

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

April 1989

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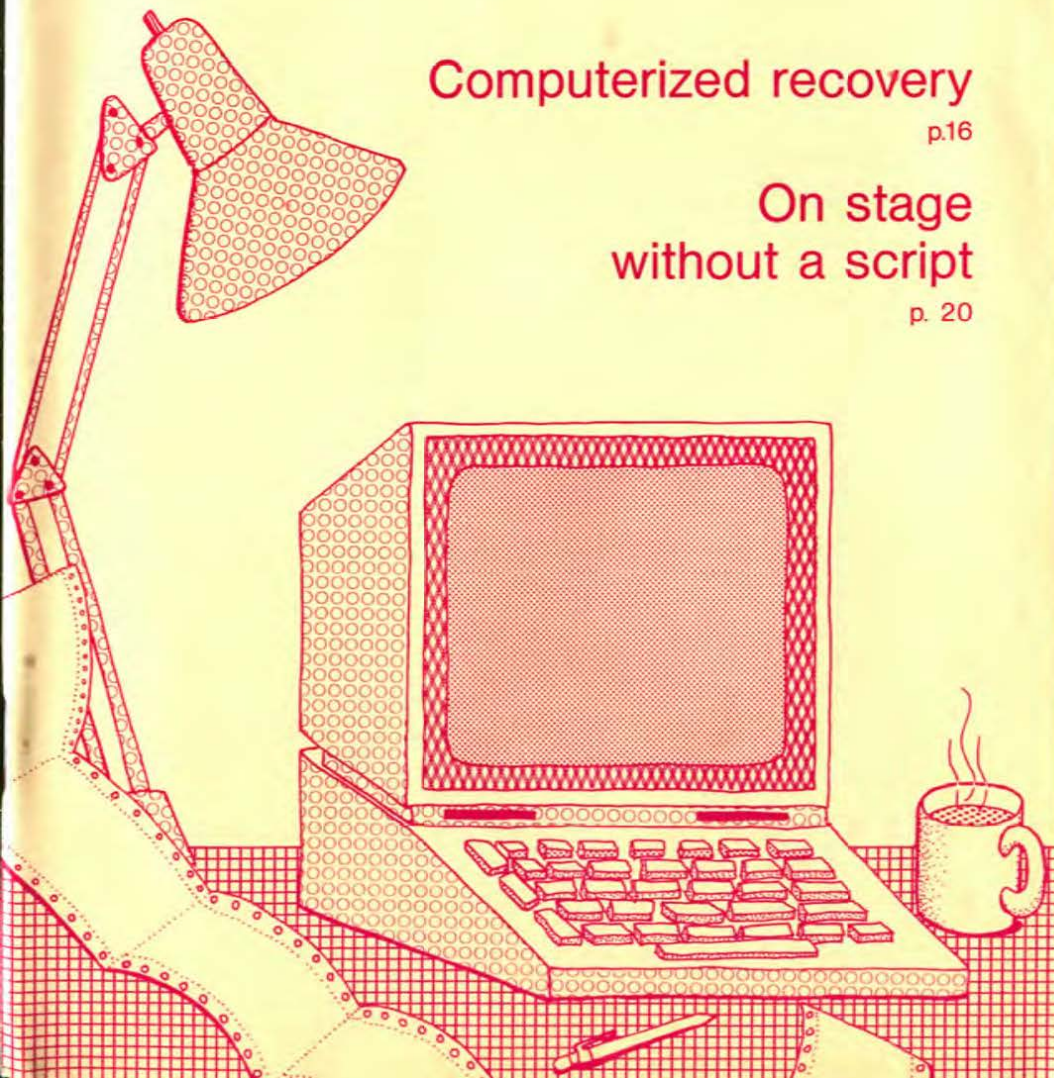
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Computerized recovery

p.16

On stage
without a script

p. 20



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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Oldtimer's disease

Time of onset

At any time during recovery. The disease has been observed in its beginning stages as early as a few months into recovery (when it is sometimes referred to as "the ninety day wonder condition.") It is, however, more common among persons with many years in the program. Indeed, some researchers suspect that the longer people are in recovery, the greater the risk of the disease occurring.

Symptomology

Among those who have contracted the disease, certain behaviors and attitudes routinely occur. Since no single one of them necessarily indicates the presence of oldtimer's disease but may, instead, point to some related or associated condition, the following list should be used to diagnose oneself rather than other persons.

Principal symptoms include:

- Infrequent attendance at N.A. meetings. Excuses: meetings are not the way they used to be, or are boring, or do not have good recovery because of the presence of so

many newcomers;

- When speaking at meetings, reminding those present of the length of one's time in the program. Such reminders can be obvious or subtle. They may even be preceded by assurances of gratitude to those who helped one to achieve recovery;
- Refusal to get, or to use, a sponsor. This is often explained by the observation that no individual can be found whose recovery is longer than one's own—which indicates a confusion between quality of recovery and quantity of recovery;
- Complaints (privately expressed) that N.A. is not as it used to be, or has been watered down, or is in serious danger of becoming ineffective, in part because of all the new people coming in;
- The belief that one is the definitive interpreter of and authority on the Basic Text, the steps and the traditions, and thus is the savior of N.A. from its less enlightened members;
- Preaching the message (often with the index finger upraised) rather than sharing experience, strength and hope. This symptom can show itself in a variety of ways. For example, frequently beginning sentences with "You should" or "You need to" instead of "I did" or "I am doing";
- Resentment if one is not called upon at a meeting, and resentment against those who have been called upon to speak. Special resentment is reserved for the person chairing the meeting;
- Referring constantly to one's past struggles, defeats and triumphs. Only in the rarest of instances is there any reference to present



problems. Behind this lies the belief that, granted one's years of recovery, one ought not have any current problems. There is, in addition, the fear that admission that one's life is not always wonderful and joyous might damage the effectiveness of N.A. in the eyes of newcomers.

Cause of disease

Pride and fear.

Treatment

Depending on the severity of the individual case, one or more of the following will probably prove effective:

- Frequent meetings: daily for one to three months, if possible;
- Involvement with a strong, insightful, available sponsor, especially one with extensive experience working with newcomers or potential relapsers;
- Re-working the steps, beginning with Step One, with special emphasis on Steps Three and Eleven;
- Listening carefully at meetings. The practice of listening is greatly enhanced by the decision not to speak at meetings, even if called upon, thus freeing one from having

to prepare what one wishes to say while others are speaking;

- Volunteering for service, including coffee-making, setting up and taking down chairs, general cleaning up after meetings;
- Making sincere efforts to bring the symptoms of the disease to an end. For example: resisting the tendency to remind others of one's recovery date; focusing on oneself rather than on others; speaking about "how it is" rather than "how it was;" making a gratitude list; asking those in one's home group for their help and support in one's struggle against oldtimers' disease.

Prognosis

Left untreated, the disease can cause serious problems in its victim's spiritual life and in his relationships with other people.

In extreme cases, the disease may lead to a return to using and to death.

With treatment, the victim can be restored to good spiritual health, characterized by gratitude to a loving God for the gift of recovery, freely given.

J.C., New York

Spiritual awakening

When I was a sophomore in college, one of my best friends from high school committed suicide. He called me a few days beforehand and asked me to come see him. He needed to talk. I managed to come up with some sort of excuse and sat at the phone, nodding off from time to time, for the next hour or so. I carried that guilty secret for years. I was too wasted to go see my friend when he needed me. Too far gone to get up off the floor and

into the car. Trying to listen, but wishing he'd hurry up so I could get back to the party.

I don't know whether or not he told me that he was in trouble. I know that even if he did, I didn't hear him. For a long time, I was alone with the secret belief that I had helped kill my friend. That it was my fault. Maybe if I'd listened a little closer I would have picked up on a clue. Maybe if I had been straight that day...

He was one of the good guys. He smiled a lot. You know, one of those people who could light up a room. Make you feel special just because he was there. I could tell him anything. He seemed so happy and excited about life. That's one of the things that hurt so much when he died. I really loved him.

Before coming into the fellowship, I tried to talk about it once in a while. "He didn't call to ask for help, he called to say goodbye." "He was

manipulating you... he called a lot of people that week." "He was in so much pain... he had so many living problems... he's better off." Despite everyone's good intentions, nothing helped.

Ten years later, in a treatment center, I was instructed to share my life story with my group. I got through the entire story of growing up in an addicted household, of an abusive marriage, and of all the ways I had sold myself for drugs. None of it appeared to have any effect on me at all. Until I told about my friend's death. I cried. In front of people.

They didn't say any of the things that other people had said. They also didn't say everything I felt I needed to hear. But that night the healing started. They told me that, in its very simplest sense, powerlessness meant that I couldn't control my actions when I was using. That even if a "straight me" had wanted to go, my disease and the drugs had more power than that love and good intentions. They told me that I had done the best I could with what I had, and that maybe part of my guilt and grief had to do with really knowing that my disease was calling the shots that night.

Over the next few years, you people and the steps of this program have used this lesson to teach me quite a few other things. I had to take a look at my ego. I can neither get someone clean nor make them use. Nor do I have power over whether they live or die.

Self-centeredness. My friend died—not me. He didn't do it to me. It was

a very personal decision that had nothing at all to do with me.

Forgiveness. He committed suicide. While I may not agree with his choice, I have to look at the way I felt the times I overdosed. Forgiveness doesn't mean his choice is okay with me. It means I know I'm not his higher power, and that I believe he did the best he could with what he had. I had to stop asking why. It may not be for me to know.

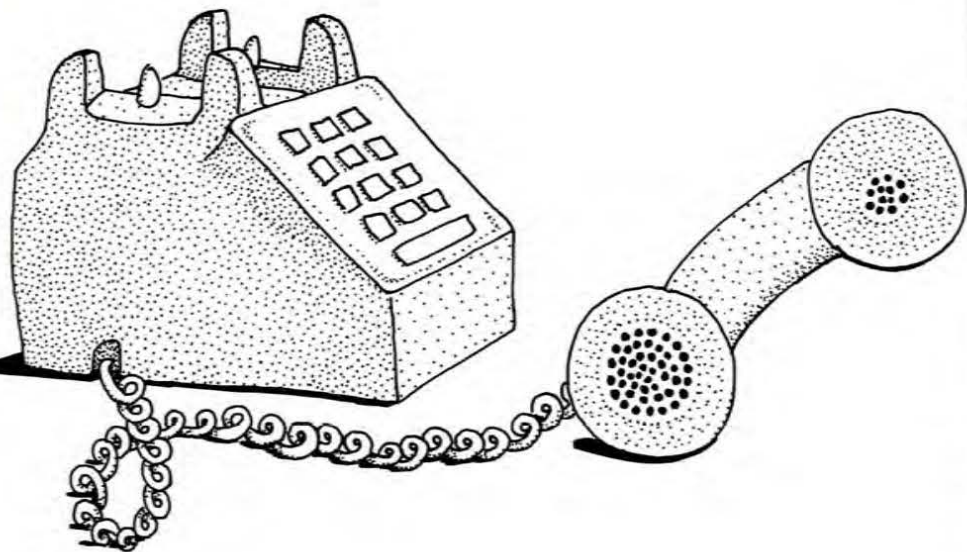
I have to look again at my powerlessness. In the ten years between my friend's death and beginning my recovery, how many times did I need that situation in order to justify my using?

I was told that in the fellowship I could choose any higher power I wanted. I have come to believe in the will of a Higher Power who is far more wise and loving than I can even conceive of, and that when people I love "move on," their spirits become part of my Higher Power.

That means a lot to me. It means that when I "lose" someone to death, it's only because my Higher Power is becoming stronger, more loving and more personal to me. Sometimes when I pray, I picture their faces. When I'm scared, I picture them standing with me.

It means that when I miss those people acutely, I haven't made enough of an effort to establish a conscious contact with them. It tells me that a spiritual awakening is something that can grow in me forever, as long as I continue to stay away from one drug for one day and present myself at a meeting to ask for your help.

A.P., Massachusetts



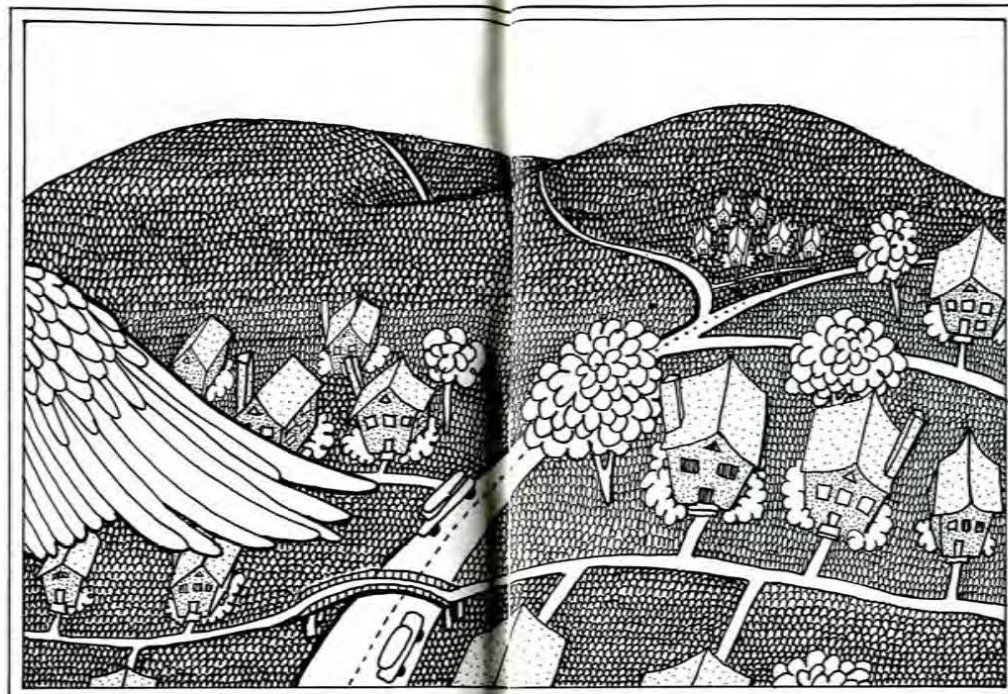
A full circle

Today I was walking in the prison yard when I looked up and saw a hawk soaring along on the winds of freedom. I decided to lay on the grass and watch him for awhile.

Before I knew it, I was looking down at myself lying in the prison yard. Then it came to me: I had become the hawk. I was flying high above the prison, looking down at the many earthbound souls. I was unsure if I would be able to fly outside the fence that was around the buildings of sorrow, but I knew I must try.

I turned myself to the wind, and I was off. I thought to myself, "God, could this really be happening? Have you finally heard me and set me free?" I flew for what seemed like hours, days, years. I was soaring high in the sky with the wind in my face and the sun on my back. Yes! I was free. Free of my man-made prison and the earth that supported it. I flew over green rolling hills with many houses lined in a row. I saw many beautiful things on the earth so far below me.

I saw a beautiful lake below, shining in the sunlight, and I felt thirsty. So I landed on the rocks along its shore to drink. For the first time I saw my new self, and it took my breath



away. I looked so beautiful, so strong and proud. Only someone with a great hand could create something so wonderful. I took my drink and was off once again.

I found myself flying over an area filled with little houses. I landed on a treetop in the back yard of a little white house. In this backyard I saw children playing happily. There was this one boy with black hair. He seemed very familiar to me, but yet he wasn't. I felt joy as I watched him with his little friends. His smile was as wide as an ocean, and the sun danced in his bright black eyes. When he laughed, the songs of angels came from him, as from all children who are so happy. I was filled with the happiness of his age. A strong wind blew, and with one great thrust of my wings again I was off. As I flew, I

thought of the small boy and how very familiar he seemed, and what a beautiful life he had.

Next I found myself flying over a park. I saw many young kids playing football. Always liking the game, I landed on a wall near the field to watch. I found that they were enjoying a fall afternoon just being young. Fall? But I just left the small boy and it was a sunny summer day. How long had I been flying? But before I answered myself, I heard a voice belonging to a good-looking boy around the age of twelve or so. He and his friends were playing around in the leaves, laughing and smiling.

He had very black hair, and a dark tan from the summer just past. I could hear his voice over the others as he called and joked with his friends. There was something about

him that made me think we had met before, but again I could not think of where. As he called to his friends and ran about, his voice seemed to make my heart fly without my body, and I felt so very good.

I watched for some time, all these young happy people with only their children's games to worry about, when a wind caught my wings and once again I found myself high above the earth.

As I flew, the sky seemed a little different. It was somewhat grayer in

***A strong wind
blew, and with
one great thrust
of my wings I
was off.***

color, and the air was not as warm as it had been. Was a storm on its way? I found myself above a high school and thought, "I should find somewhere to land until the sun shows itself again." I was in the back of the school where a group of boys and girls were standing around in a circle, yelling and shouting out words of anger.

I saw two of the young men in the middle, fighting. I moved in closer and thought to myself, "Why don't these two listen to the others," but then when I listened closer to what the others were saying I could see they were.

All the young people looking on were not trying to stop them but were cheering them on to fight harder.

I looked hard at the two who were doing battle, and saw that one of these young men was fighting with great anger and hate as he beat the other boy. But his anger and hate seemed not to be just for the other boy, but for himself as well.

In watching this, all at once I felt a mean anger come over me, too. I did not understand it, but I yelled out loud with my new voice for them to stop fighting at once. But all that came out was a high screech which pierced the air around them. When they heard my call, the young man full of anger turned my way.

Our eyes locked and I could see a cold steel in his eyes, eyes that I somehow knew. I still did not understand fully why he was so filled with anger and hate, but I knew I must leave the place at once. So again I turned to my world in the sky.

As I flew on I thought about those boys and how they could pick a house of such great knowledge to do battle in, and how much anger the boy with the steel-black eyes had in him. Did he think so little of the other boy, of school and of himself to hate so hard? How could one so young have so much hate for all things?

It started to become darker and colder as I flew on. "Why was it becoming so cold? Whatever happened to the great warmth I felt not too long ago?" I thought to myself, "I should turn back to where I last saw the

sun," but something was driving me to go on this way. I found myself feeling mixed up by the things I'd seen and felt today, but I knew there was more to see and feel before this day was over.

I looked down and saw the lights on in a little white house; something inside me said I have to know what was inside that house. I landed on a tree

next to a big window and looked in. Funny, the house looked familiar to me.

Inside I saw that same steel-eyed young man. He was standing in the living room with a beautiful young woman who was yelling and

crying at the same time. He didn't look the same as he had before when he had been fighting the other man so hatefully. He looked sick, uneasy, and older. I felt different than I did the last time I saw him. Along with the feelings of hate and anger, I felt loneliness, despair, confusion, sickness and lost love. All this I felt today.

Was this all in just one day? This was becoming too much for me, my confusion increasing. The young woman yelling at him, I could tell, loved him very much; and from him I felt great love for her as well. But there was something standing between them that I fully didn't understand yet.

I could see that he was not sick, but was slowly poisoning himself with

drugs. The young woman, who was his wife, just could not take him throwing their life away anymore. From what I heard her say, the young man had been killing the love between them for some time with his drugs. I thought, "He was just a high school boy minutes ago; how did he grow up so fast?" But he was not grown up enough yet.

I could not take any more of what I was seeing. It put a feeling in me I had never felt before, but at the same time it seemed I had always felt it. I moved on. I tried not to think of what I had seen and the things they made me feel; I churned inside.

I flew for a long time, going over and over the things I saw. They were all so familiar to me, but how far off they were, too. I was passing over an area with businesses and thought maybe seeing people at work and play would take my mind off all I had seen. Suddenly I heard loud music and laughter coming from a small cafe below. "Now that's what I need to see. People happy and having a good time."

I landed on the building across the street and looked in the big window. I saw people dancing, laughing and just enjoying life as they raised their glasses of drink. But I felt something wrong.

All at once I felt as if I wanted to die, and that I was all alone in the

world. As I looked even harder into the big window, through all the happy people way in the back, I saw a man sitting all by himself with his head down on the bar. He looked up and—my God—it was him! Only he didn't look the same. He looked much older and so very lonely. "How could he be lonely with all those people there," I thought.

His eyes no longer had that steely look, but a look of sadness. They were very red and empty. He stood and held onto the bar to keep from falling. His body didn't look as strong as it once had. I could tell he had been sick, the same sickness that his wife had talked of. It seemed as though he'd been sick forever.

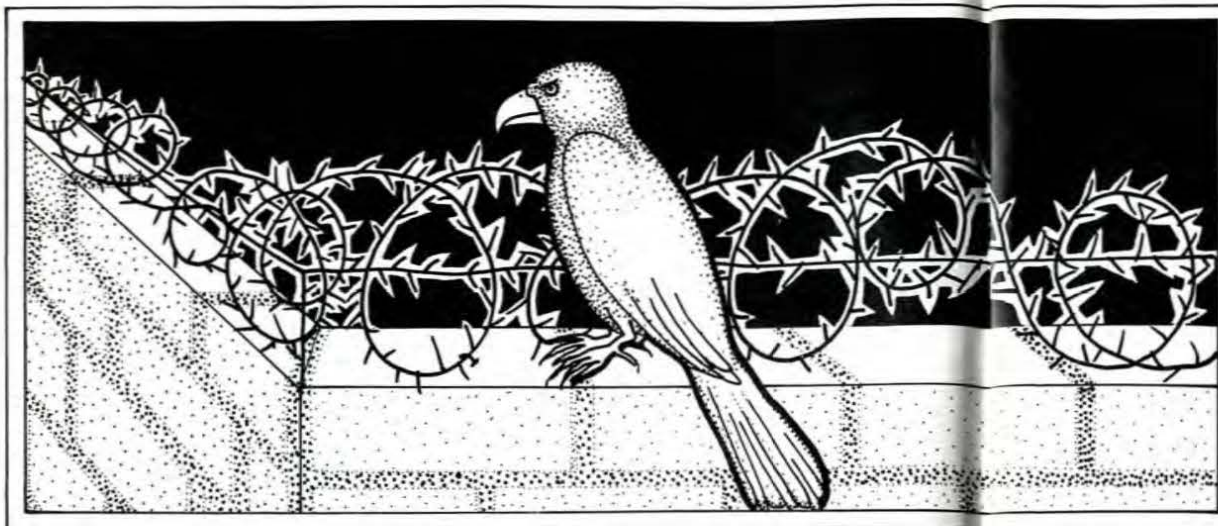
As he made his way out of the cafe and into his car, I knew I must see where he went from there. He drove himself to that same little white house; but this time there were no lights on, no wife to love

him, no feeling of warmth. In the darkness of the cold house he found his way to his bed and fell asleep.

Whatever happened to that young beautiful wife? Was it too much for her, that now he is all alone?" The sadness was just too much for me, and I flew off. It was hard to see where I was flying, for I had tears in my eyes for the young man who was sleeping alone. How did he do all this to his life

I could see a cold steel in his eyes, eyes that I somehow knew. I did not understand why.

His eyes no longer had that steely look, but a look of sadness. They were red and empty.



in such a short time? As I flew around thinking of my young man, I heard screams below me that almost knocked me out of the sky.

I flew down to the house I had heard the screams coming from, and could see through a window that the same young man was there. I looked again and saw a man at his feet. Blood was coming from the man, and I knew he was dead. The tool that had taken his life was still in the hand of the young man.

All at once from the young man I felt hate, anger, sadness, loneliness, despair and confusion. All these feelings coming at once were too much for me, and I let out a scream at the same time the young man did. I headed for the skies, flying as hard and as fast as I could.

"God! What has he done? Was his life so bad that he would kill? Did he really want to kill that man, or did he want to kill all those mixed up feelings he couldn't suppress?"

I knew in my heart that, along with that man, my young man too had died

that night. The skies were cold and dark, and the wind blew hard. "I was right. A great storm did come from within that young man." I flew even faster yet to get away from all that sadness.

Then, out of nowhere, the skies became calm again and the wind was warm. "How good it feels to be away from the cold and darkness." As I looked down, I saw the buildings from where I had started. I thought, "How funny it is that here, of all places, it would be so calm."

I landed on the fence that kept those poor souls locked in, and I looked around. "No! Can it be?" It was the young man, sitting there in a group of people, all talking about their lives of madness from addiction, and how they too had done things to themselves and others. The young man seemed to hear what they were talking about. I felt hope and strength coming from them all.

He looked better than he had when I last saw him—his eyes not so hard,

his heart more full. All at once I felt a real love. A love of life and myself. I knew deep inside me that he would be all right in these people's hands.

I gave out a cry to let him know that I was still with him and always would be. I felt so happy and free that I headed for the sun, singing a song of joy for the young man.

"He has found help."

As I flew over the yard, I looked down to see myself still there in the grass. I thought, "How well I look." I landed on a tree next to the fence and went over all I had felt and seen. It had been a long day, and now it was time to rest. I closed my eyes to sleep.

When I next opened my eyes I was looking up into the sky and at the trees outside the fence. I looked and saw the hawk flying off into the sun. "It was only a dream; I'm still behind the fence." It's funny; the dream really didn't take that long at all.

Later on that day I told a friend about the hawk I had seen, and before I could tell him about the dream that came with it he told me, I was crazy. "There are no hawks around here this time of year." Again I tried to tell him, and again he told me I was crazy. That started me thinking about all I had seen and felt while flying as the hawk.

As I walked around thinking about

all this, a couple of guys that had just got behind the locked fence came up to me to talk about a better life. We talked about how my life was while I was using, and how crazy my life was. It came to me out of the blue: God! You have set me free. You set my soul free to fly with you as a hawk so that, with clear eyes, I could see my life from past to now. All those feelings, I felt before and have with me now; but I know the order they belong in now.

Now I know that the calm I felt as I came back was a calm from within. You have set me free of all the sickness and loneliness. I have people to fall back on when I need to, and they me. Today I was that hawk, my soul became him so I could fly full circle back to my real self. I have another chance at life. I am like that little boy again, with eyes that dance with sun-

*I landed on the
fence that kept
those poor souls
locked in, and
looked around.
'Can it be?'*

shine. Now I, too, can give away the freedom you have given me. To help and grow.

I know if I walk life's road using all that I have learned through my life, my road will be one of freedom.

Thank you for the gift!

J.V., Connecticut

Gratitude and vigilance

Step Ten: "We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

We all work the steps in slightly different ways—hopefully at our sponsor's direction with higher power's help. The direction I was given led me to begin formally working Step Ten when I was clean about three years.

Incorporating this step into my program along with the first nine, I began noticing my part in the conflicts of my daily life. I learned that by admitting my wrong promptly, I freed myself from guilt, resentment and the resulting pain much more quickly. Also, I did not need to keep myself sick by justifying my behavior based on what someone did to me. By reacting to another's negative behavior with some of my own, not only did I suffer the pain of their wrong, but in a very real sense I was inflicting more pain on myself with my own negative actions.

There was also an adjustment period in which I probably took too much

blame on myself, but that leveled off as I got accustomed to taking responsibility for my part—but my part only. It is not my responsibility to "fix" the other person. For myself I feel that, in order to recover, I need to pray that H.P. gives them what they need. After I express my discomfort, I try to let go. Often, as out of line as their actions might be, my reaction is the problem. I learn a lot of patience, forgiveness and tolerance from Step Ten.

I have gained an interesting piece of self-awareness from this step. Sometimes I try to control a situation by accepting full responsibility for it even though an observer can clearly see the other party's part in it. If it is all my fault, you see, then by changing my behavior I can "fix" the situation itself—or so I sometimes think. In reality, I can only work on myself with God's help through the steps—I am powerless over another's behavior.

But the part of this step that really turns me on is the daily inventory part. I became aware of the healing process evidenced in this step as I was lying in my bed after my evening prayers. I had a "character defect relapse"—a return to an old behavior after a period of surrender, abstinence and recovery from that behavior. I was depressed at my failure; this defect had been the source of much pain. I was crucifying myself over it.

Without really deciding to do it, I began to inventory my actions of the day: I awoke and did my daily "keep me clean, etc." prayer. I did my exercise, bathed, brushed my teeth and put on clean clothes. I went to work.

From my office I made several calls (on my time) concerning an N.A. project I was serving on. I put in a hard day at work, and then went to a meeting. I talked to my sponsor and several men that I sponsor. I washed up, said my "thank you" prayer, and went to bed.

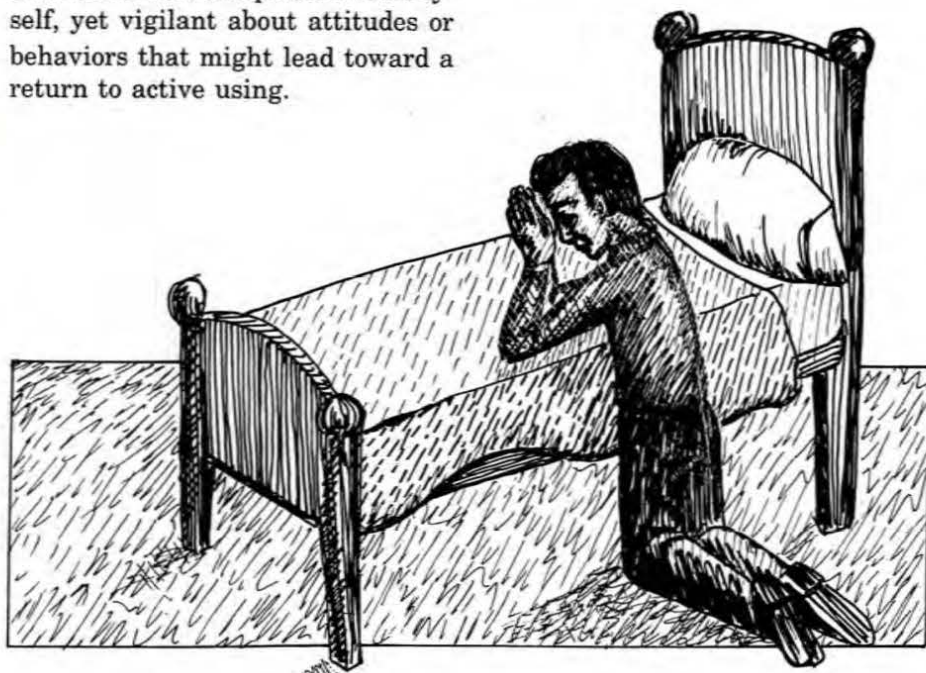
I began to realize that even though I had acted out on my defect, I had also done many more positive things than negative. In my active using days, virtually none of the actions in the preceding paragraph would have been part of my day. This time, I had only suffered the setback of not being perfect.

I realized that I am often afraid to forgive myself my mistakes. Perhaps I'm afraid that if I give myself too much rope, I will hang myself. Whatever the rationale, the steps have given me a framework in which I can be flexible and patient with myself, yet vigilant about attitudes or behaviors that might lead toward a return to active using.

When I realize at the end of the day (or whenever) that I have erred, I know I have a choice: I can ask a Higher Power to help me do better the next day. I don't have to condemn myself. Usually I do better, but sometimes I do not. But I find it very difficult to remain ungrateful when I compare my life today to the hell I used to live. So long as I remain aware of the growth I have realized with the help of God and Narcotics Anonymous, my vigilance need not amount to self-abuse. I realize that I truly am *doing* better than I may be *feeling*.

For a person who previously spent his life chastising himself into intense guilt, while rationalizing every misdeed, that realization makes for peaceful balance.

T.B., Pennsylvania



How do you work Step Ten?

This article describes some methods I use in working Step Ten. Perhaps someone will receive a tip from it that they can use. The steps have worked for me. They have kept me drug-free for many years and have transformed me into a new person. I don't weigh three hundred pounds anymore, neither my house nor my car are falling apart, and most of all I don't have suicidal thoughts. I want to live today.

For a quick Tenth Step I ask myself: What are my motives?

I have to keep my program simple. Most of my inventories are short and simple. What has helped me the most for the greatest number of years has been HALT: don't let yourself get too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Eating something is easy to do; even just an apple works. If I go to a meeting and open up to someone, my anger and loneliness disappear. Sometimes I just need to rest.

After the constant craving for drugs

leaves, it is easy to get carried away with work or hobbies, or to forget my past pattern and work too many hours. Ninety-five percent of the time when I have any kind of problem, and I identify it in my Tenth Step, I find the answer in HALT.

For a quick Tenth Step, I have a couple of questions that I ask myself: When was my last meeting? What are my motives?

As with HALT, almost all of my problems occur when it has been a few days since my last meeting. There is some sort of magic that happens at meetings.

In checking my motives, I often find that striving to be first has again become an obsession with me. That isolates me from others, and gets me out of touch with myself. I can develop an unhealthy dependency on people's approval just as I did on chemicals. Most of the time, I do a decent job of treating my disease, except for when I am hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

An inventory is a list. I usually can

instantly make a long list of negatives in my life. Gratitude lists are harder, but I need them, too. I need to see how far I have come. I need to compare my life today to the hours and days that I wasted during my active addiction. The best way for me to get ideas for this list is to go to meetings.

Our Basic Text tells us in Step Ten to monitor our feelings, our emotions, our fantasies, and our actions. This monitoring helps me. My fear and anger needs to be looked at. It is normal to have a certain amount of fear. Fear of accidents and of traffic tickets helps us avoid getting into accidents and getting tickets. What I have to really look into are long-lasting fears.

I need to examine my feelings when I get an instant dislike for someone. There is probably something in them that I dislike because the same trait is in me, and you bet your boots, I'm trying to deny it.

My addiction tricks me. It tells me that I'm experiencing hurt, when the

real emotion is anger. I try to trace these tricks. Writing assists me. Often by just sitting down for twenty minutes and writing my thoughts, I am able to identify my real feelings.

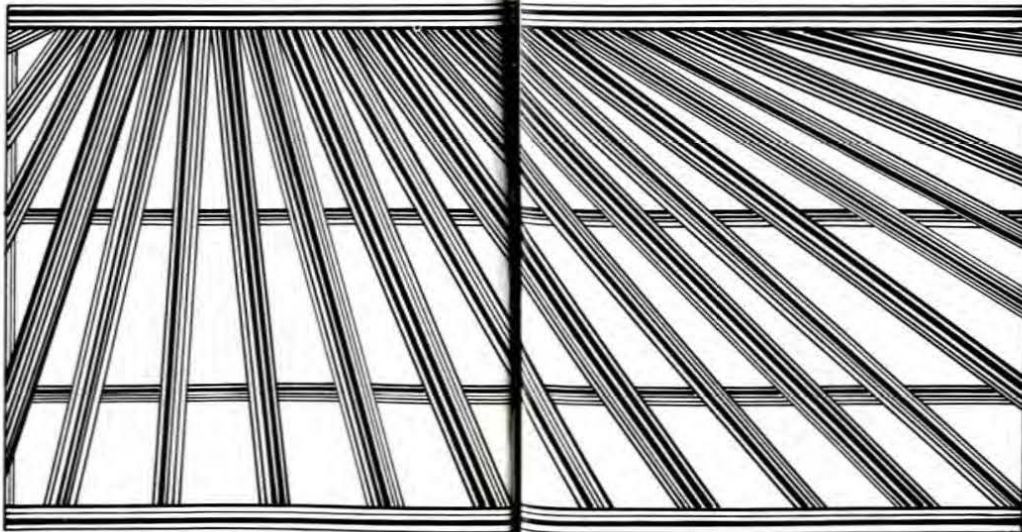
On a yearly basis I do a major inventory and another Fifth Step with my sponsor. Each year I seem to learn more and more about myself. Working the steps is like peeling an onion. You think you see the core, then you find still another layer. When I first did a Fourth and Fifth Step, my mind

My addiction tricks me. Writing helps me trace those tricks.

was not functioning very well. It takes a while to get better. I did not get sick overnight.

The final phase of this step is to promptly admit when I am wrong. This was tough for me at first, but it becomes easier and easier. For most of my life, I went to great lengths to cover up my mistakes. I thought that no one would like me if I ever made a mistake. It had been sort of a major crime to make a mistake in my home, so I had to learn to face the pain of making mistakes with people in N.A. In the process, I also learned about love, tolerance, and acceptance. The people in these rooms love you no matter what. Such unconditional love I had never felt, even from my own family.

J.S., New York



Computerized recovery instrumentation

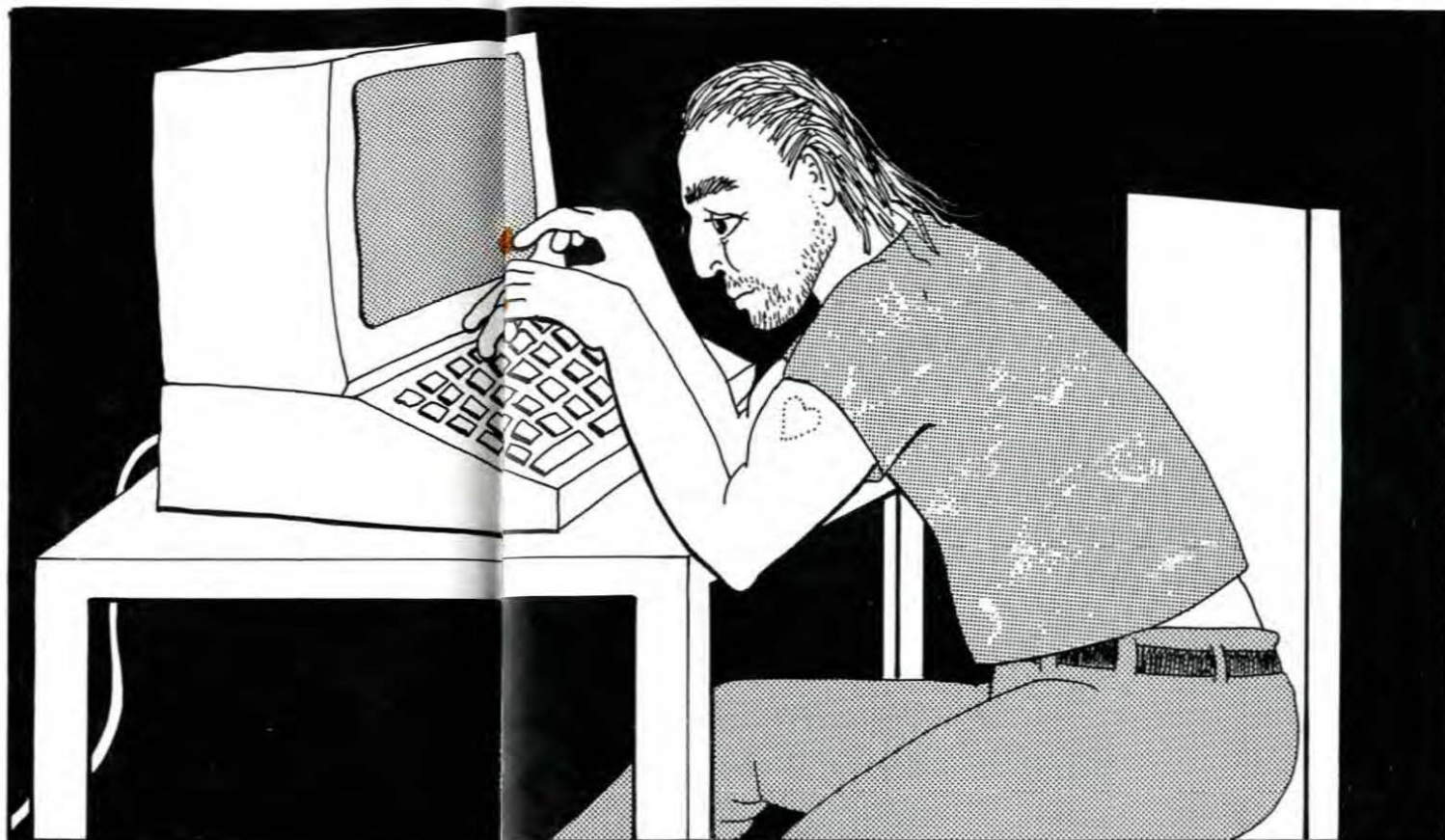
Yes, it's here! This range of state-of-the-art equipment epitomizes all that is best in digital recovery. It's not cheap, but it's the best.

Sharecue

It's spiritual—it's practical! Find that 1/4-second silence and begin sharing with confidence; no more hit-and-miss with this tiny silicon-based accessory. Worn anywhere, it will detect the end of a share in advance and provide a barely audible cue. When worn next to the skin, will provide low-voltage current to stimulate you into speech if required. Positively undetectable. Get well quicker than the rest with a Sharecue! Implant model under development.

Sharewell

Ever worried about not sounding well enough? Ever run out of pearls of wisdom when you really needed them? Ever wanted to sound like a Californian but didn't believe it was possible? This incredible little device achieves this easily. Simply calibrate it to your actual wellness level (even



goes into negative wellness for initial calibration), set it to the desired wellness level, and just share! You will be amazed. Tested at conventions, this device has exceeded all expectations.

Now incorporates random access memory of self-improvement and therapy expressions. Can even disguise defects and project humility, this device is a miracle! Sound well, Sharewell!

Contact

Achieve conscious contact easily with the God of your understanding. This is computer technology at its simplest and best. Goodbye to all that

*It's spiritual—
It's practical! No
more hit and
miss!*

tedious praying. All the strength, inspiration and direction you need, at the touch of a button.

Meditation was never so easy! This tiny device, worn like a hearing aid, with only a moderate seven-inch aerial, achieves almost instantly what it took older members years to learn!

Yes, your prayers can be heard instantly, and the answer, should you wish to hear it, will be loud and clear. Internal memory for subsequent replay, channel button for bad atmospheric conditions, and even a jamming device to clear the airwaves so you can be sure of being heard! Presets for regularly used prayers, low (41 hertz) tone for effective oneness, it's all there in a tiny mushroom-colored box.

This is the one! With the ultimate aid to prayer and meditation, God's will is a cinch!

Get well today the C.R.I. way!

J.B., England

To any lengths

My first day clean was March 12, 1988. I am thirty-six, and twenty-seven of those years were in active addiction. But thanks to other recovering addicts, I know what you mean when you talk about going to any lengths to stay clean.

My story probably starts out like a lot of others. But it helps to hear that you are not the only one that goes through this. For seven months of my recovery, we had very little money. My boyfriend did get a check every three months, but it didn't help much. We would pay rent for a couple of months and wash some clothes when we could, and that was it. We had almost no food. We would go to the centers and get what we could.

I could not work because I was pregnant with twins. We washed our clothes out by hand, using bar soap, and then with the same soap we would wash ourselves. Of course no one in N.A. knew.

Well, I lost my babies and things got worse. The only thing that we had to eat was grits. We even saved our cigarette butts and re-rolled them over and over. By this time I was eating maybe three times a week. The

rest I'd give to my boyfriend, because he was going to school and I thought he needed it more than I did.

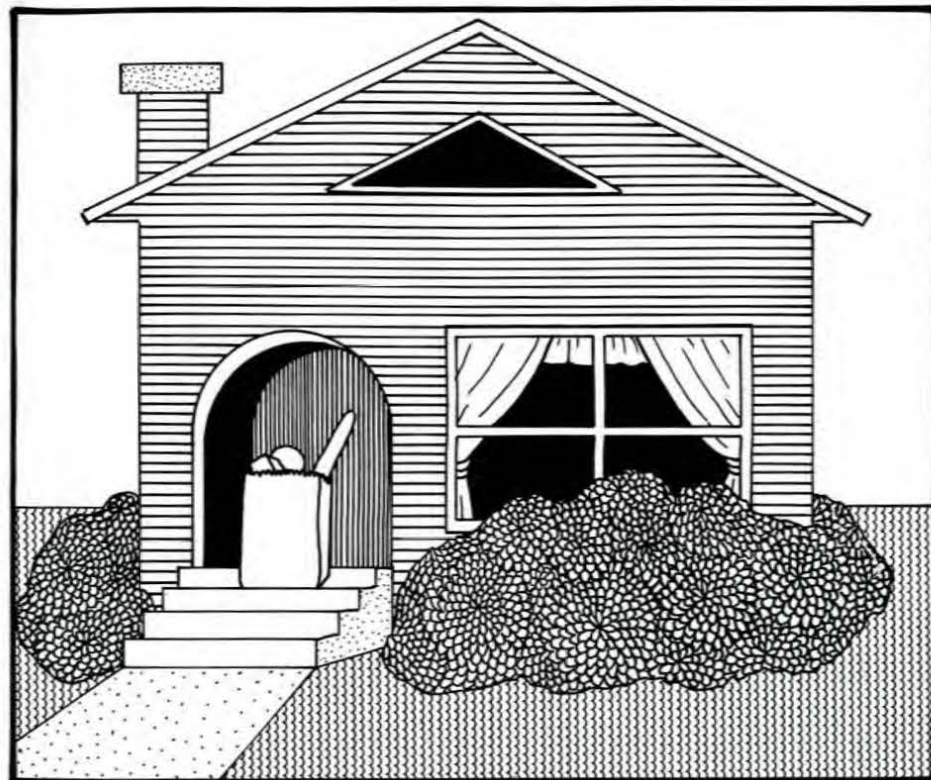
I have always believed in my Higher Power, so I kept saying that he would help. *And he did!* Another addict came by, and we were talking, and it came out that we didn't have any food. I was so embarrassed because I said it. Anyway, she left and came back later and brought some food. I didn't understand why, but I thanked my Higher Power, and her, for what she did. She said, "No thanks needed, just don't tell anyone." I said I wouldn't.

I kept wondering why she wanted to help—she really didn't know me. Soon I just let it go. Finally I was talk-

*I kept wondering
why she wanted
to help—she
really didn't
know me.*

ing to my sponsor and I asked, without breaking her anonymity, why that friend might have wanted to help. She said it was one addict helping another.

Things got a little better, but not much. Time went on as usual, with something every day; as it happens, I am now going to have another baby. Another chance to be a mother—oh boy! Still no money, but I am not worried, because my Higher Power will not let us suffer. We were always happy, but now we are excited. A few



weeks later my boyfriend comes and says we don't get any money for six months.

We have half a month's rent, and we owe another month and a half. Now I start to worry, not a lot, but enough to make me really nervous. I got accepted at a rehabilitation place and I am making ten cents per dozen that I do. This is not much, but we needed it. It was something to give our landlord.

Well I could not handle this worry about the rent if I didn't let go and let my Higher Power help. My boyfriend was very supportive. He kept telling me don't worry, which is good, because it's usually me who says don't worry.

Anyway, another recovering addict stopped by and asked my boyfriend if he would like to go to work, and not just for \$3.35 an hour, but more. He was able to change from day school to night school.

Everyone talks about letting go and letting God—well it works. We are not living high on the hog, but it's much better. It is possible that the worst is yet to come, but after this we know that with our Higher Power and N.A., we can handle it and live happy and clean.

I have learned humility, willingness, letting go, open-mindedness. This program works if you want to work your steps. Thank you.

P.J., Alabama

Evolution

I've gotten to know someone at work who's not in the program but has been clean for several years. I've invited him to meetings, but he's declined, pleading an inability to be around other people. So near as I can tell, his recovery is based on isolation, long hours, and a tight routine. He doesn't seem particularly unhappy in this circumscribed world; neither does he seem particularly joyful.

And I understand how it is, because I tried it that way a long time before I came into the program. But that didn't work for me. Until I got into recovery, which for me is the point at which I started to work the steps, I didn't want to go to meetings. Being afraid of people was a big motivation for using so I reasoned that going to meetings was far more likely to set me off than cool me down.

It wasn't that I didn't like people. It was that everyone else seemed solid; I felt two-dimensional. Everyone else seemed to have a script; I needed my lines fed to me. Judicious using let me feel like I was performing adequately, and injudicious using let me not care how I was doing.

The using really took off with that discovery. So did the not caring. And



maybe that's the way it had to be. All the stubbornness, all the self-will, all the self-reliance got knocked out of me—I didn't care what happened, so there was little resistance any more to coming to the program. I was so empty when I got here.

And thank God for that. I was empty enough that I could begin to be filled. And the meetings *were* hard for

me. My first couple of months I pretended I was invisible so I'd have the courage to walk into the rooms. I was very sick; sitting on a folding chair for an hour or more was often agony—being very still so no one would notice me, afraid to go get coffee, shaking and sweating and so very scared. But they said keep coming back, and I did.

I can't say it was hope that drew me. I'd tried so very hard to get clean on my own—and had succeeded for months at a time—that all I could hear was a voice in my head saying, "What makes you think you can make it this time?" I kept hearing "a day at a time," but everyone looked

***Everyone else
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a script; I
needed my lines
fed to me.***

to me like they were planning to be around a while longer than that. No, it wasn't hope; it was the lack of any alternative.

What I really had, I think now, was faith. Faith for me has been showing up even when I didn't believe, staying clean even when it didn't make sense, praying even when I doubted God, talking to people even when I was scared. I couldn't let wanting to use or not wanting to use be the focus of my recovery. Being willing—no, desperate—enough to do what I was told, to work the steps, to reach out as much as I could, has had to be.

And I couldn't reach out very much. I'd take phone numbers, and eventually ask for them, but it took me years to *use* them. I'd have to make notes to myself about what people said to use in later conversation. Nobody, including myself, seemed that real or substantial in those early days. I wasn't using but I was still the person who used and who took time to

change. Remember language class dialogues? "Hello, Paco, how are you? What lovely galoshes. Please pass the jam." That's kind of how it was for me for a long time.

I don't know if some are sicker than others, but I think we all recover at our own rate. And part of my recovery was willingness to tolerate a pretty slow rate, to feel agonizingly shy

**Remember
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'Hello, Paco, how
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That's kind of
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and self-conscious and unworthy. A major turning point came as I was mentally berating myself for being a total loss, and might as well use, when I heard an answering thought: "You're not that worthless." If I ever heard God speak, it was at that moment. *Nobody* is so worthless as to deserve the awful misery of active addiction.

Thank God for the people in this fellowship. I was so hungry for love, affection and attention and hadn't the least idea of how to ask for it. They hugged me, they smiled, they shook my hand, they remembered my name. And I began to remember theirs. And I eventually found it pretty funny that everyone in the rooms

was complaining about not having the script either.

It's not always pleasant. A lot of that terrible shyness is gone, but roller coaster feelings remain. As a friend of mine says, for some of us, the volume is turned up. What I have learned is how to live with some discomfort, with not always feeling poised, with still alternating between up and down. Being calm may not be in my nature. I am not necessarily the person I would like to be, but thank God I'm not the person I was.

And I have a good job, a generally happy relationship, friends, a car that runs most of the time, none of which I had when I got here. I don't happen to think the program gave me these things, but I do believe the program has made me the kind of person for whom those things are now possible.

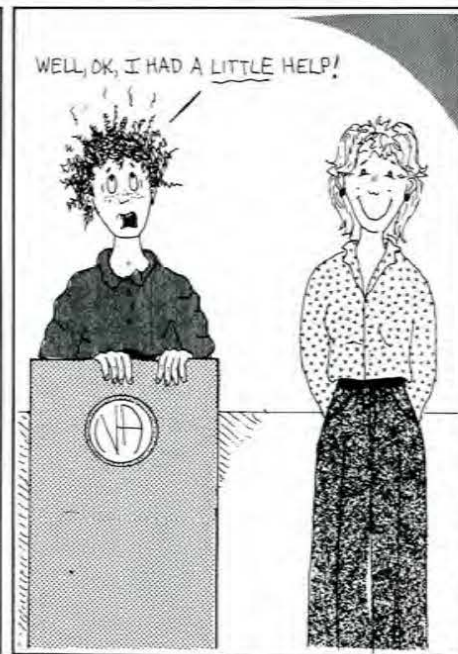
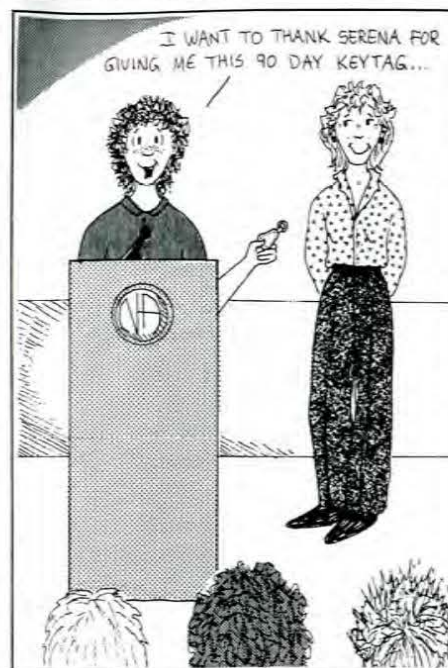
I once read a book by an Auschwitz survivor, who called the last human freedom the ability to choose one's attitude no matter what the circumstances. Or, as my sponsor puts it, I'm not responsible for my thoughts, but I don't have to entertain them. When I begin sinking into self-loathing, fear or depression, I can often exercise the choice—to call someone newer or sadder than me, to perform some act of service, to go to a meeting, to put a better face on than what I feel. These days, I try to measure my recovery by the ability to get out of myself. And I suspect that's how I can best be myself.

As for my fellow worker, God bless him, and I know there will always be a hand out for him as there was for me.

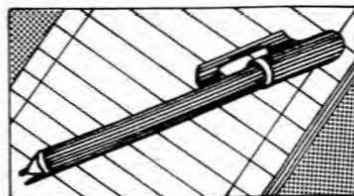
Anonymous, Hawaii

Home Group

**Marge's Moment
of Clarity**



Viewpoint



The air is blue!

Smoke-filled service meetings are a very negative aspect of N.A. membership. They make a mockery of N.A. openness, because they discourage many members from full participation in N.A. As leaders and trusted servants, we must not flippantly shrug this off. It is a recurring, reprehensible problem.

Our common welfare should come first in all of our affairs, even before an individual's right to indulge in smoking cigarettes at another member's expense. We trusted servants of our individual groups and of N.A. as a whole must not allow ourselves to remain beguiled by statements such as "my smoking is only hurting me," or "if it bothers you just go away." How can we tell fellow members of N.A. to go away and at the same time tell them to "keep coming back"? How does that work? What does it mean?

Or how about this one: "If we don't

allow people to smoke in service meetings, nobody will come!" That sounds like a familiar old refrain: "If I don't use drugs, I won't have any friends." I don't know of any recovering addicts who won't travel on an airplane, go into a hospital or work in a state or federal building where smoking is not allowed. The service work we're doing is important. They'll come.

With the terrific growth N.A. has had in the past ten years, more and more non-smokers are coming into our fellowship for recovery. And the more members we have who stay clean for a long time, the more we see

Smoke-filled service meetings make a mockery of N.A. openness.

people quitting smoking. The number of non-smoking N.A. meetings in our area, meetings once unheard of and apparently unneeded, now nearly equals the number of smoking N.A. meetings.

Non-smoking members are therefore finding opportunities to serve in a comfortable environment at the group level, but then what? How can health-conscious members, or mem-

bers like me who have severe allergies to second-hand cigarette smoke, serve N.A. beyond the group level? The answer is that many of us can't.

Only by insuring that members have access to all N.A. service meetings at all levels can we insure that the ties that bind us together will remain stronger than those that would tear us apart.

We trusted servants of Narcotics Anonymous must take a fearless stand on behalf of those we now serve as well as those to come. We must lead by example. The values and priorities we stand up for demonstrate our ability and desire to place principles before personalities.

I suggest that we make all N.A. service meetings, at all levels, smokeless.

L.F., California

We're recovering too

I am an addict. I'm also a teenager. Through the grace of God, I found Narcotics Anonymous six weeks before my sixteenth birthday. Now I'm eighteen. This afternoon I returned from a convention. The convention was wonderful, but at the gigantic Saturday night meeting the female speaker said, "Women have to *earn*

respect in N.A." I appreciate her statement, and have one of my own: Teenagers also have to earn respect in Narcotics Anonymous.

I didn't get clean just to get respect,

We have the same deadly disease, and it has killed too many teenagers.

but I do expect to be taken seriously. At thirty months clean I finally feel respected—but it shouldn't have taken this long. After the way I was treated when I was new, I'm very grateful that at fifteen I was absolutely ready to get clean, or I'd be in jail, in an institution or dead.

I was the third adolescent to get clean in this area, and we were lost. We were very active, but it took months before we were viewed as recovering addicts rather than teenagers; that is, before people would listen to our suggestions in service meetings, group consciences, etc.

I did service work to give N.A. something back for what it had given me, but I felt like I was wasting my time. I recall having nine months in service work and watching the members overlook my suggestions to listen to an adult service newcomer who was saying what I had previously said. I'm male. I feel sorry for female teenagers; how much worse yet it must be for them.

We are addicts. We have the same deadly disease, and it has killed too many teenagers. I've been told repeatedly by older members that they've shot more dope than I've ever seen. So what! That's your problem. It's not "what or how much you used," it's "what you want to do about your problem and how we can help." Telling us how much more you used and ignoring our ideas and suggestions isn't helping us; and I guarantee that what I say can help you.

Narcotics Anonymous is where we look for love, encouragement and companionship. Please don't single us out of this because we didn't shoot dope or go through twenty treatment centers. Not many addicts make it in general, and the numbers are even worse for teenagers. Perhaps this would change if we were treated the same as everyone else: as addicts seeking recovery.

J.O., Pennsylvania

Editorial replies

Missing Pieces

In response to "The Missing Pieces of our Service Structure," December 1988.

From New Jersey: I am in one hundred percent agreement with the author. I have been involved in serv-

ice for over six years now, and it is quite obvious to me that something is missing. It makes sense for us, as a fellowship, to go back to our roots.

Actually, I am quite surprised that I feel this way. I have been one of those radical purists who has fought so hard and for so long to sever our ties to A.A. I have even been called

*I had been
called anti-A.A.;
maybe I'm
mellowing out.*

"anti-A.A." on a few occasions. Maybe I'm mellowing out in my old age, or maybe I'm getting better.

Oh yes, I still believe in "one disease-one program," N.A. language at N.A. meetings and all that. But hey, doesn't it make sense that if we adapted their steps and their traditions, then we should adapt their service structure as well?

I have recently sent a letter to the A.A. General Service Office in New York, asking them to send me a copy of the guidelines for their service structure. After I read through it, I will hopefully have some ideas about applying their experience, strength and hope to our service structure. Maybe by then, there will be more of us involved in N.A. service who would be willing to discuss this issue at length.

My thanks to the author of "Missing Pieces" for this thought-provoking article.

J.D.

To the men of N.A.

The following are in reply to the letter "To the men of N.A.," published in February, 1989.

From California: Although I understand N.G.'s pain and rage, I disagree with the concept that sharing the symptoms of our disease goes against carrying the message of recovery.

Too many of my friends in N.A. have gotten "good" or "appropriate" or "morally well" overnight, only to return to active addiction. I particularly remember one man who became obsessed with other N.A. members who did not live up to his brand new moral standards. During his last few months of life, this friend would "confront" other N.A. members about their dating habits and their language. He, on the other hand, was a reformed man, gentle, polite and soft-spoken.

Under this man's exterior was a person full of hostility. He suddenly quit coming to N.A. and used drugs. Within a few months this friend of mine was murdered during a drug deal gone bad. Although I do not have the power to change what happened, I can't help but think that if this man had not become too well too fast, perhaps he would today have recovery of the slow-healing variety.

We get better slowly and anyone who tells me different is under suspicion.

No, I do not agree that N.A. members should stop or edit their sharing about "the monster" inside. Repressed N.A. members or ones who downplay or deny the symptoms of

their disease are much more dangerous, harmful and relapse-prone than obnoxious, outspoken, crass and hard to control N.A. members.

What I would like to hear more about are N.A. women sharing about their violent insides. Then, perhaps, we would have more women in N.A. with more time. It's long been thought that this violence is only the man's responsibility. Let me tell you that I've verbally and physically abused many a man, woman and child during the fourteen plus years I was in my active addiction, and I'm liable to repeat the behavior clean and in N.A. except for the fact that my N.A. fellow members let me express who I truly am, lest I should repeat it in recovery.

In my many inventories over the past ten years, I have discovered a violence and capability for abuse in myself. Part of the dishonesty of my disease was a behavior pattern which let men take the rap for this survival instinct gone astray in me. I was able to manipulate this because we so easily put it into men's area of responsibility. Shame on women, shame on myself and shame on N.A. if we let this myth continue.

D.H.

From Indiana: I readily agreed with N.G.'s viewpoint about male behavior and macho ego. A problem we seem to have in our meetings is that some (both male and female) use the fellowship as a social outlet—a dating pool, so to speak. The fact that personal recovery depends on N.A. unity becomes overshadowed when a person can no longer attend meetings because a certain ex-lover will be there.

We seem to be unable to relate to each other on any level other than sexual; and some never return to the meetings after the relationship turns sour.

Fortunately I have been able to concentrate on personal recovery, working on learning to love myself, so that I will be able to build on a firm foundation when I am ready for a full relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

It hurts to see this happen to others and I wish I had some good advice to share with someone involved in this way. Thanks to N.G. of California for making me realize how grateful I am to the program of N.A. and the recovery found in the N.A. Way!

C.S.

Second class membership?

The following are in response to our recent column "It's Your Turn to Share," and the article we published in October entitled "Second Class Member."

From Ohio: Although I prefer to use N.A. terminology I cannot mandate others to do so. What I can do is share with the people I sponsor that, very simply, we're addicts who are clean; I can let them know that recovery is here in Narcotics Anonymous. That is the message that was shared with me.

If A.A. would have worked for addicts there would be no N.A.; in the same respect, if it wasn't for A.A. we would not be who we are today. However, Narcotics Anonymous is here, and the words we use are a part of our program. I respect them wholeheartedly.

So, yes, it really does matter how we say it!

I have also shared the same feeling as did the other member about the maturity in N.A. This program has yet to fail me. The people have, but the program hasn't. So therefore I have no

Sure we have a lot of growing to do. Stick around and help us.

reason to leave. If we do continue to leave, as many do, there may not be the continuous stability, clean time and maturity that our fellowship now has. Sure we have a lot of growing up to do, so stick around and help us. Make a commitment to Narcotics Anonymous. I did, and I wouldn't trade it for the world!

C.S.

From New Jersey: H.O.W!., "second class member." Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness have been the keys to progress in my recovery. I honestly tell you, my open-mindedness keeps me willing to gratefully receive help from wherever I can get it! If I am drowning and I am thrown a life-preserver from another fellowship, shall I push it away because I am a "purist"? Get real! I'm sick, and I seek help in three different Twelve Step programs (mainly N.A.), plus rehab, psychotherapy and group therapy. I had many problems before my drug addiction. I am dealing with them now, clean, wherever I can receive help with them. My life

is better than it's ever been!

What am I willing to do to stay clean and recover? Whatever it takes! I don't want to go back! We all work slightly different programs. I refuse to deny myself the growth I can receive from my "other" weekly step meeting, and I also refuse to leave N.A. I love N.A. It's where I started identifying, and where I keep my memory green. When an N.A. "purist" puts me down for getting "outside help," I consider that they may be closed-minded and ask H.P. to help them. Let's not bite the hand that fed us! If it wasn't for A.A. (the "other fellowship") where would we be?

C.N.

Anonymous: I live in the southwestern desert, completely cut off from civilization. The nearest fairly large city is 140 miles away. Our fellowship extremely small—eight members attending three meetings a week. If our newcomers had to depend on N.A. alone, they would die. We're a tourist town, where having clean time at our meetings depends on members vacationing here.

But I can tell you one thing: there is recovery in Narcotics Anonymous folks! And it falls back on me to make sure of that, not on them. Am I willing to love all our members where they are at, not where I expect them to be? I do not depend on the local fellowship to meet all my needs. Service sends me traveling, where I meet countless members. The Loner Group keeps me writing at least ten letters a week. My N.A. sponsor several states away keeps the phone bill expensive. With all this and our three

meetings a week, I don't have time for any other fellowship.

The issue concerning language is not, in my opinion, an issue. I carry an N.A. message and believe in it very strongly. What the group does is out of my control. If members who fuss over purity would back off, a miracle might happen. Over many months the young members watch those of us with a commitment to N.A. and soon develop our lingo without our intervention. Believe me, it works. Try it. Be patient and see the miracle.

Unity is very important; each Twelve Step fellowship needs this to survive. If we need to debate or vent frustration, there are service meet-

I carry an N.A. message. What the group does is out of my control.

ings designed and equipped with Roberts' Rules of Order.

Narcotics Anonymous does have a message which is ours to live for those who want it. It's my opinion that at some point we each need to quit running and call one place home. We need not only to make that decision, but to love, serve and grow there.

Anonymous

From the editor



"It's Your Turn" response

We made an appeal in the February issue for a more lively exchange of ideas in our "Viewpoint" section. The response has been good. Several of you mentioned specifically that you were writing in response to that appeal, and the general quantity of viewpoint articles has gone up. Thanks to all of you who are participating. Let's hear from more of you, and keep it coming in steadily.

It is still by far most important, however, that we receive quality, thoughtful material for our main section, "Meeting in print." Everyone, especially our readers in hospitals and institutions, those who are newcomers, and those who are not members of N.A., will get maximum benefit from the N.A. Way if we present substantial N.A. recovery, month after month. This is our fellowship's vehicle for presenting the most current, ever growing "heartbeat of N.A." in written form.

Group subscription drive

At this writing we are in that position again where over half of our current subscribers are unpaid credit orders who came on board with our recent free trial offer. The two striking observations about that fact are, one, that we're grateful for the opportunity to expose so many more people to the N.A. message through the maga-

zine, and two, that we're once again in a vulnerable financial position.

Last time we did this, we saw a wave of subscriptions come in toward the end of the trial period. After all was said and done, we came out about even financially. We learned a lot, and put much better tracking procedures into place on this offer. We're hoping to see a real influx of paid subscriptions right about now. If you are planning to stay on with us and haven't gotten to it yet, please take a minute to do that now. You can save us the expense of further invoices, and save yourself the hassle of missing any issues.

We'll let you know how we came out on this latest group drive as soon as we know. If we lost money, it may be the last time we can afford to try it that way. If we broke even, we'll consider it a success. We're not interested in making money with this magazine, but we are hopeful that we will stop losing money at some point. To do that, we simply have to keep growing.

Any help you can give us by way of announcements, discussion with friends, and providing exposure within the fellowship is appreciated. The magazine's still young, and we are totally committed to bringing it to full maturity. That simply can't be done without you.

R.H., Editor

From our readers

Anonymous
Box 9998
San Diego, CA
92109



Learning to reach out

A few months ago I moved to a new area (over 600 miles!) and at first I felt so lost and alone. It was like the experience of being a newcomer and going to my first meeting. During my first few meetings here I would sit and listen, then pray that the meeting would be over so I could go home and cry.

During those times I asked my Higher Power, "Will it ever get better? Will I ever feel a 'part of' again?" I felt a peace within me that I'll never forget. I thought back to my days of early recovery when I wanted those hugs so desperately before and after a meeting. I even asked another addict, "Why don't they ever want to hug me?" And he said to me, "Why don't you ever hug them?" The next night I went to a meeting I was so anxious because I was ready to give those hugs.

I have been a clean member of Narcotics Anonymous for a few years, and sometimes I feel we forget what it's like to be a newcomer. Even though we read at meetings, "The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting," I personally forget that at times because of my own selfish needs. It's important for my recovery to reach out to a newcomer. The newcomer is my guarantee that the drugs are still out there and that it hasn't

gotten any better.

Today, I still feel like a newcomer. It takes a lot of humility, no matter how long we've been in the program, to realize that we can't do it alone. This is an "I can't, we can" program, and I need other addicts and Narcotics Anonymous so much today. You are my life and I thank God every day for N.A. and other addicts.

One last thing, and it is a suggestion only. Reach out to a newcomer or to a new face. Give hugs and share your recovery—because I have truly learned that I can only keep what I have by giving it away!

Anonymous

Revealing honesty

I heard a beautiful open talk at a meeting night before last. I had known the woman who spoke for over a year in recovery, but as she shared, she revealed a lot about her life before and after she came to Narcotics Anonymous. I was impressed with her honesty, and I was again reminded that an open talk can be an opportunity not only to carry the message to the still-suffering addict, but also to reveal more of ourselves to those we have grown to know in the fellowship.

I don't think any N.A. member is required to reveal where they came from. I don't ask what they used or how bad it got. I don't try to define them by their experience prior to

recovery. A lot of us work hard at convincing others that we are the sickest of the sick when we first come around. I work at convincing myself that we are all equal. As she shared

When I shared, a feeling of peace and serenity came over me. I had my first spiritual experience.

in her talk, she described the ways in which her life prior to recovery had set her apart, and how she had finally felt "one of" when she found N.A.

She had focused on the word "addiction" in our First Step. She was an addict, and it had not really mattered what or how much she had used.

At the twenty or thirty discussion tables I have sat at with her, she had never dwelled on the past. She shared about her attempts to apply the Narcotics Anonymous program to her life—today. She shared her struggles with isolation, obsession and compulsive behavior. She shared her desire to write steps and to come to a better understanding of the program. She shared her attempts to ask for help and to help others in their recovery.

But in her open talk she shared her past and her present. She shared a lifetime of addiction honestly and openly. She shared her difficulty find-

ing recovery and then her growth and joy (and her difficulties) in recovery. When she finished I knew this woman better. I was able to see once again how the details of our past experience can be so varied, but that the pain of our disease is shared. She had known the loneliness and desperation. She had found the hope and happiness of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. She finished speaking in tears. I finished listening in tears.

Anonymous

God, as we understood him

When I came into the program I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. All I wanted from this program was to help me not want to use drugs again.

My first meeting was full of long-haired, black-leathered, tattooed bikers. I couldn't help but think I was in the wrong room, but I was too afraid to leave, so I sat and listened. When the meeting was over, the woman who was celebrating her one year birthday, handed me a flyer to her one year clean and serene birthday party at her home.

At that moment I felt wanted and a part of. What a feeling. There was also a man with five years clean who told my story. I could not understand how this man, a biker, seemed to know just what happened to me. It blew me away. I was like in a trance.

I received so many hugs and was told to go to ninety meetings in ninety days, one day at a time, and to keep coming back. As a newcomer, hearing those bikers tell me to keep coming back, I thought, "Sure, I know what they want."

I went to a convention a week into recovery and the speaker said we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. I cried and cried. My understanding of God at that time was based on the experiences with a preacher who had sexually abused me when I was younger. I wanted no part of Step Three, but heard I needed to work and live these steps in order to recover, so I had to share my experience with another human being. When I did, a feeling of relief, peace and serenity came over me. I had my first spiritual experience.

I no longer have to understand God as any other person does, in or out of the program. I have a God of my own understanding, a God who understands me. What a relief to know that it was that preacher who had a problem. I now know he was spiritually sick. And now that I have a spiritual program, I have a come to know loving God.

If it were not for the unconditional loving, caring, spiritual addicts in N.A. I would still be a suffering addict or I would be dead.

D.S., California

Practicing these principles in all my affairs

I'd like to speak about finally practicing these principles in all my affairs.

God has given me five years of recovery, and after five years I'm just breaking ground on the principles of Narcotics Anonymous.

But what I need to share is for me—the five year newcomer. I do not need

to control, and I'm just starting to really understand it. I do not need to be at the top of that service committee and give my directions. Neither do I need to compete or to run the show. Just because I have five years doesn't mean I am now the N.A. goddess! Far from it. Yes, I have experience, strength and hope, and yes, I am *working* on my steps, but not perfect yet! *Ha.*

I have had the opportunity for once to sit back and watch the battles go on for conventions. I've had the opportunity to watch self-will run riot, only to watch God do his job.

I no longer feel the guilt I used to feel when the activities committee or any other committee announces at a meeting that they need help. I can accept that today I need a "service junkie" break. I also know God will do his job on seeking out people.

I need to be *honest*—yeah, I do have five years, not six; or yeah, I did that, now what can I do not to do it again? Through the principles I've been able to finally let sponsees go—because I love them. I've been able to let friendships go so God can give me new relationships, or shall I say new friendships.

I'm finally starting to believe in myself. I finally am starting to believe in God. All I truly need is God, the Twelve Steps, my sponsor and people who are trying to live this same way of life. I no longer need to explain what I do, because God gave me the courage to do his will.

N.E., New Jersey

Comin' up



ALABAMA: Apr. 14-16, 1989; 3rd E. Alabama Spring Fling; Wind Creek on Lake Martin

ALASKA: May 5-7, 1989; 5th Alaska Regional Convention; Anchorage phoneline (907) 277-5483

ALBERTA: Nov. 3-5, 1989; 3rd Alsask Regional Convention; Polish Veterans Hall, 9203 144th Ave., Edmonton

ARIZONA: May 26-28, 1989; 3rd Arizona Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Broadway, Tucson, (602) 624-8711; Arizona RSC, P.O. Box 26404, Tempe, AZ 85222

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Jul. 14-16, 1989; Campout; Felker Lake Legion Campsite, Williams Lake; Williams Lake Group, Site 8, Comp 17, RR 4, Williams Lake, BC V2G 4M8

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 7-9, 1989; 11th Northern California Convention; Red Lion Inn, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento; rsvn.s (916) 929-8855; phoneline (916) 486-0465; NCCNA-11, Northern California RSO, P.O. Box 5538, Napa, CA 95481

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

3) Jun. 16-18, 1989; 5th San Diego-Imperial Regional Convention; Holiday Inn at the Embarcadero, (619) 232-3861; regional office (619) 584-1007; SDIRC-5, 2260 El Cajon Blvd., P.O. Box 184, San Diego, CA 92104

COLORADO: Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Annual "Standing on Higher Ground" Weekend; Telluride, central rsvn.s (800) 525-3455; regional office (303) 320-8323; Telluride Retreat, P.O. Box 2124, Telluride, CO 81435

CONNECTICUT: Jun. 2-4, 1989; 3rd Family Campout; Lone Oaks Campgrounds, E. Canaan; phoneline (203) 266-0563; Greater Waterbury ASC, P.O. Box 1075, Woodbury, CT 06798

FLORIDA: Apr. 28-30, 1989; H&I Awareness Weekend; Rodeway Country Inn, 3620 W. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala

2) Jun. 30-Jul. 3, 1989; 8th Florida Regional Convention; Omni Jacksonville Hotel, 245

Water Street, Jacksonville FL 32202; rsvn.s (904) 355-6664; RSO (305) 563-4262; phoneline (904) 723-5683; Florida RSO, 1110 NE 34th Court, Oakland Park, FL 33334

3) Aug. 31-Sep. 3, 1989; 19th World Convention; Stouffer's Orlando Resort

HAWAII: May 26-29, 1989; 3rd Big Island Gathering; Mauna Kea State Park, Hilo; phoneline (808) 969-6644; Big Island Gathering, P.O. Box 10842, Hilo, HI 96721

IDAHO: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 4th Washington/Northern Idaho Regional Convention; A Resort on the Lake, Coeur d'Alene ID 83814, (206) 765-4000; helpline (509) 458-7767; WNIRCNA-4, P.O. Box 807, Spokane, WA 99210

2) Aug. 4-6, 1989; 4th Oregon / Southern Idaho Convention; Red Lion Riverside Motel, Boise; rsvn.s (208) 343-1871; phoneline (208) 343-0188; OSIC-4, P.O. Box 1234, Boise, ID 83701

ILLINOIS: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 1st Chicagoland Regional Convention; Ramada Inn O'Hare, 6600 N. Mannheim Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018, (312) 827-5131; Chicago Service Office (312) 848-2211 or 848-4884; CRC-1, P.O. Box 34525, Chicago, IL 60634-0525

2) Jun. 23-25, 1989; 5th Little Egypt Area Campout; Carlyle Lake, Carlyle; phoneline (618) 548-3547; Little Egypt ASC, P.O. Box 1062, Salem, IL 62881

3) Jul. 28-30, 1989; 5th Mid-Coast Convention; Hyatt Deerfield, 1750 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield IL 60015; Chicago Service Office (312) 848-2211 or 848-4884; MCC-5, P.O. Box 633, Zion, IL 60099

IOWA: Jun. 30-Jul. 2, 1989; 6th Iowa Regional Convention; Stouffer Five Seasons Hotel, 350 1st Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids IA 52401, rsvn.s (800) HOTELS-1; phoneline (319) 398-9100; IRC-6, P.O. Box 2062, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

LOUISIANA: May 26-28, 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

MICHIGAN: Jul. 1-4, 1989; 5th Michigan Regional Convention; Clarion Hotel, 6820 S. Cedar, Lansing MI 48911; rsvn.s (517) 694-8123; phoneline (517) 483-9101; MRC-5, P.O. Box 4818, E. Lansing, MI 48826

MISSISSIPPI: Apr. 14-16, 1989; 7th Mississippi Regional Convention; Royal d'Iberville Hotel, 1980 W. Beach Blvd., Biloxi MS 39531, (800) 647-3955; phonelines (601) 865-0699 or 875-1161; MRCNA-7, P.O. Box 6851, Biloxi, MS 39532

MISSOURI: Jun. 9-11, 1989; 4th Show Me Regional Convention; Hilton Inn of the Ozarks, 3050 N. Kentwood Ave., Springfield; regional office (417) 781-6770, phoneline (417) 866-7392; SMRCNA-4, c/o Show Me RSO, 610 Pearl -C, Joplin, MO 64801

MONTANA: Apr. 29, 1989; 1st All-Montana Gathering; Helena, MT; Fellowship Gathering, P.O. Box 133, Jefferson City, MT 59638

NEVADA: 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 JERSEY: May 19-21, 1989; 4th New Jersey Regional Convention; Vista Hotel, Newark International Airport; rsvn.s (201) 351-3900; phonelines—out of state (201) 462-9199, in New Jersey ONLY (800) 992-0401; NJRC-4, P.O. Box 22091, Newark, NJ 07101

2) Jul. 21-23, 1989; 2nd Central Jersey Area Scavenger Hunt; home base at Bradley Beach Municipal Bldg., Main Street between McCabe and Lorraine Aves.; phoneline (201) 462-9199

3) Jul. 28-30, 1989; Quad State Unity Convention; Parsippany Hilton, 1 Hilton Court, Parsippany-Troy Hills NJ 07054, (800) HIL-TONS; Bergen County ASC, P.O. Box 104, Northvale, NJ 07647-0104

NEW MEXICO: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 1st New Mexico Regional Convention; Hilton Inn, Albuquerque; phoneline (505) 848-9195; NMRC-1, P.O. Box 4522, Albuquerque, NM 87196

NEW YORK: Apr. 28-30, 1989; 5th Grtr. New York Regional Convention; Concord Resort Hotel, Kiamesha Lake NY 12751, (800) 431-3850; Greater NY RSO (718) 805-9835; GNYRC-5, c/o RSO, 119-20 94th Ave., Richmond Hill, NY 11419

2) Jun. 16-18, 1989; 3rd Annual Manhattan Area Convention; convention messages (212) 995-0763; Unity '89, c/o Community Center, 208 W. 13th St., New York, NY 10011

3) Jun. 23-25, 1989; 10th East Coast Convention; University of Buffalo, Amherst Campus; phoneline (716) 878-2316; ECCNA-10, P.O. Box 141, Buffalo, NY 14216-0141

4) Jul. 28-30, 1989; Aurora, NY; Rochester Central Office (716) 232-2690; NNYC-89, 2605 Elmwood Ave., Ste. 135, Rochester, NY 14618

NORTH CAROLINA: Apr. 28-30, 1989; 4th Greater Charlotte Area Convention; Marriott Executive Park, 5700 Westpark Drive, Charlotte NC 28210, rsvn.s (800) 228-9290; phoneline (704) 379-0440; Greater Charlotte ASC, P.O. Box 32262, Charlotte, NC 28232

OHIO: May 26-28, 1989; 7th Ohio Convention; Bond Court Hotel, E. 6th at St. Clair, Cleveland; phoneline (800) 451-3000; Ohio Convention, P.O. Box 10834, Cleveland, OH 44110

OKLAHOMA: Apr. 7-9, 1989; 3rd Oklahoma Regional Convention; Sunmark Hotel, Stillwater; Tulsa office (918) 747-0017; OKRC-3, Tulsa CSO, 4611 S. Peoria, Tulsa, OK 74105

QUEBEC: Mar. 31-Apr. 2, 1989; 5th French N.A. Convention; PQ Community Centre, 253 3rd Street, Shawinigan; phoneline (819) 537-4667; L'Envol 5, C.P. 841, Shawinigan, PQ G9N 6W2

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jun. 16-18, 1989; Carolina Regional Convention; Radisson Inn, Spartanburg; CRC '89, P.O. Box 5201, Spartanburg, SC 29304-5201

TENNESSEE: Apr. 7-9, 1989; Nashville 10th Anniversary Convention; Quality Inn, Briley Pkwy., Nashville, (615) 361-7666; phoneline (615) 297-9762; 10th Anniversary, P.O. Box 24061, Nashville, TN 37202

TEXAS: May 19-21, 1989; Texas Unity Convention; Whitney

UTAH: Aug. 4-6, 1989; 6th Utah Campout; Utah RSC, P.O. Box 6157, Salt Lake City, UT 84106-0157

WASHINGTON: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 4th Washington/Northern Idaho Regional Convention; see IDAHO

WEST VIRGINIA: May 12-14 1989; 6th West Virginia Convention; Cedar Lakes Resort, Ripley, WV, (304) 372-7000; phoneline (304) 344-4442; Convention, P.O. Box 2381, Westover, WV 26502

WYOMING: Jun. 30—Jul. 2, 1989; 6th Western States Unity Convention; Little America Hotel, Cheyenne; rsvn.s (307) 634-2771; phoneline (307) 632-6433; WSUC-6, P.O. Box 184, Cheyenne, WY 82003

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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 of 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.

