

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

August 1992

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The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

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

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Recognition

Hi family. My name is Lori and I'm an addict, and I love you all. I have a message I want to carry. I'm going through a very spiritual growth in my life. It's beautiful, I can't even explain how beautiful it is.

I found out recently that I have lung cancer and that I'm am going to die, it's terminal. Right now I'm just fighting for every day. When I first found out that I had this cancer I was in full denial of it, and that I was going to die. I knew I had it but I was in denial of the death part. I found out last week that I have to work the first three steps on it, and so I have. I accepted that I am dying and that my life was unmanageable and I turned it over to my Higher Power, whom I call God, and He has totally turned my life around.

Once I accepted it I told the doctor that, if anything, I'm only angry because I just started to live about eight years ago. (It will be eight years in September.) I finally just started my life because of this wonderful program, these wonderful Twelve Steps. I remember when I came into this program, I didn't think those steps were going to change my life. How could those steps change your life? It

took me two years to see that the First Step didn't say drugs, it said "addiction."

My drugs might not have been like your drugs. I didn't shoot anything in my veins or snort anything up my nose. I smoked a little bit of pot, popped some pills. I was mostly a prescription drug addict, and over the counter stuff, but I have the disease of addiction. I was sick. Many newcomers come in now and I see them struggle and they don't seem to get past that. It's not the drugs, it's the addiction. For me the first three steps are simple, "I can't, He can and today I'm going to let Him." Those I can work, those I had no problem working. Then the Fourth Step! I looked at that Fourth Step and heard people say "don't just look at the bad things you did, look at the good things, too." Well, to me that step had nothing to do with that. I was looking for my character defects, I was searching and I had to write down the bad things in my life, all the bad things that happened. And a lot of bad things happened. I came from a dysfunctional family and I was a dysfunctional human and those things that happened in my life were where the character defects came from.

Once I looked, and... "Oh yeah!" Anybody who thought she was retarded, (I have a learning disability,) anybody who thought she was retarded all her life, is going to feel stupid. I thought I wasn't pretty, so "nobody's going to like me." My father is an alcoholic and, of course, we had to deal with his alcoholism... Somewhere

along the line, love got lost. All these character defects, all these things that were broken, took over, so here's this dysfunctional person. For me the Fourth Step was not just looking at what I did wrong to people, but where I got my character defects. Then I was having to look and see the clear picture and say "Yes, yes, by God, it wasn't my fault. I was sick, I'm not a bad person.

"Anybody who was raped when she was a teenager would have this character defect." With God, it was like I saw why I was sick, and it was okay.

It was wonderful to see it. Then it was so easy to turn it over to God. It wasn't like I was looking at bad people, I was looking at bad things that happened in my life. I was a sick person and because of those character defects, my insecurities, my fears, I turned to drugs. That was my escape. So I am not a bad person, I am a sick person. I am not responsible for my addiction. I am responsible for my recovery, so then I can move on and turn it over.

I prayed after sharing my Fifth Step, and asked God to remove these character defects. The next day, after about two hours of praying, I burnt my Fourth Step. I burnt those character defects. They still come back to haunt me sometimes, but I let go to the best of my ability and it was so beautiful.

When I had to make my list of people I had harmed, it was so easy because it wasn't this "bad" person, it was this sick person that did all this

harm. I had years of things to make amends for and to make that list was a lot easier because of the Fourth Step. There is where I listed the wrongs I had done. For me to turn those over it was such a relief, and to make amends to these people was like, man, I could have gone to a shrink for a billion years and never gotten this kind of relief.

Today as I work on my Tenth Step and I look over my what I did for the day, I find that I do very little that is *really* wrong. When I get up in the morning and I turn my will and my life over to the care of God, I don't want to go out there and make a mistake, I don't want to go out there and hurt somebody. I don't like having to make amends. I like to do things right, so that became a little easier.

I still have character defects and at times I'm in all kinds of turmoil. If there's something going on in NA, a controversy, I'm right in the middle of it. Then I have to say, "Okay, am I working the steps today? Why am I in this turmoil?" Now it's easier to let go. By the way, folks, if you have controversy, try to get it over with. It's so much nicer not to be always fighting. But I guess we always will, because we're human.

Today I'm able to carry the message of recovery and it's so crystal clear what I need to say to people. But I don't know if I could actually get to the point of acceptance that I have in my life today without knowing that my life is going to end.

I use to think if I ever got cancer I would just have to die because I have

no insurance. I have a real powerful resentment towards the government for not having a national insurance, a policy that would help people like me. I thought if I ever got sick I just wouldn't have the money and I would just die. But God has sent me the most wonderful doctors and they've told me not to worry about the money. The money doesn't mean anything. I've had so many doctors doing this for me. So *He's* taking care of my needs, everything, I don't need to worry about anything.

Now I want to share about the another beautiful thing about my program, and it's the gratitude. I am so grateful. I was taught early in recovery to make a gratitude list. Today I am even grateful for my fat. All my life I've battled with being overweight. I'm about forty pounds overweight. Well, if I weighed what I am "supposed" to weigh, and I got sick, my body would already be in distress. I never dreamed I'd be grateful for that. I look at all the blessings that God has put down for me in these eight years, like my job. I am so grateful I've had that wonderful job.

When I got out of a treatment center I didn't know where I was going to work. I was two thousand miles away from home, pretty darn scared

and I didn't know what kind of job I could ever do, because I never stayed long at any job before. God sent me out to an animal shelter and I ended up working out there. I went in there and said, "This is where I want to work." I had turned it over to God that morning, and didn't even know that shelter was there. I have worked with animals for nearly eight years and I love it.

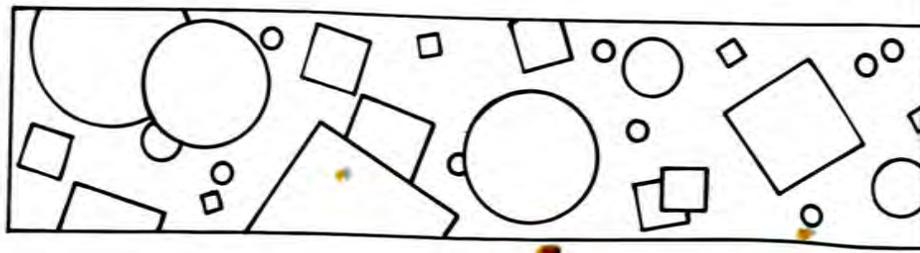
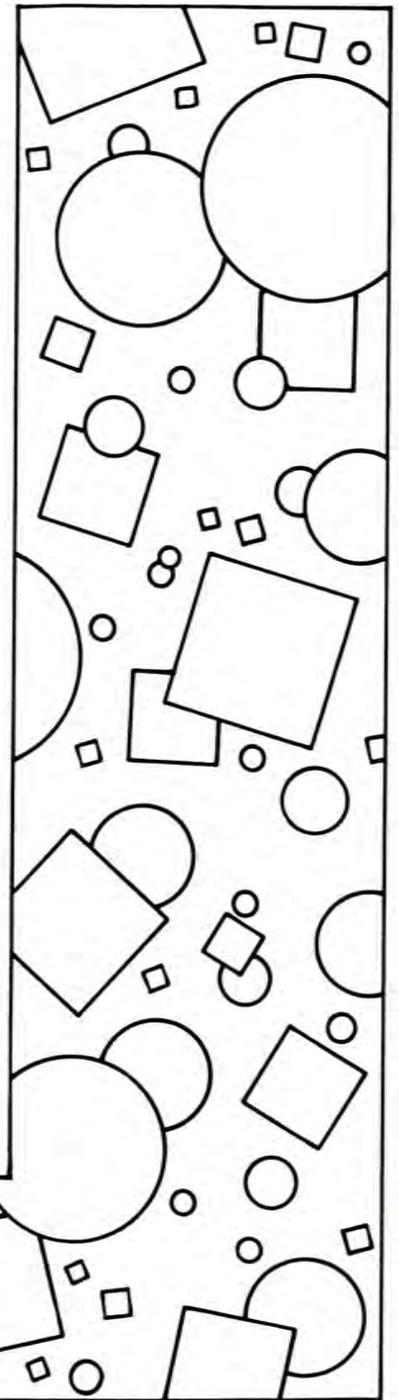
When I got cancer I had a baby racoon and we loved this racoon. It was so much fun and I raised it from the day it was born. I had to give it up because they were afraid it would bite me and I'd get an infection. My immune system is kind of shot to heck right now. So I had to give it to somebody and they retrained it so it could be let loose. To me that was a gift. God sent me Jill, and I loved that little racoon because it brought us a lot of joy. So I look at all the things I have to be grateful for.

Newcomers, if you want to enhance your program, make a gratitude list. Look for things to be grateful for, even if it's just the little things. Pretty soon the list gets longer and longer.

The last thing I want to share is another gift that God gave me through this program. It's the ability to love. Someone once said this is a

"love disorder," somewhere love got lost. Today it feels so good. Now I can love people so unconditionally and they can love me in return. I've been in a relationship with a man in the program for nearly seven years and he is so dear. Our love is so great. I don't know too many people who love each other as much as we love each other, and it's because of this program. Before I wouldn't have been able to love anybody. I was so bitter and angry at people. I feel so much love that I want to run around hugging everybody and loving everybody. I'm apt to run up to a stranger and hug 'em. I'm just filled with so much love and this is what this program can give, this is another one of those gifts. Newcomers, hang in there because you have a wonderful, wonderful life ahead of you. If there's one thing I could give to everybody in NA it is the kind of program that I have today. I would love to give it to everyone. So search for it. Search for that kind of a program. Search for that total love, total happiness, total everything. We did our suffering in our addiction now it's time for us to be good, time for us to change, time for us to be happy. It's time for those good feelings and they will come, just work the program. Be very grateful for this program. I love you, everyone of you, and I need your prayers. Bye.

L.S., Alabama



It's His thing

For me, all the steps need to be worked through over and over, but certain steps (like One, Two and Three aren't *repeated* as much as they are a part of my daily routine. I am grateful that I am at a stage in recovery where I believe the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous have become a natural part of living clean for me and that, in most of my life situations, I can easily see a particular step at work or in need of working. When my own "vision" is clouded, my sponsor or close friends remind me and my acceptance of their caring guidance is pretty good.

Recovery in NA has given me the gift of life itself, and as I have grown, the ability to be in harmony with a Higher Power, the world and within myself. Sometimes I can't believe the miracle and the freedom of living without blaming everyone and everything for my difficulties. The healing I have experienced through working the steps has allowed me to look at myself honestly, but without wallowing in self-pity, self-loathing and self-recrimination for my past and present behavior. I know today that I am powerless over my disease, although responsible for my recovery and my personal efforts to change for the bet-

ter. I know that I used, not because of any one reason, but because I could not cope with any kind of reality. I am not responsible for the disease of addiction that is part of me but I am most certainly accountable for my own inability and/or unwillingness to cope with the reality of life, and responsible for doing what is necessary to improve the way I deal with the world around me.

The Sixth Step is one of those steps that I find myself coming back to more often than almost any other. This is the step that helps me maintain healthy attitudes and healthy behavior towards others. Having become aware of many of my character defects which block positive interactions with the world around me, I now need a way of continuing to believe that I can keep getting better and better. I hear a lot of talk at meetings about the various personality traits that we, as addicts, need to watch for and "work on." It occurred to me a while ago that the Sixth Step suggests that I become willing to have God remove all my defects of character. For a long time, I thought that meant only that I needed to be willing to let go of all my defects, not just a defect here and a defect there that was causing me particular trouble, while hanging on to a few favorite ones that I still was comfortable with. Today, I see this a little bit differently. I realize that, for me, the main thrust of the Sixth Step is to let God remove the defects. I am willing to let my Higher Power remove all of them, not just the ones I don't think I can deal with.

When I first started believing this about Step Six, I was SCARED. Did

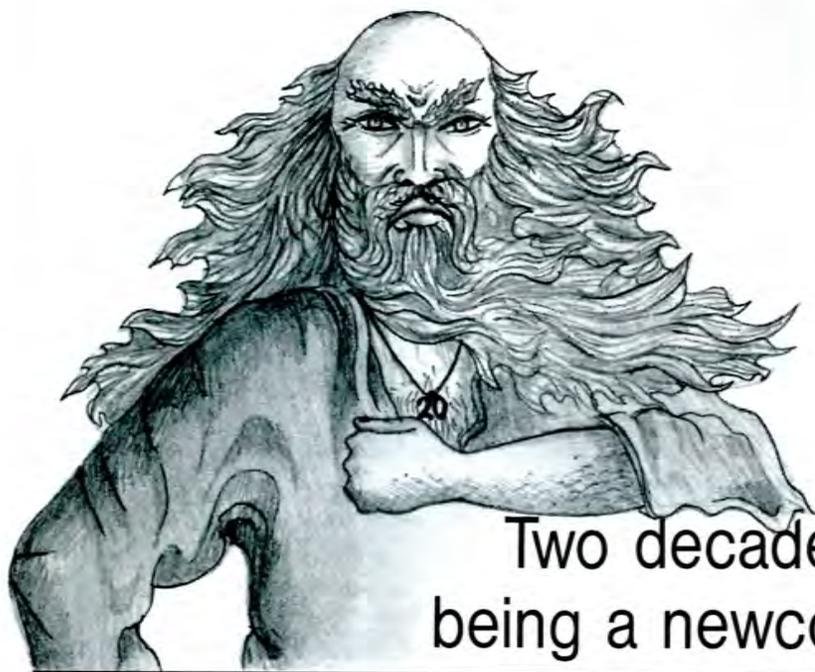
this mean that I would have absolutely no control over which ways, how and when I would gradually change? How could I possibly let go of that control? Then I remembered something I'd heard very early on in my recovery, something about "God's time, not mine." I realized that not only would I need to accept my Higher Power's time schedule, but also His choices and priorities about which character defects needed work and how He would show me what I needed to do. I went back and did another "formal" Third Step to renew my trust and faith in H.P. I reviewed my Fourth and Fifth Steps and made sure I had been honest, fearless and thorough. Then, on to a Sixth Step that held relief and serenity for me. I stopped beating myself up about the willingness to address the character defects I thought were my biggest problems and began to let my H.P. guide me. I started to see that even the simplest, everyday situations were actually opportunities for me to see how a shortcoming was hurting me or others. Since I do not have control over everything that happens in a day, I can now see a little more clearly how my H.P. does put events or people in my path that can make me aware of a character flaw which needs my attention. I have been able to completely trust that H.P. can remove all my defects and I've decided I'm going to let Him do it in His way. If I'm unsure about the footwork I need to do, I can ask my sponsor or another recovering addict to help me see it.

Completely surrendering to my H.P. the ability to remove my defects by first showing me which ones need to

be addressed today, I can now approach the Seventh Step with humility and ask for their removal. For me, that mostly is just the strength and courage to change, to act differently and to acquire a good habit to replace the bad one. I already know that my H.P. will give me strength and courage when I ask for it (and sometimes even when I don't!). The action of Step Seven is my responsibility to stop thinking and acting sick and start thinking and acting in healthy ways. The freedom I experience on a regular basis from approaching Steps Six and Seven in this way is fantastic. In addition to the freedom, I feel joy when I realize I have handled a life situation better than ever before and gratitude toward my H.P. and to NA. And we all know what an attitude of gratitude can do! I have also finally begun to understand the meaning of "praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out" in Step Eleven. I can see that principle in practical use, seeing Steps Six and Seven as I do. And I can see how much a part of all the Steps my Higher Power is and how I can be closest to Him by letting Him do His job.

I feel so much better knowing that my H.P. is the architect of my recovering personality. What would I turn into if I did it my way? Since I don't want to give up all the joy I have found in being clean and being a part of Narcotics Anonymous, it seems best to let my Higher Power do His thing with me. With NA, I can make the daily choice to pick up my recovery tools and do the footwork.

M.S., Virginia



Two decades of being a newcomer

This September, if I make it there one day at a time, I will celebrate my 20th anniversary in Narcotics Anonymous. Well, actually I haven't been coming to NA for the whole twenty years, but that's only because there wasn't any NA where I first got clean. My first Twelve Step meeting was in a treatment center. I was taken there by a woman and introduced to my first sponsor and friend in recovery (except they called it "sobriety"). Eight years later, I still hadn't used and a new friend encouraged me to help him start an NA meeting. Our new meeting was so poorly attended that we had plenty of time to read the little White Book to each other, which we made many copies of for the few addicts we could corral. My attitude about recovery became more rigid and more militant as NA literature became more available. I even lost my gratitude for the fellowship where I first found recovery, since I had been starved of the ability to openly share about my drug use with addicts who really understood. For a brief period of time, I believed that NA was the only possible way for addicts to recover.

Today, I am glad to say that I have realized that many people can find recovery in other ways, although NA is the way for me. I have regained a strong sense of gratitude for the fellowship that was there for me when I was in such desperate need. For a while, I bounced back and forth between fellowships,

when NA was still new and small in my area and I needed more meetings than NA had. I have been going only to NA ever since my area has had daily meetings. I still find that one meeting a day isn't too much for me, when I can get to that many. When I can't, I feel that four meetings a week is a safe minimum and I hang on for dear life in between.

I don't go to meetings because I'm afraid of using anymore. I go to learn from others, to share my experience and, sometimes, just to be nosy. I often question myself about whether I have taken the right path. When I reflect back to the very, very beginning, I remember that I was given no promises of happiness or wealth. I was not even given the hope that I could stay clean. In fact, those around me back then found it quite amazing that I did. Those around me today find it quite amazing that I'm going to have

twenty years clean, but perhaps for different reasons. I am amazed by it because I always was told that addicts don't recover, they just use and die. It is only through Narcotics Anonymous I found out, for me, *that is a lie*.

I continue to see brief glimpses of humility through humiliation. The steps have become a part of me and working them is the way I live. I know that I need to work with others to continue to learn, grow and change. For years, I cruised through the rooms of NA and the halls of our service structure, participating in many activities, listening to others and making long-winded speeches about the joys of recovery. I have only recently begun to share about newly identified feelings, without worrying so much about my image as the local NA old guy. I truly feel that NA has given me the best years of my life, although I have had many difficult days during those



years. I must say that my attitude about the difficult days has not been nearly as negative as earlier in my history. NA seems to have shortened the bad days and lengthened the good ones.

For a long time I stayed clean, attended a lot of meetings, did a lot of

service work and neglected my own responsibilities of daily living.

A few years ago, I began to submit to a lifestyle of a responsible, productive member of society. This came with a great amount of difficulty because the unconditional love in NA was so much easier to deal with than the realities of the outside world. I still want to run away from life sometimes but then I discover that living on the edge is not much fun. I have gained too much to let it fall to pieces, even though I sometimes feel I'm falling to pieces inside. The true friendships I have acquired because of recovery reach through all age, social, racial, religious and professional boundaries. These friendships sustain me during the tough times and I have many examples around me of how to face life on life's terms.

I'm not one of those famous

personalities that gets invited to speak at lots of conventions. In fact, I'm not a very good speaker. During clean-time countdowns I feel sad to stand up alone, but also happy that I can. I also have the greatest collection of NA convention coffee mugs. Just thinking of these experiences can

I am a newcomer

"Newcomer"—I hear this word at every meeting. I hear great emphasis put on this word. Who is a newcomer? What makes the newcomer so important? How long do I have to come to NA before I am no longer a newcomer?

After much thought, writing and praying, this is what I came up with. I have never been and will never again be, where I am right here, right now. I am a newcomer. In this moment in time, no one has ever been here before. We are all brand new to this moment in time. And if I am brand new, right here, right now, what else can I be, other than a newcomer? I'm a newcomer. . . you're a newcomer. Regardless of the amount of clean time we have.

That makes you and I the most important people at any meeting. This leads me to believe that not only is it a privilege, but also my duty, to offer you the gifts I would offer any "newcomer." The gifts of acceptance, patience, tolerance, caring, sharing, and love.

Just for today, to the best of my ability, I will offer you these gifts, whatever your clean time is. For if I deny these gifts to you, I deny them to myself. Just for today, I will view life with wide-eyed wonderment. I will share my experience, strength and hope that I am having as a newcomer, to this moment, in this place and time, right here, right now.

D.V., Canada

bring feelings of joy so strong I find it hard to control my tears. I would like some newcomer to teach me to be a better speaker so that I might share my joy with more people more often. For now, my home group thinks I'm pretty okay and they lovingly remind me when I start sounding like the voice of doom or when I speak more about my history instead of my today.

That still is a challenge for me.

In many ways, I'm still a newcomer. Maybe not to the rooms of NA, but to life and living and feelings. My early friends in recovery told me to keep my memory green and to never forget how I felt when I first got clean. Today, not using is still my number one priority. I find the things that I share with newcomers often challenge me and I'm happy to say that we're still the same.

R.S., Virginia



The traveler and the journey

I have traveled emotional highways of despair and agony. My vehicle was drugs. Compulsion and obsession drove me. There seemed to be no escape. I was a prisoner and was unaware of any key to freedom. I saw no hope, no refuge and certainly no answers. I believed I would remain in desolation. Because I was there I believed I was where I belonged.

I entered the world of addiction at a very early age. I believed the wonderful gifts and promises of drugs might save me from the terror and emptiness that lived in my soul. Each time I escaped the dreariness with the help of drugs, I felt no pain or remorse for my actions, and I became a pro at burying my sorrow. I believed it was unnecessary to feel anything. I placed all my problems on the altar of drugs and, at first, they were removed. My false God seemed pleased by my dedication and service, and continued to bless me with the "rewards" that go along with drugs.

For the next twenty years, I continued to worship this God. It was my sole purpose of living and came before all else, including my family, loved ones, friends and, of course, my own self.

Then I began to see that the promises of bliss and peace were lies. I was surrounded by strange fears and felt so lost and alone, even when I was with others. I cried but little, for I'd forgot how to feel. I bitterly cursed my destiny. My soul cried out in solitude, wanting to be comforted and embraced with love, but my back was turned on my own soul's cries. I could not allow tears to fall for I believed that if I ever allowed such expression, I would surely die. Because the feelings seemed too powerful and destructive.

I searched for relief through religions and sects but my uncontrollable urges kept me from grasping peace for any substantial length of time. I became a master of manipulation and deception. I knew no other way to exist. This was my way of life and I was trapped. I wrote of my anguish and noticed that a tiny voice within whispered to me, but I could not hear, I was too far from sanity.

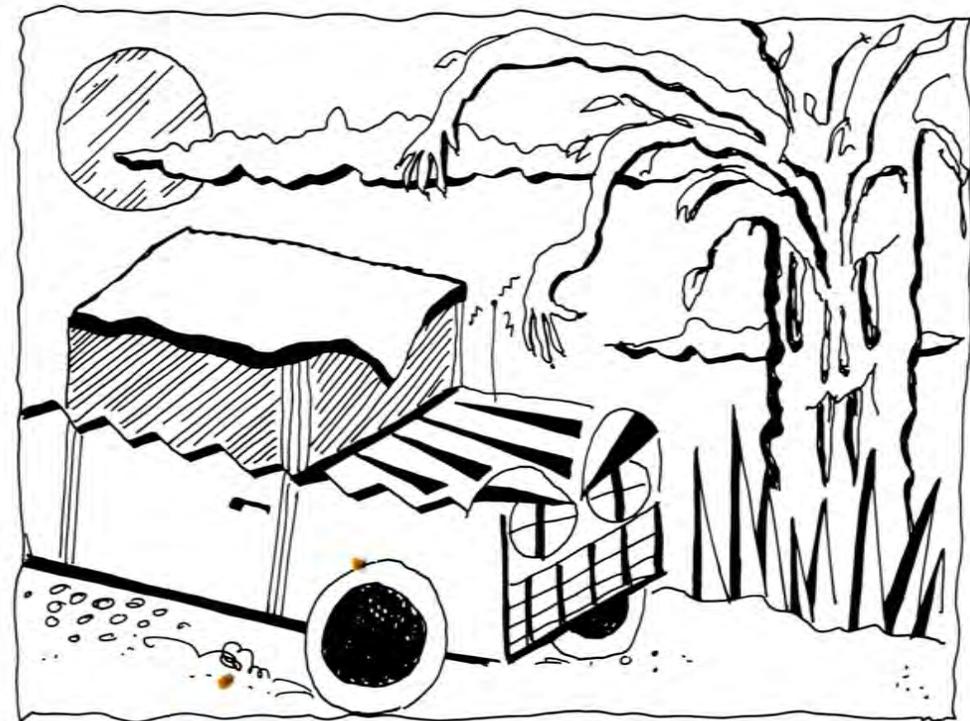
I felt beaten, helpless and hopeless. As a last resort, I entered a place of rehabilitation that started to change the tapes within my mind. And I laid my life upon the altar of a Higher Power that I hoped could save me. This Higher Power had somehow saved others and they had a serenity that I wanted. I came to realize I was indeed powerless over my addiction. As I gave less power to drugs and

more power to an unseen Higher Power, I became teachable.

I learned how to be humble, to ask for help, to listen to others who helped me to hear the whispers of my heart. My soul cried out in gratitude for I was no longer my own enemy. I started to feel my emotions. To my surprise the feelings I had buried came to the surface gently. They were not more than I could handle. I recalled the ongoing insanities and saw that I was finally in a place where I could ask a new Higher Power to restore me to sanity. I bowed down and asked forgiveness. I was the one who created the darkness and indescribable self-inflicted pain. It was me who refused to see or hear the truths of this Higher Power that was loving,

forgiving and compassionate. So at that moment I was willing to turn my life and will over to this Higher Power, for my ways had not worked.

I searched within and found who I really was and how my life of addiction had affected not only me, but others as well. I shared this moral inventory with my own loving God and another human being. This uplifted me to a heavenly grace. I felt a oneness I had not known and a freedom for which I had longed. This made it simple to have my forgiving God remove my defects of character. I realized my new path had removed me from the emotional highways of turmoil. It was like getting on a freeway to peace. I wrote down in ink the names of those that had been affected



by my harmful ways and proceeded to make amends the best way I knew how.

By twelve simple steps and by people who are recovering from the same disease as mine, I am able to feel who I really am. To love and be loved with no conditions. To accept life as life is intended and to share what I have received.

Today I am free at last while I quench the thirst of my loving spirit. Now I have a choice that I never knew I had. To not use, at least for today. Somehow today turns into many days, thus years. I've learned that happiness exists. That it's a gift from my Higher Power and it's my choice whether I receive it and the uncountable blessings I have offered to me. I thank my Higher Power for now I

have serenity. I thank the program and the friends I have come to love. I thank this second chance for life that was graciously given to me. I give thanks daily for my current relationships. And for my past, for it brought me to where I am today. People in recovery are special people for they are strong, enduring and sensitive. I am grateful to be one of these. Today I ride in a vehicle of peace, and assurance of a clean life, driven by my Higher Power as I travel highways of serenity and fellowship.

Today I have promises which are sound and sure. They provide me with the key to stay clean as long as I follow the Twelve Steps and the suggestions in the program. Today I live in gratitude and thanksgiving for I am another miracle.

K.G., New Mexico



Beyond doubt

Greetings from Wyoming. I hope this article finds you well and in the miracle of recovery.

Right now as I write this I'm waiting for an NA friend and we're heading up the road a hundred miles to go to our monthly area business meeting. I look forward to these because it gives me a chance to meet others in recovery and share in something that I didn't know before coming to the fellowship; love, unity and fellowship with people that I can identify with.

There will be a dance tonight and now I look forward to these. At first I didn't, but my sponsor kept saying "show up, get involved." There was no way that I was going to dance. That was a fear that I thought would never be overcome, but as time passed I was finally able to get out of the corner and clump around on the dance floor. I could get out there and kick my toes and laugh. When I first came to NA, I was sure that I would never laugh again—I mean all the things that I'm addicted to had me a slave to hopelessness.

Then a person who really cared and still does, (not because I had money, drugs or anything to offer society) introduced me to you—NA and its unity. God, was I ever unsure of where I was and if I belonged. It reminds me

of an addict's sharing in the *NA Way Magazine*.

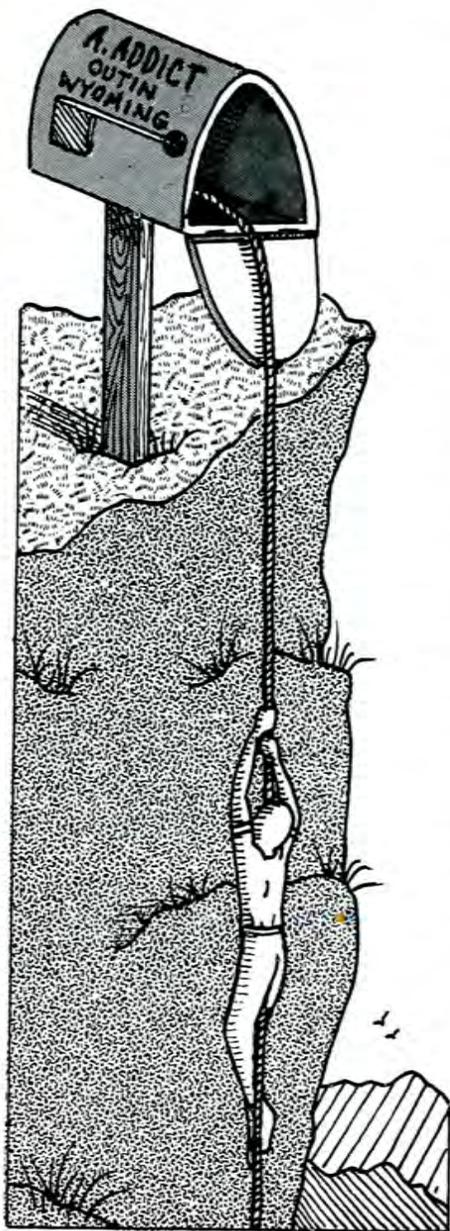
The article was called "I can leave if you want me to..." (January 1992). It really told me that I need to look at my program ask myself "do I reach out to the newcomer?" God, I related. Like the person in the story, I had nowhere else to go but death. I read my NA book, go to meetings and I find that this is where my recovery is taking place—even with you who I have not met personally, but through letters—you who care enough to share. I am really trying to be understanding of the steps and the traditions in my life and the changes in me continue. Today I care.

I have found that the words "I can!" spell danger in my life. When I start using these words I find that the selfishness in my life becomes overwhelming. The "we" gets lost to where I again feel the fear of being alone. It says in the NA book "I Can't—We Can," and the unity in "we" has really saved my life.

All the letters that I get from you across the country, my meetings, the *Meeting By Mail* and the *NA Way Magazine* remind me of where I have been and that there is hope. I never have to be alone again.

Another thing that I wanted share with you is about the traditions and how important they are in my life. About 18 months after coming into the fellowship of NA I had a relapse and went back out for about a month. I had stopped doing the things in recovery that I had to do to stay clean. I stopped letting you love me. I started leaving out the unity in my life. I was in deep trouble. Then you sent me

a letter of hope in the form of an addict who works the principals of NA. Again I felt a chance, I didn't want to die. I started bonding again with the group, my Higher Power and even



through letters. It has been getting better.

One day another member was over at the house. I had confronted him about making a decision affecting the members of the group without getting a group conscience. We ended up arguing about it and he told me that I had no room to talk because I had relapsed in the past.

It was like a slap in the face. I again felt all the fears of "What if the group feels that way?" "What if the group is just being nice and they really don't care?" I did a lot of praying about it and talking to my sponsor. I was really scared, scared of not having the trust of the group come back even though time had passed since my relapse. With an overwhelming feeling of loss again I wondered if I wanted to stay clean. Can I really help anyone else in recovery or attract them by my actions since I had relapsed?

Well I'm still in recovery one day at a time, and I love NA. The answer that I had to find for myself didn't come from within me but through you and your sharing the traditions with me. The Traditions One, Three and Twelve tell me what it's about. It also lets me know that I don't have to judge you today. Any day that you or I can stay clean is a miracle. We are a miracle. I am not willing today to turn my back on any addict who reaches out for help, whether they have one day clean or many years.

No one person in NA can make it work without the help of NA as a whole. I love you all for the sharing gift of life that you have given to me.

Anonymous

Home Group

Nurturing the inner Slugg



The broad perspective

Imagine the freedom WCNA 22

There may still be time, if you hurry, to attend WCNA 22 in Toronto, Canada. Thursday, September 3d, through Sunday, the 6th are the scheduled days for the main events, but special tours for WCNA participants will go on a bit longer, and convention planners point to many other attractions in the city.

By the third week in August the Sheraton Centre and L'Hotel were probably booked, but attempts were to be made to get a contracted block of rooms in a nearby Hilton. Call the WSO for the latest possibilities for accommodation. The majority of meetings, banquets and some events will be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Registration and merchandising will also be located there.

Located at 227 Front Street West, the MTCC is in the city core of Toronto. It is adjacent to the CN Tower, the world's tallest freestanding structure. Underground walkways, which allow entry to a variety of malls, shops and cafes, connect area buildings, including the Sheraton Centre, L'Hotel and the MTCC.

WCNA host committee

Toronto addicts involved in the planning effort for WCNA 22, "Imagine the freedom," were asked to share about the experience.

Chairperson Sean S, asked if the site would be hard to find, said "Look for the tallest freestanding structure in the world, we'll be right under it."

He added "Sign up, come visit," and noted that Toronto is a "beautiful, clean, cosmopolitan city. Not a "melting pot" so much as a multi-cultural city, where people are encouraged to hold on to their origins."

Rachel A, Convention Information Chairperson, sent along a note containing her impressions, starting with the preparations to submit a bid to host "Imagine the freedom."

"We were in my living room, packing up the shiny blue boxes...the bid for the world convention. There was I, praying Montreal would get it so I could go as a guest/stay free at my parent's place..."

"Wondering how to make something spring out of the box so when they opened it at the WSO they'd get a clown-at-the-circus feeling...Toronto, a city full of surprises..."

"I remember the day I decided to chair a subcommittee for the WCNA, and hearing a description of the position I did get, knowing when I heard it that this was what I was supposed to do—that little neon spark that my HP ignites when I am supposed to pay attention to something.

"My motives and my life have changed since we packed the shiny blue boxes. This is recovery and I don't doubt it today.

"Saturday (July 11) was a 'Unity Day' for all members working on the convention. We walked as a group

what will become a well-worn path from the convention centre to the Sheraton Centre. We will line this path with our excitement, our dreams, our expectations, our love...for the thousands of you who will join us here in Toronto Labour Day Weekend. We are looking forward with mixed emotions, for it is truly close!"

Other committee comments-

Marilyn N, Registration: "A little apprehensive about amount of volunteers. We'll need about a hundred more." She asked that volunteers check in with Convention Information ("Look for the 'big desk.'")

Genina A, Hotels & Hospitality: Pointed out that in addition to three scheduled "Hospitality Suites" a "Quiet Room" will be established in the convention centre "For people to gather their thoughts, get away from it all. The hospitality rooms will be a bit more social."

Patricia D, WCNA 22 Committee Secretary, said: "This effort has brought us together. Working on something like this you find that the others are people, just like you."

Jan, treasurer, noted "We'll have the best of everything we can, without it costing extra." Jan mentioned that merchandising for this convention will be "skeletal," with more of an emphasis on taking orders than in previous conventions, though some sales will be made on the premises.

Anthony A, WCNA coordinator, echoed what many of the hosts shared when he said of Toronto "It's a cultural mosaic, an extremely diverse culture."

He added "Each world convention has its own nuances. Though it is not

greatly distant, it is, technically, another country. That presents challenges. The local committee has responded to those challenges excellently, they are extremely competent, and that's made it a lot easier."

Immigration information

You will need proper identification to pass through checkpoints when entering Canada. For U.S. citizens a passport or birth certificate and driver's license is required.

Outreach ad hoc

WSC Outreach ad hoc Committee Chairperson David J asked that all regional and area outreach efforts make their presence known to the committee by writing it through the WSO. Also, any minutes, guidelines or reports of outreach efforts are needed.

The new committee, created at WSC 1992, will have its first full meeting during the Fall meeting of WSC boards and committees October 31. Unless some unexpected SNAFU occurs, that event will be in Cincinnati, Ohio.

World Unity Day

NA members at the Toronto world convention will assemble simultaneously with members in groups, areas and regions around the world to commemorate World Unity Day September 5, 1992 at 8:00 EDT (6 September 1992 0000 GMT). The WSC Administrative Committee requests the coordinated gatherings in response to a 1992 WSC motion setting aside the "day," partly to generate funds for WSC. World Unity Day donations may be mailed to:

WSC Treasurer
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

Alive in NA . . .

to help others

An especially intriguing document was forwarded to *The NA Way Magazine* in early 1991. It was a note from a Maori tribesman named Matiu. He was then (and, we trust, still is) seeking recovery in Aotearoa NA meetings. Aotearoa is the tribal name for what is now also called New Zealand. The printing of Matiu's communication was put on hold, partly because more information was needed, but also because its references to racial matters gave some pause. With a little more information now available, and the apparently growing willingness of NA to face "head-on" the blessings and difficulties inherent in celebrating our fellowship's multi-cultural nature, the time seems right.

The New Zealand NA Fellowship dates the start of its formal existence as September, 1982. That time is mentioned in a brief, casual history, which was printed as part of a one-year anniversary celebration in Auckland. It includes, as do many other reports, information about a certain ". . . poet, rebel, and philanthropist. . ." New Zealander, who championed the establishment of temporary living quarters for recovering addicts after their releases from institutions, and who conducted NA meetings in New Zealand in the mid 1960's. A poem by that person, who is now deceased, was chosen for the front of the first New Zealand NA newsletter. The addicts who produced the newsletter did not know, then, of the poet's early support.

The history brief, and personal reports, also recall how informal NA meetings were being regularly conducted in overnight shelters (called "dos houses,") more than a dozen years before the formal service structure was established. The first Aotearoa-New Zealand Regional

Report (1989) even made mention of an NA meeting said to have existed for a while in 1959. The complete story of the early meetings, growth of NA, and the results a sharing of spiritual constants by recovering addicts from extremely diverse cultural heritages, cannot possibly be told here. What you are about to read is the letter from Matiu, and some information and comments from a few others. Bits of this story came from a quick encounter with the 1992 Aotearoa-New Zealand RSR while she was participating in the Dallas WSC. Other parts are from previous service reports, and from a description posted by Bob Stone, former director of the WSO, after a visit with both European and Maori NA members on one of the two main islands that comprise New Zealand.

Again, the full and comprehensive story is one that only the people who are living it will be able to tell. Matiu's letter, though, was mailed to the WSO. The letter, along with the other things we can share with confidence, provide a striking example.

Kia Ora

(Dedication)

In the beginning of 1988 New Zealand celebrated it's first NA convention...(at) Christchurch-South Island... with a cultured input from my Maori people, who catered our conference with a traditional Maori "Hangi" (food cooked underground). This event sparked my quest in expressing Maoritanga in my daily life of recovery.

I walked into NA with a built-in fear and boiling hate for white people here in Aotearoa.

New Zealand has, over the years, been through so many drastic changes. Firstly, being a new country of many occupations...from one culture to another...each race laying claim to being the rightful owner of this beautiful country.

Now, in this present day, it is a multi-national land and our conflicts still rage on. Conflicts over land, where many on both sides have died. Misinterpretations of cultures have nearly always left many people guessing what is the future of this country, war or peace...

So I was conditioned from birth to never trust white people. From my parents, my grandparents, so on and so on, back in time.

Then "God" (quotes Matiu's) showed me the doors of NA where, for the first time, I was stuck in a room full of white people...besides a courtroom. Yet they were all saying things I could relate to. My lonely heart, so bitter and twisted, was touched by these people who I feared and despised. Their love for me reached in and beyond my barriers, to my soul. To these early recovering addicts I love and will never forget, thank you, my friends.

For the first few months I slid in and out of the NA doors, aching and crying in pain, "I am different." Never acknowledging the simple key of this fellowship, Step One. My last treatment a few years ago, I gave my tattered will and life to my God, who I love and understand most times, and who loves and understands me all the time.

I admitted totally that I am an addict, a disease which I suffer and (that) hits my tinana, hinengaro,

whanau and wairua, and does not discriminate between culture, color, age, sex, (or) status.

I did jails, gang affiliations, running, hiding, stealing and so on for my drugs, had to, to survive, or die. Yet out of all these things and more my biggest crisis was my identity. I was facing myself more and more, "Who am I?" "What am I?" "Why do I do what I don't want to do?" Being clean, these questions kept haunting Matiu.

Identity. NA gave me this, through love, acceptance, understanding, tolerance from others, and our principles, HOW.

My people and I are still, to this day, being put down by the press, and on our streets. Racism is ignorance.

I feel what I feel, and recovery has taught me to trust my feelings. And to trust others. Being a Maori recovering addict here in Aotearoa is to push on through the conflicts and differences, regardless.

Bob S, I owe you my story. Three years ago you asked us to write a cultured input into NA here in New Zealand. Thanks for accepting me into your life. Kia kaha e hoa.

Many times I have sat in on meetings, so lonely, deep inside, wondering if this fellowship cares for me and my people, crying and hurt, yet holding on to our primary purpose. I have an incurable disease, yet I can recover with the help of other addicts. I've learned

to listen. As a Maori I now accept we are different, each one of us, yet when I give what I can, and take what I need, all will be well.

In the loneliest times I've had at meetings, God has helped another Maori person walk through our doors. My heart has almost jumped out with excitement. My hope is renewed.

Now a few years on in my walk of recovery here in NA, I give what I have to anyone. Yet in my heart...to me my Maori people are a dying race of people...and with my recovery I will stay alive in NA...to help others of my culture find life.

É TE ATUA TUKUA MAI HE
NGAKAU MAHAKI KI A TOU
TONU TE RANGIMARIE I
ROTO I NGA UAUATANGA
ME TE KAHA KI TE
WHAKATIKA I NGA
MAROTANGA KI A MATOU KI
A MARAMA HOKI KI NGA
REREKETANGA.

É TE WHANAU, KIA
ARAHINA RA TATOU I RUNGA
I TE ARA O TE RANGIMARIE,
O TE ORA, O TE PAI. KIA
ARAHINA TATOU É TE ATUA
KAHA RAWA, É TE ATUA O
NGA ATAWHAI.

KIA MAU, KIA U, KI TO
MAORITANGA...

Yours' in recovery, Matiu K

Aotearoa/New Zealand Region

Three main ASCs comprise the region, which was a part of the Australasian Region until 1989. Australia is about 1500 miles west-northwest of Aotearoa New Zealand, and is its closest larger geographical neighbor. Some one hundred meetings function there, many of which meet each week in Auckland. Auckland is on the northernmost of the two main islands of New Zealand, where about three-quarters of the nation's population make their homes. Most of the current population is of European descent. About 15 percent are of Maori extraction.

The two main islands, and many smaller ones, make the whole of New Zealand about 1,000 miles long, but only about 200 miles wide. It is mainly a rural country, with farming its primary industry. According to one report, area service meetings might mean a five hundred mile trip, one way, and the nearest WSC's have been about 7,500 miles.

This year's Aotearoa New Zealand representative to the WSC, Lynn R, said the average clean time in her region is about three years. She said a difference between New Zealand NA meetings and the United States variety is "We're a bit more formal."

Lynn said she perceives "Not quite as big a problem with the law" for addicts in her home country. She indicated programs of monitoring and rehabilitation are the main focus of the government's relations with addicts. She mentioned "homebake heroin," a recipe developed during German influence in World War II, is a most common relapse vehicle. Of the Maori Lynn said "They are possibly the only indigenous people who had no form of drug use before the white people came."

Growing gift

Just before the formation of the region in 1988, Bob S (past Director of the WSO, who was enroute to Australia) stopped on the South Island in the city called Christchurch. An excerpt from one of his reports follows:

An information sharing meeting followed the regular Saturday afternoon NA meeting in an old church near the center of the city. Dave G (later the first Aotearoa New Zealand RSR to attend the WSC) made the introductions, and it went well. I listened as much as talked and learned about their fellowship, the problems they faced and the difficulties of being so far

from the bulk of the fellowship. Much of my discussion was centered on explaining how world services functioned and how it related to support of their meetings. They seemed encouraged to hear of the continual growth of NA throughout the world, and in particular were interested in translations.

They explained there was a language and cultural problem in New Zealand that they had to address. New Zealand was colonized by England about one hundred and fifty years ago. An aspect of the colonizing was subjugation of the native Maori tribes who occupied the islands. The subjugation included many battles, much death, and the Maori always lost.

Fortunately, many survived and in recent times the nation was coming to grips with the aftermath of the colonial period. Great public attention was being paid to preserving the Maori cultures, languages and spirituality. An effort was being made by NA members to reach out to addicts from the native tribes and welcome them to the fellowship. This was not really connected to the national effort, but simply addicts wanting to help bring recovery to other addicts.

Providing literature in the Maori dialects was one of their concerns. Many of the tribes have differences in their languages, and one translation might not be adequate. A

translation has been accomplished of Informational Pamphlet Number One (*Who, What, How and Why*), and they were debating a long term policy, but no resolution had been reached.

Several Maori had attended NA meetings and found not only recovery, but a level of personal acceptance that was uncommon in parts of the country. This eventually led to holding an area service meeting in one of the tribal community centers. Matiu mentioned this in his letter, and that the tribe hosted the conference with traditional foods. The tribe welcomed NA members to their homeland with several gifts, one of which was a tree.

The Kauri tree is a tall, slow-growing and majestic softwood tree. Some are as old as 1,500 years and the Maori give names to these old patriarchs of the species. The tribal cultures are polytheistic (...believing in or worshipping more than one god) and believe a spirit resides in most living things, including trees, so they attach particular significance to them.

For transport between the islands and for ocean fishing the men do cut these trees and hollow them out as long canoes. But each time a tree is cut down, a new seedling must be planted and a special ceremony performed by an appointed or senior member of the tribe. This is done to satisfy

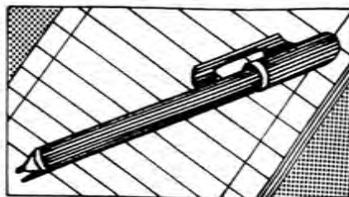
the spiritual nature of all things, particularly the Kauri tree, and perhaps also as an article of faith in the future.

After the information-exchange meeting many of us went to a home for wonderful food and talk about NA, and the gifts recovery brings. Before sundown we gathered in the front yard. Dave brought out the Kauri tree NA was given by the tribal chief, and we prepared to plant it.

Matiu presided over this solemn occasion, and he offered spiritual consecration to the soil and for the health of the seedling. He and the other Maori present spoke in their native language and translated into English the meanings of each segment, and also some parts in which we were asked to participate.

I believe the fulfillment of this tree-planting was an acknowledgment by the members that the tribal chief had belief in the spiritual nature of NA and its connection to a Higher Power. It was an honor to have been present at this occasion, a binding of the spirit of NA recovery with the spirit of the Maori peoples and their belief in God.

Viewpoint



Empathy

To "Anonymous," who wrote "Don't let me go," published in the May 92 NA Way:

When I read your article I wondered if I had written it in a post-recovery black-out and didn't remember! I related completely to what you had to say about the direction NA is heading and how you feel about it. I, too, have a little over five and one-half years clean, work a strong program of recovery, have a "Ruebenesque" figure (I choose not to perceive myself in a negative way today), am a survivor of incest and I'm very bothered by smoke.

I've recently stopped attending my step-study home group and a womens' meeting because I'm not comfortable there anymore. I wasn't getting recovery, only resentments.

Our area is full of meetings that are "non-smoking," but take smoke breaks instead. The usual scene on Friday night is that smokers stand by the open door before the meeting

starts and the room fills with smoke. They file in late, disrupting the first part of the meeting.

We usually have great speakers who carry powerful messages, provide a sense of spirituality and evoke strong feelings and bonds amongst all us addicts. Once the speaker stops, the smokers apparently feel it's their right to break the spiritual bond and go outside to, in my opinion, stuff their feelings, while the few non-smokers seem to wonder why the meeting has to stop. The seven-minute smoke break turns into fifteen or twenty minutes. The meeting reconvenes with a loud, disruptive group outside talking, and about half an hour's worth of sharing time left. Just enough time to reassemble the bond that was lost during the break. All of a sudden we're out of time with three or four hands left up in the air, wanting to share. If the smokers want to take a break that's their business, but what if one of those hands left up in the air is a newcomer who really needs to share or an old-timer who is lost and afraid?

Why do some NA meetings condone what, in my opinion, is a drug break? Why do some NA groups have meetings where an addictive substance is used openly and willingly at the tables?

I have a problem with food. For-

tunately I don't have to eat while I'm at a meeting.

My sponsor tells me I'm in a purist stage that will pass when I start becoming more tolerant of my own shortcomings. I'm talking about this at meetings. Before I stopped supporting my groups I told each group why I was stopping and how I felt. Thank God I live in an area where there are a lot of meetings and some kindred souls started two meetings that are one-hour, non-smoking and have no breaks. I changed. I now attend those meetings.

I believe you feel lost, alone and abandoned by NA. Our disease is progressive, therefore our recovery had better be, too. We change. I left my name, address and phone number with the NA Way staff when I wrote this reply. Hopefully, if you need to, you'll write or call.

I heard you and NA "won't let you go!"

Anonymous

Not laughing

When I became GSR of my home group, my motive was to represent my group on an area level. I left the last area service meeting feeling very powerless. After talking to many addicts in this area, it seems like a big joke. My problem is that I don't see anything funny about what is going on.

I have thought about my part and realize that if I, as an addict, do not speak up, I become part of the problem and not the solution. I see important issues that need to be addressed, such as meetings and sub-committees that need support, open positions on an area level and an agenda that can't be met in a three hour time span! These are only a few observations right off the top of my head. It appears to be more important who likes who and who doesn't like who. Area service is not a social gathering, at least that was my understanding. Granted, I don't know as much as some that attend area service meetings, but I know a lot of what I see and hear reminds me of when I was in active addiction—over inflated egos, power struggles, personality conflicts and self-will. The bottom line is that I don't feel like I'm in an atmosphere of recovery when I attend area service.

The Second Tradition states that there is one ultimate authority—a loving God as he expresses Himself in our Group Conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

Addicts are strong-willed, self-centered people. We must constantly be on our guard that our decisions are an expression of God's will rather than personal opinion or ego. Egos, unfounded pride and self-will would destroy a group if given authority. Offices are given in trust, at no time do any of us govern.

As GSR, I am willing to remember that Narcotics Anonymous is a God-given program. My home group voted for me in trust. I am willing to

represent my home group but not willing to take an active part in what I feel is not truly an expression of God's will at area service.

Anonymous

NA "religion"

I read something very interesting and heartening a while back. It was a motion submitted by the Upper Midwest Region in the 1991 Conference Agenda Report. The motion was concerning a revision of our literature to remove gender specific language, and changing references from "God" to "Higher Power."

I have been recovering from the disease of addiction, for over two and a half years, by following the program of Narcotics Anonymous to the best of my ability. There is one aspect of this program which has been a constant struggle for me, and that is the strong Christian bias that permeates every aspect of our literature and even our meetings.

I was first introduced to NA by my brother who, after 18 years of active addiction, had found a way to recover and stay clean. Not just stay clean but change the things about himself that made him have to use. I received a surprise phone call from him one afternoon. We hadn't talked for a very long time. The reason for the call was one of the biggest shocks of my life. He called to make amends for the

many things he had done to me for most of our lives. During this conversation we talked more, and more honestly, than we ever had. He talked a lot about a "Higher Power" and a "God of his understanding" which seemed in a way very interesting, but I was immediately repulsed by any talk of "God."

It was a few months afterwards before I was more properly introduced to the program by a friend; one who was trying to stay clean, without much success. He seemed to have the same problem, which we talked about long and frequently. The old biases were too strong. Our hatred and disbelief of organized religion, of any kind, was just too much, and we couldn't seem to overcome it. I reached a point after about six months where I saw that chemicals and other escape mechanisms were just not going to work for me. That was painfully obvious, not just from my own experience, but from listening to the members of NA at the meetings I had attended with my friend. I was left with only two choices: death, or accept the "religion" that NA offered. Death seemed a lot more tolerable. I was caught up in a seeming hypocrisy. Members said NA wasn't religious, but everything I read, and that they said, seemed to me to state otherwise. They even closed the meetings with a Christian prayer. I could see that NA worked for them, could even work for me if I could keep an open mind and an attitude of tolerance. I had to try or die.

Recovery has been a battle for me, which I have survived only through the love and support of the members

of my home group. I can even say that today I kind of believe in a power greater than myself, but it has not been easy and I still repeatedly have to deal with this issue.

The friend who introduced me to the program that has saved my life was not so lucky. He, though thankfully still alive, suffers today from the misery of active addiction. He is not the only one. I have seen many come and go during the past few years, unable to reconcile themselves to our program. How many more have to die to preserve biases in NA?

I tend to be afraid to express my views, I am tired of the ridicule and the "Oh, you just don't understand" looks. The problem may seem a simple one of semantics, which it is. It can be changed simply by changing the wording of our literature. Change is what NA is all about. Being able to learn and grow. Those "simple" words nearly killed me and have, I believe, killed others. It is time to be inclusive instead of exclusive, "that no addict seeking recovery need ever die from the horrors of addiction."

With love,

Anonymity

The Basic Text says that anonymity is "a state of bearing no name"

In NA when I speak at a meeting I try not to be drug specific, try not to share about what I did to get my

bag, or share about how I used drugs. The reason why is so I can be as one with all who are at a meeting instead of being different. Also, when I don't use any of that type language I drop my pride and ego, and the comparison attitude towards people.

I have learned that we all have one thing in common, addiction; and recovery is what we strive for. When I got clean I didn't have anything in common with anyone because they didn't use like me. I couldn't identify because everyone was drug specific, and I wasn't looking for the feelings behind their messages. All I heard was the drugs they used, and how they used them.

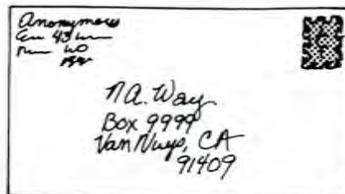
My definition of anonymity is "one for all and all for one." No one is better than, no one is less than. The only way I know to keep anonymity is by placing the principles of the Twelve Steps and Traditions before the members of NA, and by identifying myself as an addict trying to recover from the disease of addiction, trying to stay clean just for today.

When I see people who try to act like someone else, or try to tell me that there is no recovery in NA, what I try to do is set an example that there is recovery in NA, and try to make myself available to people who want help in their recoveries regardless of personalities.

My whole life I felt different. By practicing the Twelfth Tradition I don't have to be a chameleon to be a part of.

Anonymous

From our readers



I can live in my own skin

I'm a recovering addict named Ginger. I'm sitting watching someone clean my carpets and keeping my serenity by reading the *NA Way*. I've discovered that I'm a good person and I have a lot to be grateful for.

These last couple of weeks I've been experiencing an inner peace I've never felt before. I don't know why I feel it, I just do. I'm accepting myself and loving the feeling that comes with it. I'm understanding the concept of letting myself make mistakes, knowing that's how I grow. I feel great peace that I finally feel ok about myself. My HP has given me something I've prayed for, for years. I just never knew how to ask. I finally just said "help me love myself," and now I feel great. I've been searching for this feeling all my life.

I was such an angry child that everyone around me thought I would end up doing some murders and never get out of prison.

I feel so good. I live today. I think today. I make good decisions today. I shower only twice a day, instead of ten times a day trying to get the LSD off my skin. I go to school and I face people. I sleep at night and get up in the morning. I eat good. I drink, 7-up, milk and water. I wash my car, more

than once a month. I take care of myself. I'm paying rent. I have a full tank of gas in my car. I pray. I go to meeting. I deal with situations. I keep trying to improve my communication skills. I call my sponsor. I work the steps to the best of my ability.

I never realized how much good I do for myself till these last couple of weeks. I've just stepped back and looked at myself really hard and long. At first I dropped to my knees and cried at what I thought was hate. It wasn't. It was love. I was afraid to love myself. I don't know why. Maybe just another feeling. I've always been afraid of feelings. Actually I never really felt anything till I got clean. I started using at nine years old. So I started to feel after I got clean, and I've only been clean for a year and three months. So I'm still learning to feel stuff. Anyway, I love the way I've been feeling. I'm so happy with myself.

I hope people read this and feel it can happen for them too. In the mornings I wake up to a great big hug to myself. I jump up and open my curtains and make it a good day. The window isn't a TV anymore it's just a window to allow view. The view doesn't melt. I really love life today and more important I love myself. That is the biggest high I've ever found, felt, kept and remembered.

Thanks to my Higher Power and the Narcotics Anonymous program I can live in my own skin. I now can share that love with others. Thanks for listening and being there for me.

T.M., California

do not have to make the same mistakes over again. I can be a responsible, productive member of society who faces my own problems in everyday living, to be the best recovering addict I can be.

J.S., California

Self-acceptance

In my addiction I never realized that I had anything to do with my problems. I thought it was everyone else who was to blame. I never knew I had a problem with accepting myself for who I was. I would cry at night because I couldn't be who I really wanted to be, and I could not stop using drugs. I thought society was responsible for my problems and feelings.

When I got clean, I was scared about what "you" thought about me. I couldn't give anyone a hug, look people in the eye. Most of all, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't want anything to do with anybody, because I could not accept myself for who I was and what I had done in the past.

The only way I know now how to deal with self-acceptance in everyday living is to humbly look at my part in the problem. I look at how I got into the problem. After the problem arose, how did it affect me? How did I treat the people around me? See if I hurt anybody, and if I did, I make my amends to the person I hurt. Before I go to bed I write about the problem, then reread it. Then I honestly try to find a solution to the problem. I ask my Higher Power for the courage to face the problem with the solution. I

Free

I would be with my God now if it wasn't for NA. If it hadn't been for NA saving my life I would not be around to tell you my story as a recovering addict. I want to share my experience, strength and hope.

When I was on the street I felt I was in control of my habit. I thought I fooled everyone. I lost so many things in my life... my family, my personal property, and my freedom.

With the help of NA I have started to find a new and likeable part of my inner-self that I never knew I had, and my Higher Power.

What NA helped me to find I could have never accomplished on my own. I am proud to say I am a recovering addict. I have made it this far because of NA, my Higher Power, and a spiritual awakening that has brought me to face reality and myself.

I had tried to get clean so many times and in so many ways and always failed.

I am a grateful recovering addict and I actually like myself for who and what I am. I can live life on life's terms with the help of God and the Twelve Step program of NA. The program has given me a new meaning and a new purpose to my life. I am in

a county jail, but I have never felt so free as I feel now. I am free from pain, runny nose and eyes, from hot and cold chills, and a sweating body that craved drugs.

Today I have God of my understanding and am living life without the use of drugs.

R.V., Florida

Working for the solution

Today I went to a meeting where a newcomer was talking about how life was going great and he was expecting the bottom to fall out. It took me back to all the times I set myself up to fail. And how these failures brought me to the home of NA.

When I got here they said "read the book, the answers are in there." I found the steps and looked at my disease. At first glance I thought it was the drugs, and that as soon as I worked through them the drug problem would be through.

Well, there goes that idea of brainpower out the window! It took me a while to catch what Step One meant about addiction. My whole being is about addiction. Today I see how it is that when I work the steps, read the Basic Text and work with other recovering people my life unfolds into a new being. When I hold on to the old idea that I can do it on my own I set up my disease to run rampant in my life.

Today I am living in a town that has had only one meeting a week. All that time on my hands! I thought I could handle it. Then, during the meeting,

I thought about "I," how that has set me up so many times to go on a run to self-destruction. So after the meeting I asked who would be willing to help start another meeting?

Today we are working on finding a place and we are back doing what keeps me clean. If I am working for the solution it's hard to set myself up to fail. Our magazine has helped me stay here. The message of recovery has helped me during meetings and today gives me strength to keep on keeping on. Thank you.

S.W., Wyoming

Supports writer

I wish to take a moment to offer my support to S.C. in Canada, whose letter, "As we understand..." appeared in the June 1992 issue, pg. 18. S.C. refers to his/her Higher Power as Goddess, so that when S.C. recites the Serenity Prayer, it is along the lines of "Goddess, grant me the serenity to..." etc. I fully appreciate and endorse all the major points S.C. makes in his/her argument. I particularly like the way that the article is worded so that it is never determined whether S.C. is a man or a woman.

In that tradition, I bid you all farewell for now, and wish you wonderful and rewarding recovery.

J.G., California

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Comin' up



ALABAMA: Oct. 16-18, 1992; Surrender in the Mountains IX; Mount Cheaha, Alabama; info (205) 922-0680; Surrender in the Mountains, PO Box 678, Huntsville, AL 35804

AUSTRALIA: Oct. 2-4, 1992; Sydney Combined Areas Convention; "Faith, Hope and Hilarity"; Hurstville Civic Centre, Hurstville, Sydney, Australia; Convention, PO Box 198, Petersham NSW, AUSTRALIA, 2049

CALIFORNIA: Aug. 14-16, 1992; 4th Annual Humboldt/Del Norte Unity Weekend; French's Camp Pierceny, CA, Southern Humboldt County; info. (707) 444-8645 or (707) 442-3325; Unity Weekend, PO BOX 6634, Eureka, CA 95502

2) Aug. 14-16, 1992; 6th Annual Mountain High Campout; Camp Richardson; info (916) 577-1042; South Shore ASC, 1230 Margaret Avenue, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

3) Aug. 28-30, 1992; SCRACNA Campout; Hurkey Creek, 307 1/2 Island Avenue (private address) Balboa, CA 92661; info (818) 338-3339

CANADA—SASKATCHEWAN: Aug. 21-23, 1992; SSACNA VIII; "Reaching Out for Recovery"; Royal Canadian Legion Hall, 238 High Street West, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; info (306) 692-3083

CONNECTICUT: Sep. 4-6, 1992; Connecticut River Valley 12 Step Retreat; Ivoryton, CT; info (203) 347-3324; Retreat, PO Box 1056, Middletown, CT 06457

ENGLAND: Oct. 2-4, 1992; 6th Annual United Kingdom Convention; "The Voyage of Recovery"; Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Plymouth, Devon; rsvn.s directly with hotel (total anonymity is assured) 0852 266256; fax 0752 600062 quoting NA Convention; UCKNA VI, PO Box 1980, London, ENGLAND, N19 3LS

FLORIDA: Oct. 2-4 1992; 5th Annual Florida Regional Hospitals and Institutions Awareness Weekend; Riverside Inn Resort, Homosassa, Florida; rsvn.s (800) 442-2040; info (813) 547-0444

2) Oct. 2-4, 1992; 10th Orlando Area Celebration; "Decade of Dreams"; Hilton Gateway, 7470 Highway 192 West; info (407) 382-8784; OACFR, PO Box 5022, Winter Park, FL 32793

3) Oct. 16-18, 1992; South Dade Area Unity Weekend; Marco Polo Resort and Hotel, 192 Street and Collins Avenue (Ocean Front), Sunny Isles, Florida; info (305) 221-1198; hotel (800) 327-6363; Unity Weekend, PO Box 141514, Coral Gables, FL 33114

FRANCE: Sep. 18-20, 1992; 3rd Paris Area Bilingual Convention; Cite Universitaire, 19Bd Jourdan, 75014 Paris; info 33-1-42 37 57 79; Narcotiques Anonymes, CBPNA 3, B P 630-04, 75160 PARIS Cedex 04,

GEORGIA: Aug. 21-23, 1992; 3rd Annual Northwest Georgia Area Campout; Red Top Mountain State Park

INDIA: Sep. 6, 1992; 4th Group Anniversary; Saint Mary's School, 92 Ripon Street, 1st Floor, Calcutta

INDIANA: Aug. 21-23, 1992; Spirituality Under the Stars Campout; Tippecanoe River State Park, Winamac, IN

2) Nov. 14, 1992; Indiana Multi. Regional H&I Awareness Day; Donner Center, Donner Park, Columbus; phonline (812) 331-3974

IOWA: Aug. 15, 1992; Greater Illinois Gathering of Regions; Loras College in Hennessey Hall, 1415 Alta Vista, Dubuque; (815) 626-0790

IRELAND: Nov. 6-8, 1992; 8th Irish Convention of NA; "It's Crystal Clear"; Jurys Hotel, Waterford; IRCNA, PO Box 1368, Sherriff St Dublin 1, Ireland,

KANSAS: Sep. 18-20, 1992; Multi Regional Learning Day; Wichita Plaza Hotel, 250 West Douglas, Wichita, KS 67202; rsvn.s (316) 264-1181; info (918) 664-4883

KENTUCKY: Sep. 25-27, 1992; 5th Annual "Freedom Between The Lakes"; Energy Lake Campground, Kentucky Lake; info (502) 898-6054; WKANA, PO Box 2866, Paducah, KY 42003

MAINE: Sep. 11-13, 1992; We're A Miracle IX; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred, ME; info (207) 721-0516; SMASC, Convention Committee, PO Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101-5309

MISSISSIPPI: Nov. 13-15, 1992; Surrender by the Seashore Gulfcoast Area; Biloxu, MS; Speakers and Workshops interpreted in Ash.; info (601) 863-6285 or (601) 868-8595

NEBRASKA: Aug. 14-16, 1992; 9th Nebraska Regional Convention; Lincoln, NE; Holiday Inn, Airport, Lincoln, NE

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Aug. 16, 1992; H&I Awareness Day; American Legion Hall corner Main and Glass Street, Suncook, NH; helpline (603) 432-0168; Granite State Area H&I, PO Box 4354, Manchester, NH 03108

NEW JERSEY: Aug. 14-16, 1992; 2nd Annual Northern New Jersey Convention; "A New Beginning II"; Parsippany Hilton, Parsippany, New Jersey; rsvn.s (908) 862-5899; info (201) 881-9658

NEW YORK: Sep. 11-13, 1992; Recovery in the Catskill Three; Friar Tuck Inn, Catskill, NY; info (800) 832-7600; A combined recovery effort of Mid-Hudson Area and Greater NY Regional Council; Convention, Route 32, Rural Delivery 1, Catskill, NY 12414

NEW ZEALAND: Oct. 24-26, 1992; 2nd Aotearoa Regional Convention; "Spring Clean"; Manawatu College of Education, Centennial Drive, Palmerston North; Aotearoa NZRC III, PO Box 133, Palmerston North, New Zealand,

NORTH CAROLINA: Sep. 25-27, 1992; 1st Annual Central Piedmont Area Outdoor Convention; Acres of Recovery One; Van Hoy Farm's Family Campground, Union Grove, NC; info (704) 278-9536

OREGON: Nov. 13-15, 1992; 15th Pacific Northwest Convention; info (503) 344-6040; EASC, PO Box 262, Eugene, OR 97440

PENNSYLVANIA: Sep. 4-6, 1992; Little Apple Area Birthday Celebration; info (215) 776-7306; LAA Birthday Committee, PO Box 274, Allentown, PA 18105

2) Sep. 25-27, 1992; 4th BCACNA; "The Growth of Recovery"; Royce Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Longhorne, PA, 19047; rsvn.s (215) 547-4100; info (215) 547-1640; Bucks County ASC, PO Box 12, Morrisville, PA 19067

TEXAS: Oct. 23-25, 1992; 5th Annual Best Little Regional Convention; Abilene, Texas; need speaker tapes minimum five years clean, workshops three years

2) Apr. 9-11, 1993; LSRCNA VIII; Hyatt-Regency, Town Lake, Austin; if you wish to speak at meeting or workshops write by November 30, 1992; Two years clean time requirement for workshops, five years for main speakers; Programming LSRCNA VIII, PO Box 19444, Austin, TX 78760

VIRGINIA: Sep. 25-27, 1992; OLANA UNITYFEST I; Holiday Inn, Chesapeake; info (804) 569-9498

WEST VIRGINIA: Oct. 30—Nov. 1, 1992; Mountaineer Regional Service Convention; "True Colors"; Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV; info (304) 343-8143; MRSCNA, PO Box 2381, Morgantown, WV 26502-2381

WISCONSIN: Oct. 9-11, 1992; 9th Annual Wisconsin State Convention; Holiday Inn Convention and Civic Center, 205 South Barstow Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701; info (175) 356-3123; rsvn.s (800)950-6121; WSNAC IX, PO Box 381, Woodruff, WI 54568

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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?

NA 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 NA way*

