

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

November 1988

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Are you living with
a bag over your head?

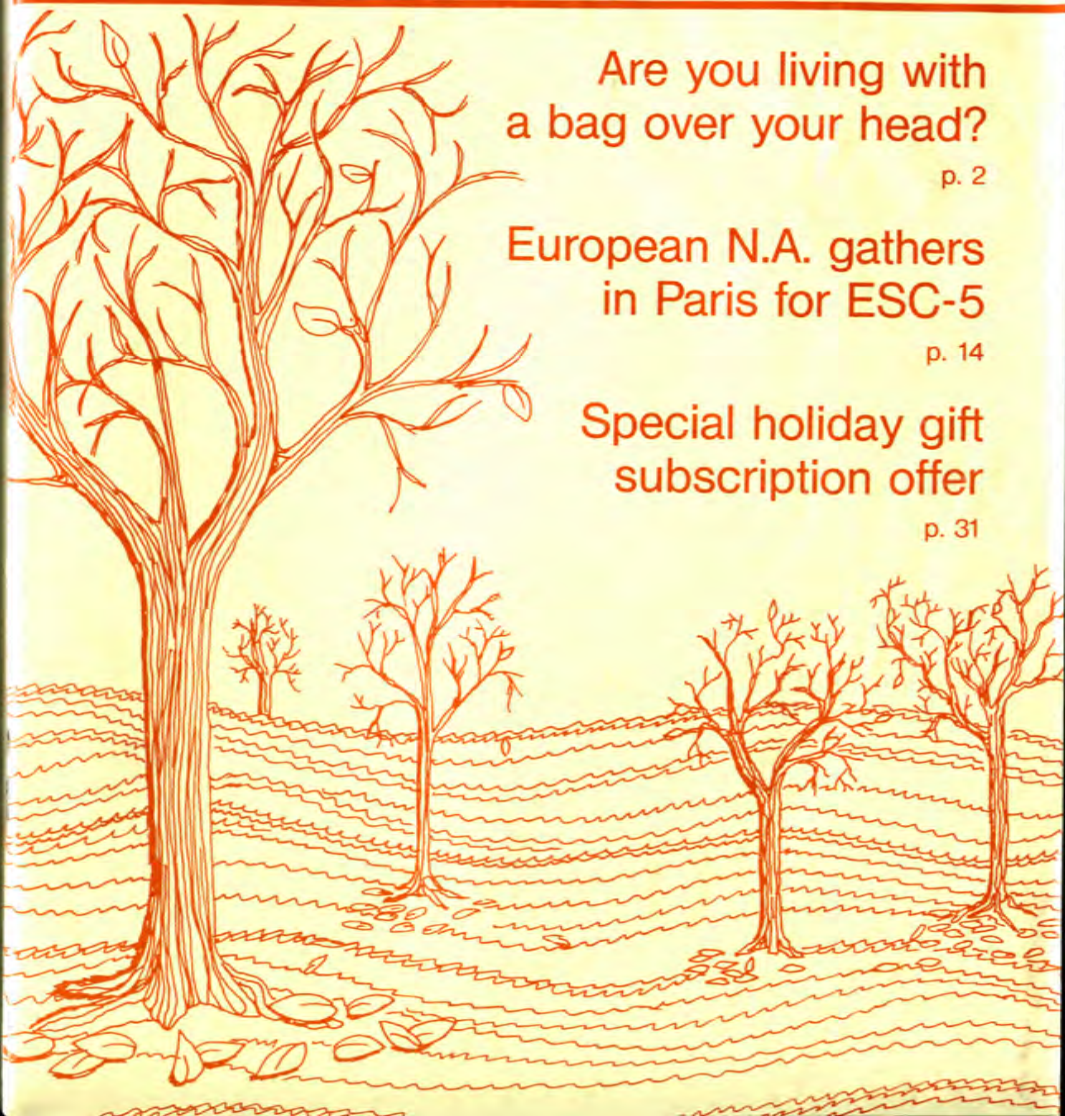
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European N.A. gathers
in Paris for ESC-5

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Special holiday gift
subscription offer

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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.

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M A G A Z I N E

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volume six, number eleven

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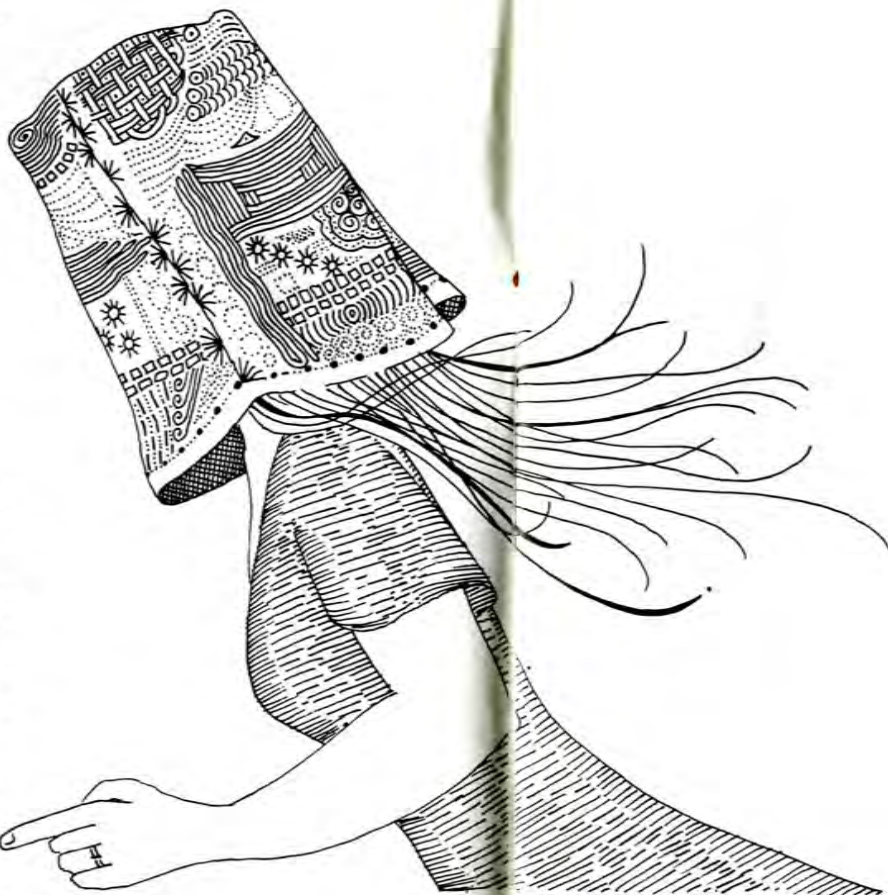
The bag of many colors

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful woman who wore a bag over her head. It was a beautiful bag, woven from the threads of many lives and many places. There were the violet threads of her awakening spirit and the kelly greens her lovers added and, of course, some golden ones that her son had given her. There were black threads, too. Greed, jealousy, death and despair were part of her bag as well. No single color or pattern was exceptional, of itself, but together they were spectacular.

And people would pity her as she passed. "Woman," they would say, "why do you wear this bag on your head? Why don't you let us see you?"

And she would usually reply, sadly, "It's all there, right on the bag, there's no need to show you more; there isn't anything else." And although she spoke clearly, her answers were muffled through the bag. Nobody heard her.

Other people envied her. "Beautiful woman, how fortunate you are to wear that exquisite bag on your head. The



colors must be much brighter from the inside."

This made her feel lonely. It was dark in the bag. And sometimes hard to breathe. She wondered how anyone could envy her view.

One day, she met someone without questions for her. Or judgements. No talk about her bag, no inaccuracies offered about her soul. Just the simple statement, "I used to wear a bag on my head. I don't anymore, and it's different." Then quiet. She was quiet too. She didn't ever remember knowing that she had a choice about whether or not to wear the bag.

She didn't hear that voice again. Not for a long time. For nine long, sad years she thought about "different." She had no idea what "different" meant. It had never been "different."

When next they met, the question was simply, "Would you like me to help you remove your bag?" And then, when she hesitated, "It will be different. You probably won't like it at first, but give it some time. Then, if you still don't like it, you can put your bag back on." So she agreed to try.

As they lifted the bag off her head, the air began to smell strange. The light was too bright and the noises

were too loud. Everything was too much and too fast.

The woman had few choices. She could jump back into her bag. Or she could sit quietly beside the road for awhile and wait for it to stop going so fast. She waited and waited. And waited some more.

The strange sights and sounds became a little more familiar. And friendly. Then they started to make sense. She began to accept and enjoy them.

"Woman, why do you wear this bag on your head? Why don't you let us see you?"

One day, she picked up her bag. Her impulse was to wear it. But she knew that she couldn't go back inside. She looked it over carefully. She saw the violet threads of her awakening spirit and the kelly greens her lovers had left and the golden ones her son had brought. And she saw greed and jealousy and death and despair. She saw how their blackness improved the design. Sharpened the colors.

The beautiful woman turned the tapestry bag over and over in her hands. She examined every thread. And when she came to the place where her eyes had been, she stopped. It was all black.

How good it is to know that even when all I can see is black, it is only part of the pattern. I am grateful to you all for showing me the colors.

A.P., Massachusetts

An unconventional Fifth Step

One member finds the freedom of self-acceptance through honest sharing

Step Five: We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Our Basic Text starts out describing this step by saying, "The Fifth Step is the key to freedom." I have taken this step and have been given this freedom. It is far ranging and all encompassing. My desire to do drugs was taken away years ago, but this freedom that I have obtained goes beyond not having to use drugs. Today, I have the freedom to feel and to live.

For years, even while in the fellowship, emotions bounced around in me. They were strong, intense and mostly negative. I felt some anger, but mostly I felt a lot of depression; like I was not good enough, never would be, and that I was behind in the game of life without a chance of catching up to the rest of the world.

The emotions were unpredictable. I might feel good in the morning, but if someone said the wrong thing at work, I would be upset the remainder of the day. However, I did have some emotional highs—usually they would keep me up most of the night, and then I would be dragging around the next day.

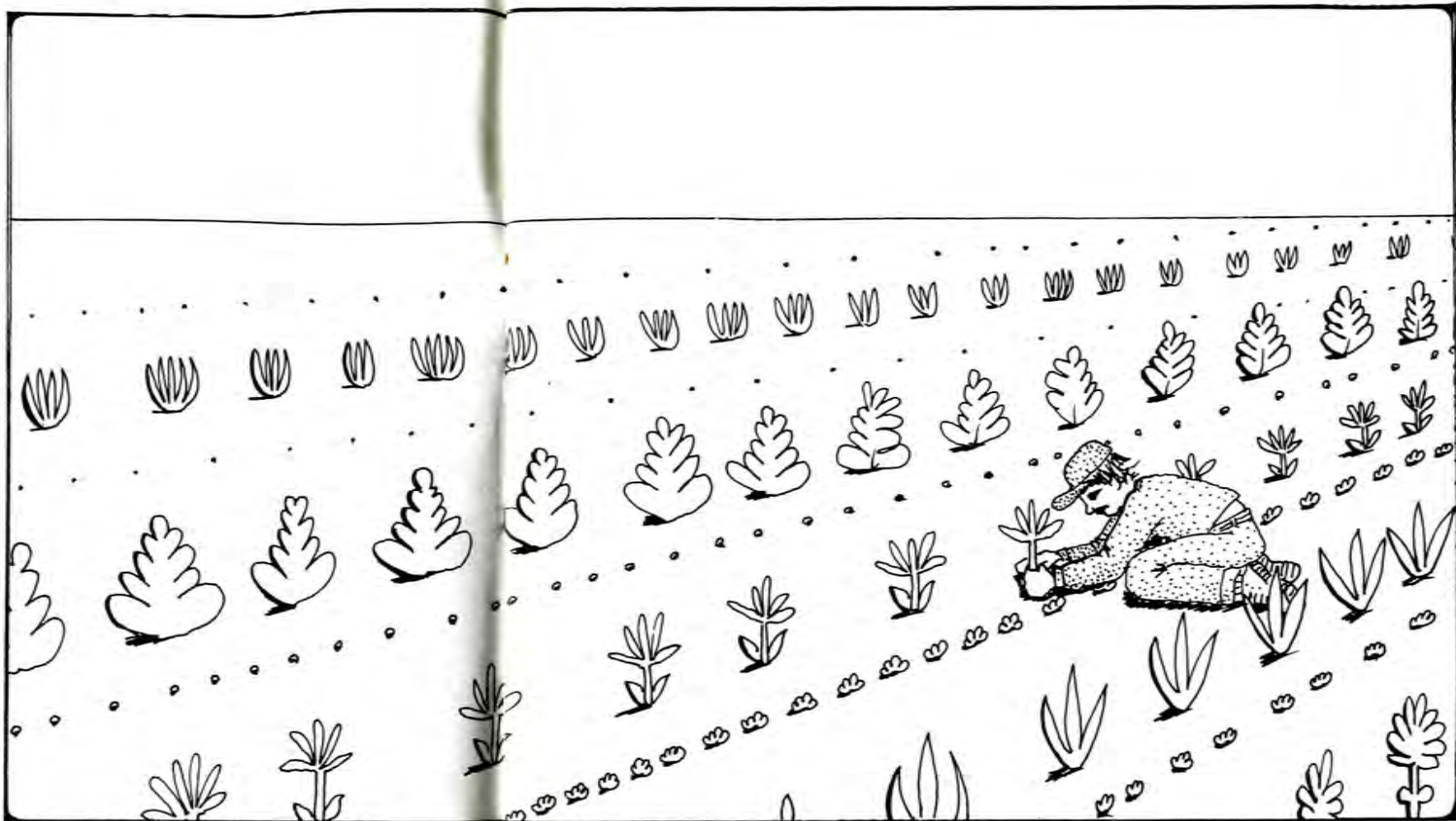
Before working this step, I was not free to live. Guilt hammered me every day. I believed I was in the wrong profession. I thought that I chose the wrong hobbies. Most of all, being a male, I felt enormous guilt for not innately knowing how to quickly and easily fix cars, appliances, and plumbing problems as well as remodel houses. When something broke down around me, I felt fear. I wanted to crawl into a hole and hide. If I did go with my interests—gardening, reading, jogging, doing judo—I felt guilty. I partook of my hobbies, but I really did not have the freedom to completely enjoy them.

My life is different today. Step Five

seemed to work miracles in my life, so I'm going to share how I did it so that someone else can benefit from my experience.

My Step Five was different than what many members take today. I came into the twelve step programs before there were many meetings and before it was fashionable to go to a rehab. I was clean for some time before there was even a single N.A. meeting in the state.

Few people went to any type of counselors, so I did not have the help of one. Initially, I admitted my wrongs at or after meetings. Most meetings were small—less than a dozen members. So one sort of had to do a lot of



talking. I did even more talking at speaker meetings because it seemed that speakers were always needed. In my early days, I always had a problem to dump on someone after a meeting.

I felt wonderful around program people. They understood; they were not judgmental. They filled me with hope and a sense of trust. Most of all, I felt unconditional love. They did not care whether I was black or white, rich or poor, stupid or bright. They did not even seem to care that I was afraid of fixing my car or that I was well over a hundred pounds overweight. Our members seemed to be into loving, not condemning.

Back then, my method of doing Step Five was simply to share anything that bothered me. At times, we shared for over an hour after meetings. When I admitted these terrible things about myself, others shared similar feelings. Their sharing made me feel not quite so bad, not quite so unique.

Before working this step, guilt hammered me every day.

For a number of years, my gut-level sharing at meetings gave me strong, positive emotions. However, my life outside the meetings remained more or less unmanageable. I still drove a beat-up old car, my house roof still leaked, daydreams of suicide still haunted me. But I kept coming back because I felt good at the meetings. The people at the meetings gave me hope.

They say that depression is when you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. The people in the rooms showed me the light. Of course, a day later, I would forget where the light was, but I went back and they showed me again where to find the light.

My crude, simple methods with the Fifth Step kept me clean. Also, my life slowly improved: I patched up the roof, I bought a new car, and I seldom thought of suicide. My guilt eased up. I took time for my hobbies and received much pleasure from them. I entered many races—5K's, 10K's. I continued learning judo and started to go up the belt ranks. In the spring, my gardens were full of beautiful flowers; in the summer they were full of watermelons. However, my job still had its ups and downs.

I believe a good Fifth Step is based on a good Fourth Step. I have always done a great deal of writing. I have a stack of notebooks filled with inventories. I seem to get mixed up with my thoughts. On paper they become clear.

At some point in my recovery my sponsor died, and I had to find another. As luck would have it, I met a fellow who was in the same profession as I was, who had similar childhood problems, and most of all, who was a strong believer in the steps. Soon after, he became my sponsor. I spent many hours doing Fifth Step work with him. Some major life problems—a winter car wreck, the death of my alcoholic father—forced me to cling to my sponsor. We have grown quite close and we keep in contact despite our busy schedules.

I now see distinct advantages in

dumping Fifth Step material in a single session to a single person instead of piecemeal to dozens of people. A single person can help one to dig deeper to see the connecting threads between one's different problems over the years.

My particular circumstances growing up had given me a slanted, limited conception of how a male was supposed to think and act. I believed that a male should be a good, mean football player who was loud, vulgar, and greasy from fixing cars. Males were not supposed to read books or raise flowers. By helping me to realize the effects of my upbringing, my sponsor gave me freedom from guilt when I do things like reading or cooking.

At present, I am gaining acceptance of myself and others; I am becoming more accepting of both my own and others' feelings. People should be able to have their own feelings and interests. Everyone has a right to a favorite color. There is no one "right" color. In a similar fashion, there is no one "right" hobby or interest. I do not have to be an expert mechanic today. I do not have to be loud and vulgar; I am allowed to be gentle and peaceful.

Looking back in hindsight, I feel that what may have brought me this far, even though I did not have the opportunity to go to a rehab or a counselor, was that I had willingness. I tried to do what they told me. They said to go to meetings, and so I went to meetings. They said to read the literature, and so I read it over and over. They said to work the steps or die, and so I tried to work the steps.

My journey in the program was not a short, quick sprint to the top of

human efficiency and accomplishment. Rather, my journey has been more like an obstacle course with monsters at every turn. But throughout, I have always felt that people in the program were cheering me on, helping me around the obstacles, and teaching me to defeat my monsters. My trip in the program has not brought me to the top of society. Instead, it has allowed me to become comfortable with who I am.

My method of doing Step Five was simply to share anything that bothered me.

I am grateful for being free today. As a young adult, I was locked up in a mental ward and had my mind locked away for many years with prescription drugs. I felt that there was something wrong with my brain, so wrong that it had to be chained up with medicine.

My use of drugs, which included alcohol, caused me to gain over a hundred pounds. When I weighed three-hundred pounds, I lost the freedom of participating in physical events. The gift of freedom has enabled me to earn a black belt in judo, run twenty-six mile marathons, and participate in a triathlon (swimming, biking, and running), as well as raise a garden full of flowers.

I feel a part of the human race today. I feel grateful to be a part of the N.A. fellowship. My mission in life is to work with others in the N.A. program to help the suffering addict.

J.S., New York

Surrendering

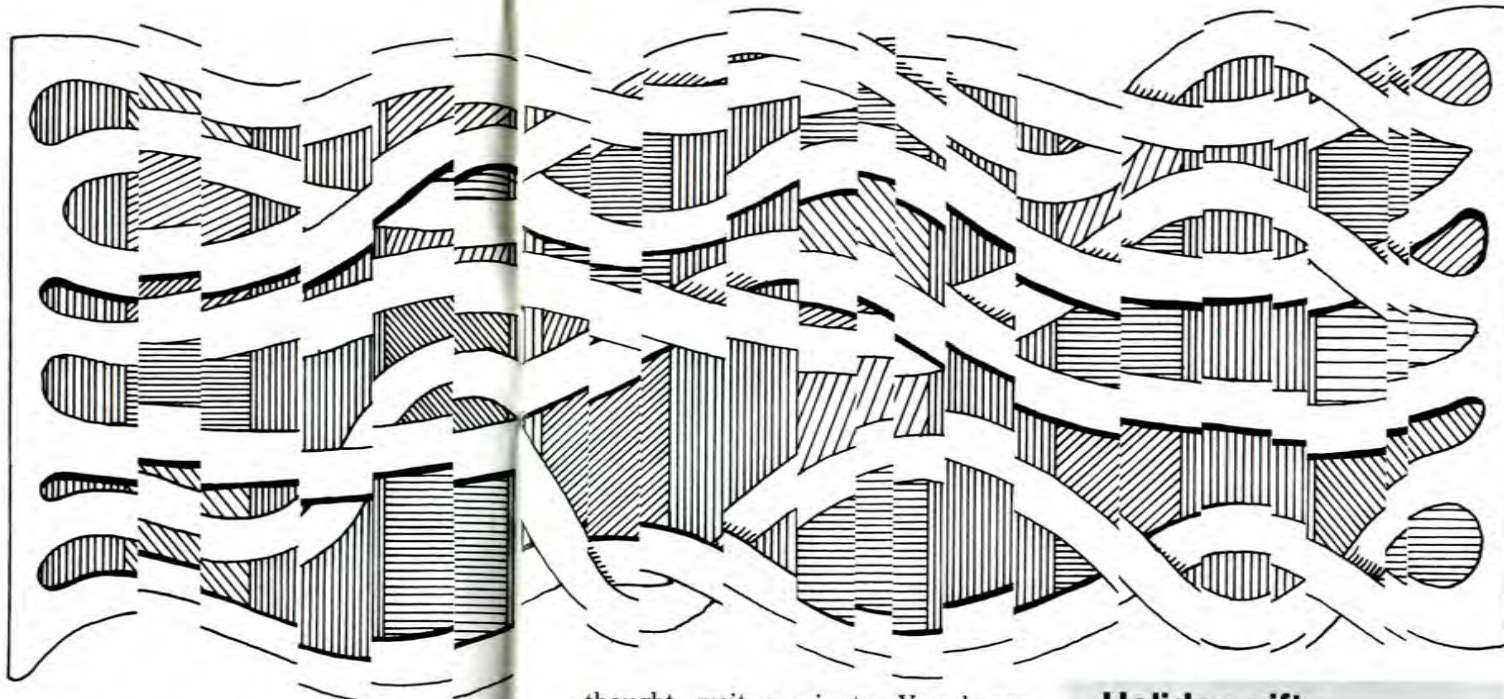
There I was, on a battlefield all by myself. I felt like I was alone, fighting for my sanity and my recovery. I was sick and tired of using drugs, but more than that, I was real sick and tired of myself and I didn't know how to change.

I felt so lost and scared and insecure, the same way I felt when I used drugs. I knew then that I didn't want to use anymore, but I didn't know how to surrender. *Surrender??* To what, to whom, to where? "To a higher power, to God, to the program, to your sponsor," I kept hearing from other recovering addicts in the N.A. fellowship.

"Keep coming back. It'll work, if you work it." I kept hearing that echoed in those rooms, and I wondered what it all meant. I knew somehow that I had finally found a home, a place where I truly belonged. "I'm an addict" was a very scary thing for me to admit the first time, but I knew that my disease—my ego—had defeated me, and I had to finally give in.

I had to get down on my knees and actually start praying. I had to start getting a conscious contact with God as I understood him. I had to believe in a power greater than myself to restore me to sanity.

I still didn't really know what it all meant. All I knew was that I loved each and every one of those people in those rooms, and I knew that those



people really loved me. They weren't there to give me a line of bull, or something I could use to cover up my feelings. Instead, they were giving me what they called "the tools of recovery" to help me identify my feel-

**I knew that I didn't
want to use
anymore, but I
didn't know how to
surrender.**

ings and deal with them instead of running and hiding from both them and myself.

I was told when I came into the program, "You have to give up your playmates, your playgrounds and your playthings." At least that's what I heard. This sounded so hard (and it still does) because I missed the old friends I had used with. But then I

thought, wait a minute. You know, those people never really loved me for who I was inside. They claimed to at the time, but all through those years of using, I never knew me, I never understood me, I never liked me. Well, I thought, it's about time to start learning.

I also heard that this program teaches us how to *live*, and I know that's true. Before I came into this program I was learning how to *die*. I lived dangerously. I was a menace to society and hurt many people, but most of all I hurt myself.

I didn't want to go on hurting myself anymore, so I thought, *surrender*. Surrender means "to give oneself up as to an enemy," and that's exactly what I had been to myself—an enemy. I had to learn to surrender, to stop fighting with that enemy inside, and change her into a peaceful, loving friend.

L.B., California

Holiday gift subscriptions

Been wondering what to give that special friend over the holidays? He says eighteen Serenity Prayer plaques will probably do him for a while? Well, here is a chance to subscribe to the N.A. Way for yourself at our regular rate, and get a subscription for your friend at a 20% savings. The total cost for both is \$27 US, \$35 Canadian—a savings of more than 35% off the cover price! What will you and your friend be getting? New N.A. recovery stories, new features on N.A. service and N.A. growth, new viewpoints on today's N.A. issues—a new meeting of your N.A. Way home group every month. See the special order form on page 31 for details.

Working with a sponsor

I'm a newcomer, and I have a sponsor who is heavily involved in service work. She told me to wait sixty days to get involved in service, and I did. I found I like service work. I like to know about the history and workings of the N.A. Fellowship.

My sponsor is hard and makes me deal with my feelings of pain and anger, when they are in my face. My sponsor is the one who keeps me going at times when I'm out of it. I like the way she makes me work the steps because I don't always look at it the way I should. I'm learning things about myself just from working with my sponsor. I do trust her and feel close to her. I can talk to her.

The bad dreams of hurting myself and harming people in my addiction are happening again, and she is there for me. She has taken me to RSC, and we went on an N.A. retreat together. I learned I can handle being around large groups of people. The first trip I took I just wanted to be around my sponsor because I was afraid to meet new people. During the trip to that retreat, it didn't upset me to be away from her because she had the blind faith in me.

When we are alone, she asks what I learned. At times I feel I may not give her the answer she wants, but I can give her an answer to the best of my ability at that time.

At times it scares me when I share with her because I feel she will think less of me, but she doesn't. My sponsor tells me it's all right not to

like myself because I don't really know myself. I'm happy after sharing with her. At times there's not a monster in my life after talking with her. I like my sponsor, and I feel safe with her. At times it's like I'm a kid and scared and she tells me it's okay.

My sponsor has put me in service work, and that's fine because I want to give back what the N.A. program has

given me in the way of a new life. The program has given me life, from eight years of being dead and thirteen years of killing myself through addiction. I want to live again thanks to the program.

Sure, dealing with emotions scares the hell out of me, but at least I'm feeling again and I'm learning to deal with feelings, besides loving people freely, with no strings attached. I'm not afraid to reach out to a fellow addict as much anymore, and I know that I'll be touched back when I hurt.

At times it scares me when I share with her, because I'm afraid she'll think less of me—but she doesn't.

I'm not afraid to give my N.A. family my life because they and my sponsor are helping me stay clean one day at a time. I have the choice to stay clean or use today, and I know with my Higher Power and my sponsor we will make it just for today. I like the few changes I see in my life. I can handle the fear of my addiction. I know if my life gets messed up I have a friend in my sponsor who will be there if I call.

My sponsor has taught me a new meaning of the word friendship. And it's neat. Sure, I have a bad day, but so far I'm clean seventy-six days—by the grace of my Higher Power, the love of my sponsor and the N.A. Fellowship.

D.D., New Mexico



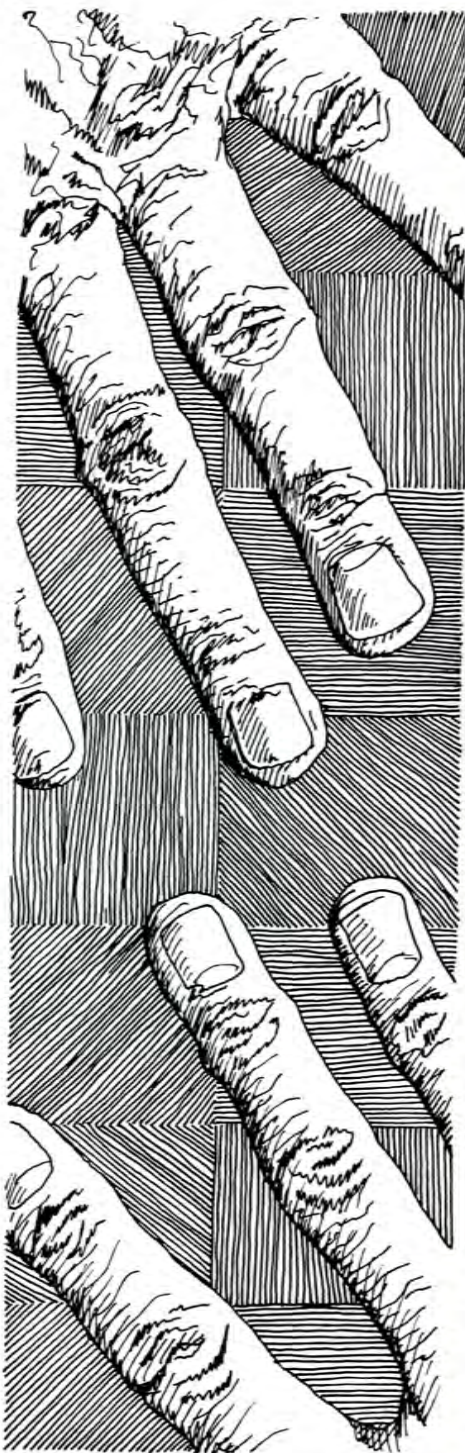
Carrying the message

I have a one-track mind. I tend to see everything from the perspective of my addict-self. I have been known to sit in meetings or talk to sponsees declaring that there's no way to help an addict who is still practicing unless that addict wants help.

In some ways, this is true. We can't *force* someone to get clean. We can't *keep* them from taking that next fix. We can't even *make* the ones who do come through the doors stay clean, although we sometimes go to ridiculous lengths trying! But if I'm being truly honest I know that we can and do help the addict who still suffers by staying clean and carrying the message.

I've been forced—sometimes by pain, sometimes by the invaluable remarks of others—to redefine certain concepts over the years. I have had to find a broader, deeper definition of "carrying the message."

The possibilities for carrying the



message, of course, are endless. Attending meetings. Giving newcomers our phone numbers and encouraging them to call. Cleaning up the meeting place. Running errands. Chairing. Sharing. Doing P.I., H&I, or other forms of service work. Taking responsibility within my home group. The list goes on, limited only by selfishness or lack of gratitude and imagination.

What struck me today and served to broaden my definition of "carrying the message" was a phone call, not from another addict, but from a newly married woman with whom I had shared about my addiction. Her call was a cry of pain, for both herself and for her husband, a practicing addict.

As she poured out their story I could feel their pain. Aware that there was no Nar-Anon in her area, I suggested that she attend open meetings of N.A., both speaker and discussion. Before she hung up, I apologized for keeping her so long. We had talked for two and a half hours, long distance. "I'm running up your phone bill," I said.

"No you're not," she replied. "You're saving my life."

I cried. My perspective had suddenly shifted. Rather than seeing myself as an addict with considerable clean time, I was remembering where I came from. I felt once again like a suffering, practicing addict, married to a practicing addict, and mother of a practicing addict.

And then the faces of the non-addicts who attend my home group swam before me. I could see the confusion, the shyness, and yes, the distrust on their faces at their first

meetings. I could also see their desperation, and their hope. Most of all, I could see their smiles of gratitude and relief as we welcomed them, and helped them to understand the disease of addiction.

Talking to this young woman made me realize how valuable our open meetings are to the non-addict. Although in most groups they do not participate in the discussion, they listen and gain a world of insight and life-saving information. Most important of all is the support and love that we as recovering addicts give them and, by association, give their suffering addict.

The faces of the non-addicts who attend my home group swam before me—their desperation, their hope, their smiles of gratitude.

The next time a person shyly offers the introduction, "I'm So-and-so, and I'm a visitor," that person is going to get an extra warm smile from this addict. I'm going to be more careful to speak to them before they slip out the door. I can help both them *and* the addict who is still out there—by carrying the message, and living the words, "My gratitude speaks when I care and when I share with others the N.A. way."

D.A., Virginia

European Service Conference

A British N.A. member shares his impressions of the Fifth European Service Conference held this summer in Paris

Report from Paris

The European fellowship held its fifth service conference in Paris on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of July. As it has done ever since the first one in Dublin in 1984, the conference brought together N.A. members from all over Europe and provided them an opportunity to share strengths and problems, hopes and fears. The theme was a simple one: Carry the Message (or *Transmettre Le Message*, *Die Botschaft Weitertragen*, *Transmitir A Mensagem*, *Pasar El Mensaje*, etc.). As you can see, carrying the message in Europe is far from simple!

Members described the history of their country's N.A. community

The opening meeting on Friday afternoon

found most of us in varying states of exhaustion after traveling overnight from all corners of the continent. During that meeting, a delegate or representative from each country briefly summarized the history and current state of his or her N.A. community.

France: A tiny English-speaking group formed in Paris in September 1984. Since then the city's fellowship has grown to one French-speaking meeting per day, two English-speaking meetings per week, and one weekly bilingual meeting. A new group started recently in nearby Versailles. In addition, there is a group in Nice, on the famous Cote d'Azur in the south. No H&I committee is yet operating in France, but the Parisian fellowship recently formed a fundraising committee. The French representative closed by remarking on the obvious problems of literature translation, of which more later.

The United Kingdom: The English fellowship was born in August of 1980 in Chelsea, London. Eight years later there are over two hundred meetings throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, including thirty-three H&I meetings, served by a service structure that has evolved to a point where a new level of service—the U.K. Assembly—has been created. The assembly brings together RSR's from two regions and ASR's from areas not as yet part of a region, together with representatives from all national service sub-committees. So far it is working very smoothly. The U.K. representative explained the formation of the U.K. Service Office (UKSO), a limited company which produces literature under copyright from the WSO and is answerable to the U.K. Assembly.

In all areas of service the message is being carried loud and clear. Most recently the *Clean Times* newsletter committee became a part of the assembly and went national, while a permanent U.K. Assembly Literature Review and Input Committee was set up after an ad

July in Paris

It was quite pleasant in Paris that morning, warmer than London. Actually, the trip from London had been exhausting. We'd been traveling all night by car, and we got into Paris quite early in the morning.

We were tired and wanted to go to sleep but we couldn't get into our rooms until the afternoon, so we all went to the Turkish baths in the Arab quarter (which was a little bit scary).

We had a nice rest, and then got back to the conference. As we were coming into the grounds, we saw a lot of German license plates on the cars outside and we knew the event was truly on. It felt exciting.

The conference was held at CAAP 20, the Center for Actual Animation for Paris, a sort of school for cartoonists. It was a very nice place, fairly new. I guess it was partly a hostel as well, at least in the summer,

and that's where we were housed.

The center was on the outskirts of Paris in a mostly residential area. People made good use of the French cafes nearby, and there were pastry shops all over as well as a little place that had great cheeses.

We got settled into our rooms, then went downstairs and attended the first meeting, where people delivered reports from the various countries.

The room in which the first night's meeting was held was quite big. There were from a hundred to two hundred addicts there, and we knew there were more people coming. You definitely got the impression that it was going to be a big event.

It was great for so many of us, representing much of the fellowship in Europe, to get together now that there are lots of N.A. people in countries besides Britain.

K.H., England

hoc workshop on *It Works: How And Why*. Conventions are regular events around Britain now, and this year sees the second annual U.K. Convention in London.

Ireland: The Irish fellowship formed in October 1979, and now has thirty-five regular meetings, including five H&I. These are served by two area service committees, Dublin and Munster, with almost all Dublin's twenty-one groups currently represented.

A regional service committee met for the first time last April. In addition to an efficient phoneline office, Dublin for the last two years has had a service office for storing literature and files. As with Britain, this office is in the process of becoming a limited company. In October the Irish are holding their fourth annual convention.

Spain: At the time of this meeting, it had been exactly four years to the day since the first Spanish group met in Barcelona. Currently there are four groups in that city, two in Madrid and one on the island of Ibiza, along with an H&I meeting in a women's prison. Barcelona has a phoneline and twenty-four hour answering service. In April a mini-convention brought together members from Barcelona and Madrid.

Sweden was one of the newcomers to the ESC. In early 1987 a Swedish A.A. member met an N.A. member from England. Together they formed the first Swedish N.A. group that February, in Stockholm, with others starting up in Gothenburg and Upsala. The Swedish members said they were here at the ESC to learn. There were no service committees yet, though H&I and PI are both being discussed.

Germany: The German fellowship is now about eight years old, with thirty-six groups currently in existence and eight H&I meetings. Two area service committees serve the German fellowship. As the member from France had done, this member remarked on the problems surrounding literature, and said they were trying to sort out a copyright agreement

with WSO.

Belgium was another newcomer to the ESC this year. In February 1987 some members from Paris came to Brussels to help get the first Belgian group under way. A second group formed subsequently in Liege. Apparently a Flemish-speaking meeting started somewhere, but the representative was unsure if this still existed. One H&I meeting lasted for just three months, but contact is still being maintained with hospitals. As for P.I. work, at least one public meeting has been held over the last year in Belgium.

Italy: The Italian fellowship was founded in Rome in September 1981, by two addicts already recovering in A.A. After a hard struggle getting off the ground, there are now around forty regular members in Rome, with six meetings a week. H&I work has proved difficult. Members are trying to carry the message into prisons but are encountering bureaucratic obstacles. P.I. work has included anonymous appearances on four television programs.

Countries not represented at the Fifth European Service Conference were Greece (two meetings a week in Athens), Norway (one meeting a week in Oslo), Austria (one meeting a week in Salzburg), Portugal (five meetings a week in Lisbon, one in nearby Cascais), and Switzerland (two meetings a week in Zurich).

After five years the ESC still serves primarily as a learning opportunity for Europe's newly developing N.A. communities. On Saturday of this year's conference, a meeting called the European Service Plenum was held to discuss three main topics: 1) the European *Newsline*, the newsheet set up at last year's conference, 2) the European Service Office, which is opening in London this fall, and 3) the real nature and purpose of the conference itself.

European Newsline

Kevin, UKSO manager, talked about the

The ESC still serves primarily as a learning opportunity for European N.A.

Is ESC just a convention, or should it be a decision-making event like the WSC?

Newsline, whose third issue came out shortly before ESC-5. As a vehicle of communication between European countries it has been a great success, reporting on developments throughout Europe and providing news of meetings. Distribution has been kept ultra-simple: one copy is mailed to each country and then photocopied. Such funds as have been necessary have been supplied by the U.K. Service Office.

Kevin emphasized that this is not a newsletter in the usual N.A. sense, in that it is primarily a service report. He suggested someone might like to start a proper European newsletter. He also felt that responsibility for the *Newsline* should in due course be handed over to the new European Service Office.

European Service Office

The previous discussion brought us neatly on to this topic. Jim, who was selected by WSO to run the European Service Office, explained that the office's primary function will be the production and distribution of literature within Europe. It will also serve as a base for the continuing and urgently needed literature translation process. He explained that WSO was not coming in with an American plan for Europe, but was merely offering American experience and help. A location for the office is being sought in London. Once found, it will take about three months to become fully operational.

The European Service Conference strives to further define itself

An experienced member opened the discussion on the function of the conference. Do we, he asked, really *want* a conference? If so, what is it for? Is it really just a convention, or should it be a decision-making event like the World Service Conference?

Until now, the conference has served as both a unifying event and a learning weekend. Last year's decision to start the *Newsline* was the first decision in the conference's history.

Aside from that, there has been no real continuity from one year to the next. In addition, there has been no decision-making body to decide, for example, where any money generated from a European conference should go. If we want it to go towards next year's conference, who decides? And is there a need for some kind of European Committee to which the European Service Office would be accountable?

These remarks produced immediate feedback. Some felt that we should be patient, and that the four conferences up 'til now had shown definite long term results. A fairly intense discussion ensued, with members from England, Ireland, Germany and America sharing ideas and suggestions. Gradually the idea of some kind of combination conference and convention emerged, with final decisions being left 'til the closing meeting on Sunday.

Literature and translations: pressing needs, difficult problems, promising direction

The literature workshop on Sunday morning was a small but truly international affair, with two French members, two Germans, one Spaniard, one Italian, one Swede, one French Canadian and one Englishman taking part. Not surprisingly, the principal topic of discussion was translation.

A member from France gave a concise history of French translation of N.A. literature. Two years ago a member from Montreal, Quebec, got in touch with N.A. in Paris, and together they began translating. Since then, thirteen pamphlets and the White Book have been translated.

After this ESC they will be proofreading a translation of the Basic Text. They have had some help from a professional agency in Montreal. Leaving out the stories because of cultural differences, the text should be translated by the end of this year. A second edition will contain French-language stories from France and Quebec.

Die Botschaft Weitertragen

The first translated literature we had was sent over by the World Service Office. We were very happy to receive it but we found it not quite up to standards.

One very big problem we had is that certain English words are very hard to translate, and we had to really do a lot of soul searching to come up with the right expression, one that was accurate but that wouldn't change the message of recovery.

We especially had problems with some key terms.

"Willingness," for example, in the original translation that we had from World Service was translated as "willpower"!

In the process, we really had to work the program! And those involved were given some things by the literature that probably even the people who wrote it in the first place never considered, because they never really had to think about every word that went into it.

R.K., Germany

A great share

The European Service Conference is a sort of combination convention and conference—service workshops and discussions, as well as recovery meetings. I think, personally, that this involves more people in service.

I have a tape of one of the open meetings at an earlier ESC held in London. People were coming up and saying, "I used to feel that service was boring, but after this I think I want to get involved." They heard other people share about their service involvement and the difference it's made in their recovery. It was definitely a big factor in the growth of the fellowship in the U.K.

In the U.K. anyway, people shy away from talks about doing service; it's thought of as drudgery. But for me, if it wasn't a lot of fun, fellowship and getting to meet people most of the time, I don't think that I'd have done it. And that's at least part of the message carried by the European Service Conference.

K.H., England

The Italian member agreed that using stories from the home country was important, though the Italians felt some of the stories from the Basic Text could be retained and translated. He made the point that N.A.'s fast growth in the U.K., for example, must ultimately be due to the accessibility of the written message. He also said that the Italian fellowship had big problems with WSO's Italian translations. WSO, he said, had come in with their translations well after the Italians had already begun their own work.

The German member said they'd had the same problems. They'd had to tell WSO to scrap eight or nine German translations of pamphlets because they were so bad. Unfortunately, lots of misunderstandings and frustrations had followed. He went on to add that the German fellowship has since translated nine pamphlets and the White Book. They too are working with professionals on translating the Basic Text. The committee is in a healthy state, and relations with WSO have improved.

The Spanish member described an experience similar to those of the Italians and the Germans. The original Spanish pamphlets sent from WSO were unusable. In late 1986, a professional translator happened to join the fellowship in Barcelona. She began working on new translations with WSO's approval. The Spanish fellowship is now assuming that it should carry on translating its own literature.

Peter from Sweden said they had translated one pamphlet. He wondered if they should use their own unapproved translations in meetings. Everyone else laughed and said that *they* had!

Those who attended this workshop came away feeling that it had been most useful and inspiring.

At the final meeting, after we'd heard reports from the weekend's various workshops, two votes were taken. First, it was agreed that the European Service Conference would henceforth be called a "convenference" (a conven-

tion with workshops devoted to service). Secondly, next year's conference site was chosen. We'll see you next year in Barcelona, Spain.

B.H., England

A personal view

I had a cosmic vision at the Turkish baths in Barbasse, Paris. To be precise, I actually had a vision of the entire cosmos, lock, stock and barrel—the whole shebang. I saw the point at which space and time become one dimension and move backwards. I felt the inextricable confusion of all types of sensibility, and had a particularly forceful impression of the fact that the universe was infinite, yet had a sum energy component of precisely *nought*.

The overall insight this vision gave me—and I say vision because I really did feel as if I was seeing something—was that the ideas we have about the cosmos, and any other possible power that may operate in it besides ourselves, are to the reality what a child's scrawlings on a wall are to the objects they depict. This wasn't a mystical intimation; far from it, rather it seemed entirely literal, and it gave me a tremendous sense of relief and release. The subsidiary insight was that yet again I'd managed to weird myself out with travel, lack of sleep, coffee and cigarettes.

Later on, I told a fellow recovering addict about the vision. He said, "What do you feel about this experience now?" I said, "I think it was brilliant." Apparently the wrong thing to say if you're subject to these kinds of visions. What you should say is, "Ecstatic," or "A tremendous sense of inner calm." If you say "Brilliant," it betokens a state of spiritual development akin to that achieved by a compulsive watcher of soaps.

All this is leading into a discussion of what went on at the European Service Conference of Narcotics Anonymous. It's an odd way to

Personal reflections on the Fifth European Service Conference

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get started, but it was an odd weekend. To appreciate how far the fellowship has grown over the past five years since the first conference in Dublin was not an option open to me, but people who had been there assured me that it was incredible. What I did pick up on was an enormous emotional charge, the relief of visitors from countries where there is very little N.A. indeed, on finding themselves together with other recovering addicts. The first afternoon—the one after the cosmic vision in the Turkish baths—I was sitting in the main hall listening to the various delegates report on the progress the fellowship was making in their own countries, and my eyes began to prick with tears.

I felt a new sense of gratitude, a gratitude that there were already meetings available for me to go to when I became willing to find recovery, and gratitude on a second count that there were these dedicated addicts in outlying regions who are willing also to make the effort to carry the message of recovery.

The main subject of debate—suitably enough, considering we were in Paris, a city well known for its preoccupation with method and form—was what was to be the future character of this now-established gathering? Some people felt that the conference ought to move towards being a body with some legislative power in relation to the European fellowship, others felt that there was little role for the conference even as it stood, and that instead it should turn into a European convention.

The problems involved in setting up anything equivalent to an acting, representative service committee on a European scale are pretty obvious. How would countries be represented? Proportionate to the number of meetings they have? Or to a calculated coefficient of the number of meetings per capita of the population? While I was at the conference I worked out a quick sum in my head: Britain may have by far the most meetings of any European country, but we lag

well behind Ireland in terms of meetings per head of population.

What could a European Service Committee really discuss? As it says in the text, the problem with literature is language, and in Europe there are lots of different languages. To some extent, the conference took the form of a learning forum, where members from different countries could get together and discuss the various ways in which they've dealt with the problem of translating recovery literature into their own languages.

Again, this was an opportunity for some gratitude to be expressed on behalf of British conference-goers. We may dislike the Americanisms we find in a lot of the literature, but at least they are comprehensible. Several of the European N.A. communities have been bound up over the years in the problem of having literature translations approved by the World Service Office.

The upshot of the debate on the future of the service conference itself was that it should stay very much the same as it is, except with more of an emphasis on personal recovery, basically a sort of "conference." The European representative elected by our own U.K. National Assembly put forward the idea that other countries should also elect European representatives, and this was carried by the conference. A European Service Office is being established in London, and these representatives will liaise in its running.

Other workshops at the conference covered service and traditions. Chuck and Bob, representing the World Service Conference and the World Service Board of Trustees respectively, answered questions from the floor. It was instructive on the one hand how alien the problems facing small and struggling fellowships seemed to the British visitors—we often grimaced as traditions seemed terribly compromised—and how on the other hand we feel small and misunderstood by the American fellowship. For me it was reminiscent of the

Dream come true

We finished the German White Booklet. When we finally had the draft in hand it was unbelievable. We had put so much work into it; it was one of our dreams come true.

At the beginning of one regional service conference, we came in with the draft. The committee asked the fellowship at the conference if we could read it to them, and we passed the booklet around.

Some people were crying as the drafts came into their hands. Finally, we had the literature in our own language so that any German addict could read it for themselves; it was a very beautiful experience.

We on the committee had worked on it so long that we weren't even aware of what an incredible thing it was. We had just done our best from day to day, you know. We had turned everything over, not really knowing what would happen. And it all happened as it was meant to.

R.K., Germany

The lesson, I suppose, is that we all basically face the same problems. N.A. will grow in Europe as it has grown everywhere else.

way I've compared my using with other addicts' in the past. On the one hand I felt I'd used too little to recover, and on the other too much!

The lesson I suppose is that we all basically face the same problems. N.A. will grow in Europe as it has grown everywhere else. Sometimes it will develop haphazardly, sometimes there will be breaches of traditions, but ultimately the growth will be organic, and through attraction rather than promotion.

Some of the individual sharing was very moving indeed. I have nothing but admiration for the superb work of organization that the French fellowship has achieved. The speakers were taped, and there were many French addicts available to act as translators. I was astonished at how good their English was—until I was told that in many instances these addicts had been forced to improve their English simply in order to be able to recover. The first meeting in Paris was held in English, and there are still bilingual meetings there.

On Saturday night we were treated to musical accompaniment by the aptly named "Incurables," plus a host of imported N.A. talent featured in solo spots. After initial problems with self-obsession, I too sweated it out on the dance floor until the wee small hours.

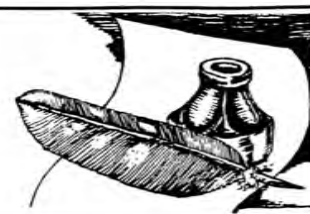
The final meeting on Sunday was sad. I felt emotionally hungover as I said goodbye to friends I had made from France, Italy and Sweden, and hoped that I wouldn't have to wait another year to see them all again.

For me the chief benefit of the whole weekend was that it was the first time I had been to a large N.A. gathering where I hadn't had the strong feeling that I really didn't belong, and that all these people were really a self-righteous bunch of cultists. It was a breakthrough on the self-obsession front.

See you next year in Barcelona!

*W.S., England
from U.K. Clean Times
August/September 1988*

Viewpoint



program. I came to the fellowship trying to hold my family together. I come now for myself, with a prayer for my family. With the effort of both fellowships, today the outlook for us is great!

I wish everyone would remember they are our families, the ones who had the courage to stick it out. I believe we can cooperate without breaking any traditions, if we try.

J.L., Connecticut

Cooperation

I've got almost nine months clean. I was attending a business meeting of my Saturday night group. We were asked if we would agree to let Nar-Anon put a table in our meeting hall for a bake sale they were having. I never saw text books open so fast, or traditions cited so quickly. There was a lot of discussion on the Sixth Tradition. Everyone seemed to think that just because we were asked, it meant we had to endorse the sale.

To be quite honest, my "yes" vote was part of some step work. Step Nine says, "We made direct amends..." My wife is a member of Nar-Anon, and cooperating with and giving moral support to them is a direct part of my Ninth Step.

Step Twelve tells me to practice the principles I've learned from Narcotics Anonymous, and to use them in all my affairs. Trying to find ways around helping people (either in or out of my fellowship) is not how I work my

P.S.—After reading this letter, my wife told me Nar-Anon had been notified that there will be no room for them at our convention this year. My

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wife and I have been to two conventions, and I can't imagine not inviting and/or making room for Nar-Anon. I guess I'll go to the next convention meeting and let them know *exactly* what I think of that (idea??) B.S. Nine months doesn't seem like enough time to take on these issues, but it will have to do.

Editorial replies

Better, but not easier

The following is in response to "It Does Get Easier!," a letter published in the "From Our Readers" section in July 1988.

From England:

The article referred to people saying that "it gets better but not easier." My understanding is that recovery is like gymnastics: it doesn't get easier—a backward somersault requires the same effort and skill every time. What happens is that my ability to stay clean increases, so that it no longer dominates my conscious mind. This frees me to deal with the other stuff that's been kicking about while I was getting high—my debts, my relationships, basic day-to-day hassles of being alive in the second half of the twentieth century. The more stuff I deal with, the better I get at dealing with it, and the more stuff I am prepared to deal with.

As I pay off my debts, and keep on staying clean, my financial problems retreat into the background, and I begin to be able to live within my income. Something new then arises out of the murk for me to deal with. As I deal with that, another problem follows it. Each time I confront a new problem, or have to deal with an as yet unrecognized character defect, or do

whatever it is that my Higher Power thinks is good for me, it is every bit as difficult as my first few days clean. Practice and perseverance, however, enable me to develop the muscles (spiritual, emotional and mental as well as physical) to deal with it.

So, like the double backward somersault, it appears to the untrained eye to be easy. It might seem as though I find it easy to share in meetings, write to the N.A. Way or take on commitments. It's not. I've just had a bit of practice.

It still takes as much courage to open my mouth in a meeting and share my pain when I'm hurting as it did the first time. If my understanding of the steps is better now, it's not because the steps have gotten simpler, it's because I've listened, read, thought, and shared about them more and my ability to understand has improved as the fogs of using have been lifted.

It does get better—staying clean gets easier—but I still have as much stuff to deal with as I did on day one. The amount of work I have to do on myself doesn't decrease much. In fact, sometimes it seems to increase, just because I can handle it better. But today, that's okay. I'm grateful to H.P. for His faith in my ability to deal with life.

The bottom line is that this addict has stayed clean longer in N.A. than she believed possible. My life has changed beyond belief in the last nine and a half months, and I owe it all to N.A. It works because I work it. As I get more practice, it starts to require less effort. It doesn't get easier, but it does require less effort. The difference is subtle—but there is a difference.

J.C.

Sound off!

The following two essays are printed not as replies to specific articles, but as parts of ongoing discussions that have been taking place among our readers for the last year or so.

From New York:

This article is a rebuttal to all of those who are now bent upon using our N.A. Way forum to change N.A.—everything from our N.A. name right through to how we do or do not pray!

It really bugs me when those of us with highly controversial opinions submit them to the N.A. Way disguised as articles earmarked "for recovery only." Are we guilty of spreading poison to the sick and suffering addicts who see in us our Basic Text in action? This may be as close to the real deal as some of them will ever be willing to get, thanks to our opinionated articles!

I feel obligated to remind you that our N.A. Way magazine finds its way into detox units and rehabs as well as jails and other institutions worldwide. If you are really as concerned about N.A. as some of you claim to be, then you will make it a point to sit down with your own best thinking and submit it to our service structure.

B.S.

From England:

I haven't found anything in the Recovery Text that specifies just what format a meeting must use. If the closing prayer the group has chosen upsets someone sufficiently, the issue can be raised at a group conscience, as can more or less any aspect of the meeting format.

We don't have to wait for a meeting format to be passed down on tablets of stone from the WSC. It is our responsibility, our fellowship, our meetings and our recovery. We have a right—and a duty—to make our feelings known. If it bothered me enough and I couldn't change it through a group conscience, then I'd start a new group with a different format, one that I did feel comfortable with.

Smoky meetings bother me far more than a prayer that I don't feel entirely comfortable with, but if I need a meeting I don't let smoke, prayers or personalities keep me away from it. Perhaps there are newcomers who have been to one or two meetings and left because they thought N.A. was composed of a lot of holier-than-thou

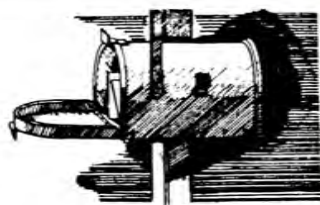
**If I need a meeting I
don't let smoke,
prayers or
personalities keep
me away from it.**

God-botherers. (Perhaps they're not entirely wrong. I bother God more now than I did when I was using.)

All I know is that I had the chance to come into recovery about fourteen years ago, and again four years ago, but on neither occasion was I ready for it and therefore passed up the opportunity. Today I rather regret those missed opportunities. It wasn't "God-talk" that scared me off, but the admission that I might have a problem. Now that I can freely admit that I have a problem I can go to any lengths for the solution.

J.C.

From our readers



Change

"Our disease involves much more than using," says our Basic Text, "and so our recovery must involve much more than simple abstinence. Recovery is an active change of our ideas and attitudes." There are still days in recovery when all I can do is not use. But there are days when I use what I've learned from working the steps and from you people to deal with what's happening in my life at any given moment.

For example, recently at work I got extremely angry. My first thought was to just walk out. Not say anything, just walk out. "I'll show you!" I didn't do that. I stayed and talked to someone about how upset I was. It took someone at work saying, "Don't take everything so personally," for me to realize how self-centered my anger was.

Today I'm going through a lot of changes. I am learning that my old ideas and attitudes don't work anymore. I'm taking more risks and letting myself be vulnerable. When I risk sharing who I really am and how I really feel deep down, I'm finding that the rejection I expect does not happen. Instead, I find the love and acceptance I have always wanted.

I'm learning that other people, places, things and situations can't fix me. I used to live in the old ideas of "if only I had a good relationship or a better

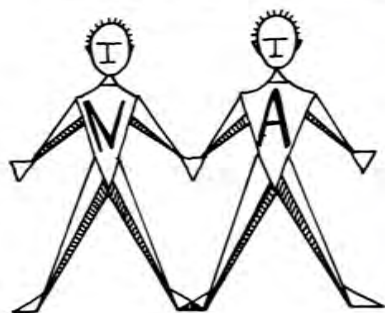
job," and "if I could get a new car and my dad would just leave me alone, I would be okay." The most joy I get today comes from within, and from maintaining a conscious contact with my Higher Power.

Knowing that other people are no longer my source for happiness makes it easier to risk honest sharing. Knowing that having a new car or a new job isn't going to change how I feel allows me to live in today and let go of some of my wants. How others want me to be is their problem. I can't live up to other people's expectations; I have enough trouble with my own! Knowing that allows me to let go of a lot of guilt.

I'm by no means well today. I've seen the tip of the iceberg, and I'm grateful to N.A. and my Higher Power for helping me to slowly change my ideas and attitudes.

"Everything is subject to revision, especially what we know about the truth."

Anonymous, South Carolina



Dear N.A. Way,

I wrote N.A. about a month ago asking them if they could send me some information on Narcotics Anonymous, and today I got it in the mail. I wanted to thank you for your help. N.A. has helped me very much.

When I was twelve years old I got drunk at a friend's house when I spent the night there. At first I liked it. It made me feel good, like a big shot.

I was drinking for about a year until the same friend smoked a joint with me and I fell in love with pot. Then I cut someone's yard and they gave me \$10. When I got that \$10, I bought me a bag of weed. Me and my friend smoked it and we were really high.

It ran out fast, so me and my friend decided to steal some money from our parents so we could get some pot with it. About a week later we got some money and we went to some older guy who sold it, and he asked us if we wanted to try some cocaine. Me and my friend said yes, but not much. My friend went first, then I went. I fell in love with it at the age of thirteen, and I've been using every kind of drug there is since then.

I've been through lots: the death of my best friend from drugs, living on the streets, juvenile hall and probation. Finally, after being told I was to be locked up for a long time, I got a chance to go to treatment. It was there that I saw that all the times I had gotten locked up, drugs had been involved.

Now I realize that I'm a drug addict and need a lot of help. The staff told me to try N.A., and I did. I'm still a member of N.A. and I feel I always will be. I've only been clean sixty-eight days, but I feel fine. If it wasn't for

N.A., I wouldn't be clean today and I wouldn't be writing this letter.

D.N., Georgia

A time of faith in the process

I received news that someone I love has stayed in denial and has gone out. I felt an instant sadness as the process of grief started. As I was on my knees fighting that process, anger gripped me. I started to remember how that addict had affected my life and had been there for me in my early and ongoing recovery. As I started to reflect back and remember, the grieving process continued and the tears came. I felt compelled to write to him.

As I wrote, the sadness diminished and I felt love. That turned again to tears of anger as I thought of how insidious this disease is. I wrote that letter, and I felt some hope. I closed the letter on that note of hope, and felt a willingness to hold myself available to help when he was ready.

To strengthen this, I wrote a letter to God in my journal. I would like to share that moment and that letter as I try to keep the hope alive.

God, help me to be patient with myself and to love myself as you love me. Help me to see that even when we seem to die on the outside, your miracle of rebirth happens to us, just as you bring the trees and flowers back to life each spring. I wish to feel the inner warmth, as in summer, when breezes are light and the sun is warm.

Help me to remember that in your time and at your speed, the miracle of spring rebirth happens and the warmth of summer follows.

Anonymous, Massachusetts

Comin' up



ALABAMA: Dec. 2-4, 1988; Surrender in the Mountains; Cheaha State Park, Talladega; Surrender, P.O. Box 1632, Athens, AL 35611

ALBERTA: Nov. 4-6, 1988; 2nd Alsask Regional Convention; Capitol Hill Community Hall, Calgary; phoneline (403) 235-9901

AUSTRALIA: Nov. 19-20, 1988; 1st South Australia Area Convention; Brighton, Glenelg Community Centre, 20 Tarlton St., Somerton Park, Adelaide; Area of S. Australia, P.O. Box 479, Norwood, S.A. 5067, AUSTRALIA

BAHAMAS: Nov. 4-6, 1988; 1st Bahamas Area Convention; Wyndham Ambassador Hotel, Nassau, (809) 327-8231; B.A.C.N.A., P.O. Box CB 11767, Nassau, Bahamas

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 24-28, 1989; World Service Conference Annual Meeting; AirTel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, (818) 997-7676

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

IDAHO: Apr. 1989; 4th Washington/Northern Idaho Convention; committee seeking speakers' tapes; Washington/Northern Idaho Convention, Attn. Program Chair, P.O. Box 807, Spokane, WA 99210

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

LOUISIANA: May 27-29, 1989; 7th Louisiana Purchase Regional Convention; Landmark Hotel, 2601 Severn Ave., Metairie LA 70002, (800) 535-8840; LPRCNA-7, P.O. Box 750237, New Orleans, LA 70175-0237

NEVADA: Jan. 27-29, 1989; 3rd Southern Nevada Convention; Showboat Hotel, Boulder Hwy., Las Vegas; phoneline (702) 369-3362; Southern Nevada RSC, P.O. Box 26636, Las Vegas, NV 89126

2) Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks; phoneline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1913

NEW YORK: Jun. 23-25, 1989; 10th East Coast Convention; University of Buffalo, Amherst Campus; ECCNA-10, P.O. Box 141, Buffalo, NY 14216-0141

NEW ZEALAND: Jan. 14-15, 1989; 2nd New Zealand Area Rally; North Shore Teachers Training College, Auckland; New Zealand Rally, P.O. Box 47087, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand

PENNSYLVANIA: Feb. 24-26, 1989; 5th Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Sheraton Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster; phoneline (717) 393-4546; Conference 5, P.O. Box 7651, Lancaster, PA 17604

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: Nov. 4-6, 1988; Best Little Region Convention; Koko Palace, 5101 Avenue Q, Lubbock TX 79412; phoneline 799-3950; BLRCNA-1, P.O. Box 3013, Lubbock, TX 79452-3013

2) 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

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9TEA

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.

