



# THE N.A. Way<sup>®</sup>

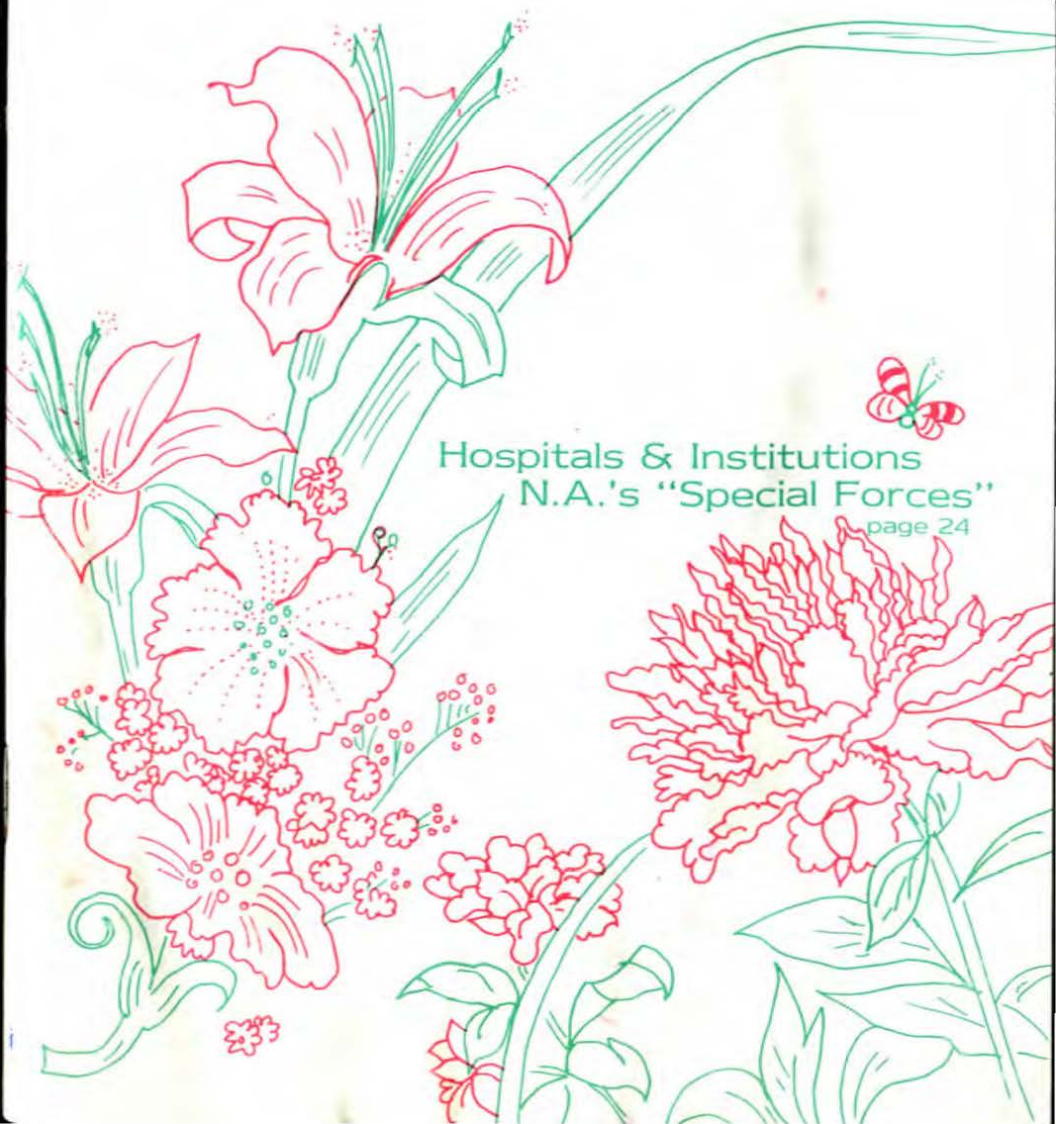
## MAGAZINE

May 1991

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Hospitals & Institutions  
N.A.'s "Special Forces"  
page 24



## 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<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

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## Why work the steps?

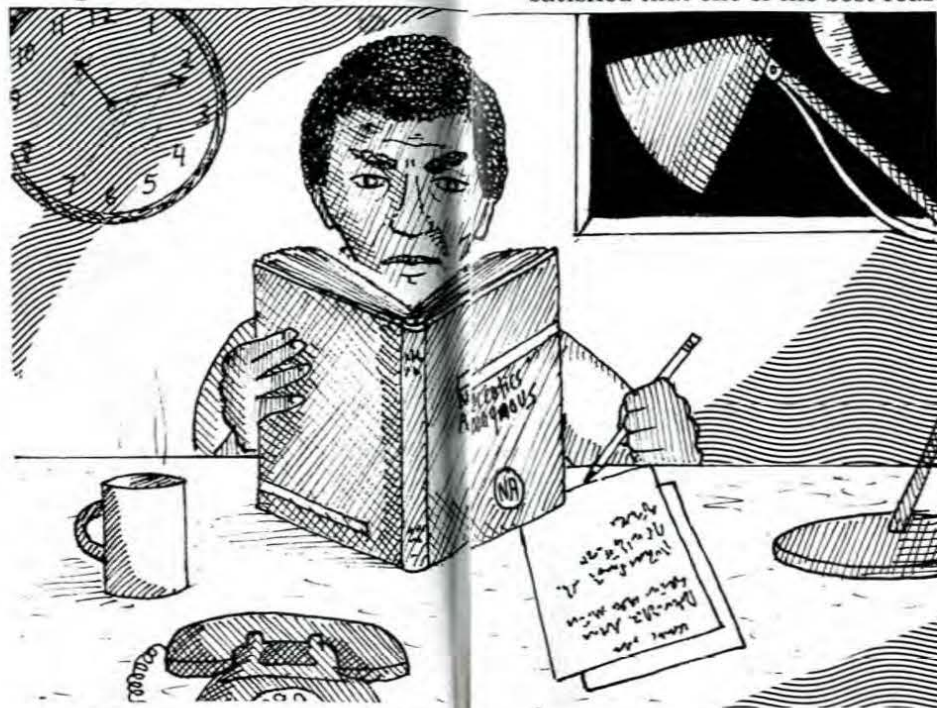
All the time I've been a part of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship I have heard that it is important to work the steps. With typical addict's defiance, my first question was why?

When I got started in recovery I was so sick, so victimized, and so far out of touch that I really felt the world owed me recovery. I wasn't about to do any work to get this thing. After some reflection and with some gentle pushing from other addicts, I was able to see how hard I had worked at trying to stay loaded and realized that if I was ever really going to get this program, I might just have to work at it a little bit. I was able to silence some of the noise in my head by telling it I was working the steps so I could stay clean.

It took me awhile to get to this point. Previously, I had utterly no idea that there was a connection between working the steps and staying clean. My first experience with working the steps had come in a treatment center—one of those 28-day rocket ship rides through the first five steps. At that time I was not very well and I was not very nice to myself. I did not want to go back to that kind of "beating up on" myself. I was just fine

isolating myself, chewing my fingernails down to my wrists, hanging from the ceiling, or whatever other really painful ways I could come up with to stay clean.

Finally, after a lot of pain and insanity through most of my first year in recovery, I decided I would see if there was anything to working the steps and staying clean. Looking back, it was a goofy journey full of stumbling and a lot of craziness, but



it was wonderful. I was able to look at and to begin to come to grips with my powerlessness and unmanageability and some of my insanity. I fought with the idea of turning my life and my will over, but was able to write a few things down about me and share those with another person. I raced through the rest of the steps looking at character defects I had no idea

what to do with, making a few necessary amends, struggling with trying to know what my Higher Power's will for me was, and trying to practice these principles in all my affairs.

Still, this first real work I had done with the steps was magnificent. I had let some baggage go. It was going to have to be easier staying clean now that I didn't have all that weight to carry around. I could be reasonably satisfied that one of the best reasons

steps helped to come to know a Higher Power. But now this neat new fact was a part of my own experience. In the many times of pain and general uncomfortableness I had to stop and ask whatever was out there for help and strength to continue. So, now, besides working the steps to stay clean, I had another reason. I could work the steps to get to know a power greater than myself and develop a relationship with that power.

Now I really had this program down. I was cruising alone, doing ok—except the noise in my head was getting a little louder again. I stopped actively working on the steps. Other addicts told me to get busy again. They told me I needed to keep working so I could stay clean and get to know my God better. "Oh, I've got that in the bag already" was my reply. "So, why don't you try working through the steps again so you can get to know yourself better?" they suggested.

Off I went on a journey of self examination and what a journey! Today I know that if I hadn't had a Higher Power to walk with me and be a source of strength and courage, I couldn't have taken the trip. For a long time in the beginning of that trip through the steps I felt worse than I had before I found recovery. It was horrible walking through the mess that was me, but deep down inside I knew that I wasn't going to feel lousy forever. I had a lot of hope and a little faith that things really would get better. Things did get better. Out of this reason to work the steps, I was able to give a big piece of me back to myself and I love it!

to work the steps was to stay clean. Yet, with this work, I had discovered something else that was absolutely fantastic. During this process of working through the steps I had begun to come to know a power greater than myself.

I know that I'm not the original discoverer of this fact and I'm even sure that I had heard that working the





Following the journey to get to know myself a little better, my life and my head quieted down a lot. Things kept running pretty smoothly for quite awhile, but I kept getting a little uneasy. Lately, I've been able to understand these feelings of uneasiness and have found the best reason to work the steps so far. A few months ago, an addict friend shared with me that the reason we all need to work the steps is so that when we get what we deserve, we can handle it.

Immediately after I heard this statement, I jumped into the negative. Yeah, when the judge sentences me to twenty years to life, or when my wife dumps me, or when my kid gets run over I'll be able to handle it. I mean, that's the kind of stuff I deserve, isn't it? But, I'll be able to handle it because I'm working the steps. What in-

sanity! Our literature tells me that I am a negative person and did I ever jump the wrong way with my friend's statement.

What she meant was when I get the good things I deserve, if I'm working the steps, I'll be able to handle them. A lot of my recent uneasiness has stemmed from the fact that I've been hanging around this program and doing enough work that some really good things are starting to happen to me, but I still have some trouble believing that I deserve them. So, as I begin to work through the steps again, I'm going to try to focus on the good and my worth and try to get comfortable with the positive turn my life seems to be taking. I'm pretty positive it will work out.

So, I am a strong advocate of working the steps of this program. I write

them out and share them with my Higher Power and my sponsor. Whether working the steps to learn how to stay clean, or to get to know my God or myself better, or so I can handle it when I get what I deserve, I really believe the steps are the answer. I don't know what comes next, but I am excited and want to stay busy.

I haven't always jumped right to the solution. I still do a lot of kicking and screaming and expend a lot of energy just trying to get ready. But, over the past several years, I've gotten a lot of gifts. I've got a God and a relationship with that power that is great. I am continuing to develop a relationship with me and love that. I have a relationship with my wife that is mutually enriching and pleasant most of the time. I've got wonderful kids and even a couple of brothers

who have made recovery their way of life. And I have so many addict friends that I love and care for, and who love and care for me. It is amazing!

I never knew that life could be this way, but I am so grateful that I had a chance to find out. I never, never want to have to go back to that life of being a non-person tangled up in the hassles of active addiction living a life of hopeless desperation. I think that as long as I continue to work the steps I will be able to choose recovery instead of having to be sucked down by the powerlessness of addiction.

I love recovery! I love the steps of our Narcotics Anonymous program! I love life and I thank God for the chance to live. I also thank all the addicts who have shared with me to make it possible.

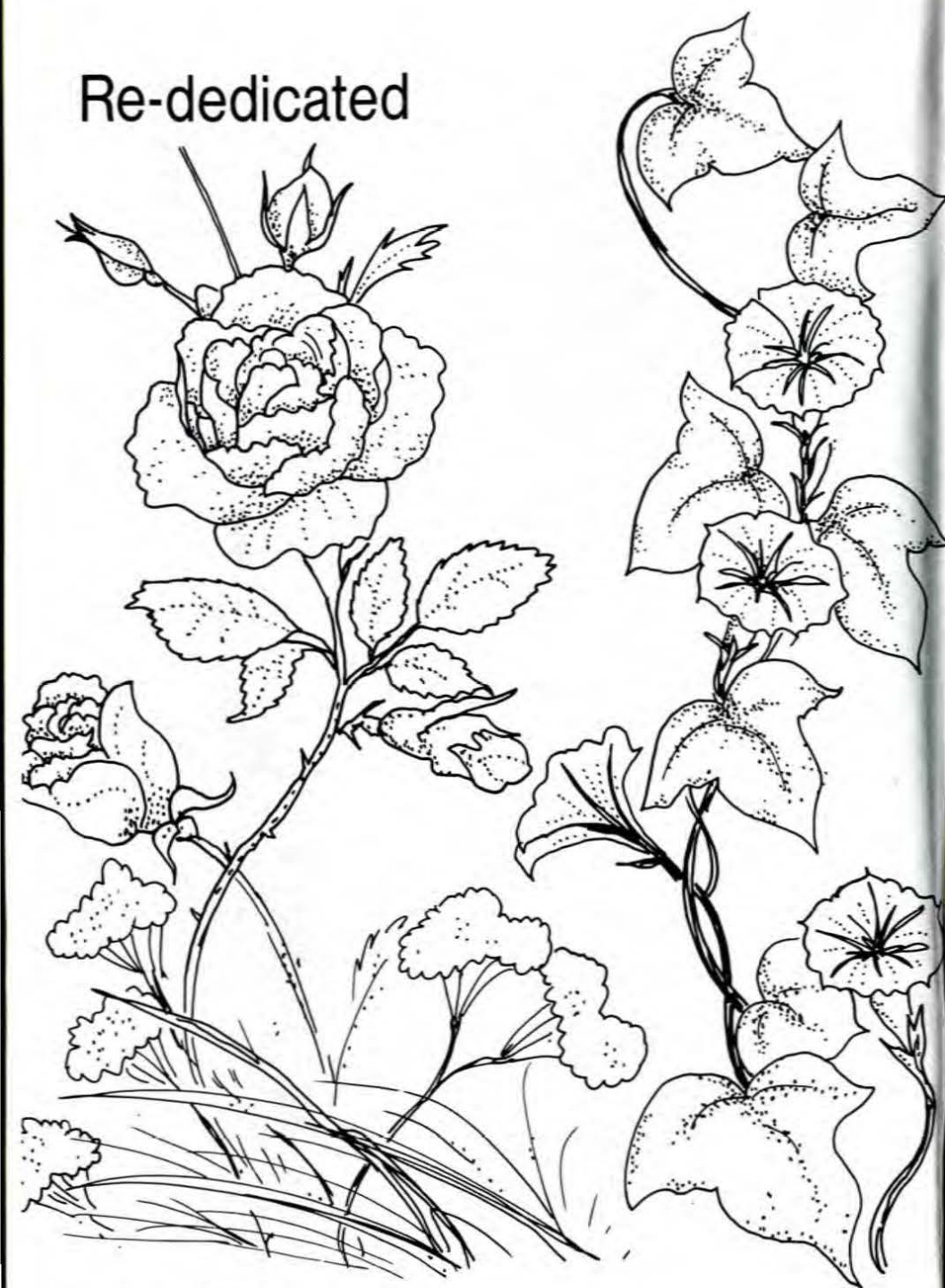
Stay clean, work the steps, and LIVE!

*Idaho addict*





## Re-dedicated



**F**or most of my life I lived in a way I didn't like. I had a lot of feelings I couldn't stand or understand. At some point I realized that drugs had a lot to do with how I felt and how my life was going. I tried to stop using and found I couldn't stop, or when I was able to stop, I couldn't stay stopped.

In N.A. I have found a way to stop the drug. That is as simple as don't use today, go to meetings, and stay in touch with others in our fellowship. For me that is only the beginning. What about the freedom from active addiction our book talks about? My addiction has a lot to do with a lifestyle, a negative way of thinking. As a matter of fact, I can't think of even one character defect of mine that I wasn't addicted to. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions seem to be providing the answers to all that stuff. The fellowship gives me hope and courage to work the steps. It is the old story; if he can do that, well I can do this. If she can face those problems, surely I can deal with these problems, and do it without drugs.

This was the second year that I had lights on the outside of our house during the holiday season. Last year over a thousand lights, and this year over two thousand. The day after Christmas I went out and bought more lights for next year. Sure, I see a pattern forming. Maybe by 1995 I will be able to quit my "light habit," or just taper off. Maybe this is just a way of taking a defect and finding a way to make it a positive instead of a negative.

In the last two years my wife and I have spent nearly one thousand dollars on flowers, plants and fertilizers for our yard. We planted two hundred new spring bulbs last year. I noticed some of them are starting to sprout already. In a few months we will have lots of colorful flowers in our yard. Isn't that the way of our program? We plant "bulbs" and "seeds," called steps and traditions. We water and fertilize what we plant, and sooner or later our life starts to fill with flowers. Sometimes when I am up to my waist in fertilizer, it is hard to remember that it is necessary to go through it to have the flowers. It is at those times when a good sponsor comes in handy. They can show us pictures of how their flowers looked after the fertilizer does its job. They also remind us to water (Steps Ten, Eleven, Twelve) what we planted (Steps One, Two, and Three) and fertilized (Steps Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine) so we can enjoy our flowers —Life.

Think about it!

*B.F., Oregon*





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## Came to believe

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Like quite a few addicts early in recovery, I got goosepimples when I heard the word "God" mentioned. I was ready for everything else, but not that. "God, just don't give me any of that *God* stuff." Like with most things in life, I wanted to do the program my way. I knew better. I had been a rebel my whole life—in total opposition to everybody and everything, so it was natural for me not to accept all of the program at first. A bit here and a bit there, which resulted in that I got stuck on Step One. Admitting powerlessness wasn't that hard. Still, there was something missing, and one day when I was feeling my resistance kind of loosening up a bit, I had a thought. I thought, these people that have been clean for a long time and are doing the steps are working the program and looking happy. These people were intelligent people, and they believed in something higher than themselves, how was that possible? I thought about it for a while, and then decided to give it a try. I could always go back to "my way" if it wasn't working. And this thing about Higher Power, it wasn't God, it was something different, and I liked to be different, so I became willing.

And then I started the hunt for my

Higher Power. I didn't know where to find this Higher Power, so I went looking. First in churches. There I found people who seemed more intolerant than myself, plus I couldn't stand the talk about "heaven and hell, which way to go?" "I've already been there," I thought, so I never went back to church. Then I went climbing various mountaintops, thinking a higher level would probably bring me closer to a Higher Power, and guess what? Right. It also didn't work. Finally somebody told me to stop analyzing and thinking, and start feeling instead, and so I did. And the search ended. Inside myself I found my Higher Power. He was a part of me.

And now the next step, what to do with this Higher Power once I've found it? So I started praying. A bit now and a bit then at first. Also, here, I couldn't just hand it over just like that. I had to make packages. "This problem is for you, this one for me, here is a small one for you, and this huge financial headache is surely for me," and so on. I was my Higher Power's secretary, and I was dividing the problems between us. That also didn't work. One day I had this splitting headache from worrying, and I was fed up. I went home folded my hands and prayed: "I can't handle anymore, please take care of this mess." And it worked. Fantastic, my headache disappeared on the spot. I felt light headed, I felt free, and I fell in love with Step Three. Total surrender. Since that time I always carry Step Three with me in my back pocket, it gives me a feeling of security. I'm in good hands.

Monica A., Norway

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## Back to the country

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I am a recovering addict and a grateful member of Narcotics Anonymous. I am also what is known here as a "transplant," having grown up in Southern California and moved to the countryside in Oregon at twenty-nine years old. My son is a fourth-generation native Californian. My whole family lives in the city except me, my husband and my son.

I used and abused drugs of every kind during my life in the city. Insanity was evident in my life every minute of every day. I had the feeling of being on a merry-go-round that was going too fast. I wanted off, but I couldn't let go. I was terrified and desperate.

When my mother died in 1979 and left me an inheritance, I had the opportunity to do what I'd always wanted. I bought fourteen acres of land.

I moved from a bustling metropolis onto a piece of raw land in a rural area of Southeastern Oregon. The nearest town is five miles away, with a population of eight-hundred and fifty. What a switch!

Although living on my own land had always been my dream, I also viewed our big move as a way to "fix" my drug problem. I held dear to my heart visions of whiskey-drinkin'

tobacco-spittin' cowboys who frowned on drugs and those who used them. Well, I was right-on with that one! I was also very disillusioned.

For the first two years I lived a fairly isolated life. I cursed all drugs, (except the herb of course) as I guzzled wine and cheap beer. I was overflowing with anger and resentments toward city life and the habits "it" created. I referred to myself as a good person who became an innocent victim. Someone who used to have a problem with some drugs. I swore off them forever.

Eventually I made friends. Slowly becoming a trusted pal instead of an out-of-state newcomer who was eyed with suspicion. I was completely accepted by my new acquaintances when they discovered that not only did I like to get high, but I excelled in this form of recreation. I was an expert. A selective connoisseur! At this time I openly changed my philosophy. I'd never again spend money on drugs, (except the herb, of course). But I'd only take and use what was given to me. Guess what? Pockets opened up and the freebies flowed my way, seemingly without end. The "dragon in me" was once again unleashed, and stronger than ever. I used and abused with a vengeance.

Let me tell you a little about country life. There are certain things that go together, things that are openly accepted as a way of life. Rodeos and liquor, hunting, fishing and liquor, community service club functions and liquor. I soon learned that the drugs were always present in the back of someone's camper. I knew right where to park!



In a few years I had to go to work to support my habit. Of course, I drifted from job to job as I had before. Many, many, times before. I found myself back on that merry-go-round and I was scared to death. Just when I finally had the home I loved and had always wanted, in an area which was truly my element, the country. I was at risk of losing it all. My family life was falling apart, it was all fading fast and I was out of control.

I was a shell of a person at this point. Empty, crumpled, beaten. I wanted to quit everything for good. I wanted to stop running, but the drugs wouldn't let me. Crying helplessly all the way to the dealer's house. I was completely powerless over my addiction. This was not what I wanted to do—I wanted to stop! I prayed to God for help and remember saying "I don't want to die."

Soon after that I got a phone call from my sister. She wanted to come up for a visit and said "Oh, by the way, I've joined A.A.—I'm an alcoholic." By the time I hung up the receiver I realized I could finally surrender. I would tell that I was an addict and that I needed help.

She arrived and after a few agonizing days I finally managed to get those painful words out. My sister wrapped her arms around me and I sobbed like the wounded child that I was. She made that call for me, trying to locate an N.A. meeting. There was some difficulty in achieving this, but she finally found one thirty miles away.

The "alcohol and drug abuse" center five miles away had no knowledge of Narcotics Anonymous meetings anywhere, and didn't even have the local helpline number. No one even said "Come down and we'll see what we can find out." It has been my personal observation and experience that it is more socially acceptable in these small communities to be a recovering alcoholic. I think recovering addicts are treated with indifference or shunned altogether. They are treated as second-class citizens oftentimes. For this reason

many people find it difficult to openly seek the recovery they so desperately want and need. Rural recovery is a struggling affair.

Shortly after I admitted my addiction to all my friends, one of them also admitted to a problem. I no longer felt alone in my community—I had an ally in recovery! We got together and commuted the sixty miles to and from the nearest N.A. meetings several times a week. About eight months later we started a Narcotics Anonymous group in our own small town. Our group is seventeen months old. We have three regular members. We desperately need outside support, but don't seem to be getting it.

There are a lot of misconceptions about N.A. and recovering addicts. The general population, especially in the rural areas, seems misinformed or

ignorant regarding the disease of drug addiction. They need to know that "the lie is dead—we do recover!"

How can we help? We can go into our rural communities, posting fliers with information about times and locations of the nearest N.A. meetings, and also include the local helpline number. When requesting that a business post a flier, give a little information about Narcotics Anonymous. It is a fellowship of men and women who get together regularly to help each other stay clean. Often that added time and effort will mean the difference between that person posting the flier and leaving it up, or putting it up today and taking it right down tomorrow. Rural recovery can be extremely difficult. Let's try to change that!

Wendy W., Oregon





## Internal discrimination

I'm a grateful recovering addict. I'm an American Indian and proud of my ancestry, heritage and nationality. I'm not a heathen, nor a renegade; I'm not unique, but I am different in my traditional ways and sacred beliefs. I attend beautiful ceremonies, and offer prayers to a God of my choice.

Prejudice has always been a razor-edged sword here, in a city that never sleeps. I was always fighting for my rights as an American Indian, in order to belong and fit in. During my school years, I was taunted and ridiculed by classmates for my "Indianness." I was always going into battle.

I have felt the wrath of prejudice and the repercussions of discrimination out there in the drug-crazed world of insanity, and in the fellowship of recovering addicts. I've struggled with this issue, seemingly, all my life, even in the fellowship.

My first year in recovery was probably the worst year I have experienced clean. I was full of a lot of anger, and I was crushed with fear. I was shy and sometimes speechless. I was a lonely, scared little boy inside. At times I didn't feel like I belonged

and was very uncomfortable because of my long hair and the color of my skin, which seemed to offend some members of N.A. I was also the only native American in the local fellowship at that time. Predictably, I didn't feel wanted. I felt like some strange alien. It has taken almost five years to finally come to terms of acceptance with the opposition of what I call the "clique." The "clique" is a tight, social group of addicts who seem to me to think they're too good to associate with anybody other than their kind.

The second and third year of my recovery process was excruciatingly painful as I strived for progress, wanting desperately to fit in; only, I feel, to have that discrimination door slammed in my face time after time. It made me feel like maybe there was a racial barrier in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I think situations like this dilute the spirit of unity, but I'm still holding on to my hope that maybe things will change for the better.

I started my own meeting of Narcotics Anonymous over a year ago because I was not asked to chair meetings. I was not called on to share my hope, faith and experience. I thought to myself, "Why is the clique so insistent upon playing junior gods and seeming to try so hard to run me off?" I felt it was a threat to my recovery. My self-esteem and my emotions were in turmoil. I was engulfed with rage and inflamed with hostility. I almost went on a one-man rampage of "hit and ask questions later." The addict in me wanted to get revenge. But I bit the arrow and let go, and gave it to God.





To me, unconditional love is accepting the addict as is—without being judge, jury and executioner. This means not condemning the addict because of the color of his skin, sex, creed, or religion. It's loving that addict for who the addict is, and not for what he is about. It's loving that addict no matter what—unconditionally. Besides, anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our traditions ever reminding us to place "principles before personalities."

As far as personalities are concerned, each and every recovering addict is at their own level of recovery progress. No one is the same, basically because of the longevity of our drug usage, drug choice, our life styles, etc. But two things we bring to the program, and that is our polished egos (self-centeredness) and our strong personalities. And I know that we're all not going to get along, but that's not saying we can't all work together and in the solution to create harmony instead of discord among ourselves.

I talked to my sponsor about discrimination and asked for his advice. He said, "My friend, racism exists everywhere in the world, in every aspect of life. Where there are people, there will always be some sort of discrimination in one form or another. Just because we get clean doesn't change the thinking and attitudes of addicts. Pray harder for them, as God will open up their eyes and minds and soften their hearts. In God's time, not our time." Then he went on to say just lift your head high, and don't let it or them get you down. Be glad for who

you are and proud of it. He gave me a hug and said, "I love ya!" I thanked him for being there for me.

I treat people the way they treat me. I didn't come to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous to become a hell raiser. I came because the narcotics I consumed had finally taken a toll on my body, and my life was unmanageable and shipwrecked in every area. I didn't get here because I was an angel and I didn't come in to look good, or to be better than anyone else or to become popular. Nor did I come with a "holier than thou" attitude, or for anybody or anything else. I came for myself.

This internal discrimination that is happening to me has happened to other minorities, and whites as well; because we're not in the same league and breed as the "cliques." "Cliques" injustices make my life miserable in recovery. I feel I'm at an emotional showdown and in a mental war—me against them. Even though I'm outnumbered, I've still got a few friends in the fellowship who accept me as is, and who love me unconditionally.

So take my inventory, talk all kinds of smut about me and even character assassinate my human integrity all you want. This is the last house on the block for this recovering addict, and Narcotics Anonymous is my home too, despite these irritating obstacles on my journey through life in recovery—one day and one step at a time.

I have spoken; thanks for listening.

*D.H.D., Nevada*

## Tools included

I'm an addict, and like most addicts I hate change. The truth is that I hate change because I fear it. I want to share my experience, strength, and hope on a few changes I have experienced in my personal recovery this past year.

I received a call from a friend advising me of a job opportunity in a distant city. I told her that I would have to pray and talk to my sponsor before I did anything. She said to send for an application first. I didn't. My life was second to none, and I didn't see how moving could improve anything. I did pray and talk to my sponsor. My sponsor asked, "Do you not want to move because you have absolutely no desire to live elsewhere, or is it because of fear?" I told her I had absolutely no desire to live anywhere else.

Then two weeks later the firm called me and asked me to at least come for an interview. My sponsor told me to keep an open mind, and not to decide anything until I looked at the entire picture.

I arrived at the airport, and again was overwhelmed with fear. There were so many cars, buses, and people! I was a small town girl—didn't feel a part of at all.

I had my interview, and heard myself accepting the position. My head was telling me "no," and my heart was saying that this was the right thing to do. I got on the plane, and the

closer we got to home the more I realized I couldn't leave my home, my friends, my job, my family. I began to cry. I was so confused. Why was God doing this to me? Why did He want me completely on the other side of the country? Why? Why? Why? When the plane landed in my home area I still felt confused rather than the relief I thought I would feel once I was safe at home.

The next morning I shared my fears and confusion with a friend. She suggested I make a list of all the pros and all the cons involved in this move, give it to God and say, "I have no preference; Your will, not mine be done." She told me I would get a feeling of peacefulness, and I would be leaning a certain way—either to stay or to go. I took the direction, and it worked! The incredible part was this peaceful feeling was guiding me to leave, not to stay as I thought! I couldn't believe it. It was easier for me to tell the people I worked for that I was leaving than to call the new job and say, "Thanks, but no thanks." I was told that the most important thing in our life is our faith, and we take that with us wherever we go.

My very first day on my new job fear was running rampant in my head! I knew I had made a mistake. How could I have been so stupid! My disease was telling me I was a loser; I had really screwed up this time. Nobody at the new job was very friendly; they rarely spoke to me. I had to eat lunch alone. What kind of a place was this, anyway? I went to some meetings, and I hated them. I had come from an area where N.A. was N.A., not to be mixed and confused



with other Twelve-Step Fellowships. I was from a place where you had one disease, one program, one sponsor, one fellowship! What was wrong with these people, anyway? Thank God I got clean away from here!

I called my sponsor, and shared my anger and frustration. She shared her experience, strength, and hope with me—she had felt the same way when she moved in recovery! She reminded me that I needed to go to the meetings for myself, because I have the disease of addiction, and without treating it with the program of Narcotics Anonymous I would die. I needed N.A.; N.A. did not need me. N.A. would survive, but I would die that horrible death of loneliness and isolation.

Once again it was about you, they, and them. If you, they and them would act right, I'd be okay. But once again, it wasn't about you, they and them. It was about me and my attitude and what I was going to do to change it. After months of trying to live on yesterday's recovery, not reaching out to new friends but clinging to the old, not being open to new ideas, I suffered, and when I got sick and tired of being sick and tired, I became entirely willing to do anything to make my life better. I began putting my current life situation into the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, seeking a solution instead of dwelling in the problem. I felt the powerlessness the First Step speaks of, I allowed myself to feel the total obsession with self, and then I gave those feelings of loneliness and not being understood to a loving God. I began going to more meetings, get-

ting telephone numbers, seeking a new sponsor—long distance sponsorship was not working for me at this point in my recovery. I needed that daily contact with a sponsor. I began to ask my Higher Power to guide me to the sponsor He wanted me to have. I did the footwork. I showed up and my Higher Power did the rest.

Today, I have a home group that has enough faith in me to allow me the honor and privilege to serve as its treasurer. I have a sponsor that lives ten minutes from my home. I have women that allow me the privilege to serve as their sponsor. God has put a wonderful man in my life to share my joy and fears. I love my job. I have the best boss in the world! I am learning more here than I ever dreamed possible.

If you had told me when I picked up that "Welcome" chip that my life would be this happy, joyous, and free, I wouldn't have believed you. I couldn't have believed you; I didn't possess the hope and faith that I possess just for today.

The moral of this story is this: If you are a recovering addict, and in the process of your journey you move to a new place and feel like a newcomer again—trust your feelings—you will be a newcomer to that area. The one significant difference is that we have the tools of recovery that we take with us—the Twelve Steps. Use them! The wonderful thing about the Twelve Steps is that the more we use them, the better they are. They don't wear out or have to be replaced. Unfortunately, I had packed mine away, and almost forgot I had them.

*D.C.R., California*

## Getting the "good hands"

My philosophy used to be that life was just one big "card game" and I was playing out the hand that was dealt to me. Little did I realize that I was stacking the deck against myself. In my thirty five years of active addiction I tried to play all "strategy hands," always looking for the easy fix. I needed that ultimate feeling of winning all the chips.

I did not see how unmanageable and insane my life really was, my excuse was always, "Well, just look at this hand that was dealt to me, it's not my fault, it's the dealer." The choice was always there to get out of the game, but being the addict that I am, I chose to remain, hoping for a better hand that would prove a winner.

The disease of addiction seemed like I was living in a tunnel of nightmares and there was no light at the end. Over the years, the "card game" of addiction was beginning to wear thin. There was constantly the solid rock denial that I was not hooked on drugs. I would tell myself that I could quit anytime. There were even times when I would be selectively abstinent and I would tell myself, "See, you're not addicted, you have this under control." My behavior during those times involved excesses of food, shopping, spending money foolishly on things I

did not need, trying to solve other's problems, people pleasing, being a workaholic and displaying control and power—anything that gave me that instant fix.

Often times I would look in the paper under the meetings section and would see the N.A. meetings' times and places. Sometimes the excuses for why I could not go failed, so I reshuffled. This went on for about two years before I walked into my first N.A. meeting on April 3, 1990. I have since learned to say, "by me" to my old playmates.

There are times I do not feel like going to a meeting, and that is when I pick up the phone and call another addict and ask them if they ever felt this way. My new associations are better players today and they never try to cheat me.

I have also learned in recovery that anyone can deal themselves a winning hand, for recovery means FREEDOM, where no one is a loser. The spirituality has allowed me a feeling of freedom and to know that I am a good person, and I can be a winner every day if I chose to be one. Recovery costs nothing and the feeling of freedom has given me a new lease on life. There is hope for me today, thanks to N.A. and my Higher Power.

I will always have the disease of addiction and it was not until I surrendered myself to the program of recovery that I came to believe that my disease can be arrested and I no longer have to serve a life sentence. There is a peace inside me now that says, "It's going to be okay, you're in the right game."

*Mickey V., New York*



## Home Group

"She likes me!"



alleviated by tapping WSO accounts, but also stated such a cushion no longer exists.

The temporary halt of most conference expenditures sparked lively discussion about how selection between fellowship priorities is effected. Both BOT Traditions Ad Hoc Committee representatives and Admin Committee people referred to "different perceptions" regarding appropriate responses to the diminished availability of funds.

## The broad perspective

### Long-range plan

WSC 1991 participants are offered something of a range of opportunity to indicate their perceptions of how priorities of activity and funding might best be reflected. The list of such opportunities includes a request from the WSO Board of Directors that the conference indicate its support for continuing work to investigate the feasibility of a combined WSO/WSC budget, currently slated to become effective in the 1993 calendar year. A "Budget Review and Utilization Committee," comprised of representatives of the WSC Admin Committee, members of the Board of Trustees and members of the WSO Board of Directors, is envisioned as a basic mechanism of the unified budget process.

### Dialogue opportunity

A more immediate vehicle for the expression of attitudes and ideas related to the broad scope of the problems may be available on the first

### Flashpoint

Shortly after an early April report from the WSC Treasurer, the chairpersons of the WSC, BOT and BOD conferred and agreed on curtailing world-level service structure meeting expenditures with the exception of expenses related to the April meeting of the WSC proper.

Evidence of the severity of conditions was dramatized April 7 when the WSC Administrative Committee informed the BOT Ad Hoc Committee, which is working on part of our steps and traditions book, that funds were not available to support the next planned project-session. The conference chairperson noted similar circumstances in the past have been



day of the WSC, according to the text of the BOT Internal Committee's Annual Report. The fourth paragraph (Page 81, WSC *Annual Reports* package) states "We noted that several motions at WSC 1990 dealt specifically with the relationship between World Service Boards and Committees. It became clear that thorough discussions regarding these relationships need to take place. You will note that both the BOT and WSC Administrative Committee plan to devote portions of their panel presentations to this matter. It is our hope that the conference will engage itself in these discussions in hopes that our understandings of these relationships will become clearer, and that any proposed changes in those relationships will occur only as the result of informed decision making."

## Connect the dots, see the picture

The WSC Treasurer chose to dramatize his perception of the fund/priority question through an anecdote included in his otherwise somber report (page 13, WSC *Annual Reports*). An excerpt:

"In case no one has noticed, I have refused to designate the cost estimates submitted by the WSC committees and the Board of Trustees, as a "budget." There are occasions when cost estimates are sometimes termed "budgets." This may occur if we were to consider a funded International Development Forum. The External Committee of the Board of Trustees may be asked to develop a "budget" prior

to consideration of the proposal. Although the term "budget" is sometimes used to describe cost estimates, I believe the most common usage of the term "budget" occurs when, or after, cost estimates are matched against income estimates.

"Perhaps a simple illustration will make this difference more clear. I want to go to an N.A. convention. The registration is \$20, the banquet is \$20, the breakfast is \$10, the dance is \$4, and \$5 for the newcomer donation. The room at the host hotel will cost \$85 per night for three nights. Meals will be about \$18 per day since I already have the banquet and breakfast tickets. The airline ticket is \$125 round trip. T-shirts and mugs will be another \$35. The total cost of everything I want to do there is \$529. A budget? No, a cost estimate. Now, I look at my income. I have \$100 in my checking account, and \$50 in my savings account. I'll get a \$200 income-tax refund in the next few days. Friday is payday, and I estimate that I'll have \$100 left from my paycheck after paying for groceries, etc. Total income, \$450, but I really don't want to use my savings.

"Now the budgeting process begins. I can bypass the banquet and the breakfast, but will still have to eat, saving \$15. I don't need to go to the dance; I'll hang out outside and listen to the music, saving \$5. It would be nice to fly, but I can drive for \$60 gas, if I don't count the indirect expenses of my car, and save \$65. If I leave Friday, I can save one night room cost of \$85. Total savings, \$170. Estimated cost at this point, \$359.

A budget? Maybe, but a little fine tuning would help. I'll include \$15 for a T-shirt and a mug for two guys that I sponsor, and allow \$20, just in case I have a flat tire along the way. Convention budget, \$394, without tapping my savings account.

"If I had used the cost estimate as a budget in the above example, it is apparent that I would have been in serious trouble. It is my observation that this has happened at the last five conferences. Each conference committee and the Board of Trustees leaves the conference with the idea that each individual cost estimate is approved as a budget, and that any alterations or eliminations can be made only with that individual committee or board's consent.

"Historically, each committee and the Board of Trustees have acted autonomously within the parameters of their approved cost estimates, and the expenditures are processed and charged through the WSO. In my opinion, this has made the Joint Administrative Committee incapable of administering WSC finances and left the WSC Administrative Committee unclear and unsure of its responsibility to supervise or administer the 'budget.' "

## WSC chairperson's report

Citing what he perceived as "... no criteria for the WSC Chairperson to involve other conference officers..." in decisions, (page 2, WSC *Annual Reports* package) the current chairperson references "... frustration be-

tween our primary service boards and the Administrative Committee." He continued, "When I am asked to participate in a decision that I believe has broad consequence, I have stated that the entire Administrative Committee needs to be involved. This involvement, in my perspective, includes participating in all related discussions, therefore all Admin members should be present. Unfortunately, there are differing perceptions within the membership of these boards and the extent of involvement the Administrative Committee should have in these types of decisions. These differing perceptions range from Admin having full participation, to Admin having no participation. Given no clear consensus, when matters of broad consequence arise, it is not uncommon for the boards to conduct their business with little regard for full Admin participation. Such was the case when the Trustees recommended to the WSO Board of Directors that they not renew the contract of the WSO Executive Director, as well as the decision of the WSO Board to uphold that recommendation.

"Another example of Admin's non-involvement was the final decision by the WSO Board of Directors Executive Committee pursuant to a permanent injunction in federal court regarding the illicit publication of our Basic Text. Except for the final agreement, the WSO Board had shown a fine effort in keeping the Administrative Committee involved with the issues progress. We, along with the rest of the conference leadership, were presented with the agreement at the



January JAC meeting, which included motions to be placed in the *Conference Agenda Report* as well as further inclusions in the *Fellowship Report*, *The N.A. Way Magazine*, and *Newsline*."

The chairperson's report notes what was perhaps an attempt to address a perceived need for a mechanism to mark priorities of "broad consequence." He recounts that the Joint Administrative Committee (which includes the chairpeople of all world level boards and committees) in September 1990 unanimously passed the resolution:

"In instances where there is need to deal with conflict among any of the arms of N.A. World Services, or where there is a need to take immediate action, it is agreed that the joint recommendations made by the BOD chair, BOT chair and the Administrative Committee Chair will be followed. It is further agreed that they do have the ability to act where there is no opportunity to convene the full respective boards/committees."

In closing passages of the chairperson's seven-page report, conference participants are urged: "Whether the structure of world services changes or not, the conference needs to reevaluate its role with respect to establishing clear and realistic priorities for projects. For instance, let's say the conference were to establish the joint steps and traditions projects as our first priority. Further, let's say that, upon evaluating WSO staff availability and our cooperative WSO/WSC funding situation, we found we could complete this joint project in two

years if we did nothing else. Given this, would the conference be willing to postpone all new WSC committee activities until the project was completed? Would the conference be willing to suspend all but essential meetings of the WSC Policy; H&I; P.I.; Literature; ad-hoc committees; the JAC; Trustees; and Board of Directors? If this is our first priority, what does that mean? Does it mean that it's a matter of life or death, or is it simply one of a list of nearly equal tasks? Does the conference feel it has this type of authority?

"As a conference, we have become organized to the point of inefficiency. We need to dare to dream, to break the old mold of how the WSC conducts business. The conference needs to be flexible enough to address new challenges with new methods. Only this way will we overcome the complex obstacles that have stopped us in our tracks. We need to address service responsibilities with proper preparation and planning, which should include an evaluation of WSO's role. We need to establish realistic priorities of projects during the annual conference. We should only take on a complement of projects that we have the resources to support, with critical attention to human resources. We need to encourage our international communities to pursue their own approach to service more aggressively, and we must loosen the reins and let the horse drive us. We need to redirect our focus to a conference that provides service, not a conference that sets policy for our fellowship."

## New World Service Office Executive Director hired

The Narcotics Anonymous World Service Office has a new Executive Director, at long last! From among a half-dozen individuals participating in final interviews March 9, the selection was Joe Gossett, now of Los Angeles, California. Requested to quickly draft a "Hello" piece for this issue, he responded:

"I'm excited about my new special worker position as the Executive Director of the WSO. I'm excited because I've been given the opportunity to serve a fellowship that's totally committed to the continuing development of N.A. Of course, with rapid growth comes a few growing pains, and the WSO will continue to struggle to find ways to be more responsive to the needs of the fellowship with the resources available.

"I believe I was recruited by our Board of Directors because of my background and commitment to assisting large volunteer service structures. At 41 years old I've had 18 years experience working with local, national and international organizations.

"My academic background extends from a community college in the mid-west to Ivy League graduate schools on the east coast, always with the goal of learning the most productive ways to assist volunteers to reach their goals.

"My expertise is not so much in having all the answers, but in knowing where to find them. Where to find them is easy; the N.A. Fellowship."

Joe arrived (he was introduced to the staff at a hastily convened cake-and-coffee break) at the beginning of April, and since then has been the good-natured recipient of what appears to be tons of reports and many hours of discourse.

In talking about the publication of this announcement Joe said to make clear that he understands his management style to have been sought as a complement to fellowship hopes and expectations.

In addition to the stream of employees and/or N.A. members wishing to share his time, the coherent expression of hopes and expectations is being attempted by a team of folks impaneled just for that purpose.

Members of the WSC Administrative Committee, the Narcotics Anonymous Board of Trustees and the WSO Board of Directors are working together to progressively orient and invest the new Executive Director with responsibility and authority.

Joe and the team are first studying the administrative, operational, sales and personnel policies of the WSO itself. The next general stage of involvement is slated to be a review of pertinent legal matters.

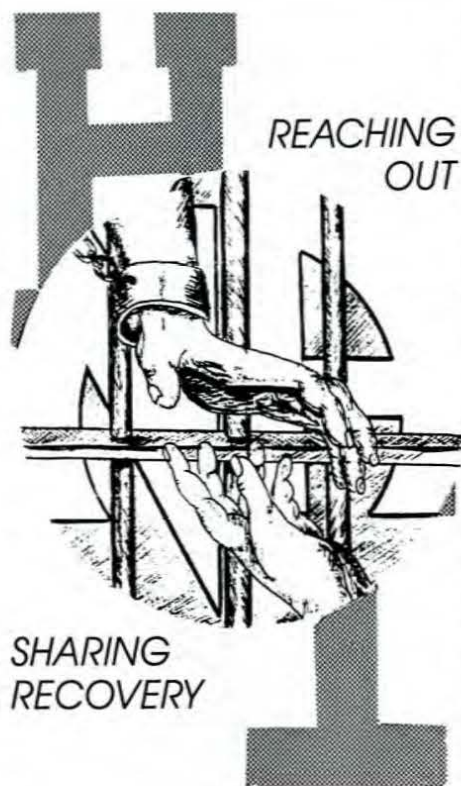
The incremental process by which the new Executive Director will come on line brings to mind the image of several tug-boats struggling to get an ocean liner out of the harbor.

The basic plan is to have him get comfortable with the Support Services Division, before becoming kinetically active in Fellowship Services.



# HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS

N.A.'s "Special Forces"



Main title art courtesy of Reaching Out

Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) carries the message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regularly scheduled Narcotics Anonymous meetings due to their incarceration. H&I introduces many addicts to the hope of recovery. In fact, a 1990 survey done by the World Service Conference (WSC) P.I. Committee found that forty-seven percent of our membership was introduced to N.A. through meetings held in hospitals and institutions. At a Southern California Regional H&I Learning Day held in April, one speaker referred to members involved in H&I as N.A.'s "special forces."

This pride in service is often evident in N.A. members involved in H&I. When asked why he participated in H&I panels, one member responded simply, but with deep emotion, "It's just the most gratifying area of service I've been involved in. It has given me a perspective of how powerful this program is, and new meaning to the words that the program can improve the quality of our lives."

No longer is the typical H&I member an "H&I kind of guy," as the t-shirts and buttons proudly proclaim. Women, too, are dedicated H&I workers, and in fact, in some regions women are desperately needed to carry the message into female correctional facilities. With the incarceration of female offenders rising dramatically, more H&I meetings are going into women's facilities, and these meetings require female leadership.

A member need not have been incarcerated to qualify for involvement in H&I service, according to outgoing

WSC H&I Chairperson Pete C. Although many H&I members admit to an initial fear of involvement in institutions due to their lack of history with incarceration, they soon find that the gratitude they gain from H&I service alleviates their anxiety. Citing the membership figure attributed to H&I efforts in carrying the message, Pete said, "Why isn't that figure reflected at the area and regional level when it comes down to service? Get involved," he urged. Fellowship budget appropriations aren't proportionate to this high figure, either, he noted.

Prior to 1987, most meetings had what was known as an "H&I can," which was passed in addition to the basket for the Seventh Tradition. Funds collected from this can, as well as monies collected from H&I fundraisers such as dances, were passed through the service structure to fund the work of the H&I committees. Much of this money went for literature to carry the message to institutionalized addicts. With H&I the only conference committee to have its own treasury, and no clear-cut system in place for the donation of funds collected at the meeting level, accountability was a complicated undertaking.

During the 1986 conference year, the H&I subcommittee decided to investigate funding alternatives, and evaluate the appropriateness of the H&I can as a source of revenue. After careful study, and to bring H&I funding in line with the budgeting practices of other conference committees, the WSC H&I Committee recommended a motion to the 1987 World Service Conference. This motion pro-

posed the removal of the H&I can from N.A. meetings. The intent of this motion, according to the WSC H&I report published in the 1987 *Conference Agenda Report*, was to "... return the responsibility for H&I funding to the service structure of N.A. as a whole in order to allow H&I to operate within our Twelve Traditions, and to insure funding accountability for H&I service efforts." This motion was overwhelmingly approved at WSC '87.

Hereafter, regional and area H&I subcommittees would go to their respective areas or regions for funds. The WSC H&I Committee would look to the conference for revenue. Funds left over from the H&I treasury were disbursed to the WSC H&I Committee through a WSC H&I Special Fund, which was administered by the World Service Office (WSO) H&I Coordinator. The funds were depleted in December of 1988.

Along with that motion, the WSC H&I Committee also proposed amending the *Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure*. This amendment recommended that each area and region carefully determine its literature needs, and submit budgets which would cover literature and administrative expenses for each area or region. Literature, rather than funds, would be disbursed to the H&I subcommittees subject to fund availability of the respective service committee. Administrative funds could be advanced as needed, and proper receipts for expenses then turned in at a later date. This motion passed, as well.



The H&I Committee has several clear-cut goals in the coming year. One of its goals is the completion of two surveys designed to test just how effective N.A. is in carrying the message in institutions. One survey, intended for distribution to area and regional H&I committees, will attempt to define the problems these committees are experiencing in their efforts to carry the message. It will also attempt to determine the number of H&I meetings currently in existence.

The second survey is aimed at professionals in the institutions where we currently hold meetings. How is N.A. viewed in these facilities? Are we effective in carrying the N.A. message of recovery? These are only a few of the concerns that will be addressed in this questionnaire. The WSC H&I Chairperson is optimistic that both these surveys will be completed this year. He urged members to participate in completing the questionnaires when they are received by areas and regions.

A main concern of the outgoing chairperson is to insure that people are making the most of the H&I quarterly publication, *Reaching Out*. This newsletter concentrates on a sharing of experience, strength and hope from incarcerated members of N.A., and on disseminating information from and relevant to H&I members.

*Reaching Out* also lists all upcoming H&I Learning Days, and enjoys a reputation as an important service vehicle. WSC H&I Vice-Chairperson "Strivin'" Ivan F. stressed the importance of timely submission to the

newsletter for planned H&I events. Since the newsletter is published on a quarterly basis, the WSO H&I Department must be notified of upcoming events well in advance of the date in question. If world-level trusted servants are needed to help plan the events or to speak, they can be contacted through the H&I Coordinator. Their attendance is subject to fund availability.

A recent mailing sent to all correctional facilities in the United States and Canada now offers *Reaching Out* by subscription. Previously, *Reaching Out* was available to areas and regions at no charge. This year, multiple copies of the newsletter will be available to correctional facilities, areas and regions by subscription. Subscribers will pay \$28.00 for twenty copies, quarterly. Individual members who cannot afford to subscribe will still be provided a free subscription. It is hoped that areas and regions will support H&I by subscribing.

The vice-chairperson pointed out several advantages to making the newsletter available by subscription. Approximately one-third of WSC H&I's budget went to the production and distribution of *Reaching Out*. It is hoped that subscriptions may recoup that outlay. Two of H&I's priorities, to provide conference-approved literature to inmates, and to send world-level trusted servants to H&I Learning Days, might benefit as a result.

Another goal set for this year is to revise parts of the *Hospitals & Institutions Handbook*, approved in 1989. Since N.A. is increasingly becoming

a worldwide fellowship, the needs of other nations must be more thoroughly addressed. To date, this publication has served English-speaking nations well. But what about nations that speak languages other than English? The WSC H&I Committee hopes to begin addressing the needs of these countries during the next year.

The H&I Committee has had noteworthy success in developing literature. *Behind the Walls*, a booklet initially developed by the WSC H&I Committee for use in institutions, was approved by the conference in 1990. The *Hospitals & Institutions Handbook* was also greeted with much enthusiasm by the fellowship. In fact, when it was presented to conference in 1989, it was approved by a unanimous vote, not a common occurrence by any WSC standards.

The WSO H&I Department responds to inquiries about Narcotics Anonymous from hospitals and institutions. Last year, over 1500 letters went out from the WSO in response to correctional facility inquiries. While the vast majority of these letters, almost ninety-three percent, are from inmates, the WSO increasingly responds to professionals working in the correctional facilities.

A recent letter from an assistant warden in the state of Alabama stated that "approximately eighty-five percent of our inmates are in prison as a result of drugs." This statistic, which probably doesn't surprise many members of N.A., underscores the fact that Hospitals & Institutions Committees are a vital link in the chain of N.A. service.

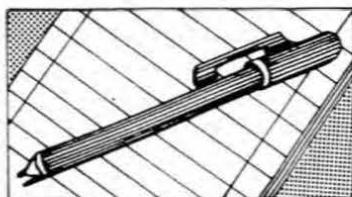
The WSO receives a tremendous amount of correspondence from inmates introduced to N.A. through H&I. According to the WSO H&I Coordinator Freddie A., WSO responded to over 1800 letters last year, mainly from inmates seeking literature or simply writing to thank N.A.

A typical letter from an inmate can soften the heart of the veteran H&I worker. In a recent correspondence received from an inmate in a state prison on the east coast, an emotional plea for literature stated, "I am writing you from behind the walls of the \_\_\_\_\_ State Prison," this inmate wrote. "I have been here for a little over thirteen months, and they have been the most fulfilling months of my life. I know that may sound a little strange, but it is true. The reason for me saying that is it is the only time in my life (I am thirty-one), or should I say since I was thirteen, that I've been clean for longer than a day." He went on to say, "But we have a problem here at the prison. It's money; we need more material desperately, especially the N.A. text . . . . This would be the greatest help you could offer to us in our struggle for recovery, besides your spiritual support."

Unfortunately, carrying the message sometimes depends on finances. "It's frustrating when I can't help them. It yanks at my heart," Freddie said.



## Viewpoint



## Caution asked

A friend called today to share with me the benefit of his strength, hope, and particularly his recent experience in certain N.A. meetings. It seems we share a growing sense of discomfort with certain new practices. Perhaps this discomfort is accentuated by our having become set in our N.A. ways. But maybe is reflective of a real problem evolving within the fellowship.

Initially, the practice that elicited my own discomfort was the responsive reading that now seems an integral part of the pre-meeting ritual in many groups. A sizeable fraction of the group calls out the numbers of the steps and traditions in unison. The same people also seem to invariably chant other sections of the readings, such as, "Alcohol is a drug!" At times, some meetings seem more like

fundamentalist-revival meetings than meetings of a non-sectarian Twelve-Step Fellowship. At least there was no rolling in the aisles, not yet, anyway.

We allege that we seek new members through attraction (rather than promotion), and more, that the "new-comer is the most important person." Yet, some of us foster group practices that might suggest an image of N.A. as a group of fanatical true believers who are party to an esoteric body of ritual and arcane spiritual knowledge. What ever happened to sanity and serenity?

Obviously, there are those who are comfortable with these practices so reminiscent of certain religious sects. Yet, there are others who are made uncomfortable, and therefore may feel excluded by these practices. Unfortunately, those who choose not to jump up and yell "Alleluia" or "Allah Akhbar" go mostly unnoticed. After all, who notices the silent? Others, more alienated than we, might avoid these groups, or sometimes avoid the N.A. Fellowship itself. Of course, we don't often get to hear from them. Attraction (rather than promotion) should not be taken for granted. Attraction depends upon the quality of the life that we exhibit to each person who comes seeking the help we offer.

We are trashing our atmosphere of recovery with this conduct. Rolling around in the aisles and speaking in tongues is inappropriate in the N.A. Fellowship.

Keep coming back; it works if you work it.

W.K., Michigan

## On social inventory

The last few years I have been uncomfortable about some things that at first seemed to be good-hearted service efforts. A recent article on prejudice, published in *The N.A. Way*; and other pieces on sexual orientation; as well as the semantic confusion that seems to invariably result when we try to cooperate to produce conference-approved literature, all show elements of what I think is a problem.

Like a fever that must hit its crescendo in order to "break," the sickness of trying to fix each other continues. N.A. cannot afford to endorse prejudice, but neither can it afford to endorse an end to prejudice. By either action we set ourselves up as arbiters of social conscience.

The most commonly heard rationalization for including in drafts of literature or papers from boards and

committees an overt or covert posture in regard to such obviously abhorrent things as prejudice is that recovery is much more than simple abstinence. I contend any benefit we might derive as a result of making a show of our virtue in this way will be offset by the result—having set a precedent for taking each other's social inventories.

We are not social workers, therapists or professional promoters. When, as individuals or boards and committees, we try to take on those roles, our fellowship loses its primary focus.

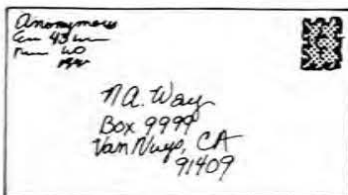
Good thinkers, and probably basically good people, have been hard at work drafting new literature and projecting what would be "good" postures of public-relations gambits. I think they are innocently too often putting the cart before the horse. A good outline for how a recovering person should think or act, or for the "image" N.A. might project, may be possible to foresee and discuss, but all too often such discussions distract us from the basic work at hand. We have been transferring energy from what has become, for many, the mundane task of carrying the message that recovery is possible, to the more challenging tasks of social responsibility.

While our leaders struggle in the captain's tower about which flags to fly, our cargo lies in the hold. Give us a little less leadership into fantastic or complicated theory (unless it concerns the rate of taxation in ports of call), and a little more basic representation.

Anonymous



# From our readers



## Awakening

I just woke up from a two-year sleep! Well, that's how it feels, anyway! Just over two years ago, my family and I moved to another state. I thought N.A. would be the same as it was in the state where I got clean. Let me tell you about my first meeting in this new state. I found the meeting by calling the helpline. They gave me a phone number of an addict who told me about the "best meeting in town." I showed up ten minutes before it was supposed to start, and it started ten minutes late.

After reading, the chairperson started talking about how the day was, and how he hated to be awake. He said he had to do what his sponsor said, or his sponsor would cut him loose.

The whole meeting was like this. I left that meeting *needing* a meeting! The next night I drove to a large town where there were lots of meetings. Luckily, I found one that had a positive message. I only had to drive fifty miles.

I tried other meetings close to where I lived, and the meetings were not like any that I had ever been to. After talking to my sponsor, I kept going to meetings. He also told me to start a meeting were I could recover, so I did. I went through all the things to start a meeting. I found a church,

and a coffee pot, and started a book-study meeting. For the first six weeks, there were only an average of three members there. Then one week there were ten. The next three weeks I sat there with my Basic Text and a full pot of coffee. At the end of the second month I went to the A.S.C., and asked to be placed on the meeting list.

The meeting did grow, and the N.A. message was heard, a positive, hopeful message. Then a "group of groups" that liked a positive message decided to form a new area, and they did. Well, a year after the new area was formed, I moved back to the state where I started, and it was like I had been asleep and just awakened. Now I know that N.A. is not the same everywhere, but the basic message is the same. N.A. is a place where addicts come to get clean, and help each other to stay clean.

*Andy A., Washington*

## What my N.A. home group means to me:

I've made a commitment to support my home group by attending the business meeting regularly to vote on and resolve group needs. We easily get a group conscience to carry our voice to the area level.

I do my best to show up early so that I can greet and talk to fellow mem-

bers who I might not have seen all week, or others who just want to catch up on conversation. When I see someone that I've never seen before, I try to welcome them to my home group.

I first started attending this group because my sponsor regularly attended it, and I wanted to show up where I knew my sponsor would be so that I could get closer to him, both as a friend and a fellow-recovering addict. As a result, I've had the opportunity to get closer to many others who attend my home group. Having a home group has really made a difference to my feeling a real part of the fellowship that we have in Narcotics Anonymous.

By having a speaker and then a discussion where each person that shares gets to choose or "tag" the person they would like to hear from, our group format has a focus on Steps Two, Three and Eleven. Because of the nature of our format, I always hear "the message," and I feel a celebration of the love and empathy we have for each other.

We always welcome children and parents of addicts at the beginning of our meeting, and that really makes me feel at home in my group.

As I see my home group members welcoming any addict seeking recovery, offering hope and love with hugs and open arms, I see the spirituality of Narcotics Anonymous. Get involved.

*Harry A., Florida*

## Life's terms

What does the program promise us? Unfortunately, not the moon, I groan almost everyday lately. I keep hear-

ing that Narcotics Anonymous only promises freedom from active addiction. It shows us how to cope without our old coping mechanism, drugs.

"So what?" the angry child inside me cries. What about a happy relationship, a great job, money, freedom, the absence of sorrow? Often lately, it is hard for me to see that it is not the attainment of "wants" that I'm here for. I'm in N.A. to save my life, because all I know how to do is die. I need help to learn how to live. So what if I don't like my job and my man seems like he doesn't love me? I'm sitting down and writing my story for *The N.A. Way* to remind me of this simple truth, because I'm afraid I'm losing my perspective on recovery. For weeks I've been feeling very depressed. I've learned that if I share my insanity, it won't get me.

If I go by external events in my life, 1990 has been a horrible year. My boyfriend left me early in the year to "find himself." He's still looking. Then my recovery guru died, and he didn't do it too gracefully, either. You've had your own recovery gurus, haven't you? Those people we put up on pedestals and refuse to believe are human until they act undeniably so. And don't get me wrong, he was a good person, and I miss him a lot.

Ultimately, it was quite a shock for me to find myself without a group of people with which to be enmeshed. That meant I had to look inside myself, and see what was in there. I mean *really* look. What I found was the total emptiness and despair at the bottom of an addict's soul. I'm still in the middle of looking into that murky pool of sorrow, and I'm afraid I'll



never make it through.

Being a good addict, however, I still try my best to run away from it. Hence my obsessive behavior over my new relationship. I know I'm getting obsessive when I start believing I *have* to see him instead of *want* to see him. But the day will be okay in a different way if I don't. The frustrating thing for this addict is that it doesn't work to try to hide from my feelings in the relationship anyway. I've lost that denial by now. But I still try! The feelings just wait for me to stop obsessing. I end up feeling them anyway. My goal is to gladly surrender to them and feel them when they come up. The program will help me through them.

What about God? Well, I don't believe in a human-like God directing my life. My Higher Power resides within me, and is my inner self—the part of me that was there before the disease. She is connected to all things and people in some inexplicable way, and hence part of the divine, as we all are. I figure it out no further. But to that I pray and turn it over. Sometimes successfully; sometimes with great difficulty. But I continue to work an Eleventh Step.

I've learned the hard way that my arrogance is simply a manifestation of the disease. Pain humbled me. Now I'm trying to be a regular addict in a lot of pain with a simple program to pull me through. Sometimes I don't believe I'll make it, and I just put one foot in front of the other, to the best of my ability on any given day, and go on. Life might not ever give me what I want, but that's not the point anyway. The point is to learn to face life

on life's terms, and go forward. Today I didn't have to use because I faced life, even though I didn't like the cards I was dealt. I need to feel whatever is there to feel, and use the program to cope with reality. It's not easy. But it sure is better than the hell of active addiction. That's the promise of Narcotics Anonymous. I don't ever have to use again. No one does who will accept this program. Sometimes I forget the simple things.

*A.P., Louisiana*

### Grateful

I would like to just share a little bit of gratitude for this program. Last December, I was on my way to the bottom of my using. This program has given me respect, self-esteem and moral values in my life today. I spent the holidays with my children and family for the first time in five years. I bought my children presents with legal money, and a legitimate job, something else I haven't done in five years.

I'm grateful to be able to write this, and share it with other recovering addicts. My Higher Power has been with me the whole way of my recovery. Today I have faith in me and God. It's great being clean, starting all over again in life, one day at a time. I've had some ups and downs, and since this is my second time around, I've learned to talk a lot, take suggestions and ask for help. Now I feel good about myself. Life is what I make of it. And I try not to put too much in it that I can't handle. I'm grateful to this program, and the people in my life. Without them, I don't know what I would do.

*Robin, Massachusetts*

## Comin'up



### LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your upcoming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phonenumber, 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.  
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**BRITISH COLUMBIA:** May 18-19, 1991; "Unity, Service and Recovery Through the Traditions," Multi-Area Learning Day sponsored by the Regional Outreach Subcommittee, at Sunscan Hall, Mc Clean Street, Trail, BC. Info. (604) 754-3034.

**ARIZONA:** May 24-26, 1991; 5th Arizona Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Hotel, 4550 South Palo Verde Boulevard, Tucson, AZ; rsvn.s (602) 746-1161; information (602) 244-0432; ARCNA V, P.O. Box 57443, Tucson, AZ 85732

**2) Jun. 14-16, 1991;** 5th Annual Festival of Recovery; information (602) 776-1212; Arizona RAC, PO Box 26404, Tempe, AZ 85282

**ARKANSAS:** May 31-June 2, 1991; 7th Annual Beaver Roundup; Buffalo National Park, Yellville, AR 72687; N.W.A.A.S.C., PO Box 23, Lowell, AR 72745

**AUSTRALIA:** Jun. 8-9, 1991; 3rd Annual South Australia Area Convention; Gathering Momentum; information 011-61-8-297-2026; Convention Committee, PO Box 479, Norwood, South Australia, 5067

**CALIFORNIA:** May 11, 1991; Lower Desert Area Splash Into Recovery; Oasis Water Park, 1500 Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs; Tickets (619) 365-1279

**2) May 27, 1991;** 13th Annual Gold Coast Memorial Day Picnic; San Luis Obispo State Beach Park, Ventura; Try Tip/Chicken Lunch; information (805) 486-1755

**3) Jun. 7-9, 1991;** San Diego Imperial Region Convention; Red Lion Hotel, 1455 Frazee Road, San Diego, CA; rsvn.s (619) 297-5466; SDNAC, 2260 El Cajon Boulevard, PO Box 184, San Diego, CA 92104

**4) Jun. 14-16, 1991;** American River Area Campout and Gong Show; Rollins Lake Resort; rsvn.s (916) 346-2837

**5) Jun. 16, 1991;** Annual Father's Day Picnic; Gauche Park, Yuba City, CA; information (916) 671-0121; Twin Cities Fellowship, 2901 Commercial Drive, Yuba City, CA 95991



**CANADA:** May 31-Jun. 2, 1991; 4th Ontario Regional Convention; "Steps to Freedom"; Holiday Inn, Downtown Toronto; information (416) 256-3149; PO Box 7079, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X7

**2)** Jun. 7-9, 1991; Dawning Of A New Day; B.B.Q. Acres, Edmonton, Alberta; information (403) 421-4429

**3)** Jun. 28-30, 1991; 1st Canadian Convention of Narcotics Anonymous; Laval Convention Center, Laval, Quebec; rsvn.s (514) 687-2440; CCNA-1, C.P. 49156, Place Versailles, Montreal Quebec, H1N 3T6

**4)** Jun. 28-Jul. 1, 1991; 2nd Annual Central Alberta Fun Family and Fellowship Campout; Old McDonald Resort Buffalo Lake; information (403) 342-1444; Campout, PO Box 472, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, T4N 5G9

**CONNECTICUT:** Jun. 7-9, 1991; 5th Annual G.W.A.N.A. Family Campout; "Together in Recovery"; Treetop Camp Resort, Route 341 Kenico Road Entrance, Kent, Connecticut; information (203) 262-1996 or (203) 790-6832; GWANA Family Campout, PO Box 1075, Woodbury, CT 06798

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:** Jun. 21-23, 1991; 12th East Coast Convention; University of Maryland, College Park, Route 1; information (202) 362-0296; Convention, PO Box 57129, Washington, DC 20037

**ENGLAND:** May 25-26, 1991; 2nd South West Regional Convention; Beechen Cliff School, Alexandra Park, Bath; information 0225 481803; SW.R.C. II, PO Box 285, Bristol, BS99 7AS, ENGLAND

**FLORIDA:** May 16-19, 1991; 4th AL/NW FL Regional Convention; Ft. Walton Beach, FL on Okaloosa Island; 1110 Santa Rosa Boulevard; rsvn.s (904) 243-9181; Convention, P.O. Box 6499, Pensacola, FL 32503

**2)** May 31-June 2, 1991; 1st Gold Coast Convention, "Solutions by the Sea"; Bahia Mar Hotel & Resort on Fort Lauderdale Beach, 801 Seabreeze Boulevard, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; rsvn.s (305) 733-2172 or (305) 572-3429; G.C.C.N.A.-1, PO Box 23577, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307-3377

**GEORGIA:** May 18-19, 1991; Georgia Regional H&I Awareness Weekend; Lake Tobestkee; information (912) 745-6513; PASC, PO Box 4362, Macon, GA 31208

**GERMANY:** May 25-26, 1991; Neues Leben Miteinander, 8th Germanspeaking Regional Convention, Aachen; Convention Committee, Postfach 11-10-10, 6100 Darmstadt, GERMANY

**HAWAII:** Jun. 7-10, 1991; 5th Annual Big Island Gathering; Camp Pohakuloa; Island Gathering, PO Box 5015, Kailua-Kona, HI 96745

**ILLINOIS:** May 24-26, 1991; 3rd Basic Campout; Oak Hall Bluff, Sullivan, IL; helpline (217) 373-2063; Campout, PO Box 1053, Decatur, IL 62521

**2)** Jun. 15, 1991; H&I sponsored Learning Day; Howard Johnson Hotel at O'Hare, 10249 West Irving Park Road, Schiller Park, IL 60176; information (708) 671-6000; C.S.O., 212 South Marion Street, Suite -27, Oak Park, IL 60302

**KANSAS:** May 24-27, 1991; 9th Annual Pre-Campout-Campout; Harvey County West Park, Newton, KS 67114; information (316) 832-9441; Memorial Day Weekend, PO Box 1303, Wichita, KS 67201-1303

**2)** Jun. 28-30, 1991; 3rd Annual Southeast Kansas Area Campout; Sycamore Valley Recreation Park, along Highway 10 outside Wyn-dotte, OK; SE Kansas Area, PO Box 276, Baxter Springs, KS 66713

**LOUISIANA:** May 24-26, 1991; The 9th Annual Louisiana Regional Convention; Sheraton Pierremont Hotel, 1419 E 70th Street, Shreveport, Louisiana 70115; rsvn.s (800) 325-3535; information (318) 746-0910; LRCNA IX, PO Box 4937, Shreveport, LA 71134

**MANITOBA:** May 31-June 2, 1991; 1st Annual Winnipeg Area Convention, "N.A. The Life Line"; information (204) 589-1845; WACNA 1, PO Box 25173, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2X 2G4

**MASSACHUSETTS:** June 21-23, 1991; Second Serenity in the Berkshires, Camp Steven-son, Pittsfield, MA. Registration at PO Box 245, Williamstown, MA 01267. Info. (413) 499-3355.

**MISSOURI:** May 17-19, 1991; "Lake of the Ozarks Weekend"; Camp of the Rising Sun, Lake of the Ozarks State Park; Limited reservations; Ozarks Weekend, PO Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

**2)** Jun. 7-9, 1991; 6th Show-Me Regional Convention; Airport Hilton Inn, K.C.I. Airport; rsvn.s 1-(800) Hiltons or (816) 891-8900; SMRCNA VI, PO Box 32321, Kansas City, MO 64111

**MONTANA:** Jun. 21-22, 1991; 3rd Annual N.A. Gathering Southwest; Blain Community Center, 975 North Main, Butte, MT; information (406) 496-6117

**NEBRASKA:** Jun. 21-23, 1991; 1st Annual Mid-Summernight Campout; Sandy Channels Camp Ground, 1 1/2 miles south of the I-80 Elm Creek exit; information (308) 236-6151; C/O N.A. Group, 15 East 26th, Kearney, NE 68847

**NEW JERSEY:** May 24-26, 1991; 4th New Jersey Regional Convention; "Continue the Miracle"; Ramada Renaissance, 3 Tower Center Boulevard, East Brunswick, NJ; information (201) 251-2402 or (201) 396-9809; NJRC VI, PO Box 1768, Rahway, NJ 09065

**NEW YORK:** May 31-June 2, 1991; 7th Greater New York Regional Convention; Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York; Convention, PO Box 285, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

**2)** Jun. 28-30, 1991; Manhattan Area Unity Convention; West 17th Street, IS 70 School, Manhattan; information (212) 505-2783 or (718) 339-6162; Unity 91, Gay & Lesbian Center, 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011

**NORTH CAROLINA:** May 10-12 1991; Annual Coastal Carolina Area Campout; Roger's Bay Campground; Topsail Island, N.C.; information (919) 686-1173

**OHIO:** May 24-27, 1991; 9th Ohio Convention; "We Choose To Live"; Beechwood Marriott (I-271 and Chagrin Boulevard); Looking for

tapes, must have minimum of 4 years clean; information (216) 543-9833 or (216) 442-9261; OCNA IX, 25931 Euclid Avenue, Suite 136, Euclid, OH 44132

**OREGON:** May 24-27, 1991; 4th Annual Oregon Together We Can Regional Memorial Weekend Campout; Sutton Lake Campground, 5 miles North of Florence; Eugene ASC, PO Box 262, Eugene, OR 97440

**2)** Jun. 22, 1991; P.I. Learning Day, Salem Heights Hall, 3500 Liberty Road Northeast, Salem, OR

**PENNSYLVANIA:** July 4-7, 1991; N.A. history conference sponsored by the Recovery First Group, box 442, Allentown, PA 18105. Site is LeHigh University, Bethlehem, PA. \$125 total package. Info. call (215) 398-8438.

**SOUTH DAKOTA:** Jun. 7-9, 1991; 8th Upper Midwest Regional Convention; "Dare To Dream"; Augustana College, Sioux Falls, SD; information (605) 332-0333 or (605) 361-5124; UMRCA VIII, PO Box 84236, Sioux Falls, SD 57101

**SWEDEN:** Jun. 21-23, 1991; 3rd Swedish Mid-Summer Convention; Høla Folkhogskola, Prastmon; information 0612-30158

**UTAH:** Jun. 21-23, 1991; 5th Annual Celebration of Recovery; Vernal American Legion Hall, 340 South Vernal Avenue, Vernal, UT; Convention Information, PO Box 1841, Vernal, UT 84078

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** June 21-23, 1991; 12th East Coast Convention; University of Maryland, College Park; ECCNA-12, PO Box 91496, Washington, DC 20090-1496

**WEST VIRGINIA:** May 10-12, 1991; Out of the Shadows; Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV, 26502; rsvn.s (304) 372-7000; Mountaineer RSC, P.O. Box 2381, Westover, WV 26502



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3TEA

## The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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

Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.





## What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a non-profit 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.

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

