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Symposium

NA Comes of Age

The fifth of this month (October) marks the forty-fifth anniversary of NA's first documented recovery meeting held in Sun Valley, California. As far as organizations go, that's a long time. It's not really old, but it's certainly mature.

In honor of our forty-fifth anniversary, we've asked some older members to compare NA as it existed when they came in to NA as it is now. They were delighted to tell us about "the old days" of NA in California, Australia, and Pennsylvania.* We expected to hear that these early NA communities were very disorganized, untutored in the Twelve Traditions, and unable to provide any services whatsoever. We were surprised to find out that this wasn't very often the way things were. In addition to asking the following members about their recollections of their early days in recovery, we asked what they felt NA's next step should be, in which areas we still needed to mature. As you'll see, they were quite willing to share their ideas.

As most will acknowledge, we've matured as a fellowship. But we're maintaining a youthful spirit. We're still open-minded and still ready to take big steps that will ensure our growth for another forty-five years.

.....

BOB B, CALIFORNIA

37 years

Q. When did you get clean?

A. I got clean in 1961, but when I first came around in 1959, there was only one meeting.

Q. Your story in the Basic Text is aptly named ("I Found the Only NA Meeting in the World"), but how did you find NA? There wasn't an NA helpline at the time, right?

A. I didn't find NA; my woman did. She was out looking for help and somebody gave her Jimmy's number. So she passes the information on to me that they got this thing going on over there [in the San Fernando Valley]. As far as I was concerned it was a foreign country. Once I got out of South Central, I was lost.

* We wanted to include old-timers from other NA communities in this symposium, but we simply didn't have enough space in the magazine.

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THE
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From the editor

In his article, Jeff G of California articulates something many NA members believed in their active addiction: "I wouldn't live past thirty." Sadly, the experience of most addicts was often just that. Death came early, and consequently, a typical NA meeting was usually populated with members in their twenties and thirties.

Thankfully, this is no longer the case. There are NA members in their teens, and NA members who are well past the usual age of retirement. Our dream that "no addict seeking recovery need die without a chance to find a better way of life" has come true. Addicts today actually have the opportunity to grow old.

As they do, the complexion of NA changes. Older members are able to offer their maturity, both in clean time and biological years, to newer and younger members. In addition, NA as an organization becomes more mature, reflecting the recovery of its members.

We wanted to find out what some of our older members thought about NA's growth over the years, so we asked them. Though the feelings they expressed ranged from pride to disgust, they all had ideas about how NA should grow in the future. Their perspective on NA's past provides insight to their views on the present.

What do you think?

Though a portion of the NA Way is filled with articles we've specifically asked for in order to create themes for each issue, there's plenty of space for your contributions—either your personal experience for the "Sharing" or "Service" sections, humorous pieces for the "Last Laughs" section, viewpoints, or comments on the magazine itself. In addition, we're interested in hearing your ideas about possible themes for future issues of the magazine. You may even have an idea you'd like to develop for the main feature. Submissions are trickling in, but the more we have to choose from, the more your fellowship's magazine will reflect NA in its entirety. We'll be watching our mailbox.

Cindy T, Editor

Correction: In the July 1998 issue, we mistakenly attributed the "Policy Bits" article to David R. It should have been Steven R, Vice Chairperson of the WSC Policy Committee. We apologize.

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in the NA Way, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The NA Way Magazine, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

There really wasn't anyplace for an addict to go then. There was Lexington, Ft. Worth, and there were a couple of doctors who were trying to start programs, but you were talking about big money just to walk in the door. They had all kinds of crazy ideas as to what drug addiction was and how to fix it.

Anyway, I went to this meeting, and there were people reading from this book, and talking about staying clean—actually they were talking about staying clean and sober. There weren't very many of them—usually about ten, a big meeting might have had twenty. Very often, half of them were from the North Hollywood [AA] clubhouse and were there to see what these addicts were doing.

- Q.** Did they share in your meetings?
- A.** As far as what they had to share, the steps didn't make sense to me, anyway. I read them. I heard them. There weren't a lot of people who could talk about them—besides Jimmy and some of these visitors [from AA]. Most of them were what they called "dually addicted." They were alcoholics, members of AA, but they had done drugs, too.
- There were people I could talk to, people who I could ask what they used. That was important then. We had to find out whether you were a "hope-to-die dope fiend" or one of them funny-style dope fiends. We were always downplaying people's addiction. You had to qualify.
- Q.** Was it mostly heroin addicts then?
- A.** Everyone was a heroin addict. There were a few pillheads, but even that was in conjunction with [heroin]. Some addicts probably left thinking "oh, my problem wasn't that bad" after listening to us talk, but a lot of that was just gross exaggeration.
- Q.** Were people pretty accepting of addicts coming to meetings loaded?
- A.** Yeah, we'd just tell them not to be too obvious about it. More often, it was a case of being not quite certain whether we should drink or not. I mean, as far as we were concerned, alcohol wasn't a drug.

- Q.** Did Jimmy set you straight on that?
- A.** No, Jimmy didn't try to force any issues.
- Q.** So he didn't tell anybody they weren't clean if they were drinking?
- A.** No, he never told anyone they weren't clean.
- Q.** So how did that develop then, that NA members understood that alcohol was a drug?
- A.** That happened much later, when we came to some understanding of the disease concept. We also worked very closely with some "outsiders" [non-addicts]—people like Dorothy Gildersleve [a social worker], Dr. Lewis Quick, and Judge Emerson. They were constantly referring people to us to get help, so they were always in touch. They managed to get across that you weren't clean if you were drinking. People came in thinking they could drink, but it was very short-lived.

We learned by experience. In those days, I think we violated every tradition that ever was written. They didn't mean anything to us; we mixed and matched or eliminated or whatever. That was what worked for us—until it didn't work.

- Q.** So you had the traditions hanging on the wall ...?
- A.** Yeah, but those were their traditions.
- Q.** What did you do to violate traditions then?
- A.** Just talking about Alcoholics Anonymous, doing things with them. Without their help, a lot of stuff wouldn't have happened, especially the institutional stuff. I've got a letter from Tehachapi [Correctional Institution] or someplace that talks about "double-dippers"—AA/NA meetings. Anonymity sometimes got loose.
- Q.** What about money? Did you take money from outside sources?
- A.** We took money from anyone who had it. [Laughs] There wasn't a whole lot of money floating around back then, anyway. No, we had to learn how to return money, in fact. A couple of places sent us money, saying, "You're doing a good job, blah, blah, blah," so we sent them a letter and sent the money back. We were self-supporting

as best as we could, but there were no funds most of the time. We got most of our printing on credit. Our printer was a program person—AA program—but he printed for us for a long time, years, and waited for the money. We never ended up owing him much; our bills didn't run over two or three hundred dollars for the year.

- Q.** What were you printing then?
- A.** Just the Little White Booklet.
- Q.** That was in 1961?
- A.** Yeah, the early sixties, thereabouts. Then I had to go do some time, clean up some wreckage, and I started a meeting in Tehachapi in 1961. But there again, we kind of rode on the coattails of AA's institutional thing.
- Q.** Were you using AA's literature then?
- A.** No, Jimmy sent me some Little White Booklets, [guidelines for] how to run a meeting, that kind of thing. Anyway, it was the first institutional meeting we had inside, and there were people there who were interested in recovery or at least interested in getting the right piece of paper so they could get out. [Laughs]
- Q.** It looked good to the parole board?
- A.** Sometimes. It didn't look good to my parole board, but that's okay. So we'd ask AA if we could carry in some literature, and they'd usually let us take half the meeting.
- Q.** So there was a lot of leniency in interpretation of the traditions?
- A.** Well, like I said, we didn't understand the traditions then.
- Q.** It sounds like the AA members didn't, either.
- A.** They may have known; they just didn't care.
- Q.** Were there more meetings on the street when you got out?
- A.** Yeah, there were three.
- Q.** All in the Valley?
- A.** No, one in Hollywood, which was important because it was the only one that was inner-city. People were starting to show up in meetings. It became like an alternative [to incarceration]. Not that the parole or probation departments were in our

corner, because they weren't. They still had the idea that they could fix the addict problem. I had a lot of problems with my parole officer, because I wanted to do it my way. I wasn't using, but I was talking crazy shit. I was still having problems with authority. I thought, "I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. I'm bringing you clean tests, and I'm working, and I'm staying at home, and I'm going to these meetings"—and he didn't want me to go to meetings.

Q. So the correctional community was still pretty worried about addicts congregating in those days?

A. Yeah, NA had not been validated. Besides, if you're on parole, you're in violation [for congregating with other addicts or felons]. I had a difficult three or four years with the parole department. I had an attitude, and the parole officer, he said, "Well, I'm going to lock you up and see if you get a change of attitude."

Q. Did your PO do that?

A. Yeah.

Q. That's terrible. So you got locked up for going to meetings.

A. Yeah, but I came to believe in jail, so they actually did me a favor.

So, we ran things [in NA] as much as we were supposed to run them. There was no great filing system, and there was no office. Jimmy probably had the most consistent telephone, so people called him.

Q. As far as decision-making for NA, it was done by whoever was around?

A. No, we had what we called the "parent organization." The parent organization consisted of the secretaries and treasurers of the two or three meetings.

Q. A representative from each meeting?

A. Yeah.

Q. So it was like a mini-ASC?

A. Yeah, there was about ten of us. As far as services, we tried to keep some kind of answering service going. The answering service would answer the phone, then call a list of NA members to see who lived in the area and was available for a Twelfth Step call.

Q. So did you go on a lot of Twelfth Step calls?

A. Oh yeah, a Twelfth Step call used to be quite an event, cause two or three or even six people used to go out on these Twelfth Step calls. You'd get a bunch of people to go because you never knew what you were going to walk into. You'd walk into some pretty weird Twelfth Step calls—drugs on the table, guns on the table, some joker paranoid, and his mama called or he called out of being scared, or whatever. There was a lot of crazy stuff, but we went anyway. We'd go out and capture one, put him in the car, and take him to a house, sit him down and talk to him all night long. There seemed to be a lot of [NA members] who weren't working during the early days.

Q. So you'd sit these guys down and carry the message.

A. Yeah, and we wouldn't let them get away, not for a while, anyway. There wasn't a lot of places to take them for detox so sometimes we'd just have to sit on them. We'd pass them around amongst ourselves.

Q. I'm assuming these guys were willing?

A. Well, they may not have been so willing, but they didn't know what else to do. [Our attitude was] don't call if you don't want help.

Q. So you'd get them through kicking, and turn them loose? They'd either stay or they wouldn't?

A. That's right. Some of us would give them some matches and say: "Go burn yourself up. Don't come around here if you're not serious." I think there was a lot more of that then. It was pretty hard-nosed. I think the way we grew out of that was that when the need increased, we tried to write some paper on how to run a meeting, or about the traditions, or what we expected to do: help addicts stay clean. We needed some committee-type work to get the word out [about NA].

Also in the sixties, there was a big turnaround in [society's] thinking about treating addicts. There was the California Rehabilitation Center,

stuff like that. Along with that, they were doing a lot of radio stuff. They used to come out to meetings and interview right on the parking lot. [It gave us the opportunity to explain] what NA is and isn't. So we started doing some slots about once a month on a call-in radio station. After one of these, people were showing up [at meetings] just by hearing about it on the radio.

Q. When did you start seeing people other than heroin addicts in meetings?

A. Probably around '63 or '64. It was just about the time of the flower children, and you know, they were pouring it on, taking whatever. So we said, "I guess we've just got to tolerate this; it is drugs. They are insane and crazy." And we were seeing it work. People started staying clean. There was a lot of growth from that. Probation officers were sometimes sending people to us. And then there were some community-oriented people, friends of NA, so to speak.

That's where part of our first trustees came from. It was decided that we definitely needed some people who weren't addicts. They could act as advisors. Most of them were people who worked in social work. It was a good exchange. They told us a lot of things we needed to do or needed to train to do. We didn't know anything. We were a bunch of ragtags.

Q. How do you think NA has matured as a whole?

A. I think we're more accepting of the fact that there are people who can do the work. We're very business-like; we're in the mainstream. We weren't recognized in any stream for a lot of years. We really didn't get any recognition until the early seventies.

Q. What happened then?

A. I think the growth started taking place—the Northern California explosion, then Colorado, Australia, England, Philadelphia.... People started finding out that there was a place you could get clean and stay

clean. And the office became very important. Before we got the office, we only had an answering machine and a PO box. When the mail got answered depended a lot on who went to the mailbox or who had the key.

- Q.** So that was the most centralized and stable thing we had?
- A.** That was it. That was our World Service Office.
- Q.** The world in a box.
- A.** That's what it was. I'd just carry stuff around in my trunk until I caught up with someone who could answer it.
- Q.** What do we still have left to do? Where do we still need to mature?
- A.** We need to inform the fellowship [about world services]. They have no idea what's happening at the World Service Conference. They have no idea why the conference even exists.

.....
DEBI S, CALIFORNIA
25 years

- Q.** So you got clean in 1973, right?
- A.** Right.
- Q.** How many NA meetings were there at the time?
- A.** Well, I went into a treatment center, so we went to NA meetings, but there weren't a lot of them, so the treatment center had two NA meetings a week.
- Q.** In-house meetings? Were they open to all NA members?
- A.** Yes, the NA community came in and ran the meetings. So that was the pool of people I got clean with—the people who came to our meetings. They were also the people you saw at all the meetings. We went to other meetings. . . .
- Q.** It's okay to say you went to AA.
- A.** I am going to say that. We went to a lot of AA meetings because there were AA meetings everywhere, every night, and NA was very young. [The treatment center] was in West Los Angeles, so we would get in a car and travel for an hour to some town called El Monte that I had never been in before because that was

where the other NA meeting was. The was also a meeting in the Crenshaw area and one in Hermosa Beach.

So that was it; that was our NA community. We didn't have three or four NA meetings a night to choose from. A lot of times we didn't have transportation, so we had to go [somewhere] close by to get to a meeting, and we went to a lot of AA meetings.

- Q.** I remember once you said at a speaker meeting that your early recovery was in AA, and you asked if the "purists" who had problems with that wanted you to go out and start over.
- A.** Right. A lot of our old-timers had bad experiences in AA in the early days, but I'm one of the ones who had a totally, completely positive experience. [The treatment center] would send carloads of us to meetings in the clubhouses and the people loved us. I mean, here was this carload of young newcomers, and they were, well, to us they looked elderly, but they were probably the same age I am today. They welcomed us; they wanted us to come back, and they didn't make a big deal about the language. I can remember raising my hand and talking about addiction and drugs. They just totally accepted us and encouraged us. I just remember good, positive support from going to those meetings.

Then of course there was the NA literature—there wasn't any. We had the White Booklet and that was it. All of us used the AA Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve. I feel I was very fortunate. I had a sponsor who was into the Twelve Steps, Twelfth Step work, going to hospitals, I mean every weekend.

- Q.** So there wasn't much experience with the Twelve Steps in the NA community at that time?
- A.** No, there wasn't. But when we went to step meetings that were AA-based, they were just filled with information: basic how-to stuff, and personal experiences about how to work the steps.

- Q.** Can a newcomer who's coming into NA now get the same kind of maturity that you had to go to AA to get?

- A.** [Long pause] Sometimes. I'm speaking for myself, but when I came into the program, I didn't know how to judge these people or what kind of program they had, and I wasn't schooled in how to choose a sponsor. They didn't have IPs laying all over the place.

I've had conversations with others who have been clean and around NA a long time, and one thing we've all noticed is that when NA sort of "broke off" formally from AA and we had our own book and our language, there was a positive side to that but there was also a negative side.

The positive side was the unity, the identification for the newcomer. [If a newcomer] comes in and hears all this different language from all these different programs—it's confusing.

- Q.** What was the negative side?
- A.** You lost a lot of the wisdom, a lot of the experience that the older members of AA contributed to people like me.
- Q.** Did we also lose NA members who left NA entirely to sustain their recovery in AA?
- A.** There were a lot of NA members who resented [other NA members] coming in and telling them they had to use this new language. They were reading statements at all the meetings about what [members] said. So they left and took their recovery with them, and we're talking about people who had ten or fifteen years at the time.

I sort of took the position of not fighting anything. I felt that I needed to stay in NA because of the women that were coming in behind me. If all of us bolted . . . I'd not only be cheating myself but the new women that were walking in the door.

There were a lot of times I didn't want to be here, times when I was the only one in the meeting with five years clean, or I was the only woman in the meeting. There was this exodus that happened.

I don't ever deny where I got my foundation. It's difficult sometimes, like when I'm speaking in a meeting, one of the little sayings will crop up or a reference to something that was so embedded in me. At some point, I stopped worrying about it. I can't change my story. I can't change where I came from. Anyway, I worked with it.

Sometimes people would come to me, angry about what NA was trying to push, and I tried to share with them that NA was new and growing. These are people that are fallible, that are going to make mistakes. If someone says something to you that offends you, let it go, stay here [in NA] and be that positive force for the newcomers that walk through the door.

Q. Hasn't a lot of that hostility blown over—like if a newcomer shares in a meeting that she's clean and sober, there isn't a lot of hissing and booing?

A. Right. It went from one extreme to the other, and now it's kind of balanced out. I think people are more reasonable about it.

I think about newcomers in treatment centers, and they get taken to a different kind of meeting every night of the week. They don't know what's going on. You don't want to humiliate them out of the room, but that's what was happening back in the early eighties. That has stopped.

Q. So NA has grown up a little bit?

A. Yes, absolutely.

.....
MELVYN B, AUSTRALIA

23 years

Q. What was your involvement in NA in Australia when you got clean?

A. There was no NA at all.

Q. And you live in Melbourne, right? Was there anything going on in Sydney?

A. There was and there wasn't. There was a guy using the NA name for his rehab center, and there was a lot of controversy and starting and stopping.

The main start, I suppose, was in Melbourne. One of the things I've found out about "historians" is that

they often miss out on what they don't want to hear or don't like. I can tell you about how NA got started here, but it's not a rags-to-riches, addict-was-desperate [story]. They were all clean members of AA.

How I got involved was I was going to AA meetings, and I ran across this book from Hazelden, and I thought, "This is good. I wonder if they've got any more." So I wrote away to Hazelden about 1975. They sent me a catalog, and inside the catalog were a couple of [NA] things. There was the Little White Book, and there was a guide to the family of the drug abuser.

Q. Was that from NA?

A. No, that was from Families Anonymous. Anyway, there was a lot of stuff. I sent away for it, and it all came. It caused a lot of controversy—it was unapproved literature, it was this, it was that.

Anyway, about that time I got very sick and was diagnosed with tuberculosis. I had to go in the hospital, and while I was there I decided to become a volunteer alcohol and drug counselor. Part of my training was to spend a day or half a day at every [drug treatment] facility in Melbourne. So I went around to all these places, and what I discovered was that there was nothing for addicts who wanted to stop using and there was nothing for parents who wanted help for their pain. So with the literature I had from Hazelden, I knew about NA and FA and I decided to start them both. That's when I wrote off to Jimmy K. I got a lovely letter back with some encouragement plus the literature that was available at that time—which was quite good—The NA Tree and stuff like that.

Q. How long did it take to get a response?

A. Oh, it was almost immediately.

Q. That's great. Knowing how mail was answered at the time, I'm pleasantly surprised.

A. Anyway, I was going around to AA meetings and at the young people's group here in Melbourne, I heard

others talking about drugs. I met [several people] and we decided to get NA going. We'd heard about NA starting and stopping in Sydney and we went to see a couple who had been involved there. I looked for a place to hold the meetings, and we found a place. What actually happened was that Narcotics Anonymous and Families Anonymous started within a week of each other at the same place. And as far as I know that was the start of the tradition-oriented NA that has been spread around Australia.

Q. What year was that?

A. 1976. The interesting thing from my point of view is that if I hadn't gotten into counseling... I was able to speak about my drug use at AA and so were the others. In other words, I didn't need NA to stay clean and sober, and neither did they.

Then for me there's always been a connection with FA. That, of course, has caused anger and resentment in other people who don't like that historical connection.

Q. Why do you think they don't like it?

A. Well, if you want to get neurotic about the traditions, talk to NA members, because there are a lot of very uptight people around. How we've survived I don't know, because there's certainly an element of self-destruction in NA. Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself....

So that's how it started. There were [seven of us] and that's how it stayed for a while. The first guy who got clean and sober in NA was the best man at my wedding.

Q. I like that.

A. Yeah. I got him to AA and he didn't like AA. Later on he got sicker and I took him to NA, and as far as I know he's been clean and sober ever since. He started NA in Bendigo.

Q. What was going on in Sydney at the time? Nothing?

A. No. I think it was around about 1982 or '83 that we started having groups that were following the traditions and getting stronger in Sydney.

Continued on page 15

Beyond belief

I've always believed in God, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that I believed in God like I believed in the North Pole.

The North Pole is there at the top of the planet (or side or bottom if you're in space). I've never seen it, but I know it's there. What impact does the existence of the North Pole have on my life?

None. Absolutely none. Nor did my belief in God. To me, it's interesting how addicts seem to transfer to God their dislike of anybody telling them what to do. At least that was true for me.

I rebelled against the very idea of a Higher Power that expected something from me. I treated the God of my understanding selfishly. I would ask for its help when I was about to get arrested. I would cry out in fear to God when I thought I was dying of too many drugs. The only time I ever thought about the idea that God might want something from me was when I attempted to strike some sort of cosmic deal such as, "Okay, God, give me my girlfriend back and I'll stop doing drugs. I'll start calling my mother—every day."

So there. I guess I did have some ideas about what God wanted from me: no drugs, call mom. Or, on a larger scale that I can see in retrospect, stop treating my body and spirit with disrespect; be less selfish; think about the person who gave birth to me. The trouble was, I didn't care what God wanted. I had no relationship with Him.

I was very fortunate when I came into the program to hear someone point out the significance of the Second Step: We came to believe *that God could restore us to sanity*, not just that we came to believe in God.

All I needed to believe about God was that He could restore me to sanity. What I really needed was to build a relationship with God.

So I began. One of the first things I did was just sit down in a quiet and private place and talk to God. I felt ridiculous sometimes, but I did it. For me, what really worked was just talking to God like I would talk to a friend, a friend who was bore-proof, I might add. I told God about what I was thinking about, what I said that day to whomever, what my friends and family were doing and what I thought about it, what I was feeling, how much I liked my apartment, and so on.

I discovered a couple of things, and I think anyone who tries building a relationship with God this way will have the same experience. First of all, I couldn't lie to God. It was absurd to even try. Think about it.

Second of all, I found I felt less ridiculous the more I did it, and I found that my mouth was beginning to speak the truths my heart already knew.

Third, I could get angry at God and He wouldn't go away.

My conversations with God began to get very introspective. There has never been much separation between prayer and meditation for me. I listen, I inventory myself, I ask for things, mostly knowledge of God's will for me these days.

What have I discovered about God's will for me?

Calling my mother every day notwithstanding, I believe He wants me to live by the principles of the Twelve Steps of NA. They seem to include almost everything that would make a good person: honesty, humility, generosity, sensitivity, awareness. The steps teach us how to live.

I'll keep learning.

Sam B, Illinois ♦

Will you still need me?

When I was a young man there were two things I was sure of: I would die loaded, and I wouldn't live past thirty. Well, lo and behold, neither of these things came about. Believe me, I was more surprised than anyone. I'd have bet anything (actually, I did; I bet everything) that I would be dead and buried loaded to the gills before 1976.

What a shock! 1977 dawned, then '78, and so on. And now here I am. It's 1998, rapidly heading for the turn of the century, the millennium, the day all the computers break! What's a poor recovering addict to do? I'm fifty-one years old, athletically inclined with a body that balks, horny as hell with prospects ranging from slim to none, paying my bills but driving a Lexus—not!

How, and more importantly, *where* can I take stock? Is there a place for me to get old in NA? Or, as John Lennon put it, "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?"

The world is driven by youth. This is true in NA as well. The most important person in any meeting is the newcomer (though "newcomer" is already a metaphor for youth, it seems literally true that most newcomers are young in age). NA services often get asked about meetings for young people, activities for young people, etc. This is fine; this is good; this is the natural order of things—but what about us dinosaurs? (I mean "dinosaurs" as a metaphor, too—not just more than forty years old, but more than ten years clean as well.) I'd like to mention a few of our needs, desires, and limitations.

I want to go to a meeting once a week where someone shares about her kid wanting a new car when he doesn't even know how to change the oil in the one he has. I long to hear a woman share about the insecurities she feels going on a date in her mid-forties, and she's never gone on a date without getting high first before now. I'm interested in how an addict with Hepatitis C interacts with his insurance company to try to make sure he gets the proper care. I'd like to hear the pride a parent has to share when his son or daughter graduates from high school. I'd like to feel comfortable talking about intimate situations that develop in middle age that I've never had to deal with before but are very relevant now. Unfortunately, I don't feel comfortable at most meetings now.

There is also another side, a very positive side, to this. I'd like to attend a meeting once a week where types of meditation are shared about and NA members share about the success or failure they've had with different types of meditation. I'd like to hear more people talk about service successes and share the secrets and techniques they've learned over the years for offering the most successful service commitments possible. I'd like to hear a healthy dose of sharing from my peers for whom the obsession to use drugs has long been gone and who are now finding that other problems in life have claimed center stage and are begging for surrender, acceptance, and prayer.

Don't get me wrong. There is nothing, I repeat, nothing, more moving or more important to my recovery than hearing a newcomer share that he or she

has "gotten it"—the message that you never have to use again. The excitement that goes along with that is what pumps the lifeblood of our fellowship. It's just that my needs have grown with my recovery and my age.

I'm looking for help and direction with these other areas of my life as well. I am aware of certain groups that have tailored their format to facilitate something along the lines of what I've shared about in this article. One group I know of asks that only members with more than five years clean share; also, they only get speakers with more than ten years clean. All addicts, it goes without saying, are welcome. Another group has one meeting a month set aside for members with more than five years clean to share. The other weeks are open participation. These are a couple of things that have been done to try to make meetings more helpful for members with substantial clean time. I'd like to hear about others.

Now for the age issue. How do younger members feel when someone like myself shares about lower back problems or my interest in how to apply the first three steps to consequences of aging? Is it necessary, or appropriate, to start a meeting with a format geared to "Senior (over 40) NA members?" How would this be viewed by other members or by the fellowship as a whole?

It seems to me that the *NA Way* is the best forum we have to open up discussions like this in our worldwide fellowship. Please write letters to the editor giving your opinion on these questions so we can get a sense of how we feel about them.

Hey, do you think I could get a senior citizen's discount on NA literature?

Jeff G, California ♦

A smooth operation

It started off like any normal Monday morning—up at 4 a.m., grab my smokes, and head out to the living room. Turn on ESPN, make a cup of hot tea, and just try to let the morning fog clear from between my ears. Wait till the last possible minute, jump into my clothes, and put on my boots. While bending over to tie my boots, I feel a sharp pain in my chest. "Ouch! This doesn't feel right," I say to myself. But as I straighten up, the pain goes away just as fast as it appeared.

So off to work I go. The trip to Modesto is uneventful. I hop in my truck and set out for Sacramento. Once there, I climb down from the truck and bang!—there's that pain again. I tell a fellow driver what's going on and he suggests two antacids. I don't think it will help, but I take them anyway.

No change. I can still feel the pain, though it's not as bad as the first attack. I call the office to tell them what's happening to me, and everyone starts to freak out. I tell them it's not a heart attack (wrong location), but that doesn't matter. They send a cab to pick me up and take me to the hospital. The first thing I tell the hospital staff is that I'm an addict in recovery, and they need to make damn sure everyone treating me is aware of this fact.

Nine hours, and countless tests, blood samples, and X-rays later, they released me to the custody of my wife, who had driven up from Stockton to see how I was. The doctor told me that I had suffered a minor gallbladder attack due to sludge and a few stones.

That was the good news; it seemed that the only way to correct the problem was to have the stones surgically removed. I had been operated on once before, but I was only seven at the time. Having my tonsils removed was no big deal, but this was different! I was an adult and understood how things like surgery work.

I was instructed to contact a surgeon and get everything set up for the surgery. I was told of all the good things

(food) that I'd have to give up till the surgery was over. Somehow I couldn't see being on a fat-free diet. One of my many addictions is to food that's not good for me. (Does polish sausage ring any bells?)

One of the first things I did when I got home was call my sponsor. His reassurance, along with taking it to my Higher Power, somehow eased the fear that was slowly trying to take over my emotions.

The next day I saw the surgeon. He confirmed that the only way to correct the problem was to have surgery to have my gall bladder removed. Surgery was scheduled, and I contacted my employers to let them know I'd be off work for several weeks. They offered their support and wished me well.

During the time between the doctor's visit and the time I went in to have the surgery, I went to a lot of meetings and shared openly about my fear of what lay ahead. Other members shared their experience, strength, and hope—and their prayers. One of the many things I've learned in recovery is that fear can be defeated by gaining knowledge about what I'm afraid of. My sponsor kept reminding me that I wouldn't be alone: God would be there, holding my hand. Seeking strength from my Higher Power has enabled me to face my fears. I only have to trust in His love for me and trust this process we call recovery through NA.

The surgery went as planned, except for a three-hour delay in starting. (My doctor got hung up with another patient.) While I was waiting, I joked with the surgical team. They were nice enough to explain the entire procedure, and they showed me all the instruments that would be used to remove my gall bladder.

When I awoke after the surgery, I was back in my room. Both my wife and my sponsor were there. Of course, God was with me as well, and I'm reminded of how truly blessed I am to have these people, along with you, my NA family, in my life today.

Sunday morning, several recovering addicts dropped by after the men's meeting to see how I was doing. One of them handed me a card that had been

signed by all my brothers in recovery who had been at the meeting. I did a good job of holding back the tears that came from reading the notes that each member had written. Printed in the center of the card was the inscription: You are loved. To this day I can't find the words to explain how much that card moved me, but I can say that I am both loved and blessed.

Later that Sunday I was released from the hospital. I called my sponsor to let him know I made it home in one piece. He asked if I felt up to a meeting that evening. You can guess what my answer was: Yes! People were shocked to see me there, but that was just where I needed to be. By turning over all the pain I felt, God took that pain away and left me just enough pain that I could manage with a dose of Tylenol. Again, the program teaches us that if we can turn it over to a loving God, He can help us overcome any obstacle in life.

By Tuesday afternoon I was no longer taking anything on a regular basis for the pain. I'm not trying to say that anyone should suffer. If the pain had increased, I wouldn't have hesitated to take something that had been prescribed to ease it. I have no need to be a martyr, but the power of prayer was just what the doctor ordered.

At the time of this writing, I am recovering from another surgery (lucky me). All those years of snorting, smoking, and otherwise ingesting crank had taken a toll on my teeth. Remembering that being responsible includes taking care of myself, I made all the necessary arrangements to begin having my teeth repaired. None of my upper teeth were salvageable, so the only recourse was to have them pulled and have a new set of plastic teeth installed.

Never in all my years of recovery did I think I'd do something as drastic as oral surgery (does anyone really like going to the dentist?). Once again, I turned my fear over to God and shared with others in meetings. I didn't know that so many of us (sorry, no names) had suffered the same dental fate. One addict helping another is absolutely without parallel.

It's only been forty-eight hours since my surgery, and most of the pain is gone.

Once again, the many blessings that come with working the Twelve Steps, remaining teachable and open-minded, and sharing my hopes and fears with other addicts in the program have helped me get through another major event in my life. I know that I never have to face any of life's challenges alone—unless I choose to, and, just for today, that choice isn't an option. I hope that my story will help someone who may be facing similar events to seek out courage in the meetings and in the fellowship. If it can work for this old recovering crankster, I'm sure it can work for you.

Jeff B, California ♦

It just gets better

I came into NA when I was forty years old (life begins at forty, right?). I knew that I couldn't continue living the way I had been living, but I was afraid of what a life without drugs would be like at that age.

For about sixty days, all I did was go to meetings and read the Basic Text—after I acquired a copy at twenty days clean. I was struggling to stay clean, and I realized if I wanted to go any further, I needed to do more than I had been doing.

I asked someone to be my sponsor (thank God, fourteen years later I still have the same sponsor) and got involved in service. That's when I truly began my recovery process. My life got progressively better, slowly at times, but steadily better. I had forgotten all the things my disease had told me about my age, that I was too old to get clean, etc.

One day, when I had about two years clean, I looked in the mirror. I was disturbed at what I saw. That youthful, cocky, arrogant, twenty-five-year-old man was no longer staring back at me. I said to myself, "Where have all the years gone? I've wasted most of my life." Following on the heels of that thought was another: "Gee, I had best take advantage of being clean and try to live life to the best of my ability and circumstances."

Looking for an opportunity to be of service?

As a result of the changes adopted at last year's World Service Conference, we are conducting a worldwide search for members who are interested in being of service. We need members with five or more years clean who have skills and experience that would be helpful in developing world service projects. If you speak more than one language, or have valuable professional or NA service experience, we would like to hear from you. While specific skills are needed, the only absolute is the clean time requirement.

In order to be considered, you will need to provide us with a completed service résumé. You can obtain a copy of the new World Pool application form (and more information) by contacting the World Service Office or you can download the form from our website.

Prior to the next World Service Conference, the Human Resources Panel will contact qualified candidates and inform them of the specific qualifications for serving on the World Board, its committees, and other world service positions such as WSC co-facilitator or the HSP itself.

In order to properly consider your World Pool application before WSC'99, we would appreciate receiving them before 1 January 1999.

*In service,
The Human Resources Panel*

As time progressed, I experienced all the physical signs of getting on in age: gray hair, receding hairline, losing a step or two on the handball court, aches and pains in the morning, and—worst of all—being at an NA function, looking out over the dance floor, and acknowledging to myself that these young women were looking right through me; they didn't even know I existed.

I began to experience some medical problems. When I had about eight years clean, I was diagnosed with a disease of the liver which over a period of time could be fatal. During my ninth birthday week, I ended up in the hospital after two separate heart attacks.

For the next few years, I was in and out of the hospital, extremely ill from the liver disease. I ultimately ended up getting a liver transplant. At times I would think, "Here I am, over fifty, with all these medical problems, in and out of surgery—is this what my life is all about?"

But my despair never lasted long. Truly, my life has never been better. Being close to the end of this journey a few times has made me realize what's most important. Life is so precious, and I am so grateful to NA for showing me how to live.

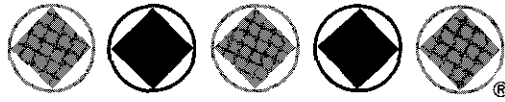
It's usually pretty easy to work a "good program" when everything is go-

ing okay. For me, the real beauty of recovery has been shown in how the program comes to light during the times of my darkest hours—whatever those have been at any given time. During all the turmoil of growing older, I've had a gift that wouldn't let me give up. The gift is the program of Narcotics Anonymous and all that working this program entails: the Twelve Steps, a loving God of my understanding, service, and a loving fellowship (all of you). I would never have made it this far without the love of my Higher Power and the love of the fellowship.

Growing old? Because of NA, I have been able to age gracefully (and gratefully). I've been able to do this because even when I'm sick, I continue to go to meetings, I still read NA literature, I still sponsor other men, I'm still of service, and—perhaps more than anything else—I still seek to improve my conscious contact with the God of my understanding.

Who would have thought that I'd even be alive at this age, and clean too? So long as I stay in recovery, growing old isn't all that bad.

Anonymous ♦



SERVICE

One world

W SB, WSC, WSO, WSCLC, WSCPI, WSCH&I—these were just some of the letters in NA's alphabet soup. Many of our members never differentiated between the World Service Board of Trustees, the World Service Office, the World Service Conference, and WSC committees. It was all just "World"—as in "I'm going to call World and see what they say about such-and-such" or "Maybe we can get someone from World to come to our learning day."

Following action taken at the 1998 World Service Conference, that's pretty much the way it is. It used to be that there was a board elected by the WSC to manage the WSO. There also used to be another board—this one made up of trustees. This board didn't have anything to do with managing the office, but the members of it directed individual staff on projects and tasks that the trustees were responsible for—projects they had been assigned by the WSC. The WSC, in addition to assigning tasks to trustee committees, assigned them to WSC standing committees. Often, the WSB committees and the WSC committees had trouble figuring out who was supposed to make which decision, and even more often found themselves doing duplicate work. There was a World Convention Corporation, a World Service Translation Committee, and an Editorial Advisory Board for *The NA Way Magazine*. In addition to all this, there was a WSC Administrative Committee that was charged with overseeing everything, and there was an Interim Committee that was supposed to make decisions while the WSC was not in session.

Sound confusing?

The people who had to work in that system certainly thought it was. So, after years of preparation and discussion, the conference decided to combine and consolidate all the different world service entities into one organization: Narcotics Anonymous World Services, or NAWS, as it has already been dubbed.

This consolidation will streamline the process of world services providing services to members, groups, and local NA communities. We expect no interruption in the delivery of routine services to the fellowship.

If you'd like to know more about what happened at the World Service Conference, a copy of the conference summary report is available upon request. ♦

Networking with professionals

By Jeff S, past member
WSC PI Committee

The following was developed by the now-disbanded WSC PI Committee as resource material to help members who are involved in PI service work.

Introduction

Developing one-on-one relationships with professionals in the therapeutic community is an oft-neglected activity among local public information committees. Many addicts arrive because of a referral from someone in a helping profession or the criminal justice system. But in order for professionals to give those referrals, they must know about NA and be confident that their clients will receive the help they need.

Both ingredients are important. Obviously someone can't make a referral if they don't know we exist, but on the other hand, no one is going to make a referral to Narcotics Anonymous if they are aware of our fellowship but view us as a bunch of flakes. Ongoing personal contact goes a long way toward raising expectations and increasing the comfort levels of professionals.

Who are professionals?

Who are the professionals we should be talking to? Their titles will vary from country to country. Essentially, they are people who may be in a position to talk to drug addicts who need recovery. They include, but are not limited to:

- Treatment professionals
- Parole and probation officers
- Halfway house counselors
- Mental health professionals
- Social workers
- Clergy
- Doctors

Make a commitment

The first thing that you must do to be effective is to make a commitment to a small amount of time each week to talk to some of these people. It could be one or two hours a week. That is enough to talk with several contacts,

provide a brief introduction of what NA is, and ask for a couple of names of other professionals who could use some basic information about Narcotics Anonymous. The amount of time is less important than the commitment to regular contact. We have a long history of not fulfilling our commitments in every form of service. This has given us a bad reputation with many professionals, and rightly so, but it is never too late to make amends. A solid commitment to follow through and a consistent track record go a long way toward repairing that reputation.

What to say

The goal of this contact is to provide the professional with a short introduction to NA, a meeting list, and maybe some basic informational pamphlets. A misunderstanding among many professionals in the therapeutic community is the notion that "NA is just like AA except it's for drugs." We can effectively correct this misconception by emphasizing that in NA we recover from the disease of addiction, not from any specific substance. This is apparent in our First Step: "We admitted we were powerless over our *addiction*, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Following that, we should ask if they would like a panel presentation or if there is anything else we can do, and then listen. If it is within our power and the traditions to help, great. If not, explain the reasons why as simply and succinctly as possible. Most people are prepared to hear "no" as an answer to a request, and honestly, they usually prefer to hear it sooner rather than later. They especially prefer to hear a "no" rather than a "yes" that is not honored. Whatever we say we will do, we must try to do—to the best of our ability.

Stay organized

Keep a journal of the individuals whom you contacted. Record names and contact information. Record pertinent details of the discussion, any materials you left with him/her, and the date. This information will be very useful in helping you determine when to follow up with another visit. It will also be helpful to the next member of the PI

committee who will be contacting these professionals.

This information will also serve to update and expand your database of professionals for direct mail projects, broadcast fax, and other purposes in the future.

Concerns

Unlike PI panels, which should never be done alone, phone calls and personal visits are often handled by one person. If this is the case, it is important to keep the visit short and to the point. Don't let yourself be drawn into extended discussions about NA if at all possible. This is only an introduction. Invite the professional to your next PI panel or community meeting where there will be more NA members to answer questions for several professionals. Remind the professional that NA is a very large fellowship and you are but a trusted servant. It is important that the professionals understand that there are no "bosses" in NA.

The following is an example of a form you can use to keep track of your professional contacts:

Sample PI Networking Contact Sheet

Trusted Servant: _____
Date: _____
Organization: _____
Phone: _____
Contact name: _____
Fax: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

Reason for contact:

- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Follow-up
- ☐ Meeting list update
- ☐ Other

Materials sent or left:

- ☐ Introduction packet
- ☐ Informational pamphlet
- ☐ Updated meeting list
- ☐ Event flyers

Comments: _____

The following dramatic demonstration illustrates some of the questions you may be asked during a professional contact and some suggested ways of answering such questions:

Dramatic Demonstration

The phone call

(ring . . . ring . . . ring)

Professional: Basic Treatment Center. This is Joe Counselor. Can I help you?

Trusted servant: Hello, Joe, my name is _____. I'm a recovering addict in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I'm calling professionals in the chemical dependency field today to talk about NA, answer any questions you may have, and give you some literature that can help you in providing your clients with the help they need to recover from the disease of addiction. Is now a good time to talk, or would it be better to set up an appointment for a later date?

P: Well, I have a couple of minutes right now. What is Narcotics Anonymous all about?

TS: I'll just give you a brief description. We're a non-profit fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We meet regularly in informal groups to share our recovery and how we are staying clean with one another. We're a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. Anyone can join us; the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using.

P: Wow! I'd really like to spend some more time talking to you than I have right now. Can we set up an appointment for later?

TS: Sure, I usually stop by to see people on Wednesday afternoons. I have an opening at 1 p.m. Is that good for you?

P: That sounds good. Do you know where my office is?

TS: I have your address. Should I ask for you at the reception desk or come directly to your office?

P: Oh, just come on up—third floor, room 339.

TS: Great! I've got you down for 1 p.m. I'll see you then. Good-bye.

P: Bye.

The visit (knock, knock)

P: Hello.

TS: Hi, I'm _____. We spoke on the phone about Narcotics Anonymous and set up a one o'clock appointment.

P: Oh yes, great. I'm pleased to meet you. How are you?

TS: Excellent, thank you very much. And you?

P: Very well, thank you. I was very interested in what you had to say during our phone call. Thanks for taking the time to stop by. What exactly is your title? Are you a counselor?

TS: No. We don't have counselors. Almost all our services are provided by volunteers. We're called "trusted servants" within the fellowship. My responsibility is to introduce professionals like yourself to Narcotics Anonymous, answer any questions you might have, and find out if there's anything NA can do to help you.

P: NA is pretty much like AA, then?

TS: I'm glad you asked that. The program we follow is similar to AA's in that we also follow Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, but rather than focusing on recovery from a specific drug, we focus on recovery from the disease of addiction. This encompasses all drugs, including alcohol.

P: Oh, I see. How many meetings do you have in the area?

TS: We have ____ weekly meetings here in the city, and statewide we have more than ____ weekly NA meetings. I've brought a current local meeting list and one that covers the entire state. We update them every three months. I can send you a new list each time they're printed. Would that be okay?

P: Yes, that would be very helpful.

TS: Great, I'll put you on our regular mailing list. If you'd like, I can also put you on our broadcast fax list to receive announcements of dances and other functions our fellowship puts on.

P: That's an excellent idea! Send it to 555-5555. I've been wanting to send my clients to social functions in a recovering atmosphere.

TS: I also brought you some introductory literature: An Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous, and some informational pamphlets.

P: Thanks.

TS: Is there anything else I can do for you right now?

P: Well, actually, I would like to have someone come in and make a presentation to my clients. Is that possible?

TS: Yes. We could do that. Why don't you come to our next panel presentation to community professionals? It's scheduled for ____ at _____. Here's a flyer announcing the meeting. Also, we have an introductory video available from our Regional Service Office called "Just for Today." You can also order other literature from the office. Here's an order form with the office's address and phone number on it. If you'd like a panel of NA members to come in and make a presentation to your clients, I'll need to speak with my committee about making arrangements for it. We meet in two weeks. I'll call you the following week with some dates and times.

P: Thanks a lot.

TS: It's been a pleasure meeting with you. Do you have any colleagues you think I should contact?

P: As a matter of fact, you should talk to my boss. He really needs to hear more about the resources available in our community.

TS: Thanks, I'll contact him. One of the pamphlets I've given you is called "NA: A Resource in Your Community." Would you mind passing that on to him and letting him know I'll be calling to follow up?

P: Sure.

TS: Great! Once again, it's been a pleasure meeting you. My committee and I look forward to working with you for a long time.

P: Well, the feeling is mutual. Have a good afternoon.

TS: You too. ♦

Set free

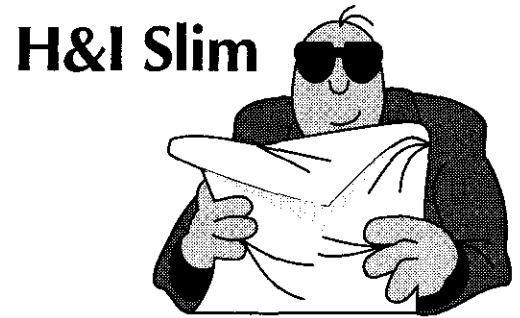
I'm an addict and my name is Pam. At the end of my addiction, I had voluntarily committed myself to a psychiatric hospital. The insurmountable fear I had of going on with life had paralyzed me. My life was saved because of a loving Higher Power, an H&I panel, and the Basic Text. As a result, I've been clean for three-and-a-half years and I'm passionately committed to H&I work.

I have been involved with H&I since I had thirty days clean. I cannot put into words what it feels like to do H&I work. The humility and gratitude I feel go beyond what mere words can describe. I have an insatiable appetite for service work and my recovery. If it hadn't been for H&I, I don't know where I'd be today: in jail, in an institution, or dead. I am truly grateful.

I've learned that it really helps me carry the message on H&I panels if I bring my Basic Text with me. The message we carry comes from our Basic Text and it does not change. Since we never know the results of our Twelfth Step work, we cannot go wrong by referring to the Basic Text. When I'm at an H&I commitment and nobody on the panel can relate to a particular addict's personal experience, all we need to do is refer to the Basic Text. It helps any addict feel "a part of," and steers them away from focusing on the differences between us.

I came into recovery as an agnostic. At thirty days clean, I was blessed with seeing my HP at the world convention in Baltimore, Maryland. During the concert held in the outdoor amphitheater, my HP revealed herself and spoke to me. She asked if I was ready to surrender. When my response was "Yes!" she kept repeating over and over to me: "You are free. You have surrendered. You have nothing to fear." (I was completely done detoxing when this happened.)

I have not only been set free from the obsession to use and the self-made prison of my mind; I am free from the degradation and hopelessness that I came from. As a result, my faith continues to grow. ♦



For those of you who haven't had the pleasure, H&I Slim is the ultimate H&I kinda guy. He hangs out in hospitals and jails all over the world. You might say he's always in the know, and always on the go. Got a question about H&I? Need some help? Write H&I Slim in care of WSO.

Dear H&I Slim,

My region regularly puts on H&I workshops—sometimes as many as two a month. We use the *H&I Handbook*, and from time to time we also bring in State Department of Corrections officers to answer questions about their facilities. My question to you is: Since we put on so many workshops, what other resources can we use to make the workshops more informative and interesting to those attending them?

Looking for more info

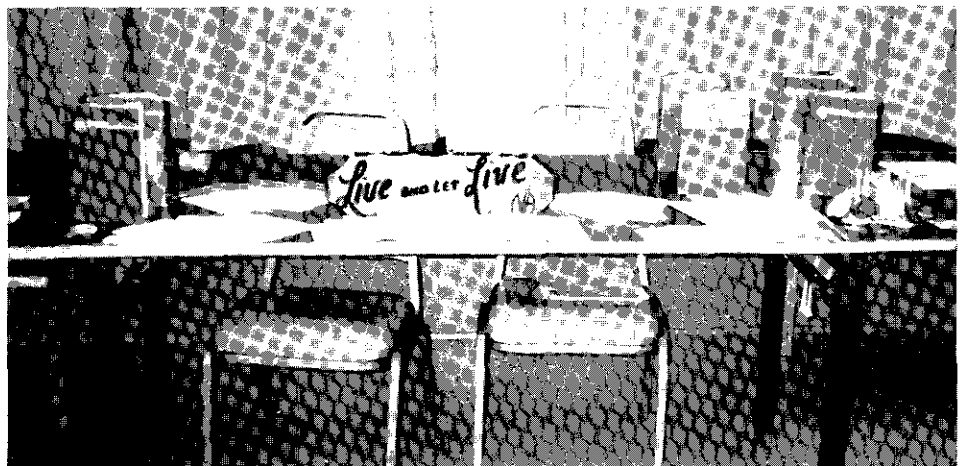
Dear looking,

First of all, let me say congratulations to your committee and your region on working to carry our message through H&I service. You're right—our *H&I Handbook* is our best source of information, but there are a few others. The audiotope that comes with the *Handbook* is excellent. It can be played at a workshop as well as listened to by panel members on their way to an institution. There are also several H&I-related bulletins, the two newest of which are "Men with Men, Women with Women" and "H&I Meetings in Methadone Clinics."

Also, WSO has some material drawn from skits put on by members of the WSC H&I Committee. This material is available upon request.

H&I Slim

Picture this



The "Live and Let Live" Group in Baltimore, Maryland, was founded in 1984, and has been meeting in this room ever since. There are about twenty active home group members, and the meeting regularly draws more than 100 people.

- Q.** One thing I'm sure our readers would like to know is how much NA has matured. You've told me some things about how immature NA was then, what with the traditions police on one end of the spectrum and people at the other end who knew nothing about the traditions....
- A.** That's the way it is now. In the early days, it was much better.
- Q.** How so?
- A.** It was just more relaxed. We had the basic outline of what we needed to do and we were all trying to work for a common cause, but as it got bigger, it had room for people to be bloody-minded.
- Q.** In what areas do you think NA still has some growing to do? Where do we still have problems?
- A.** Narrow-mindedness. Rigidity. Addicts coming along are not going to accept that authoritative do-as-I-did, go-to-meetings, read-the-book, work-the-steps attitude.
- Q.** Are you basically talking about certain NA members not accepting people seeking additional help outside of NA such as therapy or religion?
- A.** A perfect example is a cartoon I saw in the *NA Way*. This woman was talking about finding [something else] and the woman on the other end was getting more and more worried.
- Q.** Right, that was the January 1998 issue.
- A.** I nearly wrote to you about it.
- Q.** Well, now you don't have to because you're being interviewed for the magazine.
- A.** I thought the cartoon was shaming people who wanted to do other things outside of NA. [That attitude] ultimately causes divisiveness because it shows intolerance. We've got to have respect for people. When we shame them for doing something outside of a narrow point of view, then we're not respecting them. I mean, what you published was the norm [in NA]. When I became a full-time counselor, there was a lot of prejudice. What's more, I'm an atheist. That has caused enormous problems for people—not for

me as a recovering person, but for others. Then I stopped going to meetings. That was another problem because I got so much shit at meetings and I was sending my clients to meetings. They said you couldn't stay clean without going to meetings. Nonsense!

I bought all that when I was new. If you wanted to meet someone who was gung-ho on meetings, steps, Twelfth Step work, I was that person originally. I changed as time went on. Now [I ask]: What is recovery about? What is the sickness? What is within us that's recovering? And there's more than one way to do that.

NA is always going to be reborn with new people maturing within the fellowship and implanting their persona on it. But what's dangerous is the idea of "circling the wagons"—outside is bad and inside is good.

I don't believe addiction is a disease. That's absolute nonsense to me. For addiction to be named a disease—that was useful in 1935 and 1953. It's useful now if you just want to get clean and not go any further. You know yourself how many addicts get clean, but are into other addictions.

- Q.** Or just don't make any fundamental changes ...
- A.** Exactly. Another [conflict I have with NA's philosophy] is that I don't have a God. You take a look at the steps and they have a real God-orientation. I spend a lot of time counseling people to work through the first three steps using their own higher self or whatever so we can move on to the important steps: the fourth and fifth.
- But we keep treating this stuff as sacrosanct. This is in the book, therefore it must be true. I helped write the Basic Text, not just my story, but the stuff inside the text itself. That was written by fallible human beings who were writing what they could at that particular time.
- Q.** I was going to tell you that some of the new literature, particularly the new Step Working Guides, make mention of members using a set of principles at their Higher Power or their own highest self.

- A.** That's a good trend, but when you get in there in the groups and people come in and they're desperate and they're told, "This is what you have to believe"—it's very easy to propagandize the old stuff. Older members stayed clean because they had support from the fellowship, but that's the thing: You only get support if you follow the party line. If you don't, you'll get condemned, you'll get ostracized. It happens to new people. It happens to people like me. The love is not unconditional.

- Q.** So you think NA really needs some unconditional love, then?

- A.** Yes, because that's the thing that really heals.

.....
DAVE F, PENNSYLVANIA
24 years

- Q.** What was NA like when you found it in 1974?
- A.** There was a local rehab here, and it was a very enlightened rehab in that it opened its doors to addicts. It treated alcoholics for five or six years, and in the late sixties began treating addicts. The director believed that the same principles that worked for alcoholism would also work for addiction.
- So there was NA on the ground at that time. There were two NA meetings a week and there had been NA off and on in Philadelphia, but mostly on since about 1969. There's a quick, interesting little story...
- Q.** Do tell.
- A.** It has to do with the importance of literature. An addict from this area had gone to an AA convention in California in 1969, and he met some people who said, "Look, there's NA out here." And they handed him one—one!—copy of the Little White Book. He brought it back to the rehab and showed it to a friend of his who was a therapist at the rehab and they started an NA meeting. All they knew about NA was what they got from the Little White Book.
- Q.** That was enough, I guess.
- A.** That's right. And from that, people who went through the rehab started meetings in their own communities,

so by the time I came in in January 1974, there were about a half-dozen meetings in the Delaware Valley, which is Philadelphia and the surrounding suburban communities.

Also about that time—the late sixties, early seventies—the drug problem was growing. A lot of drug rehabs were starting to spring up that were modeled more on the Synanon approach, which was therapeutic communities [advocating long withdrawal from society]. A lot of them never addressed the problem of alcohol in the life of an addict.

Then here was this Little White Booklet and meetings that made it very clear that alcohol was a drug. That was a radical minority view at that time. There were rehabs that, after you were there a year, would try to teach you how to drink socially. They would take you out in the evenings and try to show you how to have one or two beers.

- Q.** We've come a long way. How about the Twelve Traditions? Did the NA community in Philadelphia follow them? Did you talk about them?
- A.** That's a very interesting topic because everybody went to AA. Nobody would have even attempted—it would have been viewed as foolhardy and half-stepping—to try to stay clean solely on NA meetings. [NA members] simply didn't have the clean time. I remember my first home group. It was a big meeting because it would have something like twelve or fifteen people, and that's really about all the addicts that were going to NA.
- Q.** And that was a huge NA meeting in Philadelphia in 1974?
- A.** Huge. And there was someone down there who was rumored to have three years. That was an extraordinary amount of time. So we all went to AA, and that's something people in the fellowship today have a hard time understanding. We read AA literature at the meetings.
- So with the exception of our relationship with AA, I'd say we followed the traditions. There was a meeting in a treatment center, and

[the staff] insisted that addicts [from outside] have a urine test before going to the meeting. So what we called the "Intergroup" then voted not to support that meeting because it was a violation of traditions.

- Q.** That's a controversial issue even today.
- A.** But we never viewed ourselves as a "little AA." We had our own personality from the beginning. We went to AA to learn spirituality and about the steps from alcoholics who had more experience with them.
- Q.** Would you say that NA language played a role in developing NA's identity?
- A.** I don't think so at all. We had a very clear identity. We had our own activities. We had our own Intergroup. We had our own public relations committee trying to get the message out, I'd say even more aggressively then than now. We had a hotline in Philadelphia, and it rang in an addict's home. So I'd say the identity as a separate fellowship from AA predated the whole focus on NA language. That didn't hit here until the early to mid-eighties.
- Q.** How did that affect the fellowship in Pennsylvania?
- A.** It caused a lot of problems. A lot of people who were very involved in NA no longer go to NA because of it. This wave of "correct-speak" drove people away. But that wasn't the first thing. We had a major exodus when The NA Tree came down.
- Q.** Oh, really?
- A.** Yeah, it was disseminated in about 1977 after it was passed out there in California. A lot of people were very resistant. It turned out to be a minority, but it was a strong, vocal minority who resisted adopting the service structure that—we felt—was being foisted upon us.
- Q.** What was your service structure before that?
- A.** Pretty much like AA's. We had an Intergroup.
- Q.** I'm not sure all our readers are familiar with AA's structure, so would you elaborate on that a little

bit? What did Intergroup do? Did a representative from every NA group go to an Intergroup meeting?

- A.** Yeah, and it was done really well. The meeting was moved around to try to encourage interest from other areas.
- Q.** That's great. Did it provide any services?
- A.** Yeah, we had public relations. We had a literature committee. We did our own literature here. As I understand it, the First Step out in California read "...powerless over our addiction" in the early sixties, and it probably read that way in the Little White Book that landed here in 1969. But somebody here decided that it should be "...powerless over drugs." It was that way for quite a while, and it became a real controversy here. Meetings were reading it with "powerless over drugs," and when The NA Tree took hold, people went out to these meetings to tell them they weren't NA. Also, we were always trying to contact California and we never got a response. There was no viable fellowship in New York then. There was no viable fellowship that we knew of anywhere else. That's when a lot of people who were instrumental in early NA here just left.
- But as many stayed as left, and they got their rewards. It's been tremendous to watch the growth of the fellowship. It takes compromise. I will say that [the NA language controversy] has tempered over the years. People can come into meetings and talk any way they want without causing a negative response.
- Q.** What else has changed?
- A.** Yeah, I'll tell you something else you'd never see in a meeting today. We had fifty-fifty raffles. [Editor's note: In a fifty-fifty raffle, tickets are sold for a certain amount and the pot of money is split between the organization conducting the raffle and the person whose ticket is drawn.]
- Q.** In meetings!?!
- A.** Can you imagine trying to get away with that today? There'd be a shoot-out.

- Q.** What other wild and crazy things did you do back then that NA doesn't do anymore?
- A.** Smoke in meetings. It was coffee, donuts, and cigarettes at every meeting. Nobody gave any thought to non-smoking meetings.
- Q.** What else?
- A.** People knew that if we wanted this thing to take off, we needed newcomers. Somebody sick with their ears open was a precious commodity. Also, relapse was viewed a little differently then. One could almost get the feeling that relapse today is just another day in recovery. I've heard people say in meetings that relapse is good and some other pretty absurd things. Relapse was taken very seriously, and it was something to be avoided.
- Q.** Do you think that's due to people coming in with "higher bottoms" these days?
- A.** I don't know. I think people are afraid to give each other direction today. It's not hip to tell someone, "hey, you're making a mistake." We've gotten to be this "we'll accept anything you do" thing, and that's bullshit. People need direction once in a while. The old-timers when I came around would get in your face if they thought you were doing something wrong. I was in a meeting a couple of weeks ago, and this guy was sharing about how alcohol wasn't really a problem for him and he could drink. I interrupted and said NA's a program of total abstinence and he really shouldn't be sharing here. People got upset with me for saying that.
- Q.** In your view, in what areas does NA still have some growing to do? What's the next step for NA?
- A.** I think we need to get the message of NA out to the public again, in terms of getting our phone number and meeting lists out there. Basically, I'm pretty happy with the way things are. I love the interest in history that's occurring. I think the next big move is that every region should record its history. I think the conventions are great and incredibly

well-organized. Thank God so many addicts have the talent for putting those things on.

I'd also like to see us recognize the NA Fellowship in New York that existed back in 1949, 1950, etc. I have a copy of the articles of incorporation of Narcotics Anonymous filed in 1951. I also have an original copy of "Our Way of Life—An Introduction to Narcotics Anonymous," published in 1951 in New York. I just think we need to be more objective about our history. It doesn't diminish in any way the contribution of the people in California. I owe my life to that Little White Book ending up here on the East Coast. I don't think it diminishes Jimmy K one bit to talk about the contributions of Danny C and Houston S. I think we should explore the connection between the fellowships in California and New York. There may have been some contact between them.

Another thing I'd like to see is us somehow luring back the people who may have been put off by the intransigence of the mid- and late eighties. They have a lot to give—and they also have a lot to get here.

You can get clean here and never walk into another fellowship's meeting today. I've seen it. It's that strong. It's that big. We don't have to be afraid anymore that we're going to dissolve into some other fellowship. We're not going anywhere. ♦

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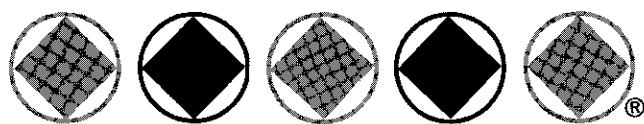
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CALENDAR

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales: 16-18 Oct. 1998; Combined Sydney Area Convention; Clancy Auditorium, University of New South Wales, Sydney; info: scacna1998@hotmail.com

CANADA

British Columbia: 13-15 Nov. 1998; 12th Western States Learning Days; Coast Plaza Hotel, Vancouver; info: WSLD-12, PO Box 43056, 4739 Willingdon Ave., Burnaby, BC V5G 3H0

Quebec: 9-11 Oct. 1998; 11th Quebec Regional Convention; St-Hyacinth; info: (514) 955-9846; email: ge091548@er.uqum.ca

2) 14-16 Oct. 1998; 8th Baie-Comeau Area Convention "Rassablons nos Energies"; Camp St-Paul, Les Buissons; info: (418) 296-9249 or (418) 295-5062

COLOMBIA

Valle del Cauca: 30 Oct. - 2 Nov. 1998; Colombia Regional Convention; Cali, *more will be revealed*

DENMARK

North Jutland: 2-4 Oct. 1998; "Together We Can"; info: ASC-NorthJutland, PO Box 1212, 9100 Aalborg, Denmark

FRANCE

Paris: 16-18 Oct. 1998; 2nd Bilingual French Regional Convention; info: 33/148/783031

INDIA

Maharashtra: 22-24 Jan. 1999; 6th Bombay Area Convention "Darkness to Light"; info: 91/22/7651905; email: NAbombay@hotmail.com

MEXICO

Baja California Norte: 9-11 Oct. 1998; Convencion Baja California "Un Nuevo Comienzo—A New Beginning"; Hotel Lucerna, Tijuana; rsvns: 66/333900 or toll-free from Mexico 91/800/66300 or toll-free from USA (800) LUCERNA; info in Mexico: 66/800986 or 66/803435 or 66/802979; CBCNA-VI, Av. Quintana Roo 1621, Suite TIJ #1080, Tijuana, BC 22000; info from elsewhere: (619) 277-6438 or (925) 372-6534 or (213) 264-6992; CVBCNA-VI, 4492 Camino de la Plaza, Suite TIJ #1080, San Diego, CA 92173-3097

PERU

Lima: 14 Nov. 1998; 13th Anniversary Celebration; info: 51/14/9957841

PHILIPPINES

Manila: 12-14 Feb. 1999; Philippine Convention; San Antonio Parish Center, Forbes Park, Makati; info: namaila@yahoo.com or tat@epic.net

UNITED KINGDOM

Northern Ireland: 30 Oct. - 1 Nov. 1998; 14th Irish Regional Convention "The Message is Hope"; Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, County Down; email: mad@tinet.ie; info: IRCNA-XIV, PO Box 543, Tomb Street, Belfast BT1 1AA, N Ireland

WEST INDIES

Bahamas: 13-15 Nov. 1998; Bahamas Area Convention "Celebration XI"; Nassau Marriott Resort Crystal Palace Hotel, Cable Beach; rsvns: (242) 327-6200; hotel fax: (242) 327-5079; info: (242) 324-8195 or (242) 324-2942 or (242) 326-5113 or (242) 393-3749 or (242) 322-2713; Celebration XI, PO Box CB-13549, Nassau, Bahamas

Bermuda: 9-11 Apr. 1999; Bermuda Islands Area Convention "Serenity in Paradise"; info: (441) 292-7163 or (441) 295-5300; email: gbotelho@ibl.bm

UNITED STATES

Alabama: 27-29 Nov. 1998; Greater Birmingham Area Convention "There is Hope in Our Eyes"; Sheraton Civic Center Hotel, Birmingham; rsvns: (205) 324-5000 or (800) 325-3535; info: (205) 923-3342; GBACCNA, PO Box 310147, Birmingham, AL 35231

Alaska: 2-4 Oct. 1998; 14th Alaska Regional Convention; Princess Hotel, Fairbanks; rsvns: (907) 455-4477; hotel fax: (907) 455-4476; info: (907) 452-7378; website: <http://www2.polar.net/~akna>; ARCNA-14, Box 82824, Fairbanks, AK 99708

Arizona: 11 Oct. 1998; East Valley Area Blues Fest; Tempe; bands interested in performing or for other info: (602) 927-9443

California: 10 Oct. 1998; 10th Annual Contra Costa Area Unity Day; Ambrose Recreation Center, Pittsburgh; email: unity_day@mailcity.com; website: <http://members.delphi.com/unityday>

2) 19-21 Feb. 1999; Central California Regional Convention; Doubletree Inn, Ventura; rsvns: (805) 643-6000; info: (805) 736-1757; email: kfactor@silcom.com; speaker tapes needed, call (805) 486-3373; website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~silo>; CCRCNA-VII, PO Box 3908, Simi Valley, CA 93093

3) 1-4 Apr. 1999; 21st Northern California Regional Convention; please send speaker tapes to: Program Committee, 405 El Camino Real #448, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Connecticut: 8-10 Jan. 1998; 14th Connecticut Regional Convention; info: (860) 667-8215; or (860) 246-9255; email: Tony12@aol.com or Silvara@rh.edu; Those with 10 years clean, please send speaker tapes to: Programming, PO Box 41, Marlboro, CT 06447

Florida: 20 Oct. - 1 Nov. 1998; 4th Uncoast Area Convention "Life is Good"; Adams Mark Hotel, Daytona Beach; rsvns: (904) 254-8200; info: (342) 337-9018 or (352) 373-6606; website: <http://gnv.fdt.net/~ncoastna>; email: mkek@fdt.net; UCACNA-4, PO Box 12151, Gainesville, FL 32604

2) 13-15 Nov. 1998; Rainbow Weekend II; Clarion Hotel, Hollywood; rsvns: (800) 329-9019 or (954) 458-1900; info: (954) 768-9748 or (954) 523-0520; email: BCFTL@aol.com; Rainbow Weekend, PO Box 23837, Ft Lauderdale, FL 33307

3) 26-29 Nov. 1998; 17th Serenity in the Sun; Airport Hilton, West Palm Beach; rsvns: (561) 684-9400 or (800) HILTONS; info: (561) 882-0754 or (561) 747-1497 or (561) 641-4390; Serenity in the Sun, PO Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

4) 9-11 Apr. 1999; Daytona Area Convention "An Oceanful of Miracles"; Ramada Inn Ocean Front; rsvns: (800) 654-6216; info: (904) 253-8962 or (904) 676-2409; DACNA-I, PO Box 741468, Orange City, FL 32774-1468

5) 22-24 Oct. 1999; 1st Mid-Coast Area Convention; info: (561) 272-5999

Georgia: 11-13 Dec. 1998; 1st North East Georgia Area Convention "Spirituality is the Key"; Holiday Inn, Gainesville; rsvns: (770) 536-4451; info: (706) 754-5735 or (706) 864-5992; NEGANA, PO Box 907804, Gainesville, GA 30503

Hawaii: 29 Oct. - 1 Nov. 1998; Hawaii Regional Convention "We Are One"; Turtle Bay Hilton; rsvns: (808) 293-8811 or (800) HILTONS; info: (808) 676-9125 or (808) 834-4867 or (808) 262-5298; email: schredz@aol.com; Hawaii Regional Conv., c/o 575-C Keolu Dr., Kailua, HI 96734

Idaho: 23-25 Oct. 1998; Pacific Northwest Convention; info: (208) 345-6768 or (208) 373-0897; email: www.sima.org or gratful2@aol.com; please send pre-registration and inquiries to: PNWCNA-21, PO Box 3051, Boise, ID 83705

Indiana: 5-7 Mar. 1999; Indiana State Convention; Holiday Inn North, Indianapolis; rsvns: (317) 872-9790; info: (317) 535-9553 or (317) 392-2549; ISNAC-6, c/o IRCC, PO Box 501481, Indianapolis, IN 46250

Kentucky: 15-17 Jan. 1999; Louisville Area Convention; info: (502) 774-5361; LACNA-9, PO Box 70246, Louisville, KY 40201

Maryland: 6-8 Nov. 1998; Ocean Gateway Area Convention, Ocean City; info: (410) 208-2709; email: jutes@juno.com; OGANA, PO Box 112, Berlin, MD 21811

2) 27-29 Nov. 1998; Freestate Regional Convention "Experience the Power, It's a Spiritual Journey"; Hunt Valley Marriott; rsvns: (410) 785-7000; info: (410) 778-3178 or (410) 604 0694 or (410) 758-1033 or (410) 827-5475; website: <http://www.erols.com/barsc/fsrcon6.htm>; FSRCNA-6, PO Box 873, Stevensville, MD 21666

Massachusetts: 13-15 Nov. 1998; South Shore Area Convention "Surrender to Serenity"; Sheraton Inn, Plymouth; rsvns: (508) 747-4900; info: (781) 925-3009 or (508) 588-7562; email: KSTC3@aol.com; send speaker tapes to: SSACNA-2, PO Box 4631, Brockton, MA 02402

2) 5-7 Mar. 1999; 8th New England Regional Convention; Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, Danvers; rsvns: (800) 325-3535; info: (508) 672-2673; email: MKrusz@aol.com; NERC-VIII, PO Box 3492, Fall River, MA 02722-3492

Michigan: 30 Oct. - 1 Nov. 1998; Kalamazoo Area Convention "Lose the Attitude, Gain Some Gratitude"; Radisson Plaza Hotel, Kalamazoo; rsvns: (800) 333-3333

2) 26-29 Nov. 1998; Metro Detroit Regional Convention "Through Change Comes Freedom"; Westin Hotel, Detroit; rsvns: (800) 228-3000; info: (248) 544-2010 or (313) 361-4214 or (313) 368-6868

3) 1-4 July 1999; 15th Michigan Regional Convention; Valley Plaza Hotel, Midland; info: (248) 545-2179; send speaker tapes to: MRCNA-15, 220 East 9 Mile Road, Ferndale, MI 48220

Nebraska: 9-11 Oct. 1998; 15th Nebraska Regional Convention "Surrender to the Possibilities"; North Platte; info: (308) 345-6737 or (308) 345-6564 or (913) 475-2555 or (308) 534-7609; website: <http://nrcnaxv.swnebr.net>; NRCNA-15, PO Box 156, North Platte, NE 69103-0156

New Jersey: 6-8 Nov. 1998; Northeast New Jersey Area Convention "In The Spirit of Unity"; Newark Airport Sheraton; info: (732) 326-0204

2) 13 Dec. 1998 - 2 Jan. 1999; "New Year, New Life 5"; Meadowlands Hilton; rsvns: (800) HILTONS or (201) 348-6900; info: (973) 279-4723 or (973) 427-3616; BASCNA, PO Box 7974, Haledon, NJ 07538

3) 28-30 May 1999; 14th New Jersey Regional Convention; Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Cherry Hill; rsvns: (800) 257-8262 or (609) 428-2300; info: (609) 259-0006; NJRCNA, PO Box 7274, Colonia, NJ 07067

New York: 16-18 Oct. 1998; Western New York Regional Convention "Eighth Wonder of the World"; Fallside Resort, Niagara Falls; rsvns: (716) 285-2541 or (800) 519-9911; info: (716) 832-1369 or (716) 863-9813 or (716) 632-0927 or (716) 837-3258 or (716) 876-3521 or (716) 835-8554; WNYRCNA-3, PO Box 151, Buffalo, NY 14207-0151

2) 19-21 Feb. 1999; Rochester Area Convention "Recovery is Possible"; Hyatt Regency Hotel, Rochester; rsvns: (716) 546-1234 or (800) 233-1234; info: (716) 288-7232 or (716) 458-8001 or (716) 342-3434; email: scarlet1@frontiernet.net; RACNA-V, PO Box 485, Rochester, NY 14603

North Carolina: 8-10 Jan. 1999; Spiritually High in the Land of the Sky Convention; Best Western Biltmore West Hotel; rsvns: (800) 528-1234; info: (828) 253-8789; WNCANA, 22 Oregon Ave., Asheville, NC 28801

Ohio: 9-11 Oct. 1998; Ohio Regional Twelve-Step Retreat; Tar Hollow State Park, Chillicothe; info: (937) 492-9795

2) 27-29 Nov. 1998; Greater Cincinnati Area Convention "Thanks for the Miracle VIII"; Cincinnati Marriott Hotel; rsvns: (800) 950-8883 or (513) 772-1720; info: (513) 751-2428 or (513) 521-1823 or (513) 961-8635; GCACNA, PO Box 141300, Cincinnati, OH 45214

3) 1-3 Jan. 1999; 10th Columbus Area Convention "Where Death Ends ... and Life Begins"; Radisson Hotel Columbus North; info: COACNA-10, 1561 Old Leonard Road, Columbus, OH 43203

4) 28-30 May 1999; Ohio Convention "With the Tools of Recovery, Our Direction Becomes Clear"; Sandusky Holiday Inn; rsvns: (419) 626-6671; info: (440) 234-0393; email: LeMmeow@classic.msn.com

Oklahoma: 9-11 Oct. 1998; Shawnee Fall Convention; Ramada Inn, Shawnee; info: (405) 382-4173 or (405) 332-4233 or (405) 275-4052; Convention, PO Box 3615, Shawnee, OK 74802

2) 9-11 Apr. 1999; 13th Oklahoma Regional Convention "Back to Basics"; Trade Winds Central Inn, Oklahoma City; rsvns: (405) 235-4531; info: (405) 947-3757; email: alodel@busprod.com; OKRCNA-13, PO Box 18355, Oklahoma City, OK 73154

Pennsylvania: 27-29 Nov. 1998; Tri-State Regional Convention "Start to Live 16"; Doubletree Hotel, Pittsburgh; info: (412) 441-2535

South Carolina: 9-11 Oct. 1998; This is HOW We Do It Convention; Quality Hotel, Spartanburg; rsvns: (864) 503-0780; info: (864) 586-4612 or (864) 583-0183 or (864) 574-7335 or (864) 599-0702; HOW Convention Committee, PO Box 8068, Spartanburg, SC 29305

2) 22-24 Jan. 1999; Upper South Carolina Area Convention; Embassy Suites, Greenville; rsvns: (864) 676-9090 or (800) 362-2779; info: (864) 242-6824 or (864) 233-5685 or (864) 576-2322; Uscana Convention, PO Box 2907, Greenville, SC 29602-2907

3) 12-14 Feb. 1999; Just For Today 10, A Decade of Recovery; Hilton Head Island Beach and Tennis Resort; Hilton Head; rsvns: (800) 475-2631 or (803) 842-4402; info: (803) 790-0608; JFT-10, PO Box 23523, Columbia, SC 29224

Tennessee: 25-29 Nov. 1998; 16th Volunteer Regional Convention of NA "Gratitude for the Gift"; Memphis Marriott Hotel; rsvns: (800) 228-9290 or (901) 362-6200; website: <http://www.phix.com/~recovery/na.htm>; info: (901) 386-8848 or (901) 761-0049 or (901) 323-2794; VRC-16, PO Box 22056, Memphis, TN 38122

Texas: 2-4 Oct. 1998; Best Little Regional Convention "Lost Dreams Awaken and New Possibilities Arise"; Clarion, Abilene; rsvns: (800) 592-4466; info: (915) 672-9344 or (915) 673-0180 or (915) 658-3429 or (915) 695-4600

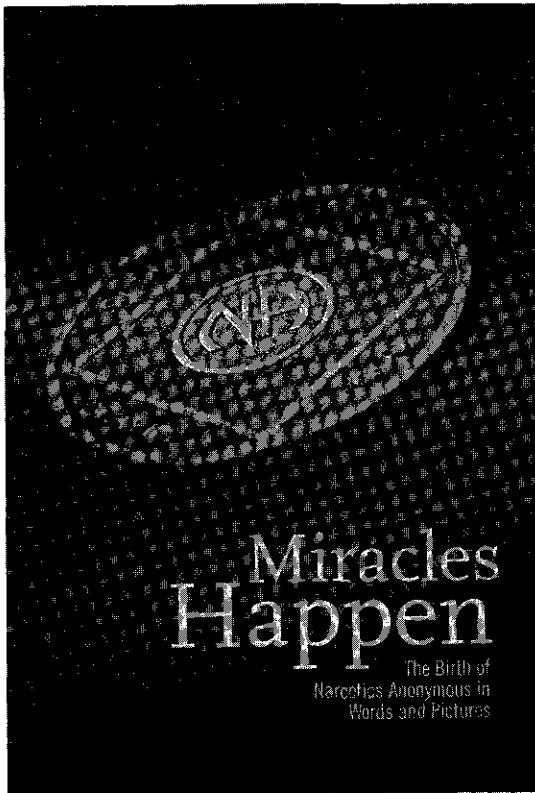
Vermont: 6-8 Nov. 1998; Champlain Valley Area Convention of Narcotics Anonymous "Together We Stand, Divided I Fall"; Ramada Inn & Conference Center, Burlington; info: (802) 863-3638;

Virginia: 2-4 Oct. 1998; OLANA Unityfest; Doubletree Hotel, Virginia Beach; rsvns: (800) 313-0099; info: (757) 934-1849

Washington: 6-7 Nov. 1998; Washington-North Idaho Regional H&I Learning Days; info: (425) 303-0272 or (360) 293-9531 or (360) 426-4115 or (360) 274-6437; WNIR Learning Days, 1821 Broadway, PO box 122, Everett, WA 98201

West Virginia: 13-15 Nov. 1998; Mountaineer Regional Fall Convention "It's a We Thing"; Cedar Lakes, Ripley; rsvns: (304) 372-7860; email: Mdc1504@aol.com

Wisconsin: 23-25 Oct. 1998; Wisconsin State NA Convention "An Awakening of the Spirit"; Oshkosh Hilton; rsvns: (800) 445-8667 or (920) 231-5000; info: (920) 727-9711 or (920) 235-4463; WISNAC, PO Box 2463, Oshkosh, WI 54901



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