if it was low.

N.A. Way: Well, it seems to have worked out. From what I've heard, what really counts

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I've gotta
call!’ ”

"By the time an addict is ready, they should already have heard about Narcotics Anonymous."

is how often the PSA's get played on the air. If they are repeated frequently, there is wide, immediate response. And if not so frequently, well, there are *some* calls that come in.

Kim: Yeah, exactly.

Steve spoke with us further about PSA response levels.

N.A. Way: When an area or a region runs a radio or television PSA, does that significantly increase the number of calls the phoneline receives immediately?

Steve: No.

N.A. Way: That's a surprise. Any idea why not?

Steve: Well, I believe that the message we transmit is one that is received slowly in general. It's just like any of our members: when they finally came to that point in their lives where they were ready to quit, usually they had already heard about N.A. a few times from a few different people.

People see or hear the PSA and remember it. They see it again, and it reinforces itself. But I think we thought that they would see the PSA's one time, and immediately they would go, "Gosh, Narcotics Anonymous! I've gotta call!" What really happens is that they see us, and they think about it.

By and large, we've found that the number of calls doesn't increase immediately when the PSA's are run, but the community's general awareness of N.A. does. Somewhere down the line, that causes a friend, a relative, a co-worker of an addict to say, "Gee, maybe you could look for help." And they look us up in the phone book.

Reaching out to the press

Steve: For years, the order of the day was that when contacted we would respond, but we would not go out and initiate contact. When we started doing that, we found that people were very receptive to Narcotics Anonymous. They

would say, "Gee, that's great! We didn't even know you were there!"

The current *Guide to Public Information* offers quite a lot of material on how to deal with the media. Most of those materials were designed to lead the public information committee member by the hand, step by step, through each phase of media work.

Detailed instructions on writing and distributing a news release, samples of the kinds of questions reporters might ask (along with appropriate responses), even a section entitled "Some Insight About Reporters" help ease the fear of the unknown for addicts unfamiliar with this kind of service. And detailed contingency plans—outlines of what to do and whom to contact when someone calls from the press—are laid out.

In addition to the current P.I. guidebook, a new media information kit being produced by the WSC P.I. Committee is close to completion. It may be ready for approval at the next World Service Conference annual meeting. The kit provides additional material for use by local P.I. committees in responding to media inquiries about N.A.

The WSO assists in the fellowship's P.I. work by providing background information, when requested, for reports which mention N.A. As a result, awareness and knowledge of N.A. are slowly growing.

N.A. on exhibition

Presenting N.A. at international conferences is an area of outreach that is expanding this year. N.A. was involved in a few such conferences last year, such as the Non-Governmental Organizations conferences in Hong Kong and Honolulu [see the November 1987 and April 1988 issues of the *N.A. Way* magazine for features on these events], and the Anglo-American Congress meeting in the United Kingdom this spring.

"We found that people were very receptive to Narcotics Anonymous."

"I could bring my recovery to my service work, but service couldn't replace the steps. Not ever."

N.A. literature displays and other informational activities are being arranged for several more international conferences in the months ahead, including a professional convention in Norway. Contacts made through these conferences continue to stimulate interest in the N.A. program from countries which currently have few or no N.A. meetings.

Locally, many public information committees routinely put up N.A. displays at health fairs and professional gatherings, often with the coordination and support of both the WSC P.I. Committee and the WSO.

Attraction or promotion?

Steve: The difference between attraction and promotion is in keeping the presentation of our message very simple. We state who we are and where you can find us; we stay away from promising anybody anything; and we don't promote ourselves as being better than somebody else. Our materials all say pretty much the same thing, simply, directly: if you've got a drug problem, call Narcotics Anonymous.

Personal rewards of P.I.

Kim: There isn't a lot of personal recognition in public information. It's not the kind of thing that you get a lot of thanks for. It doesn't have that tremendous gratification of sitting at an H&I meeting talking face-to-face with other addicts—and there's nothing that gives me energy quite like that does. Public information is a lot of behind the scenes mailing, paperwork, that kind of thing, and it takes a special kind of person to do it.

One of the things that I have really learned in P.I. is the difference between service work and recovery—that my recovery was in my meetings, it was not in my service work. I could bring my recovery to the service work, but the service work couldn't ever replace the steps—ever.

VIEWPOINT



Second class member?

At the risk of making some of you angry, I still go to "The Other Fellowship." I guess, according to some people, that makes me not quite a "real N.A. member."

I admit, I get defensive. I feel judged and criticized. I'm particularly irritated when fellow members look at me condescendingly, sigh, and say, "Keep coming back."

I understand, accept and wholeheartedly embrace the N.A. message of unity. I'm not "cross-addicted." "I'm an addict" says it all for me. I just don't get what I need when I attend N.A. meetings exclusively.

For a while I tried to blame my "double life" on the fact that I live in a rural area. Then it was babysitters. Schedules. Anything. I did not want to admit that, when I attended only N.A. meetings, I felt a little crazier.

I feel a need to attend meetings where there is mature recovery. When I share that, people sometimes (usually) tell me that I'm being arrogant,

that we all only have today. While I know that my primary purpose is to stay away from drugs today, I have also been taught that recovery is progressive.

Time is important. By the grace of God, I don't have the same problems I had when I walked through the doors of N.A. I don't think about killing myself, or panic at the thought of going to a doctor's office. Those who have come ahead of me tell me that I won't have these problems most days—provided I continue to do the things that have worked for me since day one.

When I asked for help, people who had been down the path before me shared experience, strength and hope with me. I was told specifically what others had done to move from where I was into another stage of recovery.

If I truly accept the First Step, then I must believe that what worked for me then is what will work for me now. I need the people who have been here before me to share what works for them.

I know that they exist in this area. Why won't they come to Narcotics Anonymous anymore? Have we driven them all away by insinuating that they're not really N.A. members when they say and do things that we aren't yet mature enough to understand? If I can't find those people within our

fellowship, then I have a responsibility to go elsewhere for that part of my recovery. Otherwise, it won't be long before I have nothing to give away.

Why am I so sure that N.A. in my area is not where I'll find mature recovery? Because we're hung up on form rather than content. Just before my first anniversary, one of my first sponsors suddenly died. I went to a meeting that was, at the time, my home group, and I shared. That night's topic was "unity/language." All present identified themselves as addicts, yet not one member of my group could tear themselves away from the topic and acknowledge my intense grief. I can't begin to tell you how much that hurt.

Although the language was "correct," I did not come away with the N.A. message that night. The actions of my fellow group members told me that using the right words mattered much more than my sadness at losing a dear friend, my fears about finding

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my way without my sponsor and the emptiness I felt about my first milestone.

It has been a few years and the "issue" is language—again. Recently, someone complained to me that a certain person shouldn't be allowed to

chair because he still used "street language." Patience, tolerance and gratitude that someone had achieved ninety days clean and was able to chair should have settled that issue.

I hear outbursts and anger about people who use "A.A. language" instead of hope, encouragement and enthusiasm for the fact that another recovering addict has developed enough of a crack in his denial system to want to recover in Narcotics Anonymous.

Mature recovery speaks the language of the heart, not asking anything of a newcomer except that she try not to pick up one drug for one day. If we can't help someone to do that, then what good is it if they understand anything at all about a unified message?

Maybe it's my fault. I'm not too good at placing principles before personalities. I just don't know what to do when I see the principles that saved my life being trampled on in the name of N.A. unity. I only know of one way to "guard the traditions" without becoming a crusader: that's by working the steps to the best of my ability and trusting a Higher Power with the rest.

As I have grown in my recovery, I have come to believe that the twelve step recovery programs have a unified message—individually or collectively. My second sponsor taught me that *there is only one message*: that, as a result of these steps, we've had a spiritual awakening. The most critical part of awakening a spirit is to stop medicating it. I hope that it won't be much longer before I can count on that message in *every* meeting I attend. Does it really matter that much *exactly* how we say it?

A.P., Massachusetts

From our readers



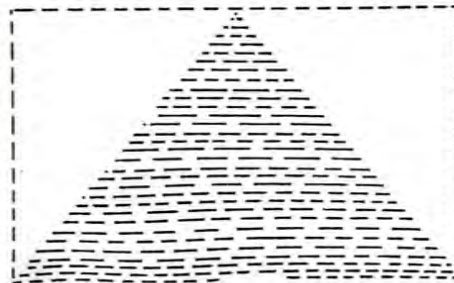
Life in the clean lane

I've always been afraid of really strong feelings, almost as though they would do some kind of permanent damage. Like I could never return from them.

Last night I rode around frantically, getting upset, scared, trying to find a particular N.A. meeting. I really, really wanted to get there, to stand up at the end and get that hug when they say "multiples of years" at the instant when my fourth year began.

But I was beginning to convince myself that it didn't matter. It was okay to miss the meeting. "God's will," you know, "acceptance." But then I realized that all that was in self-defense against being sad and disappointed and lonely and alone. So I guess I kind of tried to just let myself feel it, and I was trembling and crying. I dropped my bike in the parking lot when I got there.

Finally, after wandering around the little campus where the meeting was being held, I saw a familiar face



through a window. I went into the meeting and listened and talked and got my hug.

And you know what else? I was sitting in my apartment tonight and that little feeling of wanting somebody's company started hurting, and I didn't ignore it. I didn't convince myself that it didn't matter. It does matter! I'm not alone anymore; I don't have to live like I am.

What a trip this is! Life in the clean lane. It *does* keep getting better.

J.D., New Mexico

Identify, don't compare

I am an addict. I have been gratefully and humbly clean in this fellowship for five years. Throughout my recovery, my Higher Power has put many different addicts in my path to share with and learn from. We all have different war stories, different drugs of choice, different lifestyles and different problems, but what binds me so lovingly to all of you are the feelings we've shared throughout our recovery and the tools we have to deal with those feelings.

I may not be able to relate to the situation of a minor miracle (a recovering addict under the age of twenty-one) being upset at his parents for demanding an early curfew, but I can understand his feelings of resentment. I may not be able to relate to the situation of a recovering mother suf-

fering from "child burnout," but I can relate to her feelings of powerlessness.

I was told when I came into this fellowship to identify, don't compare. This fundamental truth has probably helped me more than anything else in my recovery. My disease still tries to isolate me from other addicts by focusing on all our differences. What keeps me feeling a part of this fellowship, instead of apart from, is my willingness to see past all the different situations we're in and zero in on the feelings we share.

I know from experience that the Twelve Steps of N.A. will help me sort out, identify, and deal with all the feelings that my disease still tries to camouflage or deny. Today, if I really listen to another addict share, I can sort out and identify the feelings he is experiencing in his situation. I am then able to share my experience, strength and hope with him and help him deal with those common feelings.

The greatest feeling in this fellowship is when another addict, whether he be young, old, black, white, male, female, straight or gay, looks me in the eyes and says, "I know how you're feeling, because I've felt that way before, and this is what worked for me..."

So, my family of recovering addicts: please see past my lifestyle or situation and hear my feelings when I share. I need you. That is how I recover.

Anonymous, Tennessee

No matter what

Warmest greetings from Thorne Bay, Alaska—or, as I refer to it on less spiritual days, "Hell on Earth."

I am a temporary loner (four months). I found N.A. recovery in

Fargo, North Dakota, and continued it in Washington, D.C., and now Alaska. Perhaps the greatest gift I've found in my recovery is hope. The idea that *no matter what*—I can stay clean. Furthermore, *no matter what*—I can lead a happy life. If my attitude is on the spiritual side of life I can face anything and I can face it anywhere. Even in "Hell on Earth" Alaska.

This is probably bold talk for a guy who has the benefit of lots of meetings on his home ground and won't be a loner for very long. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it applies across the board.

It is popular in my home area to preach the essential nature of attending at least seven meetings per week. I would find this dogma irritating if it weren't so laughable. I believe that my recovery, my life, and my happiness depend directly on my self-honesty and my spiritual attitude more than on a quota of meetings to attend. If this were not the case, loners couldn't possibly recover.

I have a very serious disease—addiction. It will hound me until I am dead. But I am involved in a wonderful program for recovery. And we do recover. Narcotics Anonymous can raise us beyond a day-to-day struggle to stay clean. I guess what I'm rambling about is my belief that the variety of tools in the program (spirituality, meetings, steps, sponsorship, literature), when applied with vigilant honesty, offers a life of recovery from addiction that can be enjoyed no matter how many meetings a member is able to or chooses to attend. The possibilities for growth in N.A. truly are boundless, and the paths for this growth infinite.

M.J., Alaska

Comin' up



BAHAMAS: Nov. 4-6, 1988; 1st Bahamas Area Convention; Sheraton Grand Hotel, P.O. Box SS 6307, Nassau, (809) 326-2011; N.A., P.O. Box CB 11767, Nassau, Bahamas

FLORIDA: Oct. 7-10, 1988; 5th Keys Recovery Convention; Marriott Casa Marina, Reynolds & Flagler, Key West, (800) 228-9290; Key Recovery Group, P.O. Box 4664, Key West, FL 33040

2) Nov. 17-20, 1988; 7th Annual Serenity in the Sun Convention; Palm Hotel, 630 Clearwater Park Rd., W. Palm Beach; Helpline (407) 533-3778; Serenity 7, P.O. Box 3151, W. Palm Beach, FL 33402

IRELAND: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 3rd Annual Irish Convention; N.A. Ireland, P.O. Box 1368, Sheriff Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

KANSAS: Feb. 17-19, 1989; Second Mid-America Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Holiday Convention Center, Salina, (913) 823-1739; Mid-America Convention, P.O. Box 383, Salina, KS 67401

NEBRASKA: Oct. 7-9, 1988; 5th Nebraska Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Northeast, 5250 Cornhusker Hwy., Lincoln; NRCNA-5, P.O. Box 80091, Lincoln, NE 68501-0091

NEVADA: Jun. 23-25, 1989; 2nd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; Nugget Hotel, Sparks; phoneline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1191

NORTH DAKOTA: Oct. 22, 1988; 7th Annual Fargo-Morehead Banquet; Oak Manor Hotel, I-94 and US-81, Fargo; Fargo-Morehead ASC, P.O. Box 3243, Fargo, ND 58108

OHIO: Oct. 14-16, 1988; 1st Ohio Regional 12 Step Retreat; Tar Hollow State Park, Four Hills Resident Camp, Laurelville; Ohio Regional Office, 66 E. 15th Avenue, Columbus, OH

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 6th Annual Tri-State Regional Convention; Vista International Hotel, Pittsburgh, (412) 281-3700; Tri-State RSO, P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

QUEBEC: Oct. 7-9, 1988; 1st Quebec Bilingual Convention; Crown Plaza Hotel, 420 Sherbrooke

St. West, Montreal (514) 842-6111; Quebec Convention, P.O. Box 141, Succursale Youville, Montreal, Quebec, H2P 2V4

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 11-13, 1988; Serenity Festival; Landmark Best Western, Myrtle Beach; Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

2) Dec. 3, 1988; "Just for Today" Mini-Conference; Hilton Head Inn; Mini-Conference, P.O. Box 1837, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

TENNESSEE: Nov. 23-27, 1988; 6th Volunteer Regional Convention; Garden Plaza Hotel, 211 Mockingbird Ln., Johnson City, (615) 929-2000; VRC-6, P.O. Box 353, Greeneville, TN 37744

TEXAS: Oct. 14-16, 1988; Texas Unity Convention, Whitney; Texas Unity (Whitneys), 1612 Second Street, League City, TX 77573

2) Nov. 4-6, 1988; Best Little Region Convention; Koko Palace, 5101 Avenue Q, Lubbock TX 79412; N.A. Helpline (806) 799-3950; BLRCNA-1, P.O. Box 3013, Lubbock, TX 79452-3013

3) Mar. 24-26, 1989; 4th Lone Star Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Riverwalk, 123 Losoya, San Antonio 78205, (512) 222-1234; LSRCA-4, 2186 Jackson Keller, Suite 327, San Antonio, TX 78213

VIRGINIA: Jan. 6-8, 1989; 7th Annual Virginia Convention; Williamsburg Hilton and National Conference Center; Virginia Convention, P.O. Box 1373, Hampton, VA 23661

WASHINGTON: Oct. 7-9, 1988; Eleventh Pacific Northwest Convention; Red Lion Inn at the Quay, Vancouver, (800) 547-8010; Helpline (206) 573-3066; Pacific-Northwest Conv., P.O. Box 5158, Vancouver, WA 98668

WEST VIRGINIA: Oct. 21-23, 1988; 7th Tradition Convention; Cedar Lakes, Ripley (304) 372-7000; Convention, 2408 9th Avenue, Huntington, WV 25703

WISCONSIN: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 5th Wisconsin State Convention; Ramada Airport Inn, Milwaukee, (800) 272-6232; WSNAC-5, P.O. Box 1637, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1637

THE N.A. Way

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

*My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share with others
the N.A. way*

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 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 belong to N.A.—there are no fees or dues. The only requirement for membership is a 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.

For more information about N.A., see your local phone directory, or write us at the address inside.