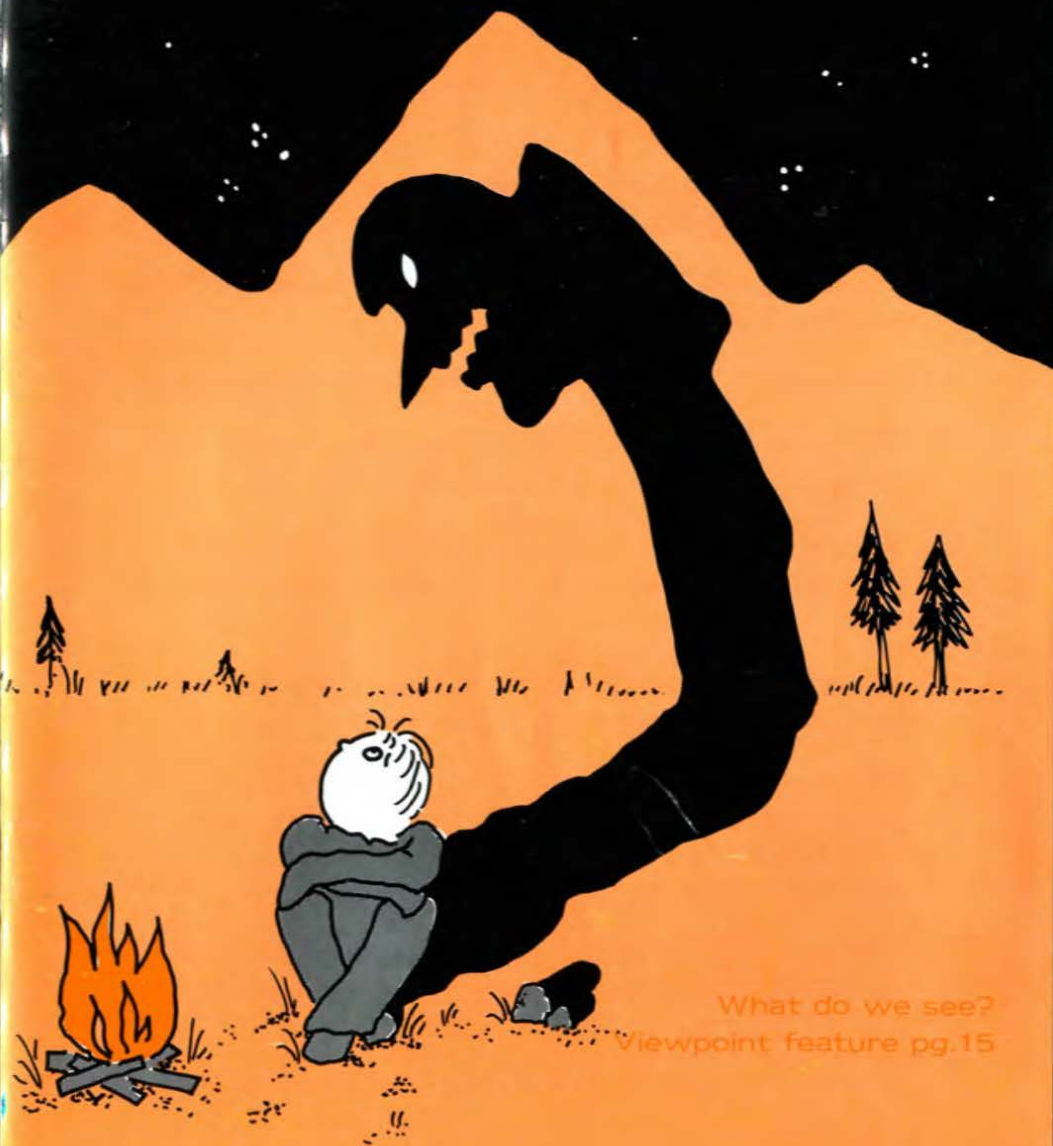


# THE N.A. Way<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E

December 1990

\$1.75



What do we see?  
Viewpoint feature pg.15

## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

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

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

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## From the editor



Last month (Volume Eight, Number Eleven) the annual tradition of spotlighting N.A. Newsletters was upheld. We trust you enjoyed that sampling as much as did the N.A. Way staff.

For this month, perhaps in response to the growing interest in dialogue at every level of service and recovery within our fellowship, submitted articles and manuscripts contained a very high percentage of "opinion" when compared to the pieces that have been received about personal recovery. Relentless in our attempt to provide a realistic, responsive literary vehicle for the N.A. Fellowship's voice, the staff elected to make the December 1990 issue one in which *Viewpoints* are celebrated.

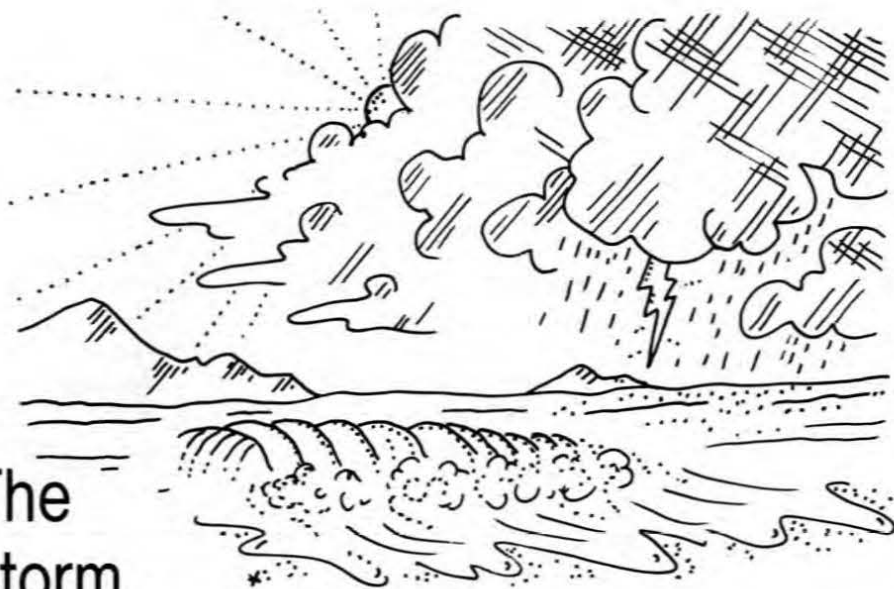
So, for the second month in a row, the general layout of the N.A. Way Magazine is slightly unusual. For our readers who are uneasy about change (aren't we all?) please be assured the value of consistency is not forgotten. The standard *Meeting in Print*, *Homegroup*, *Feature*, *Broad Perspective*, *Viewpoint* and *From our Readers* line-up will continue as the framework for each issue, but a little flexibility has been exercised in order to "flow" with prevailing conditions.

Addicts on the front lines of service have been expressing dissatisfaction with the availability of beneficial communication. Their representatives on boards and committees, at every service level, also decry the slow, stilted and sometimes erroneous information that is bandied about. Board and committee reports have been said to sometimes be incomplete or unrepresentative; and RSCs and ASCs have not always fully apprised local fellowships of circumstances in other places. Papers upholding unity or autonomy on behalf of the same addicts have seemed to conflict rather than compliment, to compare rather than to identify.

The magazine cannot tell you the truth. No single instrument can reflect that multi-dimensional, evolving event. The truth is in the commonality produced by the free assembly of our diversity, and it cannot be fully captured on any paper.

Toward an ever more faithful expression of that diversity this, the December, 1990 issue of the N.A. Way Magazine, willingly and hopefully offers what you have written, with an expanded *Viewpoint* feature, starting on page 15.

## The storm



Recently, I went on vacation to the north shore of Lake Superior. I spent a few days away from it all, relaxing and marveling at all the life around me. I discovered during that time that Lake Superior has a life of its own. It is a living, moving source of energy. The first day I arrived, the lake was a shimmering calm, I had never seen it so peaceful and glass-like. The weather was unbelievably hot for that area; a scorching ninety degrees. It continued like that for two days. I spent that time exploring the wonders of the lake and all its surrounding art work. There was so much to see, so much to learn. I couldn't get enough of it all.

Then late in the afternoon on the third day a cloud bank could be seen rolling steadily across the lake. When it hit the shore, it was packing fifty mph winds that had a wind chill factor of about forty degrees. The tem-

perature dropped fifty degrees in twenty minutes. The shoreline became a frothing, angry monster with no sign of the beach I had just minutes before been lounging upon.

The change was incredibly swift, demanding and furious. It raged on for the next twenty-four hours, like a ferocious beast that I was sure would bring the cabin down (and was surprised that it hadn't already). It battered the shoreline and sent waves spraying twenty feet high.

As fast as it came, it went. The sun came back out and warmed things back up to ninety degrees. The mighty lake gently mended its wounds, slowly rocking itself back into slumber.

By the time I left on the fifth day, everything looked exactly as it had when I came. If I hadn't actually experienced that storm, I would have never believed it had happened, so peaceful was the lake.



But I had been there, and as I was sitting on shore the last day, marveling at the wonders of the lake, something familiar about the whole event tugged at my mind. Then it occurred to me that that lake and its behavior was very much like me and my recovery from addiction since I became a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

When I first arrived at the lake it was calm, peaceful, and serene; it hardly made any waves as it gently lapped the shoreline. The water looked cool and inviting after a long, hot, miserable eight hour drive. That's how it was when I went into recovery. I was tired and beaten from such a long, messed up life. I needed help and I turned to N.A. The group of people there invited me in and showed me the serenity that could be found through working the Twelve Steps. I gladly surrendered to the calm and peace I found there.

At first I stayed calm, peaceful, and serene in recovery, just like the lake was the first couple of days. The first few weeks were the accepting time. I sat back and listened to the readings from the White Book and Basic Text. I learned that there is life after drugs and began enjoying life again. I met new people at the meetings who cared about me and wanted to be my friends. I started feeling my newfound Higher Power and how much he loved me and could help me. I had hope for the future. I felt great joy. I wanted this to last forever.

But it didn't last forever. Just as the lake by its very nature will not and cannot always stay calm, so I cannot always expect to stay happy, joyful, and serene. One day reality set in and

I came out of the "honeymoon period" of recovery. Suddenly being clean wasn't so much fun anymore. Getting honest sucked. Making amends to everyone didn't seem fair when they didn't have to make them back. I missed my old friends and old ways. I was mad at my fiancé for saying the hell with me and keeping his drugs. I fought everything and everyone who came near me. My fury knew no end. I thought I would never come out of it, and if I did, I thought I would be in worse shape than when I started. I did not want to be an addict.

Days passed, and one day at a meeting, everything suddenly became clear to me. It was like a revelation of just what recovery was all about. I began to understand. I started praying for willingness to work the steps again. I asked God to grant me serenity. And like the lake, I finally came out of my storm too. I gently healed my wounds with God's love, gradually gaining the peace that could be found by following this path offered to me through the help of Narcotics Anonymous.

Now that I have been in recovery for a while I have learned to recognize when these storms are coming. Like the cloud bank that can be seen coming across the lake, warning of the impending storm, so there are signs that also warn me when my life is again evidencing unmanageability. I cannot escape the reality of the storm. I must work through its fury before I can find the calm of the other side. Each time I go through the process, I refine the rough edges a little more, make things a little smoother.

Cathy H., WI

## Hope at an early age

Seven years ago today a desperate fifteen year old girl picked up her last white chip.

Willing to go any lengths after using for nine years. Willing to listen to members say "You're not an addict—you're too young. Come back after you've experienced some pain."

Remembering at age nine being used by adults just to stay high. Doing anything to get that next drug. Feeling desperate, alone, not even human. I remember thinking in my first few months in N.A., while relapsing—"why do I need to go through more pain? I want to get clean!"

With no one my age to relate to I just wish someone had explained the Third Tradition to me: "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using." There were some that looked into my eyes and saw the pain. They knew I had paid my dues. Putting all teasing aside—I surrendered to the program. Being the youngest member of my area I struggled to be taken seriously. I had suffered

enough. I learned that the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous can work just as well for me as they can for the addict who used for twenty-five years.

Today I'm twenty-two years old and have been clean for seven years. And in carrying the message of hope to young addicts I am now the "old-timer" of my group. I'm respected and hope to change the attitude that age or the amount of time someone has used determines if N.A. is for them. If I had given in to this attitude I may not be alive today. The hell I lived in was so indescribable that the God given program of Narcotics Anonymous was my only hope.

There is hope! I have a choice. I never have to use again no matter how I feel, and that choice is available to us all.





## Active empathy

After reading "Going Where Help Is" in the September 1990 *N.A. Way*, I knew that I should write a few words on my experience, strength and hope.

Since the death of my mother this year I have wanted to write regarding my experience, strength and hope for other recovering addicts who may encounter this situation in their own lives. When it came time to write, I was at a loss for words. Obviously, my Higher Power did not believe that it was time.

The feelings I experienced prior to her death while caring for her at home were frightening to me, because I felt so alone and unique—a bad placed for any addict to be. I went to meetings nearly every night because I desperately wanted to stay clean no matter what, and all I could do was cry at the meetings. I had major resentments whenever people shared gratitude, "didn't they know what was going on in MY life?" I had such expectations on everyone and everything. My acceptance level was zilch, and each night I wrote in my journal begging for help to keep the focus on myself.

At this point in time, I came upon my three year anniversary of recovery.

My fondest memory of this anniversary was when people from the fellowship came to my house and repeated the whole presentation in front of my mother, as she was too sick to come to the hall this year. That night, I gave her my three year medallion with lots of love and gratitude that she was able to see me clean, and there was not a dry eye in the room. That medallion was my gift to thank her for loving me throughout my active addiction, and to thank my Higher Power for allowing her another day of life.

My mother died exactly one week later. I was there holding her hand. The following few minutes were a blur. I knew I had some serious phone calls to make, along with that all-important call to my sponsor. Before I knew it, my home was filled with people from the fellowship willing to do whatever they could to help, even if that meant cleaning my house from top to bottom. I wanted the smell of death to be gone, and be replaced with ammonia. I believe that at that point, I wanted the feeling to stop, and the ammonia would allow me to "function."

The day after the funeral was our ASC meeting, and, as area secretary, I kept that commitment and continued to "function." I then returned to work with the idea that life goes on, and I was going on. After one week of work, the feelings of grief hit me and I was paralyzed in my bed. I couldn't get myself out of bed, chose to ignore the phone and isolate. I stopped going to meetings as I felt as if no one would be able to understand my pain. Even when all three wom-

en I sponsored chose to get new sponsors, I was unable to see what was happening to me and my recovery. I could no longer give them what they needed because I was unable to give myself what I needed.

I am not sure exactly what the turning point was for me, probably the next ASC meeting that I went to. I felt like a stranger among my N.A. family, and boy, was that uncomfortable. But, it was those feelings of being a "newcomer" that made me realize what I was doing to myself, and how dangerously close to relapse I really was. Once again, I surrendered and became willing to ask for help.

I SLOWLY started back to meetings and friends. Suddenly the cliché that I had heard so many times in my recovery meant so much more to me, "Today I have a choice..." and I began to choose recovery in all aspects of my life. At that point, the healing process of my insides began.

Once back to emotional stability, I began to work my program to the best of my ability and focus in on myself. The past few months have provided me with more positive change than I ever thought possible. I allowed my mother to become my Higher Power, a wonderful spiritual awakening for me. Today I have a face on my Higher Power, and I can feel the unconditional love on a daily basis. My mother always wanted the best for me, and she allowed me to go through whatever I had to go through—and was there to pick me up when I chose a painful way. That love is inside me and the memory of her allows me to be the best person that I can be.

I have left a job that was financial-

ly rewarding, but was making me so miserable—something I never thought possible. I would always continue something regardless of how I felt, and today I deserve more. I have taken a look at all addictions in my life, such as food, and have allowed the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous to help me to recover and change. I now am back to sponsoring, and have three new women in my life.

In those early months of grief, I focused in on who was not there for me, and today I am so grateful for the people who were there, and have continued to be there. Once again, this fellowship has provided me with people to love me, when I was unable to love myself.

When I tried to write my feelings out earlier, I could only remember my mother just prior to her death and it frightened me. Today, I can see her warm, loving smile which lets me know how much I am healing, and reaffirms the saying that time does make things better.

I am so grateful for continuing to stay clean throughout this. I recently have had several people put into my life who are dealing with parents that are terminally ill and I have been able to share my feelings from my journal to let them know they are not unique, and understand their pain with love and compassion. By sharing these feelings I was able to see that I always wrote something about gratitude, asking for help and thanking my Higher Power at that time for each day. I never realized how much a part of my life this program was, and is.

M.K., MA



## Growing together

God has blessed me with sponsoring five people. They each have their own identity. What's more, they love N.A.

I recently went through the death of a mother with one of my sponsees. She has three months in N.A. and what she has taught me—she can't imagine. I've been taught in N.A. that sponsorship is a two way street. Before the death of her mother we met together—read things out of our Basic Text and shared our experiences, strengths and hopes. When her mom died God brought us closer together. We worked hard on Steps One and Three and we attended N.A. meetings together. I can feel her pain. But what's even greater is I can give her love and support. N.A. has taught me much about that. I always try to be there for anyone in the program if I can. We've formed a new relationship today. She calls me everyday or I call her. And dealing with death is very hard. It's a process and it's okay to go through that process. The beauty of it is we have all the tools to use through N.A. I have my previous

sponsors and the fellowship to thank for that. Especially my loving and caring God.

Today another sponsee came over and we started to go through her Fifth Step. I sat and listened. She shared. We cried together, laughed together and did a lot of identifying. I realized just how much closer we became. I could see God doing his miracles, placing these two wonderful people in my life. After she was done I told her how wonderful she was—just how hard she's working the N.A. program. We hugged and then said good-by. She took part of me with her and she left part of herself with me. God—that's beautiful.

I also have the privilege of joining a new N.A. group. It's a step and tradition meeting. We make coffee together—set up chairs together and have actual wonderful business meetings. We have great trusted servants and we all pitch in. The meeting has a great atmosphere of recovery. I'm so proud to be a part of that today.

I feel that God has really been taking care of my needs. The only one who really knows what I need is God and our beautiful fellowship of N.A. We all take care of one another. We grow spiritually into the mainstream of life. One day at a time and with each other.

I feel so honored to be a part of N.A. What all the addicts have shown and taught me can never be put into words. I try to give what I can.

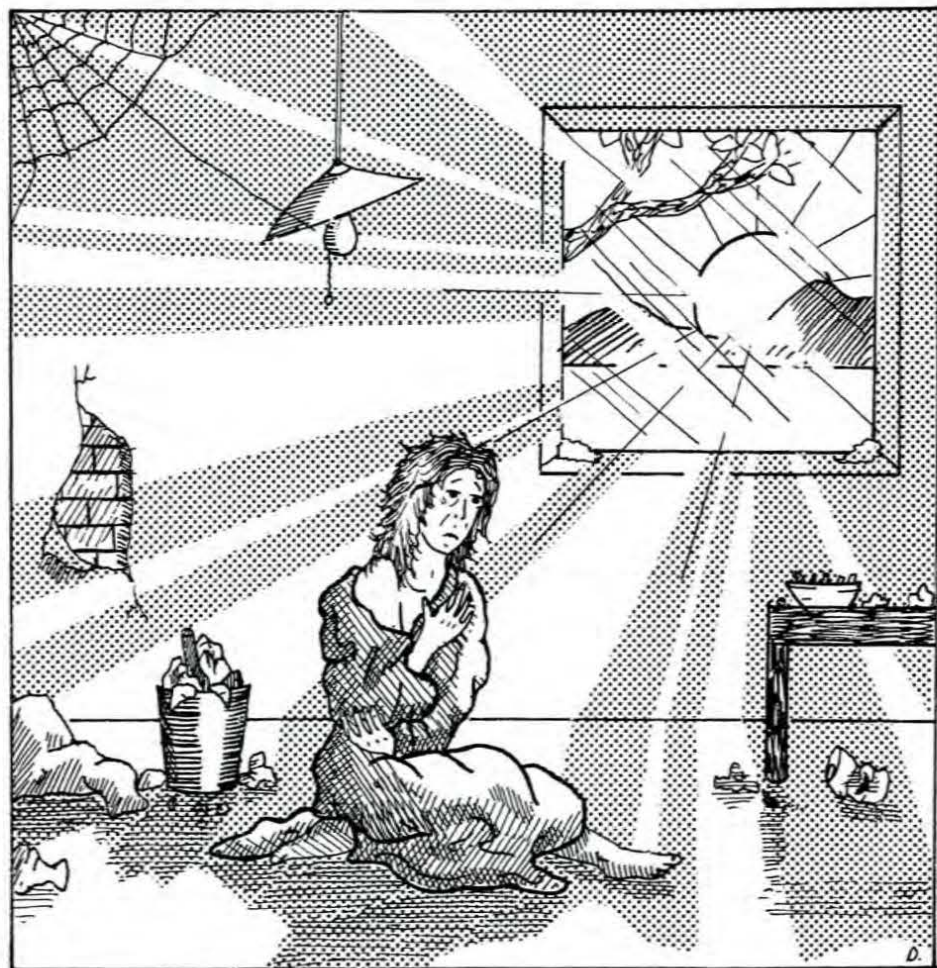
I love this fellowship and am extremely grateful for being brought back into life. Thanks so much.

*Anonymous*

## Awakening

Reading the Steps when I first came to meetings, I wondered how I would know when I had a spiritual awakening. What would happen? Would God speak to me? Would my character defects suddenly be removed? I realize now that I have had many spiritual awakenings in my recovery; each one has brought me to a deeper level of understanding, acceptance, and joy.

My first spiritual awareness came during a year-long relapse after having had a few months clean. I came





to after a night of blackout using. The room spun crazily above me, and I groaned aloud wondering what damage I had done the night before. Looking for my clothes, I made my way slowly through the house. I finally found them in the back yard, covered with grass long dead from my neglect. I came inside and lay down on my bed, sobbing. I knew, in a moment of clarity, that I could not continue in my insanity. For the first

"I can go  
back to N.A.,  
I thought,  
in surprise."

time in my using, I humbly asked God for help, putting no conditions on my plea.

Expecting some direct sign from God, I became angry when I heard no voice. I got up from the bed and walked into the kitchen, looking for something to ease my throbbing head. My eyes fell on a yellowed meeting list taped on the refrigerator. Although the list had hung there for months, it was as if I was seeing it for the first time. "I can go back to N.A.," I thought in surprise. I later knew this was my first spiritual awakening.

In succeeding years I have had many more. In my third year of recovery, I stopped as I was walking to pick a flower. I gazed at the beautiful fuchsia colors, awestruck by the contrasting hues and the velvety feel of the petals. I knew with certainty that this beauty had to be created by a Higher Power.

In my fourth year, I was driving over the top of a hill in the Bay Area. It was a clear, breezy day, and as I crested hill, I saw San Francisco, lying like a jewel in the distance. I had another spiritual awakening. I knew, beyond doubt, that there was a God, and that I was clean for some purpose.

In periods of meditation, too, I have had spiritual awakenings. I know today that practicing a spiritual program takes discipline. I must take time to listen for the voice of God within me. I believe that it is in God's time that I achieve conscious contact, not in mine. My Higher Power chooses when to reveal itself to me. I need only be patient and listen. As a direct result of practicing the Eleventh Step in my life, I am living in a new city, starting a new career. I am living my life as I believe that God would desire, utilizing the talents I was given.

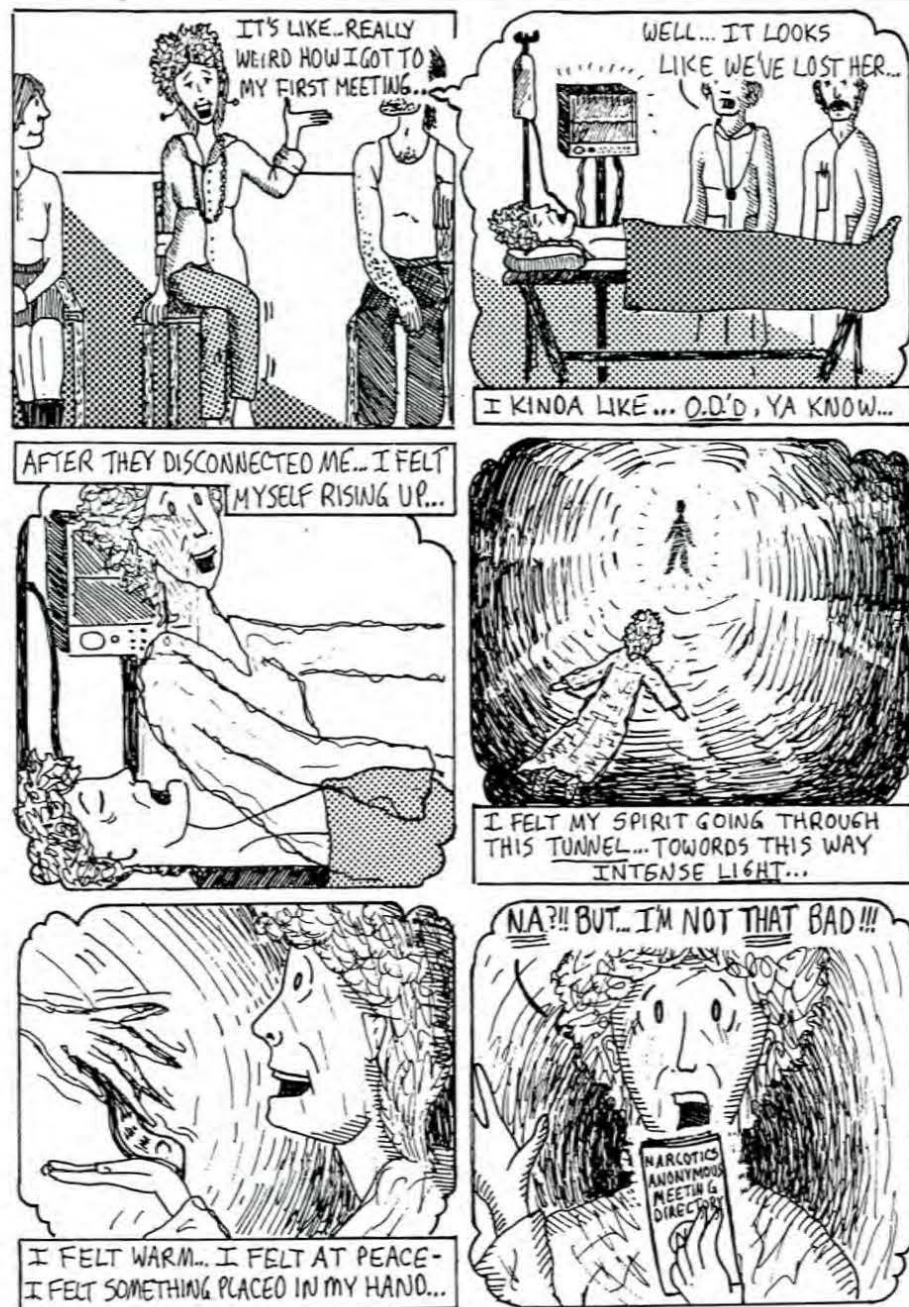
Today I no longer run from my uniqueness, I celebrate it. With the awareness of God's grace in my life, I am putting service to others before my own needs. No doubt this is another spiritual awakening for me, for I no longer remain the selfish, fear-centered person I was in my using.

Each of us has our own story to tell of our spiritual awakenings. The greatest joy I have in my recovery are the moments when I know with an intuitive certainty that I am walking the path of God's will for me. Today I believe that all the answers to my questions lie within me. Guided by my Higher Power, my life continues to unfold each day that I stay clean.

N.G., CA

## Home Group

Ultimate Denial





# The broad perspective

## Colombia

At least a couple of visitors from the United States are known to have been lucky enough to participate in Primera Convencion Nacional De Narcoticos Anonimous (the "First National Convention of Narcotics Anonymous") November 3-5, 1990, in Cali, Colombia, South America.

The approximately 200 addicts who participated are said to have included visitors from Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela along with members of the 90 regular N.A. meetings currently established in Colombia. A First National Service Conference for Colombia and its neighbors was conducted in March of this year, during which plans were laid for the Convencion, and eight points of agreement on the needs and nature of local N.A. services were adopted.

The established N.A. groups, mostly around Cali and Medellin, support a one-member office staff who, with the help of other local trusted servants, provides some literature and meeting information to people interested in N.A.

Working from an idea developed in Panama and with the aid of transla-

tions material supplied by the WSO, the Colombia National Service Committee has produced some N.A. literature in Spanish. This includes translated versions of the N.A. Steps, Traditions and such things as the picture and description of our symbol from the Basic Text.

An extremely professional and handsome 20-page pamphlet was produced by the convention planners and distributed to participants. The pamphlet includes a translation of the 12 Steps, the description of the N.A. symbol, a history of N.A. World Services, a history of the formation of the Colombia National Conference, and a description of how N.A. developed in Colombia.

The history reviews a period from 1973 to 1983 when addicts were gathering together without N.A. literature, disagreeing about the nature of recovery, and less sensitive to common goals.

In 1983 the steps became available to about 20 members who were getting together regularly. The pamphlet seems to report those members at first thought the steps were too hard or too difficult to follow, but with the help of *el Poder Superior* three, then four, began working the steps in their lives. The paper says the multiplication or growth has not stopped since then.

In 1985 recovering addicts in the city of Cali (now groups there are the *Refugio*, *Tequendama* and *Vipasa* Groups) began staying in contact with each other and started to correspond with the *Grupo Revivir* in Ibague. After a period of transition and growth *La Salvacion*, in Villavicencio; *La Serenidad*, in Cartagena; and *San Ambrosia*, in Bogota, linked up with

the Ibague and Cali groups, and the addicts were aware of *Nueva Juventud* in Pereira.

Members of all these groups and several others got together in the March, 1990 national conference and started planning and establishing parts of their service structure. Public information, literature and hospitals and institutions efforts are already underway.

One North American visitor said it is his understanding there are some difficulties with meetings in institutions in Bogota, "The institutions have an inordinate amount of control of the meetings. They do not have the same respect for the traditions we see here. There is no 7th tradition," and "There seems to be a misunderstanding among professionals about what N.A. is."

The same visitor said "They have excellent group services over there. When someone contacts the NSC they are quickly sent literature and information on how to find other groups."

## WSC business

According to tentative notes of the November Fellowship report the WSC Admin Committee is continuing with its hopes and plans to have the 1991 WSC lean more toward discussion of broad questions than the introduction of new motions that define polarities.

Regional motions will be included in the Conference Agenda Report but the word from the Admin Committee is "We'd prefer that the regions submit issues to have included in panel presentations" that will occur before the segments of committee business. The deadline for submitting regional motions or issues to be included in the CAR is December 21, 1990.

## Committee on N.A. Service

Among recent notes from the ad hoc committee working on the Guide to Service is a request that input expected to be considered for the development of revised drafts to be presented in WSC 1991 should be available to the committee by January 1, 1991.

## BOT/BOD

During an October combined meeting of the trustees and the directors of the WSO, Inc., an attempt was made to communicate with an individual who is said to be party to the illegal production of a counterfeit basic text. Board and committee people say the encounter occurred in an attempt to resolve the matter without litigation. Unfortunately no resolution was reached and litigation is now pending.

## Philadelphia forum

The agenda is not complete but a tentative plan exists for part of the Board of Trustees' meeting set for the second weekend in February to include an open forum similar to the one in Arlington, Virginia, last July.

## International Development Forum

On Saturday, April 20, 1991, the day before the opening of the 1991 WSC, the BOT plans to host N.A.'s first "International Development Forum."

Among the goals of the forum will be the establishment of some consensus of conference participants on the primary goals for N.A. development.

In a note from the WSB External Affairs Committee the board seeks ideas for topics of this forum. Pre-



planning input is sought through December 31, 1990 and in early February, 1991, a meeting will be held to finalize plans for the forum agenda. The note, sent to conference participants, closes with the statement "we need to hear from you."

### Group subscription drive

The N.A. Way staff is now preparing the mail-outs and other necessary material to conduct the annual subscription drive. We hope to get these packages to service committees by early January, for distribution to GSRs as quickly as possible. When you see the letters and sign-up sheets please talk it up. If you don't start seeing them, talk that up to.

You will still be able to order the magazine and pay later (as you can any time during the year) or pay up front. A revamping of the delivery system is underway and it includes a change in the "automatic expire" code that one of our mailing contractor has been attaching to unpaid new orders. We're adding another month to the number of issues you get with the "Bill me later" subscription (as well as changing data processing systems altogether) and expect to have a little more responsive, humane system. Many of you have started a subscription and then been cut off by this super efficient contractor, even though the payment had been received in the magazine office. We're gonna put an end to that, please bear with us.

### Help wanted

Starting in early 1991, on the heels of the group subscription drive, a stepped up effort will be made to generate more written input for the

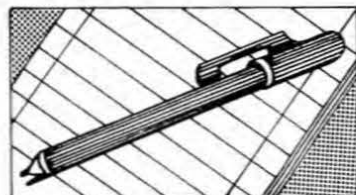
magazine. Copy inches have been staying pretty constant recently (not nearly as much as we'd like, but adequate) but the type of sharing has tended to be opinions on issues rather than the basic carrying of the message of hope.

While the viewpoint type material is very welcome, inspirational pieces are sorely needed. Presentations or workshops at area or regional functions may be helpful in encouraging writers (and subscriptions) for the magazine. Something a little less ambitious than an "N.A. Way Learning Day" might work nicely in the schedule of a convention's range of workshops. If your area or regional service committee likes the idea, please get them to contact us here at the magazine. We'll develop a presentation and bring it to your place.

### Holiday offer

Stumped for a last minute gift for that certain addict? Call *The N.A. Way Magazine* at (818) 780-3951 and start a gift subscription for them. If you call by December 10th with the correct and complete name, address and zip code of the person you wish to give a subscription, we'll get a copy of this issue (first-class mail) along with a certificate telling them a Holiday Gift Subscription has been started in their name, to them by Christmas Day. The certificate includes your name, if you wish, and we'll bill you as the donor, \$15, the following month. This offer is good only if both your names and addresses are here by December 10.

## Viewpoint feature



## In the eye of the STORM

*"We must live and work together as a group to ensure that in a storm our ship does not sink and our members do not perish. With faith in a Power greater than ourselves, hard work, and unity we will survive and continue to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."*

*First Tradition, Narcotics Anonymous.*

Conflict and exciting possibilities mark this time for the N.A. Fellowship. The development of our guidelines for the service structure, questions about how to best carry our message in the various cultures of the world and members' concerns about many other issues compete for our attention.

Openmindedness and a willingness to hear, with merited respect, each other's opinions, has always been an ideal in our fellowship. Up to the point of threatening our common welfare our members are free to express themselves in whatever fashion desired. In response to an outpouring of written concerns in recent months the N.A. Way review people and staff agreed to publish an expanded *Viewpoint* section as a feature of this issue. The next 20 or so pages may surprise or anger you, or touch your heart in empathy with the many writers who express concern for the clarity and integrity of our message of hope.

This feature is presented with the fervent desire that honest inventory and the communication of feelings and impressions can lead us to serenity, courage and wisdom. Together we can do what we could not do separate from each other.





## Coming together

I would like to suggest that we start sharing through the *N.A. Way Magazine* with a new section in the magazine called "Crossroads."

Sometimes I read something and I want to know more about it but I can't talk to that person or that homegroup, or maybe a person has asked for help that seemingly isn't important enough to have an answer in the next issue, but it would be of value for that addict to know that another is listening, and cares. Or maybe someone is wrong about something and it is published? If I got responses to an article I wrote that

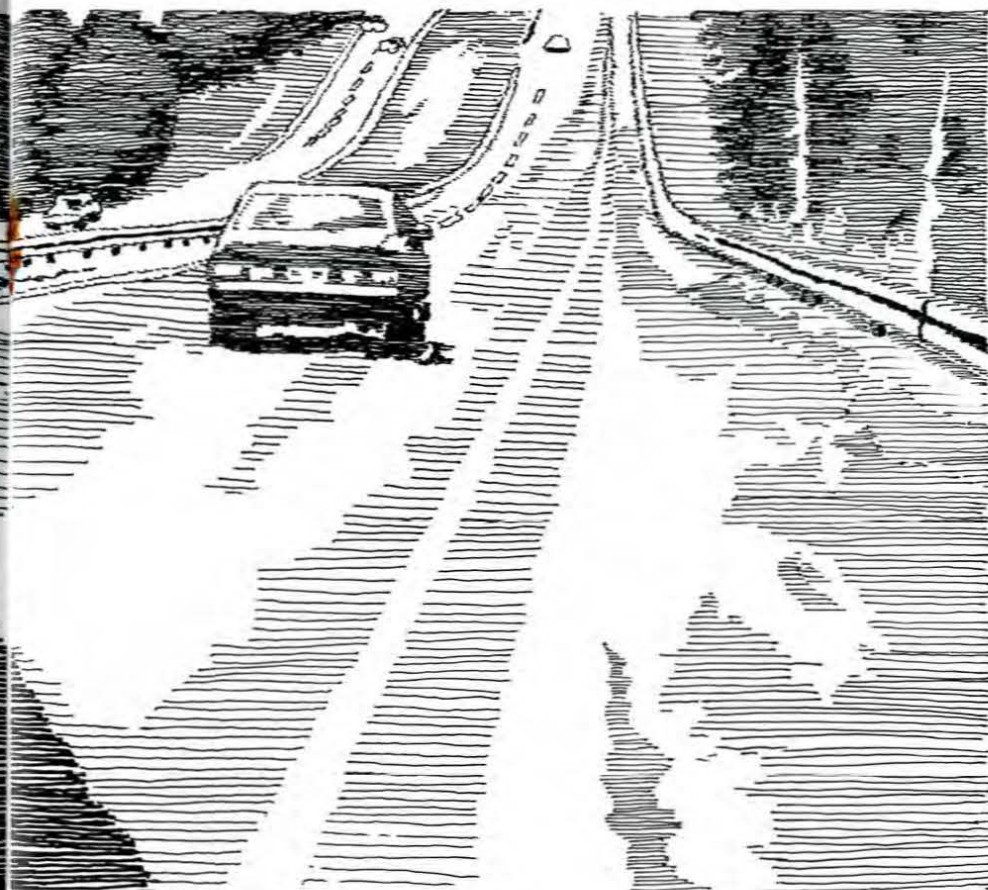
shared with me in a caring way and showed me another way, I'd be very grateful!

I would just like to see us as a fellowship encourage ourselves more and use all of our assets to the best of our ability.

I've been clean a long time. . . I'm in my fifteenth year, and I need your love and support more and more each year.

Lastly, I'd like to share a Crossroads letter:

The Newsline says a preliminary result of a 2,600-member and 97-area survey has shown something I have



been wanting to leave the fellowship over, and we are the only ones that can change it (and of course God who usually uses us to change things, anyway).

I know about twenty three ex N.A. members. Some are in A.A., church, or other types of programs. They were not in my opinion treated the way older members should be treated. I just want to point it out so that if it is true maybe we can change it just by being aware of it. I am not saying they are always right or perfect.

Anyway, the survey shows that 53% of us have less than one year

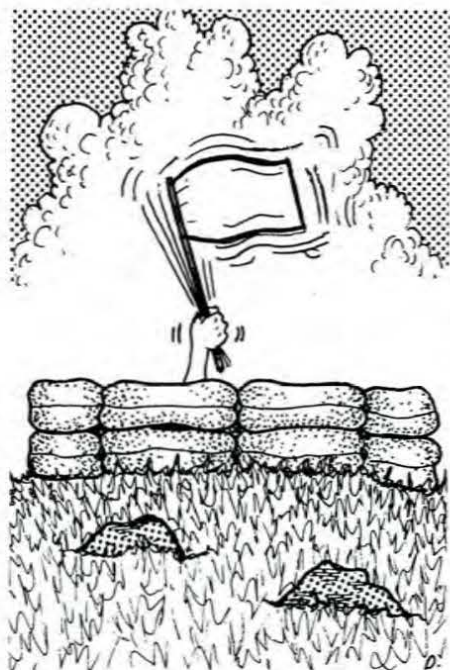
clean. 39%, one to five years clean and 8% with more than five years clean. What I would like us to consider is this: The newcomers are the life blood of the program but the old-timers are the root of the tree, so if the roots get too weak, (the program gets too watered down) the ties that bind us together sever and the fellowship will die.

I am not saying that we are in this state. I am saying that if we are headed in that direction and it has been pointed out and we don't look then we will surely die from our denial.

*D.R., California*



## Who are we fighting



Sometimes it does not feel like the war is over, only like I am in the midst of a different war.

While actively using I fought against everyone, including myself, God, my family, and my responsibilities. In recovery it seems as though we are all too often fighting against each other. We enter the battle armed with self-righteous zeal and a set of spiritual principles embodied in our steps

and traditions. Somewhere along the way we seem to have lost sight of the fact that the enemy is active addiction, and that the steps and traditions are tools that were given to us to guide us on the path to recovery, not to be used as weapons against each other.

Although I believe we are all on the right path no matter which camp we are in, and that we are all entitled to our beliefs and opinions, before we act or speak maliciously of those with whom we disagree, we should stop and consider whether we are furthering or detracting from our primary purpose when we behave in those ways. If we at least take a moment and think before we criticize an addict or a group, maybe we can refrain from acting out a defect. You see, I believe that most armed camp mentality is born out of defect and not recovery.

Ultimately I believe that God watches over us and does the best he/she can to protect us from our collective insanity. However, the only thing God might not be able to protect us from is ourselves. Many spiritually oriented movements with lofty intentions have flourished for brief periods in humankind's history, but great purposes alone do not ensure survival. There is certainly a need for what we have to offer, and we have been given a blueprint on how to make it work. By keeping our eyes keenly fixed on our primary purpose and remembering the love and understanding we need to recover, we have a good chance of success.

Maybe concern is selfish, because if N.A. doesn't survive, neither do I.

*Anonymous*

## Process vs. priorities

During the past several years, and especially the past several months, I have noticed something alarming within our fellowship. I sometimes wonder if we are suffering from another disease, the disease of rigidity. Where in our literature is it written that we should leave our creativity and originality at the door when we walk into an N.A. meeting?

I have sat in ASC meetings and listened, bored out of my skull, as the area discussed things of seemingly great significance. For instance, what brand of answering machine should be purchased for the phoneline committee, a twenty-minute discussion, as I recall. Another old-time favorite, being held over into the nineties, is Revision of Guidelines. The area I live in is deeply concerned with punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph indentations and where, precisely, they should occur in the ASC guidelines. And then, there's the ever-popular Line-By-Line Review of Literature. For this event, several N.A. members gather together armed with red pens, yellow highlighters and the publication currently being picked over. The members begin with a mo-

ment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer to ensure spiritual fitness for the awesome task at hand. The review begins. The sacred process moves along smoothly, until, AHA!, members disagree about the exact wording of a sentence in the third paragraph. In fact, it seems as though everyone in the room has a different idea of how this sentence should be phrased. Eyes become glazed and red. Tempers flare. Brows and other parts of the anatomy sweat profusely. After forty-five minutes, the issue is resolved by the arrival of the ASR, a nice fellow who majors in English at the local university. Everyone perks up a little until the next catastrophe and the cycle repeats itself for the next eight hours until all the participants go on home, satisfied that they have done something moving and earth-shaking for their fellowship.

It doesn't take a quantum leap to imagine this same scenario happening in areas and regions all over the country. Line by line, word by word, comma by comma, we grind out this Truly Important Work. Of course, I'm assuming that this only goes on in the United States. The members I've met from other countries seem to be more concerned with the translation of our literature into a language they can understand. This is the problem, fellow members. While we are busy revising guidelines, debating the controversy-of-the-month, delving into ancient service committee minutes to find something They Did Wrong, members of our fellowship are meeting secretly at great risk because N.A. meetings are illegal in their



country or watching with great sadness as racism tears their N.A. community apart. While we are busy following, debating or rebelling against the Process, many addicts remain unaware of Narcotics Anonymous. While we are busy wasting money to provide a forum for political acting out, addicts in poverty stricken areas can't afford to rent a meeting place or even buy an I.P. Our literature process still has not produced a steps book, after seven and a half years.

All of this ego, pride, fear and rigidity are probably symptoms of our disease of addiction and I'm certain that

service work, not to mention forced interaction with each other, provides us with some opportunities to apply the Sixth and Seventh steps to our lives. The miracle of recovery cannot take place, however, if we continue to ignore these manifestations of our disease. I've found, in my personal recovery, that whenever there's a problem the first step toward change is to admit the problem exists. How about if we, as a fellowship, admit that exerting control over the process is unimportant and get down to the real deal; how we can best help addicts find recovery.

*C.S., California*

## Trust the process

As an addict and a member of Narcotics Anonymous, I strongly identified with our literature when I became clean and I still do today. I'm sure this is due to the fact that addicts play a predominant role in the writing of N.A. literature.

The fellowship as a whole might be better served if the literature writing process is left intact, continuing the practice of addicts writing, reviewing and approving the literature, and by utilizing more of the abundant and diverse talent from those addicts enjoying recovery through Narcotics Anonymous.

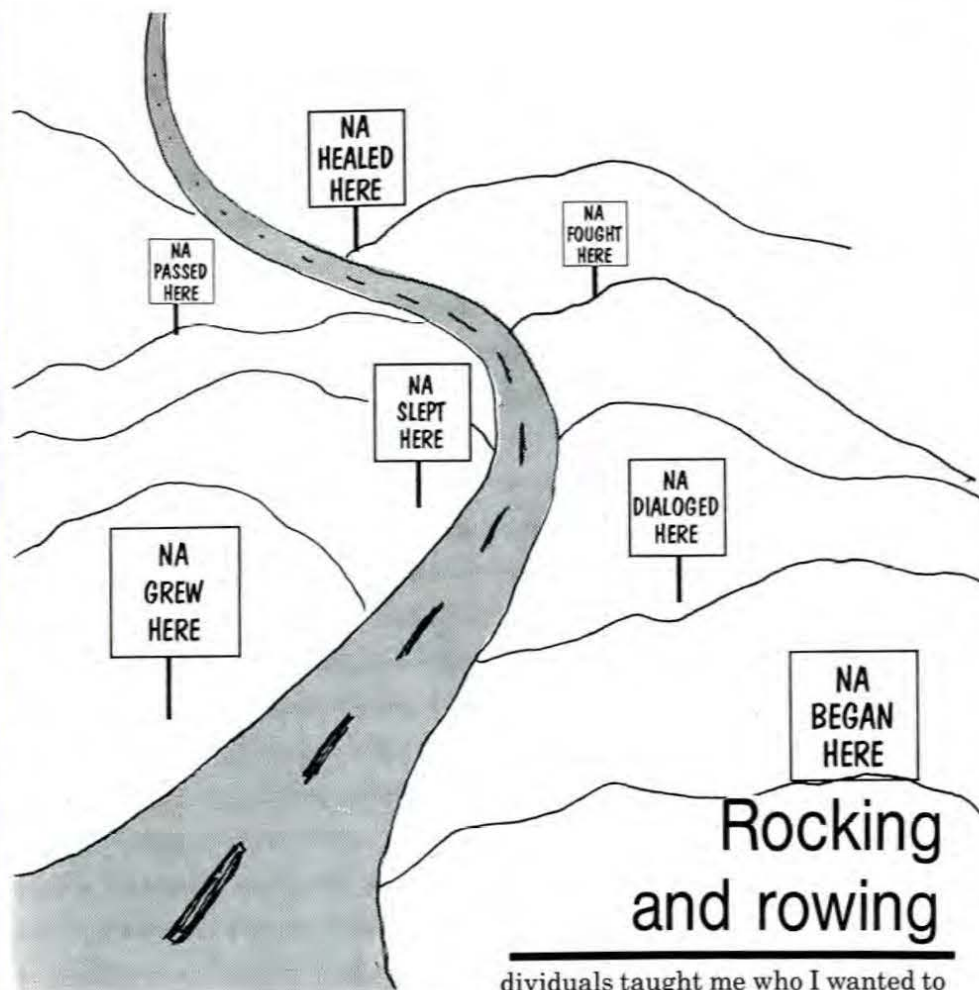
Certainly it would not be a wise premise to look outside of our fellowship to an outside enterprise or professional and be expectant of them to

understand and feel the same way we do about our Steps and Traditions and recovery through Narcotics Anonymous.

It should be taken into consideration that N.A. is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right, and that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical for one addict can best understand and help another addict.

It's true many of us not grammarians and many of us are not skilled in syntax, but as long as the prevailing spirit is one of, "Together We Can" and "Together We Are Willing," and if we have faith in our literature writing process all will be well.

*M.L., West Virginia*



## Rocking and rowing

dividuals taught me who I wanted to be and at times they also showed me who I didn't want to be.

I am very sad and a little angry today, because the people that taught me about the necessity to change are now showing me what I don't want to be, and that is like them. When I came to Narcotics Anonymous the fellowship was nowhere near the size it is today and it was possible for fifteen or twenty of us to go up into the North Georgia mountains, work on a piece of literature, give it to our area to give to our region, to send to the world literature committee. Not only did we

When I came through the door of Narcotics Anonymous, I was told that recovery was a very simple process, the only thing that I had to do was to change my entire life. Just for Today, I have been able to do that with the love and care of the individuals in this fellowship. It hasn't always been the way I wanted and certainly it hasn't been all roses, but it has been the most wonderful journey I have ever undertaken. My life is completely different today and it is all due to the addicts that God placed me with in the birth of my recovery. These in-



do this but several other regions did the same. We did this several years ago and the daily meditation book is on the list of literature to be worked on soon.

Of course we don't think that this is happening fast enough, but I believe we need to take a look at priorities. If several regions from all over the world did as a few regions such as ours did then it is no wonder that there is a back log of work for the literature committee.

I am real unhappy about the recent history??? weekend in a southern region taking place and giving certain individuals a forum to complain about our fellowship growing. Why is it that these same individuals that taught me and several others about change can't seem to accept the change that is coming in our fellowship? We are growing up and we need to make changes to be better able to adapt to the needs of a fellowship the size we are fast becoming. We need to be able to free up our groups to "carry the message" and give the TRUSTED SERVANTS that WE ELECT the ability to handle the business that is necessary in order for us to survive.

CHANGE!!!! GROWTH!!!! Isn't that what we are about? Please do not lend anymore power to those individuals (that have time?? I once heard it was quality as much a quantity that was needed) to continue using our fellowship as a place to abuse the very principles that we have been taught. Maybe they need to sit and listen for a change and allow the development of a stronger more structured fellowship. I need Narcotics Anonymous to survive and I am all for growth.

Yes, I like so many others, believe that the price of our basic text needs to be lowered, but not to the point of undercutting the very fellowship that my life depends on.

Yes, I believe that the WSO needs to be relocated in a place where the cost of living isn't so high, where we can afford to run a profitable office and be able to cut the cost of our literature.

Yes, I believe that our trusted servants need to be held accountable. I also believe that if we would allow them to do their jobs instead of continuing to cause controversy and conflict, the jobs that we have assigned them to do would get done. How can they work on the "It Works, How and Why" if all of the energy that they have is having to be directed at stopping the publishing of unapproved literature.

Please don't let these old-timers who want to keep us from growing stop the growth that we need so desperately. It just isn't feasible today for us to go backward, and so what if we don't hear the history of the NA the way they see it. If we begin sending in archives to the WSO for the literature committee to start compiling and then hold workshops to go over this compilation as we are about to do with the Guide to Service in Atlanta, then we will have the true conscience of the fellowship as a whole and not just as \_\_\_\_\_ sees it.

*K.B., Georgia*

## Abstinence and recovery

I keep reading and hearing (too much) about people in N.A. being challenged on clean time because of taking medication. I get angry when people with little medical knowledge and even less compassion add to the burden that those of us who are not in perfect health already bear.

Because I am a registered nurse I am frequently asked about this issue. What I hear is horrifying. A young lady of my acquaintance who is an insulin-dependent diabetic was advised not to inject her insulin because she "might relapse because of being exposed to needles." An older gentleman with several years clean time was told that he could not speak because he was not "totally abstinent." The drug he was taking was to prevent lethal cardiac spasms. A patient in a cardiac care unit had a cardiac arrest because he refused IV medication that could have controlled lethal arrhythmia. Luckily we were able to revive him and convince him that a massive heart attack was reason to take the necessary medication. A close friend of many years suffered three unnecessary hospitalizations in

the state hospital for exacerbations of his schizophrenia because well-meaning N.A. friends told him that he didn't need to take his medication and that it constituted a relapse. I could go on and on.

I do not feel that the N.A. program is telling me to die or live in excruciating pain, or become physically incapacitated rather than take any chemical into my body. That isn't what being clean is all about. Recovery means living a balanced and sane existence.

I love Narcotics Anonymous and the twelve steps are my life. Miracles have happened because I use this program in my daily life. However, I must be aware that the steps do not cure Diabetes, Aids, or Cancer. They cannot control high blood pressure, seizures, or heart problems. They do not alleviate depression or mania that is caused by disruption in the balance of neuro-transmitter chemicals or schizophrenia. They don't work in the body in the place of hormones, antibiotics, insulin or potassium. They have not eradicated disease.

Please, don't tell another addict to stop taking medication which may be keeping them alive. And please, instead of condemning the person, be compassionate and understanding bearing in mind that we are not all promised uncompromised good health and freedom from serious injury for our entire lives. Tomorrow it may be you. Instead, encourage knowledge, self-awareness, balance, and responsibility in taking care of the physical.

*D.B., Virginia*



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## Psst off

Anyone receiving a copy of the August 1990, fellowship report probably read in awe, as I did, at the gross hypocrisy of the entire report. However, if I am the only one in the entire fellowship who feels like I do, then someone should write me and tell me. At the same time, if I'm just the only one who caught this, then I'd like to share it with the world, for all to know, as I do, what's between these li(n)es.

For me, the first page was fairly uneventful, as was page two, with the exception of a statement that “with regular communication, we can be much more effective.” Now, I do not believe the writer was sincere. Why is it that the service arms at the world level have all the means of communicating their feelings and beliefs throughout the year to every registered member, group, area and region and all it's registered trusted servants, through Fellowship Reports, *N.A. Way Magazine*, *N.A. Newslines*, Conference Agendas and separate mailings, yet of all the letters I've written, not a one has been published. And in this instance, I know I'm not

alone. I've seen letters written by other members and areas and home groups, time and again complaining about World Services, but never anything published in a newsletter or flyer coming out of California, Van Nuys in particular. Why do we have censors in N.A. dictating what the fellowship is allowed or not allowed to read? When did the service structure change to make the member the least important and our World Services the governors?

Similarly, on page three, first paragraph, I was appalled. What kind of garbage is this that meetings will take place only if the funds are available. Since when is money needed to hold a meeting? Business meetings, area service meetings, even regional meetings are held in places where the costs are way down, and expenses are minimal. We pay our own way to get to these places and sometimes we get paid back a small percentage of our gas money. I've traveled from Miami to Pensacola and Jacksonville from North Carolina to Arlington. Miami to Kentucky and Pennsylvania, out of my own pocket, all to give to the fellowship or learn how to better serve.

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I'm a disabled veteran on a fixed monthly income and for some of these trips, am still paying off loans. What type of funds are needed in order to go to a meeting? I think elected officers forget why they were elected and what their priorities are.

From one report we read of the proliferation of a pirate edition of the Basic Text by “some resentment-filled, self-willed individuals.” Wouldn't “the proliferation of a pirate edition of our Basic Text” be enough? The writer doesn't mention the reasons why there were changes in the management of the W.S.O., which I think were because of some “self-willed individuals” who I feel misused N.A. funds for personal gain and who I disagree with in the area of financial standards, or other “resentment filled” reasons for opening discussions of a unified budget review system. I guess once you're on the world level you don't need a knowledge or understanding of the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions any more.

Then there is the statement that in order to “take advantage of all available time...there will not be any

forum for fellowship participation” at an October workshop. Well, whatever happened to fellowship input or approval? I guess the workshop will just be a waste of time and N.A. funds, since without fellowship-wide input, review or approval nothing can be approved behind their closed doors. Heck, who am I kidding...that's what they've been doing for years with our literature and they still stamp it “Conference Approved.” It's a shame that eighty percent of our fellowship has come in within the last three years and is so naive to the ways of those who can provide a voice while stifling those whose interests still lie within the primary purpose of carrying the message, yet because of their convictions about reducing world expenses have been labeled “self-willed” and “resentful” when really they are the only members who are not self-willed, but rather generous-willed to the point of looking to save funds for where it's really needed and “give it away” in the true sense of carrying the message.

Next, I read a report complaining about unauthorized this and unapproved that and how the “only item



of business that came before the committee during the entire weekend was that in parts of the fellowship, an unauthorized version of the basic text is being carried into institutions." I can see how my money and donations are being well spent on traveling, especially since everything in the illicit book is written somewhere else in our literature and it is the only book light weight enough to be allowed in most prisons.

Like I said earlier, I guess once you reach the world level you no longer need any knowledge of the steps or traditions.

Moreover, I read on the twenty-third page that over twenty-four thousand was spent on meals for people who travelled at N.A.'s expense. Meals! If they would not have traveled they would have to eat anyway, so save the twenty-five grand and let them feed themselves. Another forty-six thousand on lodging. In my home group we give nothing to the GSR to go to the area. At the area level we discussed for over an hour the (illegible) of giving one of our members thirty dollars for gas reimbursement. At the regional level we're reimbursed up to seventy-five dollars for the chair people of sub-committees, only, for lodging. Yet at the world level forty-six thousand goes for lodging. A total of \$198,087.35 was spent on travel, lodging and meals and the WSC and WSO have the audacity to complain about a lack of funds for meetings. Who keeps approving all of these trips? How many trips were made to Australia already? At what cost? Who's funding it? How many more trips are needed? For what purpose? How

many people need to do this? Two and three years in advance of WCNA XXII and XXIII and board liaisons were already appointed to make site visits to Toronto and Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. Why? If the WSC and WSO is so broke, why spend money for trips now when these conventions are so far away?

There are, in my opinion, lies, deceit and directives coming from people who are supposed to serve and obey, making suggestions, if necessary, only. At least that's the way the approved working guide reads. Silly, me. Why should anybody at the world level read approved literature when they forget what the steps and traditions were for? And, who authorized them to spend so much money that could be better spent for better things?

I know that my home group and other meetings in my area will continue meeting whether or not world services folds and dies after hanging themselves with their own forked-tongues, and I will continue working the steps with my sponsor and protecting the traditions as best I know how and carrying the message to the suffering addict whenever possible and giving away what was freely given to me, no matter what the hypocritical, self-willed, resentful members of world services do.

While controversy may feel uncomfortable, it is always a step toward growth.

*B.B., North Carolina*

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## On sexism

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As a woman addict, I have often listened with frustration in meetings as women, despite the proportion of men to women, failed to utilize their fair share of meeting time.

In 1990, the WSC P.I. Committee completed a survey of our addict population. This survey found that 36% of our Fellowship is female. If women were sharing in meetings at a ratio comparable to their numbers, at any given N.A. meeting we would hear women sharing for almost half the meeting time. From my observations, this rarely occurs.

Although society is attempting to change the stereotypes it attaches to women, it is my opinion that any lessening of the rigid roles assigned women is actually so small as to be non-existent. For the sake of this argument, then, let's assume that women hold an inferior place in our society. Let's take a moment to examine how women are socialized in the United States.

As young girls, we are taught to be seen and not heard. We are given messages that if we are boisterous, assertive, and vocal, we are not the "good girls" that our parents, teachers and churches expect us to be. By society's

disapproval of our enthusiasm, we learn at an early age to keep our mouths shut.

In school, one of society's strongest socializing agents, we are relegated to an inferior status. Unless we are fortunate enough to attend all women's schools, we find that we receive less attention in the classroom. Repeated studies have shown that teachers, even female teachers, give less attention to their female students. Female opinions in classrooms are more likely to be discounted, and even ridiculed. It is little wonder that we begin to believe that what we have to say is not important.

Our value as women has long hinged on our desirability to men. We are constantly evaluating ourselves based on our attractiveness to the opposite sex. Couple this with our suppression from an early age, and we become afraid to speak out for fear of being seen as less attractive to our male counterparts.

Now, examine our service structure. How many regional service representatives in your area are minority or female? Since women's status has traditionally depended not on our talents and self-worth, but on the status of the men we are involved with, it is not surprising that many of the women who move up in the N.A. service structure are also involved with men that are active in service in their areas. It has been my experience in service that the good ol' boys always allow a few chosen women to participate. It has also been my observation that some women active in service are co-opted by the male service structure, and do as they are directed by



the more politically astute men that mentor them.

**W**hy do women remain silent? Fear prevents women from speaking, fear that we will be seen as aggressive and hence, unattractive. Since N.A. is neither a popularity contest nor a dating pool, we should examine our fears and discard them as unfounded. Hopefully, we go to meetings to find recovery, not a new relationship.

What does this have to do with staying clean, you might ask? Everything.

It is important that female newcomers hear from women with clean time in the meetings they attend. Because women work with women, it is primarily the responsibility of female "old-timers" to reach out to these newcomers. If newcomer women go to meetings and see other women sitting like mummies, hesitant to share, how can they learn that they must open up to stay clean? Newcomers look up to people with clean time as role models. What kind of message does a woman who balks at sharing in meetings send to the newcomer?

N.A. is a microcosm of our larger society. Therefore, the ignorance that exists in our society, like racism, sexism, and homophobia, exists in N.A. Ask any minority addict member in Washington, D.C., or Oakland, California, for instance, and they will tell you that racism is alive and well in N.A. Just because it isn't talked about doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Sexism, too, runs rampant in our fellowship. How often have you attended an N.A. convention and heard a main speaker who was a lesbian? Don't they reflect the Fellowship of

N.A. as a whole? Can't they carry the message as well as a white male addict?

**A**s long as N.A. exists in its present state, special interest meetings will continue to flourish. Remove the need for them by eliminating the bias in our meetings, and members who traditionally attend special interest meetings will attend more "mainstream" N.A. meetings.

Yes, both women and men are victims of their socialization. But that can change. Women, who have traditionally been told to be seen and not heard, have to take responsibility for speaking up in meetings and carrying the message to the newcomer female who still suffers.

Male addicts need to be supportive of women when they do speak out. Men are socialized to be more competitive than women, less vulnerable to ridicule and criticism. When women are ridiculed, we take it very seriously. We question our opinions and even our self-image. Women have long been the nurturers, the peacemakers in our society. When we speak out we take a tremendous risk, for our self-worth is usually closely tied to a deep need to be accepted, despite the cost to who we are as human beings. Women have to risk our "look-good" mentality in order to both recover and help other newcomer women along the way. After all, that is our primary purpose.

*Anonymous*

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## A call for freedom from prejudice

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"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using," isn't it? That's what our Third Tradition says. But in some NA groups, other membership requirements have been written between the lines, in fine print. Though it may not be said aloud, the impression you get from such groups is this: "You've got to come from same racial, or ethnic, or social, or economic, or educational, or sexual background as we do in order to be accepted here. It's not enough, just to have a desire to stop using."

**I**n July, the World Service Conference held a workshop in Arlington, Virginia. One panel focused a portion of its discussion on the subject of prejudice in Narcotics Anonymous. Participants felt the discussion was long overdue, and that we as a fellowship should begin to further explore ways to "raise our consciousness" and, thus, to begin changing our at-

titudes and behavior. The purpose of this article is to begin raising our awareness of how we treat one another so that, ultimately, any addict seeking recovery, "regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion," may find what they seek among us.

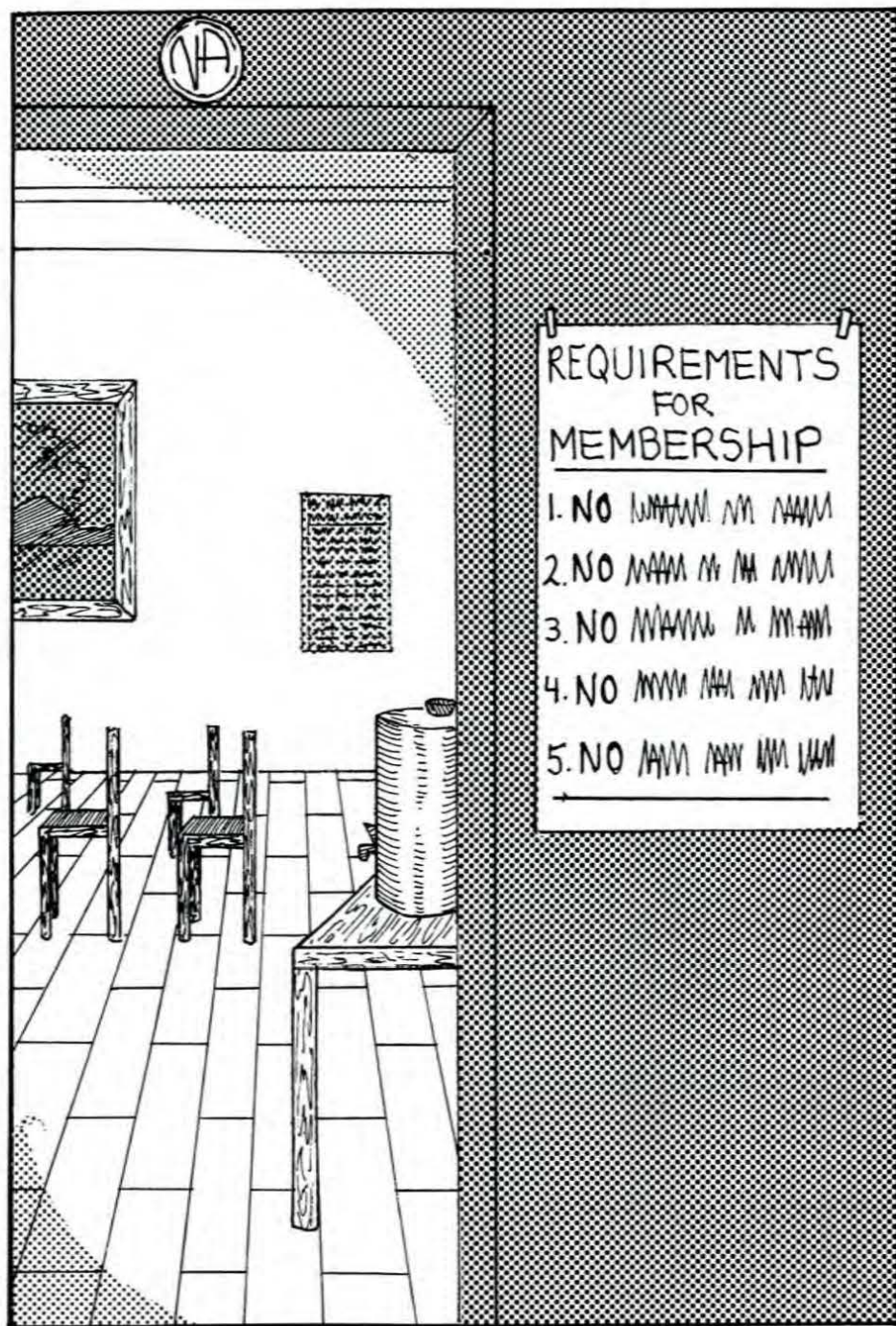
We can't begin to change unless we're aware there is a need for change. As addicts, we reflect the society we come from. We bring our racism, classism, sexism, and all the other "isms" with us into recovery. We accept unacceptable behavior, in ourselves and in each other, because "that's the way it's always been." We all suffer, to greater or lesser extents, from this kind of thinking; it's the way of the world we've been raised in.

What can we do? Well, to deny our bigotry only allows us to continue in old thinking and behavior. But when we admit we discriminate, we can begin to address that thinking and behavior with the tools of recovery.

In N.A., we're told to "show up and tell the truth." When addicts hear other addicts share their pain and their fears, something wonderful happens. Open discussions in our meetings can be very important in helping us see how prejudice affects our ability to recover, and our ability to carry the message to others. Choosing "Freedom from Prejudice" as a discussion meeting topic, for example, can open the lid on the defects we try to hide from one another, and sometimes even from ourselves.

Sponsorship is another tool to be put to work. What would occur if we all took a mini-inventory of ourselves, an inventory focused on prejudice, its





affect on our lives, and its impact on the life of our fellowship? And what would happen if every N.A. member talked with their sponsor about their fears of people from other backgrounds or lifestyles? Whenever we work the steps with open minds and hearts, healing begins to take place.

When we can accept that we are indeed bigoted, without making any excuses, then we're ready to take action. The miracle begins when we accept that, as individuals and as a fellowship, we frequently fall short of our own principles. Yes, this is who we are today—and yes, today, we need to change. Acceptance here does not mean, "Well, that's just the way things are." Acceptance means taking responsibility for ourselves, and seeking the courage to change.

At the Arlington workshop, individual members shared about their own experiences of prejudice—not only ways in which they had felt its cruel sting, but ways in which they had inflicted that sting on others. People talked about not being hugged because they were black; being shunned because of their use of essential, prescribed medication; avoiding members who have disabilities; being fearful of people from different educational levels; avoiding anyone with different sexual orientation from their own. Some of these things hampered their own recovery; some hampered their role in supporting the recovery of others; all of it made them hurt. They admitted it, and they asked all of us, as a fellowship, to help them change.

Yes, it's true: we come from a

prejudiced society. That does not mean, however, that we must remain forever bound by prejudice. The N.A. program offers freedom, not only from drug addiction, but from the insidious defects of character that keep us from living full, healthy, happy lives. By working the steps, we can rise above our shortcomings. In doing so, we can set an example for one another, and for others in our communities, of what spiritual recovery is about.

How can you "show up and tell the truth" about prejudice in N.A.? You can:

1. Raise the topic at a discussion meeting.
2. Contact your regional convention committee, and ask them to hold a workshop on prejudice at the next convention.
3. Ask your area and regional service committees to consider whether prejudice affects any of their services.
4. Talk with your sponsor about how prejudice—yours and others—affects you and your recovery. Talk with those you sponsor, too.
5. If your group conducts an annual inventory, ask that "prejudice" be one of the subjects they examine.

Prejudice in N.A. hurts the whole fellowship, from the oldest oldtimer to the newest newcomer. We, as members of a fellowship based on spiritual principles, can not and must not settle for anything less than freedom from prejudice.

*K.J., Hawaii*



## Seeing what's over there

I recently had an experience I would like to share with you. I have lived all of my life east of the Mississippi, I have never seen the west. I got clean in Florida and apart from a week or two—have never been to a meeting outside Florida in my five years of recovery. When I had three years clean I met a wonderful lady who was also in recovery, who in fact, had more clean time than I.

A year and a half later we were married. Through her an opportunity opened up for me. Her sponsor lived in Texas and although they had been sponsor and sponsee for years, they had never met. (which is another wonderful story that is not mine to tell). Anyway, we had some extra money, some vacation time, and grandparents to babysit, so we decided to go

visit my wife's sponsor.

We planned to take a week and have it coincide with the Western States Unity Convention in El Paso. Now I must admit, I had some fears about going.

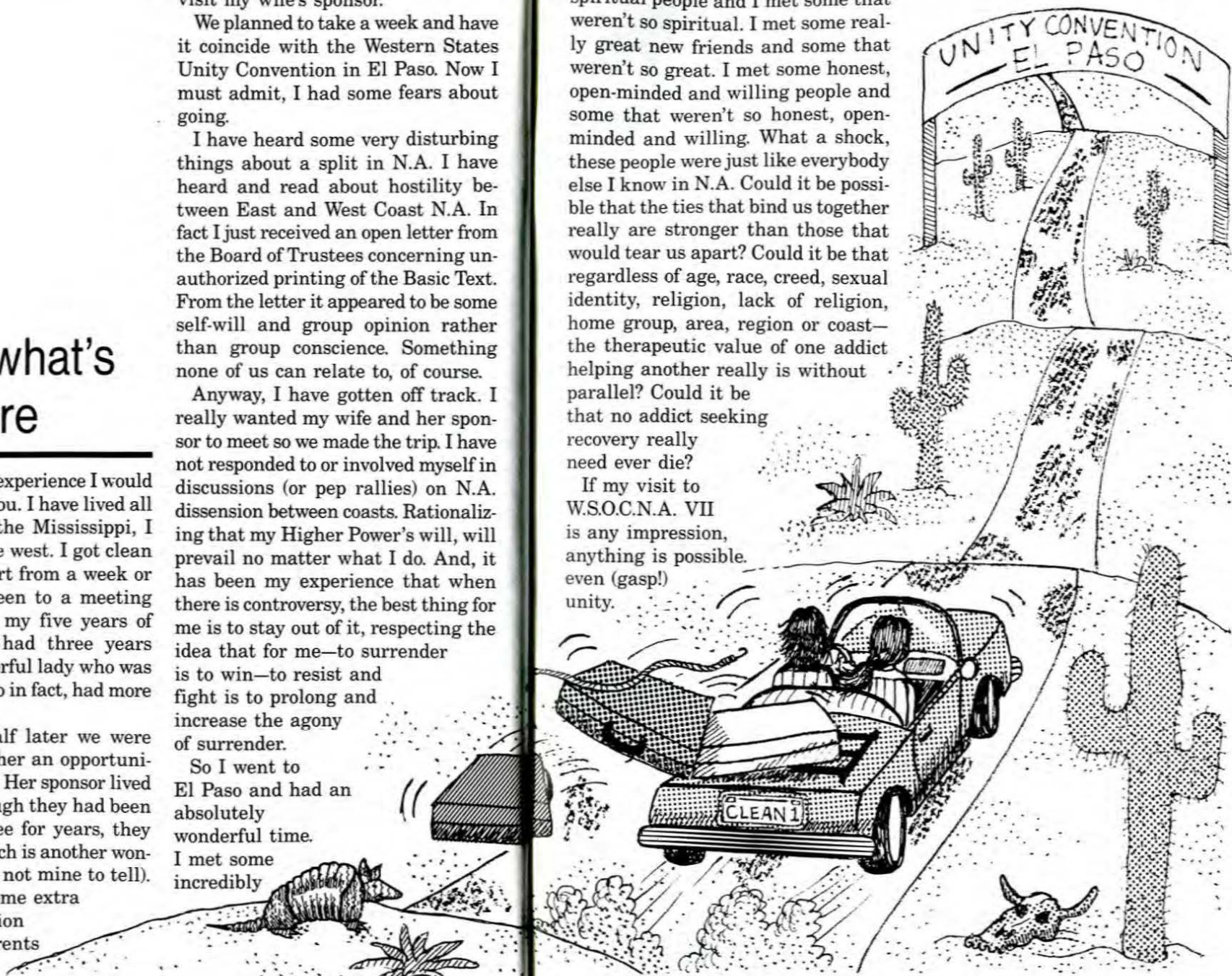
I have heard some very disturbing things about a split in N.A. I have heard and read about hostility between East and West Coast N.A. In fact I just received an open letter from the Board of Trustees concerning unauthorized printing of the Basic Text. From the letter it appeared to be some self-will and group opinion rather than group conscience. Something none of us can relate to, of course.

Anyway, I have gotten off track. I really wanted my wife and her sponsor to meet so we made the trip. I have not responded to or involved myself in discussions (or pep rallies) on N.A. dissension between coasts. Rationalizing that my Higher Power's will, will prevail no matter what I do. And, it has been my experience that when there is controversy, the best thing for me is to stay out of it, respecting the idea that for me—to surrender is to win—to resist and fight is to prolong and increase the agony of surrender.

So I went to El Paso and had an absolutely wonderful time. I met some incredibly

spiritual people and I met some that weren't so spiritual. I met some really great new friends and some that weren't so great. I met some honest, open-minded and willing people and some that weren't so honest, open-minded and willing. What a shock, these people were just like everybody else I know in N.A. Could it be possible that the ties that bind us together really are stronger than those that would tear us apart? Could it be that regardless of age, race, creed, sexual identity, religion, lack of religion, home group, area, region or coast—the therapeutic value of one addict helping another really is without parallel? Could it be that no addict seeking recovery really need ever die?

If my visit to W.S.O.C.N.A. VII is any impression, anything is possible. even (gasp!) unity.







## Comin'up

### LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phoneline number, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**  
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409.  
(818) 780-3951.

**GEORGIA:** Jan. 18-20, 1991; Peace & Recovery III; The Adventure Continues; Holiday Inn, 2155 Gordon Highway, Augusta, Georgia 30909; information call 1(404) 733-2073; CSRANA III, P.O. Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30909

**HAWAII:** Feb. 22-24, 1991; 7th Annual Oahu Gathering of the Fellowship; Camp Mokuleia, North Shore, Island of Oahu; helpline (808) 734-4357; Oahu Gathering Committee, P.O. Box 89636, Honolulu, HI 9630-9636

**ILLINOIS:** Dec. 31, 1990; New Year's Eve Gala; Annex Ballroom, 11901 South Loomis, Chicago, Illinois; information call (708) 848-2211; South City Area, P.O. Box 199327, Chicago, IL 60619-9327

**KENTUCKY:** Jan. 11-13, 1991; First Louisville Area Convention; The Ultimate Solution 12 Step Festival; Hurstbourne Hotel and Conference Center, 9700 Bluegrass Parkway, Louisville, KY 40299; information (502) 491-4830 or 1-800-289-1009; L.A.C.N.A., P.O. Box 91234, Louisville, KY 40291

**MICHIGAN:** Jan. 26-27, 1991; UPASCNA First Anniversary Conference in Escanaba; information call 1(906) 226-2421 or 1(906) 789-1929

**NEW JERSEY:** Dec. 31—Jan. 1, 1991; New Year's Mini Convention; William Paterson College, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne New Jersey; information (201) 614-9260 or (201) 669-9822; BCASC, 30 Massey Street, Lodi, NJ 07644

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Jan. 11-13, 1991, "Spiritually High in the Land of the Sky, VI" Smoky Mountain Hilton, Hilton Drive, Asheville, NC. Contact (704) 252-0386.

**OHIO:** Dec. 28-31, 1990; 2nd Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Airport, Columbus, Ohio; rsvn.s (614) 475-7551; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

2) Dec. 31, 1990; Central Ohio Annual New Years Eve Celebration; Ohio State Fairgrounds, Rhodes Center, 17th Columbus Avenue; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

**OKLAHOMA:** Jan. 18-20, 1991; 1st Annual Norman Winter Convention; Holiday Inn, 2600 West Main Street, Norman, OK 73069; Hotel (405) 329-1624; , P.O. Box 2653, Norman, OK 73070

**OREGON:** Jan. 19-20, 1991; "Right Where We're Supposed To Be"; Newport, Oregon; rsvn.s 1(800) 222-2244; OSIRSCNA, P.O. Box 1866, Newport, OR 97365

**SOUTH CAROLINA:** Jan. 25-27, 1991; US-CANA, 11th Annual Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, Greenville, SC; rsvn.s 1 (800) 228-9000, info 1 (803) 282-0109; Convention Information, P.O. Box 2233, Greer, SC 29652

2) Feb. 15-17, 1991; 3rd Annual Area Convention; Westin Oceanfront Resort Hotel, Hilton Head Island, SC; info 1 (803) 861-9595; Just For Today III, P.O. Box 22155, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

**SOUTH DAKOTA:** Dec. 15, 1990; Area II, 1990, URMSRSCNA Learning Day; Old City Hall, Boxelder, South Dakota; Take exit 66 of I-90, near Rapid City; Starts 9 a.m., covered dish, dance in evening; information (605) 348-2456

**VIRGINIA:** Jan. 11-13, 1991; 9th AVCNA Convention; Duell's Marriott, Duell's Airport; Information (703) 255-0071; AVCNA, P.O. Box 1566, Vienna, VA 22183

## We need stories!

Remember, the meeting in print section of *The N.A. Way Magazine* is your section. Like any other meeting you're a part of, you'll get the most out of this one by participating.

**Who writes stories?**  
You do!

The stories you see in this magazine are written by N.A. members—like you! You don't need to be a "great writer." All you need is your personal experience in recovery, and the willingness to share it. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. In every sense, that's *The N.A. Way*.

**What do I write?**  
Share as you would at any other meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about at a recent meeting? Are you on a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a recent turning point in your personal recovery? Share it with your fellow N.A. Way readers. We'd love to hear from you! Write us at:

**The N.A. Way Magazine**  
P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409 U.S.A.



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*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. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. 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.

