

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

PERSONAL STORIES

**FOR REVIEW ONLY
UNPUBLISHED LITERARY WORK**

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP | BT | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 2) NO EXCUSES FOR LONLINESS | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 3) REALIZATION OF A DREAM | | | | | | | |
| 4) DAMSELL IN DISTRESS | | | | | | | |
| 5) ALWAYS LOOKING | | | | | | | |
| 6) I'VE COME A LONG WAY | | | | | | | |
| 7) NO WHERE TO TURN | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 8) MID-PACIFIC SERENITY | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 9) JUNKIE MOTHER | | | | | | | |
| 10) I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER | | | | | | | |
| 11) TODAY IS ALL THAT MATTERS | | | | | | | |
| 12) THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME | | | | | | | |
| 13) CLEANED UP AND SOBERED UP, WITHOUT BEING LOCKED UP | | | | | | | |
| 14) WHY GOD | | | | | | | |
| 15) GOD PUT OUT THE FIRE | | | | | | | |
| 16) RELAPSE AND RETURN | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 17) INSTITUTIONAL STORY | | | | | | | |
| 18) GEOGRAPHICAL CHANGES | | | | | | | |
| 19) SPECIAL EDITION | | | | | | | |
| 20) I FOUND THE ONLY NA MEETING IN THE WORLD | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 21) SLOW LEARNER | | | | | | | |
| 22) NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN MELBOURNE | | | | | | | |
| 23) I'D TRY ANYTHING ONCE | | | | | | | |
| 24) THERE'S NO COMPARISON | | | | | | | |
| 25) BEING CLEAN AND SERENE IS FUN | | | | | | | |
| 26) LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY | | | | | | | |
| 27) THE MONKEY | | | | | | | |
| 28) ONE THIRD OF MY LIFE | | | | | | | |
| 29) I CAN'T DO ANY MORE TIME | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |
| 30) THE VICIOUS CIRCLE | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |
| 31) SOMETHING MEANINGFUL | | | | | | | |
| 32) FEARFUL MOTHER | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 33) FAT ADDICT | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |

A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP

1 I was born the youngest, to a family of eight, on Christ-
2 mas Eve. I heard all of my life how my coming into this
3 world was a special occasion, as a result of my birth. I too
4 thought it was a celebration, and continued to for the next
5 26 years. My parents were close to 40 when I came, so natur-
6 ally I felt like a grandchild. Every day to me was supposed
7 to be special. I demanded and got all the attention I needed
8 and wanted. My conception of myself at this time was that I
9 was to be taken care of the rest of my life, and that all I
10 had to do was be pretty and smile and the rest would be a
11 piece of cake. I put the responsibility of my existence on
12 everyone but me and if I wasn't happy, they weren't doing
13 their job. Of course when things went my way, I took all the
14 credit. To me, no one knew how to make me happy. I was con-
15 stantly filled with frustration and anxiety because nothing I
16 did seemed to get me to that place called "Happiness."

17 I was brought up in a religious atmosphere, but I never
18 seemed to be able to grasp what it all meant. I couldn't under-
19 stand how God could love me one minute but the next strike me
20 down to hell. This understanding of mine caused me to rebel
21 against all that I was taught to be "sinful". I was deter-
22 mined to prove that if I danced, smoked, cut my hair, or wore
23 pants, I would not go to hell. I began to do all these "sins"
24 in Junior High and ended up pregnant at 15. I did not want to
25 get married and be a housewife. My first reaction was to have
26 my baby and raise it myself, but that didn't go off very well,
27 so I got married and had my child at 16. You see, again, I
28 didn't want to take the responsibility of my actions, so I
29 went into the marriage bitter but determined to make it work.

My husband and I were two kids playing house. We began
going out to clubs drinking and living it up. My thinking
at this time was that I had found it, this was the life!
Right before our third wedding anniversary, my husband was
shot and killed at one of those live-it-up nightclubs. Well,
needless to say, I really had a good excuse now. I now had
another reason to cop-out on this big bad world. I honestly
felt that mean God up in the clouds was really paying me
back for all the sins I had committed. I hated Him! I'd lay
awake many a night in agony wondering if God and my husband
could see and hear the pain of loneliness I felt. I never
got an answer.

After my husband's death, his best friend and I began
spending time together crying and laughing at memories of the
past. Not too long after this I was introduced to L.S.D. My
first trip was spent in the floor with me crying and wishing
my old man hadn't died on me. But the bad trip didn't seem
to bother me because somewhere in my mind I knew I had found
something new--a new world, maybe "happiness". I was con-
stantly in search for relief from the pain and about this time
another man came along, except he was different because he had
cash. This man saw a scared little girl in agony and wanted
to buy the hurt away. Well, I tell you it didn't take me very
long at all to grab on to that and hold on till I used him
completely up. With the access to so much cash it was just a
matter of time before I was burnt out on all the pills I was
taking, the high just wasn't the same any more. Again, I
began a search for escape from myself and I found it, the
needle!

My first shot was ecstasy. The feeling that ran through
my body and veins when I got off was one of contentment and
exhilaration. I had never dreamed anything could feel so
good. During this time of discovering the new highs, I was
trying to keep two men happy. Also, my sugar daddy was con-
stantly forking out cash and I was forking out lies. My old

1 man and I really thought we were something; having all that
2 cash to buy all the dope we needed or wanted. But there was
3 something wrong that I couldn't quite grasp and that was
4 that I was slowly running out of whatever it took for me to
5 lead a double life. For about a year I shot dope for fun.
6 My feelings were, "If it feels good do it!" It wasn't very
7 long before the needle had taken full control of me--no more
8 was I in command. This dependency led me to be very care-
9 less and the next thing I knew, I was busted twice in a
10 period of a few months. I'll never forget the feeling I had
11 as I was being photographed and fingerprinted. All I wanted
12 to do was go back and run-up. My mind and body were so
13 screwed up, I wasn't even aware that I had a daughter at
14 home waiting for me.

15 Someone told me that if I went to a hospital and quit
16 using that I could probably beat the case. So that's exactly
17 what I went for and that was it! I knew I had been doing too
18 much dope but I thought I just needed a rest. I ended up
19 having my friends bring me dope through the windows and in
20 the meantime proceeded to drive my family crazy. My husband
21 was sentenced and I got 2 years probation.

22 Well, that really did it! Again God had taken away my
23 reason for living. Before my husband left I made promises
24 that I would be faithful, save money that my sugar daddy gave
25 me, and only shoot dope occasionally. I was only able to keep
26 one, and that was be faithful. I literally stayed in my bed-
27 room and bathroom for two years waiting for the day my hus-
28 band would come home and make me happy again. But there was
29 a problem. The needle slowly became my friend, lover, and
30 my reason for living. I lost every glimpse of self-respect
31 I had left. I spent hours in the bathroom sticking and cry-
32 ing because a piece of plastic owned me now and there was
33 nothing I could do. As a result of getting myself off I began
34 to "miss" a lot, and those "misses" turned to infection and
35 sores from my head to my toes. I spent a lot of time tell-
36 ing my daughter and parents that those sores on me were just

boils--how very sick I had become. I had lost everything. I
was a zombie with no feelings for anyone or anything except
my rush. I remember thinking that when my husband came home
I could quit and everything would be alright. It wasn't. I
tried staying clean for a while working in a furniture store
my father had started for us, but nothing worked. Before long
I was at it again and by this time I was burnt out completely.
There were no veins left so that I had to go in about an inch
and a half to find one and that nearly took my legs for good.
All this time I was trying to be a mother, wife, and girl-
friend. I'd dress myself up for maybe a day, put on my mask
and perform my duties, but it never did work. I had no moti-
vation to help myself for anyone, not even me.

During the worst time of my addiction my thoughts were
never suicide, I just wanted to sleep till it all went away.
My old ideas told me it was a "sin" to take my own life. I
couldn't really see, but I was slowly doing just that. As
deep as I now was into my habit it wasn't long before I was
selling everything. I had run out of lies to tell my money
man, so next went my house, cars, and jewelry, but I didn't
care, I had to have my dope. There were people reaching out
to me with all they had but all I could do, when someone
tried to get close to this scared little girl was shoot more
dope. I didn't have any ideas. I had no strength to get out
of it all. It wasn't long till I got busted again. This
time it was different. It was the end for me. I had never
been one to assist cops in anything but now the running was
over. I knew it. I told them exactly what I had done and
I didn't really care what the consequences were, I just
wanted out. I was picked up at a drugstore and taken to jail.
I was so messed up that nothing mattered, nothing! I was un-
able to walk. Both my legs were bent from infection to where
I couldn't straighten them out. I was carried by the nurses
before the judge to have my bond set. As foggy headed as I
was, I'll never forget the voices of disgust and pity as I
was carried into the courtroom. Something inside my sick

1 mind and heart told me it was all over, finally! I suddenly
2 realized how close I was to death or even, prison.

3 Without my knowledge my father had found a lawyer to get me
4 out. The nurses informed me that I was on my way to a hospi-
5 tal, police escort and all. Before I left the jail my lawyer
6 arrived. He came in, introduced himself, and then proceeded
7 to tell me the most frightening words I'd ever heard, "It's"
8 time for you to grow up!" He told me the only reason he was
9 taking my case was because he hated to see a grown man cry and
10 my father had sat in his office and cried like a baby, plead-
11 ing with him to please help his little girl this last time.
12 He informed me there would be no more calling my parents,
13 brothers and sisters, and sugar daddy for help. I was to
14 stand on my own two feet for once and take the responsibility
15 for my actions. I had never been so scared in my life. The
16 things he told me scared me more than anything, even my arrest,
17 and losing my daughter again. I didn't know where to begin.
18 I had no idea of how to grow up and no idea of what he really
19 meant, except that it had to be done somehow.

20 When I arrived at the hospital, I was informed that there
21 would be no phone calls in and no phone calls out. I couldn't
22 even talk to my parents. I didn't like to too much but I knew
23 I had better listen for the first time in my life. My lawyer
24 was the only visitor I got for the first few days. He really
25 helped me laugh at myself and the condition I was in. I was
26 lying in bed one day feeling sorry for myself and counting the
27 scars, I had twenty-two. He looked at me real serious, and said,
28 "I know what we'll do, we'll paint you green and play dot to
29 dot!" I had never imagined, in my serious and condemning mind,
30 that I could ever laugh at myself in a forgiving way. Before
31 if I laughed at myself, I was judging myself for being such a
32 failure at life. Now there seemed to be some relief and hope,
33 nothing was that bad any more.

34 My next trip was to a treatment center, and this time I was
35 determined to make this thing work. I spent a lot of that time
36 preparing myself to go to prison because there just didn't seem

to be a way out of it. My lawyer told me there would have
to be a miracle somewhere, because I'd really gone my limit.
I knew this, people just didn't get out of three narcotic
busts (including fraud) without ratting and without going to
jail. The song "Why Me Lord" came into my head, while I was
there. I had begun to know what gratitude was. My prayers
were limited to just, "Help me". I didn't know what I was
really praying to, but I had to for the first time. I
couldn't carry the burden alone anymore. These people around
me were telling me I had to believe in something bigger and
greater than me or I would die. I could look in their eyes
and see that they must be telling the truth because something
was there and I wanted it. For the first time I was told I
would have my own God that could love and understand me. I
could have a God that no one else had if I chose to do so.
Wow, what a relief this was to me. I no longer had certain
rules and regulations to belong somewhere. My God and I could
make up our own. Now I was beginning to know what faith was
and I had taken the first three big steps of my life. My
heart told me now that whatever happened in my life would be
God's will and that my worries of wondering what to do could
be taken away, if I just prayed and believed. It all seemed
so simple to do, but my will just wasn't ready to give up.
I kept telling myself, "You've made a decision, stick with it
for once and see what happens." The words of the third step,
"Made a decision" scared me because I didn't know what "dec-
sion" was. I had never decided on anything, I just reacted.

To the best of my ability I stayed with the third step
throughout my time at the treatment center. Little did I know
my next trip would be to a halfway house in Birmingham. My
counselor recommended that I go, so I could get some time
behind me and see what it was really like to be clean for
more than thirty days. When she told me the name of the
place was St. Ann's, I freaked. I thought there would be a
bunch of sisters in robes greeting me. I couldn't conceive
living with eighteen women under one roof for too long, but

1 I knew I had to go. To my surprise I was greeted by several
2 lovely women that were not nuns, but alcoholics. I knew I had
3 come to a place of love, acceptance and understanding beyond
4 my comprehension. Those women told me everything was going to
5 be alright and I believed this with all my heart.

6 My stay there began with mixed emotions. I often wanted
7 to leave, get my little girl and take off somewhere to get
8 away from all the pain of reality. I also read a great deal
9 from the A.A. Big Book and it told me it was time to take the
10 Fourth Step. I spent numerous hours writing about what had
11 happened in my life, the pain I had felt, and the pain I had
12 caused. I wrote about everything! There was a great deal of
13 pain and embarrassment involved, but also an overwhelming feel-
14 ing of relief, that I was finally able to get out all the pain
15 that had been with me all my life. To look at me on a piece
16 of paper, and realize how responsible I really was, just veri-
17 fied the fact to me that there would be no more running. The
18 old me was finally beginning to die. I began to see that I
19 really didn't deserve all the punishment I had bestowed upon
20 myself and that maybe I was worthy of that thing called "happi-
21 ness".

22 I spent several months on the Fourth Step and when it came
23 time to do the Fifth there was no planning done on my part, it
24 was just time to do it. The only way I could have held on to
25 all that garbage would have been for me to start rationalizing
26 my actions again, and the thought of losing the honesty given
27 to me and what it had done for me! To my astonishment, the
28 woman I had done my Fifth with didn't laugh, snicker, or frown
29 any the whole time. She only cared with compassion when I
30 cried, and laughed. Hallelujah! Someone finally knew the
31 crazy thoughts I had and the crazy things I'd done.

32 I now felt completely forgiven and was truly ready to have
33 God remove the old me and my sick ways. But I soon found out
34 that the key word of Step Six was "ready" and that it would
35 have to be done when God was ready, not me. Step Seven came
36 with the Sixth because as a result of Step Five I now had some

idea of what my defects and shortcomings were and I needed
someone or something desperately to take it all away. I now
had to understand willingness.

Steps Eight and Nine hit me when I came into the program.
I was ready to have everyone accept my apologies instantly,
when I wanted them to. I was so relieved that God had for-
given me that I thought everyone else had too! But again
it was only to find that I had to wait for God's time, not
mine!

As of today, I work Step Ten daily, searching for where
and if I had wronged another human being by allowing my de-
fects to overcome God's love. As a result of the Twelve
Steps, I'm not able to hold onto old ways of deceiving my-
self as long as before. God allows me shorter periods of
time for rationalization, for He and I know, I'll die if I
keep it.

Step Eleven is my way of getting out of myself. My time
for prayer can be any time, anywhere, for I now have a friend
that listens whenever I pray. Meditation was hard at first
for I couldn't hear anything God was saying. As I work the
program I find Step Eleven is when I work Step Ten, by lis-
tening to God tell me when I've wronged another.

Step Twelve is my reason for living today. To not be able
to share what Narcotics Anonymous has done for me would be
to not exist. I now have an identity. I know who and what I
am, and maybe somewhere someone can relate to the pain my
addiction caused me. If this is so, I've achieved a portion
of what I feel is my purpose for being alive and happy today.

The program of Narcotics Anonymous gave me an identity.
I can now hold my head high and tell people who I am and that
"I'm an addict". Before I came to the program and I was
asked, who are you, I wouldn't and couldn't answer because
I had no idea what it really meant. I love the newfound me.
I love getting to know me and other people like me. I now
can feel emotions that were buried deep within me for many
years.

1 The program has given me everything non-material. To me
2 "happiness" (I thought) was what and how much I could buy.
3 How little I knew what was missing. I'm beginning to accept
4 pain as growth. I know pain is essential for through pain
5 God can break down that many false personalities little by
6 little, on His time.

7 There is so much hope for me today. The program was a
8 challenge I needed desperately and was given to me as a gift.
9 Each day I want more of what it has to offer. I want so much
10 to learn. What a long way to go to reach the understanding
11 I'm searching for, but that's okay, I'm at least searching.

12 To put into words what God and the program of Narcotics
13 Anonymous have done for me is difficult, for there aren't any
14 words to express God's love. I hope that my story can reach
15 someone, somewhere, but if it doesn't, that's okay, it reached
16 me.

17 Thank you, God, and Narcotics Anonymous for giving me
18 myself.

NO. EXCUSE FOR LONELINESS

Like everyone else, I started my life as a baby, and later became a child. And, like everyone else, I grew up one day and discovered that I had an adult body. But, unlike most people, I was still a child when I made this discovery. I am an addict. Drugs, in whatever form, were my primary addiction. Self-destructive behavior, obsessive and compulsive thinking, were symptoms that lived with me, before I ever used chemicals, and stayed with me after I let go of the drugs.

When I was a little girl I started to look for a substitute for Papa. I had a father, but he wasn't the father I wanted. He was a drunk with a compulsive personality. He was highly intellectual, but very bigoted and negative, and above all, violent and unpredictable. His job required that he spend a good deal of time away from home, so there were months out of almost every year that I didn't see him at all. He was my Higher Power. He was big, strong, and frightful. When he did take the time out to play with my older brother and me, he was so much fun! But, even when we were playing together, he could not be trusted. The slightest thing could send him into a rage. Yes, I was a battered child. It was not uncommon for me to go to school with bruises on my face, along with instructions as what lie my parents wanted me to tell the teacher as to how I got that bruise.

Joe was my older brother. He and I were very competitive. Although he was two years older than me, we were always about the same size growing up. He was popular in

1 school, both with the teachers and with the other kids. All
2 his life, people told him what a genius he was. I worshipped
3 him too.

4 For several years, we were the only kids. Then, when I
5 was eleven, my brother, Lee, was born. I didn't like that
6 at all. My status as the "baby" was gone, and he represented
7 my first responsibility around the house. Before he was
8 born, we always had maids, so I never had to help my mother.
9 But with his birth, there was so much more to be done.
10 And Mama didn't have the time to spend with me that I had
11 been used to. He was a lovely baby, but deep down inside
12 I resented him for being born.

13 Mama worked all my life. We were raised by black
14 maids. They kept the radio on the rock and roll stations
15 all the time and kept the atmosphere pretty loose around
16 the house all day. I liked the way they seemed to live
17 and think, much better than the way I was being taught to
18 grow up by my parents. Many of them were very loving with
19 Joe and me, and they taught us a lot about life.

20 What I seemed to want most in life was attention. I
21 usually got it. I was bright, pretty, and wild, with a
22 tough little spirit to break. I decided early on that I
23 would grow up to be either a singer, a writer, or an artist.
24 By the time I was fourteen, I had chosen singing as a career.

25 In the late sixties in Nashville there was very little
26 of the "sub-culture" trickling into the community, like
27 there was in so many of the larger cities earlier. But,
28 eventually, through the mass media, a little hippie movement
29 was starting to blossom in our city. I had seen people like
30 that in movies, and I really thought they were neat. The
31 men all looked like rock stars. That was what I wanted.
32 When my brother discovered pot, I was close on his heels.
33 He found out where all the flower children hung out, and
34 joined them. To his embarrassment and disgust, so did his

fourteen year old sister. Joe was witty and handsome, so
older kids in the street scene liked him right from the start.
I didn't feel like I had anything to offer these wonderful
people, so I donated my body to the cause. I donated it to
anyone that looked the way I wanted him to look, especially
if there were drugs available.

I had my first taste of illicit drugs when, at four-
teen, I was sent to Atlanta for an illegal abortion, and
the doctor gave me morphine. I liked most of the effects;
I had been experimenting with alcohol since early childhood
and was quickly becoming a partyer. And, any time anyone
suggested a new kick, like cough syrup or glue, I tried it.

Once I found the right sources, I began taking all kinds
of goodies. I really liked smoke, in all its forms, es-
pecially hashish. I had my first hit of acid when I was
fifteen, and I dropped it every chance I got from then on.
We did speed in pill form mostly, in my little clique, and
even though I did experiment with downers, they never did
agree with me. Even back then, I can remember a real sense
of desperation in trying to find drugs when none were
around. The drugs I took gave me the first real freedom I
had ever known. I depended on them to expand my mind, to
relax me, to mix with my hip buddies.

When I was sixteen, our family moved to Bogota, Colom-
bia. I was four months pregnant (again) and I'd been eating
LSD every other day or so for the first three months of the
baby's gestation. On December 25, 1969, at 1:00 A.M., I
gave birth to a premature baby that died in less than five
hours. Its little insides were deformed, and it was blue.
For a couple of months after that, I was kept under lock
and key. But my parents couldn't hold me for long. And,
Colombian pot is strong. It called my name: "dirt cheap".
We lived in Bogota for almost a year. After I returned, I
was re-enrolled in high school. It had been a long time

1 since I had been in school, and I didn't adjust to the
2 discipline well at first, but things got better for a
3 little while, at least school did. I was still getting
4 high on whatever I could find, and still promiscuous as
5 hell, but the atmosphere at the school was liberal, and
6 when the other kids voted on Senior Superlatives, I was
7 elected "Most Individualistic". I won a medal in my
8 Spanish class, and I did well in all my subjects. Unfortu-
9 nately, I had been working on a correspondence course for
10 the school year before that, and I never did finish it, so
11 I skipped Graduation Day, in order to avoid the embarrass-
12 ment of being the only Senior to walk away with no diploma.
13 I lied about that fact for years. During that year, I came
14 down with hepatitis. It laid me up for a month. I had a
15 steady boyfriend at that time, and he got it too. We had
16 great plans for ourselves, after my eighteenth birthday.

17 My birthday arrived, and I tried to get out of the
18 house as soon as possible. I hitch-hiked to Indiana to
19 visit my lover, and his Mom sent me back home after a few
20 weeks. I tried that same trick again after three months, and
21 his mother kicked me out again then too. So, I went to live
22 in the house with my brother's rock and roll band. In just
23 a little while, my brother kicked me out too, basically be-
24 cause I had been playing games with three of the band mem-
25 bers at once. I learned about crashing after that. I did
26 a lot of it for years.

27 I did find places to live and people to live with. I
28 even found a job that wasn't too demanding, minding shop
29 in a health food store. At that time, I was staying away
30 from most drugs, because I had to avoid things that might
31 harm my liver. I was a vegetarian, and I kept up with all
32 the herbs. I ate all the time, and I probably ate more
33 merchandise than I sold a lot of days. I looked real serene,
34 but I was getting as fat as a pig, and I hated myself. It

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

seemed to me: then that something must be terribly wrong with
me. Here I was, clean from drugs, and all I could do with
myself was eat like a hog, and hole up in my room.

To my great relief, I met up with a piano player who
wanted to make music with me. His name was Sylvester. We
became the best of pals. We went everywhere together, even
the john. Both of us had all kinds of high ideals about
spirituality, which we tried out on one another, and found
them to be impossible, at lease for us at that time.

Right before my nineteenth birthday, I got a ride all the
way to Colorado. I didn't have any money. I didn't bother
to tell my mother and father that I was leaving town. I
didn't even give an hour's notice at my job. I just left.
Once I got to Boulder, I got wild. The street scene there
reminded me of the one in Bogota. I liked it, and I became
a part of it in no time at all. The first people that took
me in were the "guru" type. They were pretty interesting,
but I got restless. The next group I fell in with was much
more down to earth. The STP Family was the royal family on
the Hill in Boulder. One of the members took a liking to
me, and asked me to come and live with him. I loved him as
much as I was ever capable of loving anyone, and I believe
that he probably loved me too. But, we sure had funny ways
of showing it. We screwed around on each other all the time,
and when he wasn't throwing me out, or taking me back, I was
running out the door, with my thumb outstretched. I came
and went from Boulder to Nashville and back again, and we
were lovers for about six months before his death. He was
dealing MDA on the Hill, and when the cops searched him,
he ate the whole stash. I freaked out completely at his
death. I still wear the ring that his mother gave me, taken
off his dead finger.

That was the excuse I wanted to just let go of all sense
of dignity, and just stay loaded and filthy. Before his

1 death, I had been living however I could, taking whatever
2 handouts I could manipulate, crashing wherever I could.
3 I hadn't really been staying stoned all the time, though.
4 I had tried to be useful and kind to people, and even cre-
5 ative, at times. Once he was gone, I was free to let all
6 of it slide. I went on a drunk, and I just traveled around
7 the country, hitch-hiking for six months or so. I stayed
8 drunk and stoned on whatever drugs I could find. I had a
9 boyfriend, or old man, all the time, although I never kept
10 the same one for very long. I had to depend on a man to
11 protect me from rapes and murders and thigs that I might
12 encounter on the road. In truth, I wasn't very well pro-
13 tected. Some of the people I chose were pretty violent
14 themselves. And, there were several times when I had hitch-
15 hiked during that year that I was raped. I never reported
16 any of this to the authorities. I was certain that any
17 judge in a court of law would rule against me, and in favor
18 of the rapist, because a woman hitch-hiking is easy prey,
19 and most people know it. Rape was something that my life-
20 style invited, as a commonly accepted detail that I just
21 took for granted; something to avoid when I could, but to
22 expect from time to time. The same went for arrests. I
23 was arrested five times in the year that I was nineteen,
24 mostly on petty offenses, but there was one felony too,
25 that I had a hell of a time getting out of. The last situa-
26 tion like that was when I had been given a lift from New
27 Orleans to North Carolina, and we made a stop in Georgia.
28 The man who had given me a ride had known me for several
29 days, and he'd seen how loose I was sexually. He waited
30 until I was really drunk, and I'd just seduced a buddy of
31 his, and then he tried to force me into having sex with
32 him too. I didn't like the idea, and he figured that I
33 didn't have the right to turn anyone down, after the way I
34 had acted, so he beat me within an inch of my life, raping

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

and beating me repeatedly, for what seemed like hours. I was lucky to have survived that with my life, and I nearly lost one eye. Of course, my Higher Power, whom I didn't understand, sent people to rescue me. After that, I managed to get into some more trouble and spent a couple of weeks in solitary in the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta with two felonies hanging over my head. I got out of both of them, with the charges dropped, but my drinking pattern had gotten so out of hand that I was in even more trouble than I had been. I couldn't go a day without drinking enough booze or wine to knock me out, and it was becoming obvious that I had no idea what kind of behavior to expect from myself after I had had that first drop of alcohol. I still did as many of the other drugs as I could, but since the addiction to booze had gotten so physical, I couldn't handle uppers or even pot without some alcohol to offset them.

I went back home to Nashville after a year of traveling around, bombed out and flat broke, figuring that all my old buddies would be glad to see me and would put me up. They didn't respond to me the way I had anticipated they would. Frankly, they didn't seem to want to have anything to do with me, and I had to change crowds to hang out in. I finally ended up moving back in with my mother and little brother. I was unemployable. I had to at least try to clean up my act a little bit. A little bit didn't work. During the day, I was so hung-over that even after I finally found a place to work, I couldn't function on the job. I hated the way I felt about myself, and I hated being frightened and sick all the time. When I had been in New Orleans the winter before, I'd gone into delirium tremens, and the doctor in the emergency room had given me some librium to withdraw me. So, when I decided to get off the sauce, I went straight to the hospital clinic, and begged an intern

1 to prescribe a bottle for me. He did, thank God, and I
2 stopped drinking sometime in July of 1973. It took me a
3 much longer time to let go of the downers and the pot, but
4 I really wanted to get free of all drug dependency. On sheer
5 intuition, I realized that if I didn't let go of all drugs,
6 I would just jump from one addiction to another. That was
7 the only thing that saved me, because I didn't join any
8 programs, or call on anyone for help, for almost a year.

9 May 20, 1974, in order to get a certain cowboy out of
10 my hair, I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting
11 at the local A.A. clubhouse. Honestly, I didn't think I
12 needed any help at all in staying away from booze, but I
13 had met a songwriter that seemed to think there was some-
14 thing wrong with an alcoholic that didn't drink, but didn't
15 go to A.A., and since he was a loyal A.A. member, he proceeded
16 to nag me about it, until I broke down and went to a meeting
17 with him. I really liked it. The man who spoke was the
18 funniest man I had ever heard in my life. He told one story
19 after another, and I was in tears. I didn't like the refer-
20 ences to God, or the fact that all the people were so much
21 older and "straighter" than I was. So I didn't go back.

22 On September 7, 1974, I joined A.A. as a member. I
23 had just gone through a three month depression, and I had
24 no answers for myself. I had tried every tactic I knew of
25 to avoid going for help, but I just couldn't take any more
26 of life, as I was seeing it and living it then. During my
27 first year of chemical abstinence, I had moved into my first
28 apartment, made a start for myself in the music business,
29 found and lost the "love of my life" (he was married),
30 worked at the same job for nine months on end, and developed
31 a serious new addictive pattern. I became anorexic, suffer-
32 ing from a disease just as devastating as all of my other
33 addictions put together. When I wasn't starving myself, I
34 was compulsively gorging myself and vomiting. I had moved

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

to Atlanta again, this time for three months, working as a
singer in a club. Out of all the experiences I had had, I
came to one definite conclusion; I was not equipped to cope
with anything alone. I had to have help. The day I joined
A.A. it was the only thing I could think of to do, besides
use, and using (anything) was all I really wanted to do. I
was so frightened and depressed on the day I called the
clubhouse, that the people assumed that I was still shaking
off a drunk. Even though there wasn't anyone there that I
felt old enough to talk to, I really didn't think I had a
choice. These people were nice enough to let me cry, to
talk to me and to listen to me. And, unlike my other
friends, they weren't using. I stayed in A.A. for a year,
going to meetings almost every night, reading the "Big Book",
and all the other literature. It was home, and all the
people were my new parents. Then I went on the road, singing
in lounges with different rock and roll bands. I still at-
tended as many meetings as I could, but my hours usually
conflicted with meeting times. People were usually pretty
nice to me. It was almost impossible for me to stay clean on
the road, and I am sure I would've gone back to using many
times, if I hadn't been asking God for help in the mornings
and thanking Him at night. I made it a point to call A.A.
as soon as I hit town, no matter where we went. I stayed
on the road for a year, and then I spent another year or more
back in Nashville, beating the pavements on Music Row, trying
to get singing work, both in studios and in the clubs. I
didn't have much success at it, but I did learn one thing.
There is absolutely no situation that I can't stay clean in,
if I use the tricks I have learned in meetings, and ask God
for help.

It took more than four years for me to bottom out on the
strange eating behavior, but I finally did on October 13,
1978. I kept the same "dry date" for a long time, but I de-

1 cided to go back and change it a few months ago. I feel
2 more honest this way. So, my dry-date changed from Septem-
3 ber 7, 1974 to October 13, 1978, which was the last time I
4 did anything compulsive and destructive to myself. I lost
5 my old-timer status, but I sure feel better about me.

6 In 1978 and 1979, young people started coming into A.A.
7 in my area. I had even gotten stoned with a couple of them.
8 These people, like me, were drug addicts. Like me, they had
9 later developed alcohol addictions. I no longer make a dis-
10 tinction between the two. Alcohol is just as much of a drug
11 as any other.

12 A songwriter blew into town from West Palm Beach. He
13 had been going to N.A. in Florida, and he didn't like the
14 fact that we didn't have it here. So, with the help of God,
15 and one very dedicated heroin addict, I got the first success-
16 ful N.A. meeting started in our city. The other N.A. meet-
17 ing that was started at that time was started by some people
18 that we haven't seen since, but I still go to it, and so do
19 many others of us. Now, we've got six meetings listed on
20 our meeting list, and I hope that they all stay intact, but
21 attendance fluctuates all the time.

22 My life is blossoming. I place my N.A. Program above
23 all of my other interests. The meetings, the friendships,
24 the principles we discuss, and everything involved with the
25 N.A. society are the things I love most. The relationship I
26 have with my Higher Power and with myself are things I have
27 dreamed of all my life. The tools that help me to cope with
28 all of life's situations are with me all the time, no matter
29 where I go.

30 And, the most important fact in my life is this: I am
31 powerless over my addiction, not over any substance, but
32 over an isolating, sickening, frightening illness that is
33 in me. In the Twelve Steps, I have a way to live clean,
34 a way to grow up and be comfortable. In the Fellowship of

REVIEW MATERIAL:

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Narcotics Anonymous, I have no excuse for loneliness. And,
in tapping the Cosmic Source, I can create, produce, ac-
complish, and have anything I will ever need. I thank all
of my brothers and sisters in N.A. for making all things
possible

1
2
3
4
5

REALIZATION OF A DREAM

1 I was born in January, 1957 in Atlanta, Georgia. My
2 early memories of childhood are pleasant ones. I was very
3 honest as a child. I told the truth no matter what. When
4 I started kindergarten and first grade, I began to live in
5 my own world. I was obsessed with plastic soldiers, little
6 men I called them. I loved to set up an elaborate battle,
7 with different strategies and make it unfold. I loved
8 planning outcomes. As I got older, I learned how to manipu-
9 late my parents to get what I wanted.

10 Until the second grade, we moved around a lot. We
11 settled in northern Louisiana at that time, and I was to stay
12 there until my senior year in high school. Until the fifth
13 grade I made straight A's and participated in all the sports
14 I could. In the fifth grade I changed schools, so I could
15 take an accelerated course where I took the fifth, sixth,
16 and seventh grades in two years. This was a little harder
17 than the regular school and I made some B's, which didn't
18 meet the approval of my parents. I was very good in foot-
19 ball, basketball and track but I wasn't very good in base-
20 ball. Looking back, I can see that not being able to be great
21 at everything I did had an adverse affect on my abilities.
22 It made me feel inferior, and instead of being a fair or good
23 baseball player, I was a bad one.

24 Sometime that year I took my first drink. I was alone
25 that night and I drank one of my father's beers. I can rem-
26 ember that I thought it tasted awful, and wanted to pour it
27 out. I only drank one and didn't get any effect from it. I
28 don't know why I drank it, and I didn't tell anyone about it.
29 At the end of my fifth grade year we had a weekend field trip

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

and I took two airplane bottles of liquor. When I told my classmates that I had some liquor, they applauded. One of my close friends drank some of it with me and I threw some of it away. My peers didn't accept it.

I had a cute girlfriend but I was afraid of sex. I was real inhibited about sex but I bragged and lied to my friends about it. I bolstered myself by swearing a lot, and I eventually lost my girl because of it.

My next drink was at the end of my sixth grade year. We went on another weekend field trip and I did the same thing as the year before. I was beginning to feel inadequate and felt that I needed something to make me whole. On the trip I kept the liquor to myself. I was outgoing on the surface, but I was very shy. I was very afraid of not being accepted.

The next year I went into the eighth grade which was the beginning of my exposure to social drinking. I was one year behind the other kids already, and by skipping the seventh grade, I was two years younger than my classmates. That really made me feel inferior. I was not as big as the other kids and I couldn't make the starting team playing football and got cut off the basketball team. I didn't make the track team either, but they let me be the manager. I remember once as the track team manager, the coach paid me a compliment for something I'd done and I started crying. I really felt sorry for myself.

The girls thought I was good looking and I started going steady with one who was part of the "in crowd". I was still afraid of girls and felt really inadequate but I forced myself to learn. I started going to parties where there was drinking, but it did not interest me that much. I was too pre-occupied with my newfound sexual awareness. I kept going to parties and would drink two or three beers, but I only did it because everyone else did.

1 I started making some C's that year. I was pre-occupied
2 with getting the acceptance of my peers.

3 The summer of that year was when I first got drunk. From
4 then on, I didn't want to drink unless I could get drunk.
5 We would camp out and drink. After only three months, I was
6 already developing a problem. In the ninth grade, I started
7 going to parties drunk or getting drunk at them. I developed
8 a reputation as a "hell raiser", and it made me feel good
9 about myself. I was finally somebody. I felt really inadequate
10 when I was around people, and I was scared to meet new people.
11 There was some school dances that year, and I went to them
12 all drunk out of my mind. The girls in school started to not
13 like me so much because they never knew what I was going to
14 do. I would save my lunch money and put it together with my
15 allowance and get roaring drunk every weekend. C's became
16 more common and my interest in sports dropped.

17 The tenth grade was more of the same until I was intro-
18 duced to pot. At first, I felt really guilty and paranoid
19 about pot and even resolved not to smoke it any more after
20 several times. But it was so easy and convenient. I was
21 able to block out all my feelings with pot and smoked more
22 and more. I got to the point where I was drinking and smoking
23 before school or whenever I had the chance. It was fun; it
24 kept me from feeling, and it made me think that I was cool.
25 My mother started noticing my drunkenness and would wait up
26 for me when I went out. My father thought that I was just
27 going through a phase and would grow out of it. I was only
28 fourteen then. I already had a fake I.D. and bought my own
29 liquor. When I turned fifteen, I made a fake I.D. out of my
30 drivers license and started going to bars. I was always in
31 trouble and it became a common occurrence for the police to
32 bring me home. My parents would punish me but it didn't do
33 any good.

34 My Junior year was a disaster. I started failing subjects

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

and lost interest in football completely. I still played, but I didn't care if we won or lost. I stayed stoned and drank whenever I could, not caring if anyone knew about it. I even drank before football games and tests. My mother tried everything she knew to do but nothing helped. My father would try to talk to me, but I wouldn't listen. They even told me that I was a teenaged alcoholic. Man, I thought that was funny. I ended up failing everything the second semester of that year. I really just didn't care anymore. As long as I was cool and accepted by my peer group, nothing mattered to me. Being a pothead gave me an identity and I was able to belong somewhere. I felt guilt and remorse when I messed up, but when I got punished it made me resentful and gave me a reason to get high.

My Dad took a job in South America my senior year in high school, and I was all for the move. I took correspondence courses through L.S.U. because I was afraid to go to the American School in Sao Paulo. I was afraid of the kids, afraid I wouldn't be accepted. We lived at a paper mill 60 kilometers from a paved road. For a while I felt superior to the Brazilians, but they loved to drink and I quickly became friends with them. I went to work with my father in the morning and studied till noon, then drank and shot pool with my friends the rest of the day. Liquor and beer were cheap, and I could afford to drink as much as I wanted. The whole year of '73 went by and I was in a stupor every day. I passed my correspondence courses by cheating and came back to the U.S. to go to college.

As soon as I got settled in my dormitory, I started looking for connections. I was scared to death and needed some pot. I got a connection and started dealing pot. I got turned on to T.H.C. and started selling it too. I had always looked up to cool people and now I was one. I went crazy with my new-found identity. People thought I was cool. I tried

1 mushrooms and I loved them; I thought it was a spiritual
2 experience. Six weeks after I got to school, I got arrested
3 for possession. I didn't know what to do, so I called on my
4 family. They got me out of trouble, and decided they wanted
5 me nearby, so I went back to Brazil.

6 Things were sticky for a while, but within two weeks I
7 was drinking every day. My Dad got tired of me doing nothing
8 and decided that I needed to go to school. I was fluent in
9 Portuguese so I went to a Brazilian Prep School. I made an
10 honest effort for about a month, then I lost interest. I
11 was living in a cheap hotel where my Dad had an expense ac-
12 count, and I was in hog heaven. I saw my parents about once
13 a month which for me was too much. I made some connections
14 and started smoking pot again. I quit going to school and
15 just drank and smoked pot all day. That was in the fall of
16 '74, and in Brazil, they still sold biphphetamine and methaqua-
17 lone over the counter and when I found that out, I went crazy
18 with joy. I started shooting pervintine, which is a liquid
19 amphetamine, and by the end of the year I was in sad shape.
20 My friends went crazy and ended up in jail, and only after I
21 freaked out on hallucinogens for three days did I realize that
22 I had a problem with drugs. I stayed drunk for the next seven
23 months and one night started throwing up blood. I tried to
24 quit drinking and started having the D.T.'s. I had to start
25 drinking again. The only feelings I was capable of having
26 were intense fear and paranoia. I didn't know what to do, so
27 I kept drinking. I reached a point where I knew I had to do
28 something, so I tapered off and quit drinking in the morning.

29 I came back to the U.S. and enrolled at L.S.U. I was
30 tired of my lifestyle and decided that I needed a college
31 education. I really tried hard for a change and made B's. I
32 felt good about myself and started drinking heavily. I lost
33 interest in school and got into drugs heavily. I was dealing
34 and shooting cocaine and morphine. The money I made dealing

REVIEW MATERIAL:

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

— didn't support my habit, so I started running a bank fraud 1
scheme. 2

— When I saw my parents at Christmas, I conned them out of 3
\$3,500.00. I had made up my mind that I was going to clear 4
up my debts and go straight. But when I got back to the U.S., 5
it was a different story. I blew the money on dope, got 6
arrested in New Orleans for accessory on a rape charge, and 7
had to go back to bank fraud to support my habit. The Baton 8
Rouge police got onto my scheme, and I ended up working out 9
a deal with them and turning myself in. I was so out of it 10
that I was holding when I walked in the police station. 11

— I can honestly say that I had no feelings at this time. 12
I had ceased to be a member of the human race. I had to get 13
\$1,000 from my parents to get me out of jail, and again, I 14
made a resolution to clean up my act. After I got the drugs 15
out of my system, I felt all the guilt, remorse and fear that 16
I had been trying to cover up. I realized how much I loved 17
and cared for my family and decided to quit doing drugs. I 18
just drank and smoked pot - a case of beer and a quart of 19
liquor every day. I finally got a D.W.I. and my dad asked 20
— if I would like to come to Brazil and try to get a new start. 21

I went back down in December of '75, determined to do 22
— good by my father. It went well for about two months, until 23
I met an old connection. I was back on the roller coaster 24
again. I started selling pot and was making a lot of money, 25
and then I started shooting cocaine again. I started dealing 26
to support my habit again. I was very paranoid and afraid of 27
getting arrested because of the methods of torture that the 28
Brazilian police use on drug dealers, but it didn't stop me. 29
— I ran across a New Yorker and he and I organized a drug ring. 30
We were known as "o gringo mafia". For me this was the reali- 31
— zation of a dream. We would sell enough drugs to keep us in 32
money and dope and head out to the jungle to camp out. I 33
degenerated into an animal. I had to alternate periods of 34

1 shooting up and snorting because my nose had become hemor-
2 raged and my arms were abscessed all the time. On top of the
3 dope, I drank all the time. I no longer had any feelings at
4 all, only needs. The only escape that I had was our camping
5 trips. We would get away from the city, and I could feel
6 safe. We would live like animals, eat with our hands, drink
7 and do dope by the campfire until we passed out. Finally,
8 the inevitable happened, and the police came down on us. I
9 was given two weeks to get out of the country or go to jail.
10 My dad gave me a plane ticket and told me that he didn't
11 care if he ever saw me again. In the States, my mother
12 didn't want to have anything to do with me.

13 It was the first of '77 and I knew I didn't belong to the
14 human race. I wanted to use every conscious moment. I
15 couldn't identify with anyone who didn't want to use twenty-
16 four hours a day. I managed to hold down a job and made a
17 resolution not to shoot any more dope. I did plenty, I just
18 didn't shoot any. In a drunken stupor I ran into a man, his
19 wife and three little girls going fifty miles per hour. By
20 the grace of God I didn't kill any of them, but I still went
21 to jail. I liked it there; I didn't have to worry about any-
22 thing. I played cards and ate barbs all day long. If they
23 had let me have a woman twice a week, I would have stayed
24 forever. I couldn't face the outside world. I was afraid
25 of getting out. My life was a horror to think about and I
26 resolved again to quit getting "so" loaded.

27 The first thing I did when I got out was get high. I
28 had come to the conclusion that I could not handle liquor and
29 decided not to drink anymore. Two days later I was drunk. I
30 tried smoking pot to quit and it didn't work. I could not go
31 through the day without drinking, so I decided to just drink
32 beer. I would do O.K. for a week or so, but then I'd get
33 drunk again. I never remembered what I did when I got drunk
34 anymore, but without fail it was at best, obscene.

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

This merry-go-round lasted for about a year and a half
and finally the inevitable happened: I had a needle in my
arm. I went on a super bender and overdosed on M.D.A.,
mandrex and gin. I stayed loaded for about a week and the
pain nearly killed me. The dope and liquor turned on me and
would not relieve my agony. No matter how much I used, I
couldn't get any relief. Out of desperation, I hospitalized
myself.

I resolved never to use anything again, except maybe a
little pot. I had been in the alcohol and drug unit for two
days when I smoked my last joint. When I made up my mind
to get clean, I really felt free. I resolved to make up,
somehow, with all my family that I had hurt. But when I
smoked that joint all the pain of eight years came down on
my shoulders. In the controlled environment of the hospital
I was able to stay clean for five days until they took a van
load of us to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I had no idea
what it was, but since it was required, I went. I don't
remember what was talked about, but at the end of the meet-
ing they asked if anyone had the desire to stop using. I
said, "I do", and they made me get up and gave me a white
chip and a hug. I was kind of freaked out, all those people
hugging each other. They told me not to use and go to meet-
ings. They asked me to come back and welcomed me when I did,
and let me say that I had not been welcome anywhere for a
number of years.

I grasped the "one day at a time" method of not using
and soon began to follow directions and pray to a God of my
understanding to keep me clean for that day. I kept expect-
ing them to finally tell me what the catch was, but they
didn't, because there wasn't one. They gave me a Program to
live by, and I saw hope. They didn't tell me what to do, but
shared with me what they did. I have since come to know, love
and respect many in the Fellowship. I owe my life to Narcotics

- 1 Anonymous and have learned that in order to keep my recovery,
- 2 I have to give it away. Today I have been clean for a year
- 3 and a half and it is through N.A. that I am clean today.
- 4 I will do anything I can to help someone stay clean today
- 5 except use for them.

DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

I was the happy little housewife, living in a happy little house--sticking a needle in my arm.

I was twenty-six years old with two children and working on my second marriage (with my Knight in shining armor) when I started to use drugs as entertainment. After all, most people drank on weekends to have fun, why not a little dope to liven things up a bit? My weekend heroin using went on for a few years until, inevitably, heroin began using me. Soon it was all I wanted and it didn't matter what day of the week it was.

My "Knight" began to feel our Camelot left something to be desired and started going to institutions and drug programs, although he wasn't having any success.

I started looking for some help, so I went to Alanon because it was obvious that he had a problem with drugs and alcohol. I was 5'9" tall and weighed 114 pounds when I came to this Program and thought I was "looking fine"! The miracle of this Program worked even in Alanon, for I had to get honest. They told me to "Keep coming back", and I did again and again. I finally went to my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting and knew I was home and safe at last! I was still saying things like "I don't know what I'm doing here, it's my husband who has the problem". Naturally, they understood, and again I got the "keep coming back" and I did.

I got some phone numbers, a meeting directory and was doing fine as long as I wasn't home or stayed in my car to avoid my Knight-turned-drug addict.

One night on arriving home after a meeting, he was waiting for me with some dope, saying there was still some left. At that moment the "left overs" sounded good and I

1 used. The minute the chemical was in my arm I went insane.
2 It was cocaine and I never did like coke, for there was never
3 enough. I throw some money at him and demanded he score
4 some more. The next thing I knew we were fighting over the
5 coke cotton. I knew there was nothing in the cotton and so
6 did he, but we fought over it viciously as if our lives
7 depended upon it.

8 That night in 1975 was the last time I used drugs, even
9 though there were many nights when my husband bought dope and
10 offered it to me. He continued to slip on and off this
11 Program, but I stayed clean. I had to leave my house, my
12 car--all my material possessions. I had to go through a
13 divorce, get a sponsor, go to women's stag meetings, share
14 an inventory, and do many things I really didn't want to do
15 or that didn't make any sense to me, but I did them all--and
16 I didn't use.

17 I'm still 5'9" tall; although I now weigh a 160 pounds
18 and other people tell me I'm "looking fine". Through this
19 Program, I have acquired faith that if I stay clean, it will
20 get better. I know if I use, it can ONLY get worse.

21 I was given a second chance at living and I took it. I
22 have a job and function well there. I am not doing at all
23 bad as a wife and mother. By the Grace of God, this time
24 the happy housewife living in a happy house isn't hiding
25 anything any worse.

ALWAYS LOOKING

I'm a grateful drug addict. I have never been a controlled or social user. From day one, I pushed it to the limit. There were never enough drugs to satisfy me. Whenever I found a drug that I thought would work, I soon found that I had to use more and more of it. Eventually it would stop working altogether.

Growing up was very emotional and painful for me. My parents put an enormous amount of pressure on me to excel in everything I did. I was emotionally high strung, always on the edge of freaking out. When I brought home a bad grade from school, I usually received a beating or mental scolding that would last for hours. I remember having bruises, being dragged from room to room by my hair, and having things thrown at me.

My parents had knock down, drag out fights that would last all night and continue the next morning. I began to ask myself why I should obey these people who obviously didn't have their own life together.

I began to rebel at about the age of twelve. I grew my hair out, wore ragged clothes, and anything else I could do to get back at my parents. Thus began my first efforts to handle resentment through revenge.

I began playing drums in the school band, and in the eighth grade I met two fellow drummers who smoked pot. They introduced me to rock and roll, planting the seed that was to begin growing two years later.

I began to believe in the ideas that I heard in the music. Drugs, free sex, and revolution all sounded good to me. I bought a drum set and began playing in local bands.

1 I dreamed of being a star.

2 I didn't use until about two years later, simply
3 because I was still afraid of my parents. They had stopped
4 beating me as often and began punishing me by not letting
5 me leave the house. I took my anger out on my drums, prac-
6 ticing for hours at a time.

7 Then I started high school, and that's where it all
8 began. I got stoned on pot the first day and loved it. My
9 only question was "Where can I get more?".

10 Within two weeks I was using LSD and mescaline. Mescaline
11 was first. It seemed to be the cure for all my ills.
12 I laughed until I cried. I began questioning the meaning of
13 life and wondered why I had to put up with the things I did.
14 It gave me a taste of freedom that I had never felt. The
15 people who were tripping with me were beautiful, and the
16 straight people were dull. They just didn't know. I
17 decided that drugs were definitely for me.

18 LSD was next. It was more powerful and exhilarating
19 than mescaline. I had more "realizations" about life and
20 its meaning.

21 A problem began to present itself. All the freedom and
22 ecstasy left me as the dope wore off. I had to come down
23 off the throne. I figured the only way to remedy this was
24 to do more dope.

25 The feeling slowly stopped being beautiful. While trip-
26 ping I became confused and paranoid. I began seeing demons
27 in the faces of my using friends.

28 This scared me into a period of smoking pot and drinking
29 beer only. I figured if I used these and nothing else, I
30 would be okay. As it turned out, they didn't quench my
31 thirst for meaning and adventure that I sought through drugs.

32 During this period I got thrown out of my parents house.
33 This happened one night when I freaked out, thinking demons
34 were about to take control of me. My father gave me an

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

ultimatum; stop using dope or get out. So I got out. 1

I was fifteen years old, and got an apartment with a 2
friend who was old enough to sign the lease. I quit school 3
and began working landscaping, and using as much dope as I 4
could get my hands on. Living away from home gave me a new 5
sense of freedom I had never experienced before. I was 6
happy and content, my troubles were over, and life had 7
just begun. Little did I know. 8

All through high school my using buddies had told me 9
what a great high MDA was. It was the ultimate, and the 10
best way to do it was to shoot it up. I wanted to try it 11
but was a little afraid of sticking a needle in my arm. I 12
soon got my chance. I figured I might as well fire it up; 13
everyone else was. 14

I began feeling this tingle at the tip of my brain, 15
then my head exploded before the needle left my arm. I 16
loved it. Everything and everybody was beautiful; my prob- 17
lems disappeared. I decided this was definitely the drug 18
for me. 19

It was the drug for me for two solid years. I became 20
obsessed with the rush and the feeling of cold metal enter- 21
ing my arm. I preached the glories of MDA to my friends and 22
fellow workers. Most of them thought I was crazy. I was. 23
I lost my job, fifty pounds, and had nowhere to stay. I 24
roamed the streets dealing and stealing. My relationship 25
with my girlfriend, also a junkie, began to fall apart. 26

I decided that I had to quit. I had to boot up three 27
or four grams to get off, so why bother? Since I couldn't 28
get any pleasure out of all the other drugs, I figured I 29
might as well quit everything. In doing this, I began to 30
feel strange and alienated from my using buddies. I began 31
to search for the answer to my problems by reading books 32
on eastern mysticism. I tried to practice meditation and 33
yoga. My addiction had programmed my mind to accept instant 34

1 sense gratification only, so my efforts to experience spirit-
2 uality without drugs was in vain.

3 I decided that I had to get away. I joined a religious
4 cult and moved out of state, much to the dismay of my parents
5 and girlfriend. Shaving my head and doning a robe, I ex-
6 perienceed total culture shock. As the dope washed out of
7 my system I began to feel better. After a year I grew tired
8 of the rules and decided that it was time to move on.

9 I returned to my hometown and looked up my old using
10 buddies. They acted as if they were glad to see me. The
11 first night back I shot up so much MDA I nearly died. I
12 heard dogs howling and sirens screaming, and felt as though
13 I was falling through a long black tunnel. I was on my way
14 to hell in my mind. I begged God to let me live, surely I
15 couldn't live a life that would end up that way. I slowly
16 drifted back to reality, thanking God for every breath I
17 took.

18 The next day I jumped on a 707 for Florida. I figured
19 hard work and sunshine was what I needed. This lasted two
20 weeks and I was back home again shooting dope.

21 Back at home I ran with different crowds trying to
22 find one that I could relate to. I hung out with gays,
23 musicians, hippies and rednecks. I used everything from
24 crystal speed and quaaludes to morphine and alcohol.

25 After a near fatal binge on crystal speed, I decided
26 that all I could handle were barbituates. Thus began a two
27 year binge of quaaludes and alcohol. I began a new fantasy,
28 giving up one of being a rock star to one of being a big-time
29 dope dealer.

30 I began some small-time dealing and my using rapidly
31 increased. All my profits went down my throat. I began
32 shaking and sweating when I didn't have any 'ludes to even
33 me out.

34 One night I caught one of my girlfriends at a friend's

house. I was drunk and barbed out as usual, and tore the place up from one end to another. Within an hour I was sitting in the county jail.

Once again I decided that I had gone too far, I had to clean up my act or else. I straightened up for a short time, ran with a new crowd - jocks this time.

Within a couple of weeks I was loaded again. I totaled out my car, banged up my head, and ended up in the hospital. I knew I had to have help if I was to stop using drugs. I stayed on the psychiatric unit for nine days and detoxed. The best thing they did for me was to give me a list of all the local meetings of Narcotics Anonymous.

I left the hospital, started attending N.A., and found a love and acceptance that I'd never known. I refused, however, to work the twelve steps or to give up my old running mates. One of my old connections made me an offer I didn't refuse, and I began turning Quaaludes and speed by the thousands. I stayed clean for a short while, but eventually began a nine month relapse. I could no longer use successfully, the seed of N.A. had been planted.

I checked into a state mental hospital for detox. In the institution I was shocked by the old-time alcoholics and drug addicts. I strongly believed this was my last chance for recovery.

I left the hospital knowing I had to dive into N.A. head first in order to live. I gave up dealing and my old using buddies and began attending N.A. full steam ahead. I asked my Higher Power to keep me clean a day at a time and to please restore me to sanity. Life is more beautiful with each passing day and some of my dreams are coming true. I feel a love for life that I can't describe. I now look forward to a beautiful life in recovery. I look forward to helping save lives, and have found many of the meanings and answers that I have been seeking for so long and in so many ways.

"I'VE COME A LONG WAY"

1 This program works. Believe me, I've come a long way.
2 I am a miracle. When I came through the doors, I was so
3 burned out on dilaudid (those little yellow devils), I didn't
4 know which end was up. I had a \$200.00 a day habit and that
5 wasn't even getting me high. It just took that "sick" feel-
6 ing away. But "I wasn't really that bad", so I thought.
7 My arms and legs were a mess from the needles I'd used and
8 they ached terribly. I hated myself and I considered myself
9 a helpless, hopeless junkie. Today I know better, there is
10 hope and there is help for people like me. I couldn't do
11 anything without drugs and I'd do anything to get them. I
12 begged, borrowed, and stole to get what I needed.

13 I started out smoking a joint now and then. I liked the
14 high, and I'd laugh and laugh. I worked in a bar so I natur-
15 ally drank with the customers, but I could never stand the
16 taste no matter what I mixed together. I started taking
17 speed and oh how I loved that feeling. I could talk, and
18 dance, and drink like a sailor. I'd go for days like that
19 of course I couldn't take time to eat so I'd keep losing
20 weight and getting meaner and meaner. And when I'd crash,
21 look out. I wanted to kill. I went on like that for a couple
22 of years. Then I took some acid. I hated it. I was so para-
23 noid, but I'd keep on taking it because everybody else was.
24 I can remember taking my blanket, and my alarm clock and
25 going into my closet and just wishing the trip was over.
26 Then a friend of mine "turned me on" to some qualudes. I
27 remember I got sick and puked all over the place. Of course
28 I had done three of them on top of a fifth of C.C. and I
29 don't remember a couple of days after that. It was then that

REVIEW MATERIAL:

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

I decided that I would just stick to my speed, pot and whiskey. 1
 Again, I couldn't take time to eat and I got sick, a real 2
 bad kidney infection. I went to the emergency room and 3
 they gave me morphine. I loved it. Then I started looking 4
 forward to my kidney infections, which came frequently. 5
 By the time I was twenty-five years old, I'd been married 6
 and divorced three times and I had two children. I took 7
 many geographical cures, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, 8
 Maryland, and always losing jobs because of my addiction. 9
 No one understood me. I dragged my kids with me everywhere 10
 I went. I did a lot of things I'm not proud of and some 11
 that are nobody's business, but I know I can't change the 12
 past, I can only change my life now, one day at a time. I 13
 decided to stop drinking so I did. I just tripled my drugs. 14
 I just kept getting lower and lower. I'd speed all day and 15
 do qualudes after the sun went down. I loved the night life, 16
 I loved the bars, and the music and the excitement. That 17
 was my life. I didn't know any better. This went on for 18
 years. I finally did what I said I'd never do, I used a 19
 needle, and I fell in love. I loved that instant rush, and 20
 I couldn't get enough of it. I went down real fast. I 21
 couldn't think of anything but sticking that needle in my 22
 arm, and then where was I gonna get the next one. Then one 23
 day after trying to find a vein to hit, I decided I had a 24
 problem. I decided to quit, but I couldn't. The longest 25
 I could go was two or three days and I'd be just nuts until 26
 I got another fix. I finally went to my family doctor. I 27
 didn't know what else to do. I told him I needed help. He 28
 put me into the hospital for detox. I never want to forget 29
 that withdrawal. I was climbing the walls, I couldn't eat, 30
 I couldn't sleep. They had intravenous tubes in both my 31
 arms for forty-eight hours. My liver was swollen, I had a 32
 real bad kidney infection, and they found a growth on my 33
 ovary the size of a softball. You see, I didn't know any 34

1 of these things were wrong with me because whenever I hurt,
2 I thought I needed a fix so I'd just get one. I can remember
3 the nurses changing my bed three or four times a day because
4 I sweat so bad and I just knew I had the crabs because I
5 could feel them crawling all over me, only it was with-
6 drawal and I didn't know it. I remember I asked for my
7 Bible and someone brought it to me. I started reading page
8 one. I was afraid; I've never felt so alone. A couple of
9 people from the program came to visit me. When I got
10 out of the hospital after sixteen days, I went to a meeting.
11 I started meeting other addicts, happy addicts. I got
12 strength and hope. I didn't think I was an alcoholic though.
13 I thought if I could just stop using drugs, I could still
14 drink. Well, five months later, I went out and sat down
15 at a bar and started drinking. Within four hours, I was
16 copping morphine and had a needle in my arm. Alcohol is
17 a drug. Once I picked up that first drink, I couldn't stop.
18 The next day I woke up and didn't know where I was. Oh,
19 the guilt! I entered a twenty-eight day re-hab that day
20 and I surrendered. People told me--"One day at a time",
21 "easy does it", pick yourself up, brush yourself off and
22 keep on going. I go to meetings, a lot of discussions, I
23 read all the literature I can get my hands on, I have a
24 phone book for program people and I use it. I pray every
25 morning and every night. I ask God to help me stay sober
26 through the day and I thank him at night. I have a sponsor
27 I use all the time. I talk to new people. I work the
28 steps to the best of my ability. I love my new friends,
29 and I love my God. Thanks to all of you for helping me
30 to help myself.

NOWHERE TO TURN

I am an addict and a member of Narcotics Anonymous.
Today I am able to live clean and sober because of the
Fellowship of N.A.

I am now thirty years old and began using drugs about
twelve years ago.

As I was growing up, I remember the feeling I had of
wanting to belong or be part of other groups of people. I
was a loner and did not know how to do this. Fear and in-
ferior feelings were a part of me since childhood. I was
unable to participate in sports and other activities because
of the feeling that I could not do it. I had a fear of
people, especially in groups, so I lived in a fantasy world
where I was somebody. I had few close friends as a child
and tried to control and isolate the friends I did have. I
wanted to keep them to myself for fear that others would only
take them away.

I was an only child and my father died at age three. I
was raised by my mother and grandparents. I was very sensi-
tive and did not want others to see this, so I tried to hide
it. I didn't like myself and always tried to be somebody
other than the person I really was. At an early age I would
escape the reality of the here and now by fantasizing about
the future. I thought somehow if I could change me or find
the right situation that I could be happy someday. My need
to control and dominate people only drove them away and I
felt rejected.

As I got older I began to rebel at the society that I
was blaming for my inability to be happy. At the same time,
on a deeper level, I blamed myself. I started to get into

1 trouble at home and at school for attention. Inside I was
2 hurting and was very confused but solutions were not at my
3 disposal and I felt as though I must do whatever it took to
4 be accepted by any crowd. I chose other kids who were
5 getting into trouble and breaking all the rules. But even
6 in that crowd I felt different.

7 Somehow I made it through high school and went on to
8 college to please my family. I was not ready for the
9 responsibility of college and I wasn't motivated to learn.
10 I felt out of place there and did poorly. At the end of
11 my first semester, I left school and got a job. I thought
12 that hard work and low pay were what I needed to prove my
13 manhood. This got old quick. I would develop problems with
14 people wherever I went and would run from one situation to
15 another, blaming others for the problems that would arise.

16 I began to identify with the peace and love movement
17 that was catching on around the country. I thought the musi-
18 cians of this era really had the answer and part of that
19 answer was to escape to enlightenment, with drugs. I felt
20 that I could be accepted by the "long-hairs" because they
21 talked of unconditional love and other spiritual principles.
22 I started smoking pot and then came that first acid trip,
23 followed by speed and barbiturates. My first experience with
24 each drug was wonderful to me and I wanted to keep doing it.
25 I especially liked the speed and acid in those days and smoked
26 pot to keep that stoned outlook on life. I thought the drugs
27 went along with the philosophies we all talked about and that
28 it was all spiritual and mystical.

29 One by one I tried all of the drugs that I said I'd
30 never do. My relationships with women were few and none were
31 successful. This drove me deeper into escaping with drugs.
32 I felt fear and excitement with this new, destructive way of
33 life. Sometimes I had doubts about drugs, but when I was
34 high I felt reassured and confident. I left the world behind

in those moments until I came down confused and afraid.
Fear of death became an obsession with me when I wasn't
high. The effects of the speed and acid helped nurture the
fear. I went back to school and continued to use more and
more. At one point, I cut my hair and started to drink a
lot. I thought a change of lifestyle was the answer but I
still managed to find reasons to take pills.

I felt that life was empty and meaningless. I became
more and more isolated at school and my consumption of speed
increased until I was using daily and my health began to
deteriorate. I became paranoid and fearful of people which
made it harder to function. I would hang out with users
on the weekends back in my hometown. It seemed that their
solution to the dilemma of using was to use more until you
reached the point of not caring at all. I finally quit try-
ing to control my using and decided to quit fighting it. If
I was going to be a dope-fiend and self-destruct, I was
going to do a good job of it. It seemed that it was be-
coming more and more accepted that dopers were losers and we
might as well stay loaded completely. "Take as much dope as
you can" became my new philosophy for survival.

The speed runs left me burnt out, I had sores in my
mouth, my skin was turning yellow and much of the time I
couldn't go out at night because I couldn't focus my vision
and I would hallucinate. I came home from school in the
summer of 1971 totally wasted. It was then I was introduced
to the cure for the burn out, heroin. Shooting morphine and
heroin was becoming more and more a part of the local dope
culture, and I had a few friends who were well into it. I
tried it and thought it was good for me because I could
relax and eat and sleep. I learned to use a needle and by
mid-summer, I was shooting dope two or three times a day.
Jails, doing time, violence were the new topics of conver-
sation, no more peace and love. Now it was conning, ripping

1 people off and doing whatever was necessary to get narcotics.
2 I did not like any of this new talk but the dope made it
3 more and more acceptable. Finally I got involved with break-
4 ing into houses and forging checks. I stole from my family,
5 lied, sold my musical instruments for money to get drugs.
6 At the end of the summer I was arrested for check forgery
7 and put in jail where I went into withdrawal.

8 It was a nightmare to realize how far down I had
9 fallen and was going to have to answer to the law for my
10 actions. My mother bailed me out and the local drug council
11 sent me to a psychologist for therapy, which did no good
12 because I was still using. So my lawyer suggested that I
13 go to Lexington to the Federal drug hospital. I stayed long
14 enough to detox and came home with the idea that I would go
15 to school and everything would be okay.

16 I also thought one shot wouldn't hurt anything. Back
17 into active using again, I sought help again at the local
18 drug council, because I knew they were sending addicts to
19 a doctor who was writing "scripts" for methadone and bar-
20 biturates for them. So my addiction took a new direction.
21 I began to get my supply legally from doctors. Things were
22 going well, so I thought, for about a year until the doctor
23 said he could not give me any more methadone. I panicked
24 and bought some speed on the street, and while I was in
25 withdrawal from the methadone, I started speeding. After a
26 few days I got crazy and started shooting a shotgun in my
27 back yard at imaginary foes. I ended up in jail for two
28 miserable weeks of insanity and withdrawals. The court sent
29 me to the State mental hospital where they put me on two
30 Quaaludes a night for sleep. All of the dope fiends on the
31 unit were requesting them for insomnia and bringing in other
32 drugs from visits. After thirty days, I was released and I
33 went straight for the doctor's office with another drug to
34 add to my requests. I continued to pop pills and drink

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

codeine cough syrup and booze. I started dating a girl who used and my dependence on her was a means to get more drugs. Her dependence on me was emotional. I feel that she kept me alive through those times when my using was so insane that I would have died without someone to keep me from harming myself more than I did.

I had become a garbage can for drugs: street drugs, prescription drugs, paragoric, cough syrup with codeine, whatever I could get. I had been put on probation for the check forgeries and I kept getting arrested for drunk driving or brandishing weapons. Needless to say, I was always in trouble with the probation officer and they would lock me up for awhile and then send me off to another rehabilitation program or hospital.

In 1974, I was sent to a long term therapeutic community after spending about four months in the County jail. I was very sick emotionally when I got there and stayed withdrawn for the first couple of months. I went through many intense changes in the time that I was there, most of which were positive. I learned to function with other people and start to become responsible again. They gave me a place to belong and something to believe in. What they couldn't give me was a way to live without drugs outside of the confines of the therapeutic community.

I finally was graduated from their program in 1977, and as a graduate and also an employee, I was allowed to drink. I decided that I wanted to return to West Virginia because the lifestyle of New York was not for me. Really I wanted to get away from them so I could try to use successfully. I got a job in my old home town and started to see my old girlfriend who was still using, and it wasn't long until I was taking a pill or two. At some point, I just let go and started shooting, speeding and eating codeine pills and Quaaludes. I hit the depths of despair

1 because the dope had me again after all that time away from
2 it and nothing changed.

3 After all that therapy, I still couldn't control my
4 dope; it controlled me. I felt hopeless and worthless
5 like a total failure; I couldn't go back to the rehab house
6 because I felt like such a bad person, like a traitor. I
7 lost my job and continued to use, getting most of my drugs
8 legally from doctors. One doctor had become a friend of
9 mine and felt sorry for my dilemma, and I used his com-
10 passion as a means to con him out of more and more drugs.
11 I was using amphetamines, sedatives and various synthetic
12 opiates at the same time. I was miserable; my highs were
13 like lows. I couldn't live with drugs, but it was worse
14 without them. I just tried to stay numb or seek oblivion.
15 No longer could I blame my using on others like before;
16 although I tried. I really knew the truth. I was off pro-
17 bation so that was no longer a threat, but still I was a
18 prisoner to my addiction.

19 Between my sprees of using, I started to try church;
20 I began to feel as though God was my only hope, but I
21 wasn't sure if God really existed. Maybe I felt as though
22 God might just be a philosophical idea to comfort man and
23 make sense out of life. I needed something real and could
24 not find it. I began to drive away loved ones, and the people
25 I used to maintain my drug supply were cutting me off. I
26 went to live at a monastery for a couple of months and I
27 found some faith there that God was real. I still had a
28 faint glimmer in my mind that I could mix my newfound faith
29 with drugs. It did not work and I hit another bottom and
30 found myself alone and sick. It seemed as though being
31 alone and sick were a way of life for me.

32 I was ready to ask for help in a sincere way. I don't
33 believe in coincidences anymore and it was a miracle that I
34 stumbled upon the phone number of an N.A. member in the

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Atlanta, Georgia area. I spilled my guts to him over the
phone and asked him what he thought. He said it sounded
as though I needed to learn how to live without drugs. That
was so simple, but it said it all. With God's help, I caught
a bus to Atlanta in withdrawal, praying and crying, but I
made the journey. I feel that the willingness and courage
to make such a move came from a power greater than myself.

God, as I understand Him, has worked many miracles
in my life in the past two years of my recovery. In those
first meetings I heard people share honestly. They sat and
talked with me and they understood. They really cared be-
cause they were like me. They had been there. There was
no condemnation or lecture. They gave me hope by their
example. It really was possible to get a new way of life
filled with happiness and usefulness to other people. I
didn't have to be alone ever again. I could use my past to
help others and pass this new way of life on to others who
were in despair and misery. It was okay to let people know
when I hurt. I didn't have to pretend to be cool and have
all the answers or hide my true feelings. They loved me
back to health; people were patient when I needed to talk;
they listened and shared what had worked for them. I was
a part of their lives. They taught me that the steps were
the foundation of recovery.

The Program has freed me from my prison and shown me
how to be myself and live life on its terms. I owe my life
to Narcotics Anonymous. God works through the people in this
Fellowship. It works if you want it. Surrender has been
the key for me. If I work this Program, my life gets better.
Today I have friendship, love, a family of brothers and
sisters from all over the world from all walks of life. We
are united in a way that was once impossible for the addict.
We have been delivered from a living hell to happiness, peace,
joy and a fulfillment that escaped my wildest dreams in the

1 past.

2 All this has been freely given to me out of love. The
3 program is simple. It requires only sharing, working the
4 Twelve Steps, attending meetings and practicing the princi-
5 ples of the Program. First and foremost I must remember
6 that I suffer from a disease called addiction and that using
7 is insanity and death, so I cannot take that first fix, pill
8 or drink. Drugs in any form are poison to me and will kill
9 me emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. God
10 has revealed His love for me through the Fellowship of N.A.
11 I am grateful to be able to write my story and share it with
12 whomever may read it. I pray that it may be of some help
13 and bring hope to someone like me who once had no hope. May
14 God be with you in the spirit of this Fellowship and I pray
15 that this new way of life will bring all the joy and love
16 it has brought me.

MID-PACIFIC SERENITY

I am a happy, grateful drug addict, clean by the grace
of God and the Twelve Steps. Life today is fulfilling and
there is a joy in my heart.

It wasn't always this way. I drank and used other drugs
for twelve years; on a daily basis for ten of them. I was an
addict of the hopeless variety. It seems to me that I was
born that way.

I was brought up in a loving middle class family. My
mother and father were very affectionate towards each other;
my sister and I were wanted and loved children, and we were
shown that in every way. To this day, I have never seen my
parents or my sister loaded in any way, at any time. Yet I
was to follow a different path. As far back as I can re-
member, I had felt separated from this family and all of
life, never feeling a part of, always feeling different. Of
course, I am talking of an intense fear of life. I don't
recall ever feeling the simplicity of being a child.

Growing up in southern California, I seemed to get into
all the normal things. I went to the beach a lot and I was
involved in all the sports, yet always the fear was with me.
I always felt inadequate and could never live up to my po-
tential. Today I see how fear does stop us from living life
to its fullest.

I had the addict's personality, self-will run riot,
throughout my childhood. I always wanted my own way, and if
things didn't go my way, I sure let people know about it.

I seemed to be an average student throughout elemen-
tary and junior high school. More or less withdrawn, I did
have friends. I guess I was fifteen when I found my first

1 drug, alcohol. Was it a welcome friend? From the first
2 drink it was oblivion, and that's what I was looking for.
3 Finally I had found freedom from fear; booze unlocked a whole
4 new world for me, a world where I fit in. I remember from
5 the beginning; I identified with the winos, the ones who slept
6 on the beach and lived under the pier.

7 As I look back over those twelve years, I see how I
8 loved each new drug I tried, and pursued it, whether it was
9 glue, speed, downs, alcohol, psychedelics or whatever. I
10 always seemed to bounce from one to the other, going up and
11 down and all around. With each new drug came its own little
12 world, a new corner to crawl into and hide. My first few
13 highs did bring me a sense of freedom, yet in a very short
14 time the drugs stop working like that and I found myself
15 even more afraid of life than ever. Now it was worse for I
16 was not only withdrawn from life, I was caught in a whole
17 other world and didn't even know it.

18 I quit high school in the twelfth grade. Surfing had
19 been part of my life for the past few years, so it was off to
20 the Hawaiian Islands. My parents were very confused concern-
21 ing the son who didn't do a very poor job of hiding his
22 desperation. To all who were sane and living life, I appear-
23 ed very lost and unhappy.

24 That first trip to Hawaii was in 1962. The whole time I
25 was there I was loaded. Needless to say, I was very scared of
26 life. I returned to Southern California after only a month to
27 continue my addiction.

28 I had my first real love affair at this time. My girl-
29 friend became pregnant and a few months later I was back in
30 Hawaii, with more of the same drugs and booze. Then it was
31 back to Southern California. I seemed to find a sense of
32 relief for an instant in the trips I made. Yet soon after
33 arriving at my destination, the glamour wore off and I was
34 left with myself and that intense fear and desperation. I

knew of no other way except to get loaded.

In the summer of 1963, I went back to Hawaii, at my parent's expense. I had been living on the mainland, sleeping in parked cars and wandering the streets. I ended up broke, and sleeping in cars once again, and begging money on the streets in order to get loaded.

I was nineteen years old at this time and was a full blown addict and didn't even know it. I only knew I had to drink and use drugs and that there was no other way.

The end of the summer, someone gave me their surfboard to sell for a ticket back. Arriving back in Los Angeles, I was at a point where I felt I couldn't go on.

I felt totally burned out. Other people my age were going to school or working. I didn't even know how to look for a job, let alone work. A friend had just joined the Navy. To me it seemed a way out; all I had to do was sign my name. I had never thought about the service, never heard of dodging the draft. Viet-Nam hadn't started yet. So I joined. When I got off the bus at boot camp I knew I had made a mistake.

To this point I had only been to jail three times, twice for drinking and once for suspicion of possession. Now in boot camp, I found myself locked up for three months. I managed to drink cough syrup and Andre tea bags, thinking I could get loaded. I got one joint in boot camp once.

After basic training, I was put aboard a brand new ship. It was very gung-ho. For the next year and a half I stayed loaded, being the only way I could handle it.

I stayed pretty much out of trouble; stayed high and did nothing. Once, coming back after being at sea a couple of weeks, I had been taking a lot of speed. I began pulling back in and feeling very spaced out. I headed home where I had left some grass in a drawer. Mom and dad had found it and thrown it away. This triggered me and I went away for a

1 month. I stayed loaded and slept at different friends' houses. I met a girl at this time whom I later married. While AWOL one month, I grew my beard back out and pierced my ear. I finally went back to the ship. They were just getting ready to pull out of San Diego harbor and they wanted to put a uniform back on me, so I jumped overboard and started swimming. The sirens all went off; "Man overboard; man overboard; this is not a drill". They lowered the boats and got me. I spent four months in the brig.

I finally got out of the Navy. The psychiatrist said my mind was becoming disordered from the use of marijuana and LSD. I remember being in the brig and looking out at the stars, knowing that if I ever got out I was going to grow my hair out and do what I wanted. I would be happy. When I got out of the service, I was as lost and miserable as I was before, if not worse.

I was to meet a new friend in life and find a new world, the world of fixing. The first time I shot speed, I fell in love with the rush. This started something that lasted for six more years, off and on - using and fixing all kinds of drugs. I fell in love with the whole thing of getting off; it wasn't so much what was in the needle, it was the needle itself.

Shortly after getting out of the service, the girl I had met and I went back to Hawaii. We lived in the country and I was again shooting a lot of speed and downers. I found myself doing a lot of dealing to stay loaded. The woman I lived with was not an addict; she went to work and I got high.

She became pregnant and we were married. She said something about me being her husband on our wedding night and I said, "I am no one's husband", and went to shoot dope and slept on Venice Beach with my dogs. As I look back at these kind of things, I can't believe the selfishness that was so much a part of this addict.

During this period, I did a lot of dealing. My house
was being watched and things were getting really weird. My
parents were fully aware of all that was going on. They were
at a complete loss as to what to do. We had no money. My
wife was working and I was using. I was totally incapable
of work. I had no skills. I had attempted a few job training
classes, yet always dropped out because I felt inferior and
inadequate. So my parents got us out of Venice and we moved
to Hawaii again.

Somewhere in the months previous, I had gotten hold of
some books on yoga and meditation. They talked about love
and a light within, freedom and that God was love. I knew I
was lost and I wanted that "thing" inside. Up to this point
the only thing I knew about God was that I was always going
to hell in Jesus' name.

Back in Hawaii; my wife, four months pregnant, and I
were living in the country again. She knew I was using hard
drugs. Everyone was using grass, hash and LSD and an ex-
Harvard professor was the everybody's guru. We were all taking
our drugs for spiritual reasons and sitting around meditat-
ing looking for the light inside. However, I wasn't finding
any magic place inside like the books and gurus were talking
about. I was becoming more afraid and withdrawn. The drugs,
gurus, and meditation were not working. It seems I was al-
ways reading things like "when the student is ready, the
teacher will appear". Little did I know that I was getting
ready through the use of drugs and that the teacher would be
the Twelve steps of the Program.

My wife had our first child, a beautiful baby girl. We
were on welfare and life consisted of going to the beach and
taking drugs.

There was a four bedroom house on the beach next door
that was for rent. One day a very strange lady appeared.
She was about fifty, had long, graying hair to her waist and

1 wore a bikini. She said her God led her to this house and
2 she was supposed to live in it, although at the time she
3 had no money. She moved in anyway. When the landlord came
4 to show the house, she asked him to have the electricity
5 turned on and that she was supposed to live there. Through
6 various miracles, she did live there for the next six
7 months.

8 This woman seemed to radiate a feeling of love and joy
9 that I had never felt from anyone before. Immediately upon
10 meeting her I felt as though I had known her forever. Some-
11 thing in me was drawn to her. Little did I know that she
12 would become my sponsor and play such a big part in my life
13 for the next ten years. This was the beginning of a journey
14 that even today amazes me. It is a way of life, a way of
15 learning complete trust in a Higher Power. I have found a
16 love that purifies, a way of life where the constant care
17 for others becomes automatic.

18 It seems the student had become ready and the teacher
19 appeared. Needless to say, the house became a "Program"
20 house. The woman was an addict with eight years clean time.
21 She started a meeting at the house. I remember my first meet-
22 ing so well. I remember that for the first time I identified
23 with another human being, not so much because they used drugs,
24 but because of what went on inside. Fear was discussed, that
25 intense nameless fear of living, feeling seperated from every-
26 one. I guess that I had always thought it was just me who felt
27 that way. I was finally able to feel like I belonged. Psy-
28 chiatrists had labeled me all kinds of medical terms like
29 paranoid and schizophrenic. No one had ever said I was a drug
30 addict and that I had a disease. I finally felt hope. As I
31 look back, it seems I was finally ready for the program. I
32 was beaten, lost in life, searching for a God with drugs and
33 here was a way of life that was a spiritual life. I was able
34 to see other people who were like me finding a happy, clean

way of life. Yet I was not really ready because for three more years I bounced in and out of the program, never being able to grasp the concept of complete abstinence.

During that three year period, I would stay clean for two weeks here and there, but I would end up using again. I watched others around me come into the program and remain clean. Looking back I can see that I had not yet hit my bottom. I always rationalized that it was O.K. to smoke just one joint if I stayed away from the "hard drugs". I always ended up strung out.

My sponsor was a woman who followed her heart to wherever God said go, carrying the message of the program, working with young addicts. The young seemed drawn to her. In 1970 her inner voice said "head for Europe", so off she went with a few other clean members. They left financially broke as usual, but spiritually rich. I was alone again.

It was Christmas of 1970. I had three months clean and sober; the most I had ever had. Yet the feeling returned and I picked up a joint. A few days later I took some reds and within a week I was shooting dope again. This started a ten month period of using, day and night - drinking, shooting dope and taking pills. I got to a point where I knew I would never get clean again. I had completely surrendered my life to drugs. My wife left me. We had two children. Our little girl was three and we had a little boy almost two. For some unknown reason she left our little boy with me. Today I know that God was working in my life. For the next three or four months my son was the only thing that kept me alive. I identified with the mother who uses and tries to raise children at the same time. I found myself in many blackouts, not even knowing where my son was. Yet knowing he was there must have kept me somewhat aware of living.

On the morning of October 20, 1971 I woke up. There was dope in the house but for some reason I didn't get loaded

1 right then. I took my son and went across the street to the
2 beach. It was a gray morning. I remember sitting on the
3 beach, crying, just wanting to die. I just couldn't go on.
4 A feeling went through me that I had never experienced before.
5 It was as though someone put a blanket around me. I felt
6 warm and peaceful within. A voice within said, "It's over,
7 you don't have to use again". I felt a peace I had never
8 before felt. I picked up my son and went home. One of my
9 clean friends had moved to another island, I flew over and
10 found him. When I walked in the door I told him I was
11 ready to do anything to stay clean. As I sit here and write
12 this it's October 19. Tomorrow I will have eight years
13 clean and sober and that's a miracle. I am still willing to
14 do anything to stay clean.

15 Staying clean and sober today goes so much beyond stay-
16 ing away from the first pill, fix or toke. It is a way of
17 life, a life that I call an adventure today. I have an
18 outline for living; it's the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anony-
19 mous. I either practice and live these steps or I die. I've
20 known more joy than I ever thought possible. I have also
21 known pain as I had never known before. They call it the
22 pain of spiritual growth. I came here selfish and self-
23 centered to the extreme. That self had to die and as that
24 process took place, it hurt. Yet by the grace of God and
25 the Fellowship of N.A., we walk through these periods and
26 stay clean.

27 We have found a way up and out, to fly free. I have
28 learned to share what is going on inside. It is a give-away
29 program, no matter what it is, love, joy, or tears and
30 fears-we have to give it away.

31 Today I am clean and sober by the grace of a loving God
32 and the Fellowship and for this I am grateful. God is loving
33 me now.

JUNKIE MOTHER

When I got to this program I knew I was dying - mentally, 1
spiritually and physically. I had been using drugs and alco- 2
hol for the past twelve or thirteen years with brief periods 3
of what I thought were control and never a thought of com- 4
plete abstinence. Since being clean and sober, I've been 5
able to look back at my addictive behavior and realize that 6
my ability to cope had never been up to par. I remember even 7
at age nine, the need to avoid pain-taking fifteen to twenty 8
aspirin a day because that's what I knew made me feel better 9
if anything hurt. What I didn't know at the time, and 10
didn't learn until coming to N.A., was that my pain was not 11
physical, but emotional and spiritual. For the next thir- 12
teen years I attempted to fill that hole in my gut with 13
anything I could, beginning with LSD in the hippie days, 14
I tried to find a Higher Power that I could control. 15

Eventually I got involved with black magic and witch- 16
craft. There is a long period of confusion after that; my 17
memory of dates and sequence of events is poor. I was taking 18
a lot of downers, uppers, weed, alcohol and drugstore dope. 19
I was arrested once, spent a short period of time in a 20
juvenile detention center, and saw a probation officer three 21
times afterwards. There were many times later in my drug 22
career that I thought of looking up that P.O. and asking 23
her, "Didn't you know, couldn't you see, why didn't you 24
lock me away then?" But that ability to put up a good front, 25
along with many other things, is what drove me to the gates 26
of insanity. I know today that there is no one person, place 27
or thing that is responsible for my actions. 28

I never again came into contact with the law, but I 29

1 know the feeling of the person who has done time, because
2 I was locked in a prison of my own making. I continued to
3 take chemicals of all sorts, eventually shooting heroin with
4 the rest of the gang. I believe that part of my early using
5 was due to my need to be accepted. As it progressed I
6 became more and more self-centered. By the time I got my
7 first fix, I knew I was doing it because I had to, for me
8 to be able to survive in this lonely, frightening world.
9 For the next seven years, my life was a series of runs and
10 clean-ups. I think one of the reasons that I stayed out as
11 long as I did, was because I believed that I had a certain
12 amount of control. Somehow I held jobs most of the time.
13 I got married (to another hype) and had a son. I was
14 never fired, but I didn't take into consideration the fact
15 that I had to quit jobs before they fired me for stealing
16 their money.

17 I was so strung out that when I got pregnant and had my
18 baby, I left the hospital fifteen hours after giving birth
19 because I was sick and had to fix.

20 I kept trying to prove to myself that it wasn't as bad
21 as it seemed, that I could get it together one way or the
22 other. I moved to different towns, got different jobs and
23 saw psychiatrists and doctors. I read self-help/awareness
24 books, switched from drug to drug and tried methadone on and
25 off the streets, but the obsessive, compulsive insanity got
26 worse and worse.

27 My little family and I ended up, a year after my son
28 was born, back at my parents' house. There I spent the last
29 six months of my using. My husband left, got arrested and
30 went into a recovery house. At this point, I was completely
31 incapable of caring for my son or myself. My mother took
32 over my son. I was lucky to be able to get out of bed in the
33 morning to try to hustle for the day. I was dying and I
34 knew it. I was praying to God for death.

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Somehow, for some reason, I visited my husband three
times in that recovery house and I saw and heard things I
had never thought possible. The message was; Addicts Do
Recover, and I knew it was my only hope, a last chance, and
I went for it. Within a week I got myself checked into a
recovery house and started recuperating from the disease
they told me I had. There was no medication (I already knew
that didn't work). They told me this program of complete
abstinence and that by not putting any chemicals in my body
I could get better. They took me to N.A. meetings every
night --sometimes twice a day--and I listened carefully be-
cause I thought for sure there must be some catch to the
whole thing. I haven't found one yet. What I have found is
freedom - freedom from that immobilizing fear that kept me
enslaved for so long.

I spent nine months in that house, building a founda-
tion for myself, making new friends and finding out all I
could about my disease and about this Twelve Step program.
I found a Higher Power I accept and allow to help me. I
believe I had a rebirth - a spiritual awakening - the day I
walked in. I have not had an obsession to use or drink
since that day and I know that I am not the same person who
sat in a blood-splattered bathroom, trying to find a vein
to fix that dime bag in, knowing that wouldn't even get me
well.

Today I work full-time, drive my own car and spend my
own money. I go to a lot of meetings, stay active in the
service of N.A. and try to give as much as I was given when
I got here.

My son is living with me again and with the help of the
Fellowship and the Twelve Steps, we are both growing up to-
gether.

"I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER"

1 When I was fourteen years old I was insecure and naive.
2 My parents never told me very much about drugs or alcohol. I
3 guess they figured I was too young to want to try anything.
4 I was very lonely at this age and I felt I needed a crowd to
5 join. I started going to parties where there was a lot of
6 booze and pot. Beer was always my favorite and I thought
7 nothing of mixing it with pot. It didn't matter to me if I
8 drank and got high. I felt at that time that pot gave me
9 security and confidence to make friends.

10 I stayed at home a lot, even more than I went to parties.
11 My parents went out a lot, and being as young as I was, they
12 never gave it a second thought to leave me home alone. They
13 never thought I'd touch anything, but one night I did. I
14 decided to try every bottle in the liquor cabinet. Then I
15 decided to take an aspirin. During that year, my dad had
16 had an operation on his leg and he had some downers for the
17 pain. I didn't know what downers were at the time, and by
18 mistake, I took one. Later on that evening my mom called to
19 see if I was okay. When she heard how I sounded on the phone,
20 she came home. I just told her that I wanted an aspirin and
21 I had picked up the wrong bottle.

22 That summer I went to camp in Maine. I had a very hard
23 time getting along with the girls there. I hated them and I
24 never enjoyed myself there. My parents would not let me come
25 home, so I had to stay and make the best of what I had. This
26 led me to more dislike of myself and more and more despera-
27 tion to make friends.

28 In my fifteenth and sixteenth years I started going to
29 more beer and pot parties. I liked drinking out of quart

bottles. One day some friends and I went to the park to have
a picnic. I got wasted. I was cooking a hamburger on a
hibachi and it started to rain. I took the hibachi and put
it in the car. I was lucky that my friends realized what
I was doing. They ran towards me and took the small grill
out. Some coals burned the seats and they also burned my
feet.

A lot of times we would party at motels with our current
boyfriends. We would tell our mothers not to call each other
by telling them that the others were sick. Then we would
call our mothers in the morning. We never got caught.

We used to skip school a lot to get high or drunk. I
used to con my way out of everything. I had at least two
or three men teachers. I was more developed than most girls
my age. So, all I had to do was wear low cut shirts and the
teacher would let me get away with anything.

My friendships usually lasted six months, maybe less.
They all started calling me lush.

In my seventeenth year I went to Colorado with a friend
of mine from Sarasota. We got drunk and high every night.
Later on that year, I went out of town again, and every
night there I was drinking screw drivers. I was drunk or
stoned all the time. I guess that time I was fighting my
loneliness and depression.

It was then time for me to go to college. I found it
easy to get what I needed there. I decided to get high all
the time and try to cut down on my drinking. I kept a bottle
of booze in my room just in case I ran out of pot and couldn't
get any. My friend's boyfriend and I would sit out in the
hall and drink a couple of six packs of beer. To me, at that
time, beer wasn't the same as hard liquor. My social life
was going very well. I felt that with pot, it was easier for
me to make friends. One night I went with some friends to a
cocktain lounge. I drank thirteen or fourteen vodka martinis.

1 My friend gave me three pills which I immediately took. We
2 went to a pizza parlor after the lounge. It turns out that I
3 passed out in the pizza parlor with my face in the pizza. When
4 my friend sitting next to me picked my face up out of the pizza,
5 I fell on the floor. The police came, but luckily we didn't
6 get arrested and I didn't O.D.

7 The next night we went out to a bar and my friend's rich
8 boyfriend treated us to drinks. I drank fourteen double vodka
9 and tonics. I got very sick that night. This guy drove me
10 home in his new white mustang and I threw up all over the side
11 of it.

12 I didn't do very well grade-wise in college. I figured
13 at that time I would make it up in the summer.

14 I started doing cocaine in the morning during the summer.
15 I was mixing drugs all the time. I managed to get at least
16 one good grade during the summer. Now I had three weeks
17 until the semester started. My parents went out of town so
18 I had the whole house to myself. Every night we had parties.
19 We had six or seven grams of coke a night besides anything
20 else we could get our hands on. I managed to get a few nick-
21 names at this time. They were: Promiscuous Paula, Boom
22 Boom, and Space Cadet.

23 The summer finally ended and my parents were coming home.
24 I left the house and went over to a friend's to help her wash
25 her car. I decided to take some downers. I went into the
26 house to get a light for the joint I had. I was walking back
27 outside through the kitchen when I slipped and fell. I had a
28 blackout and hit eight bottles of soda with my wrist.

29 After leaving the hospital, I went home for a week before
30 going back to school. I had a lot of guilt and blame hanging
31 on my shoulders. I decided to call a psychologist that my
32 parents and I knew. I figured that if anyone could help me,
33 he could. I couldn't stand walking around with all the guilt
34 and shame I was feeling. I went out the following night and

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

drank sixteen rum and cokes, but all that did for me was make
me sick.

I kept seeing this psychologist even though my drug
and drinking problems kept getting worse. I was at a point
that I felt I could out-smoke or out-drink anyone. I felt
important. I tried acid once and didn't like it at all be-
cause I had a bad trip. One time a friend and I tried some
mushrooms. We didn't remember what we had done that day.
We were cleaning the house and I noticed some neatly folded
laundry. Apparently we had gone to a laundromat and done our
laundry, we just didn't remember.

One of the main things that led me to drugs was fear of
rejection. I feel this happens to many of us whether we
want to admit it or not. To me it was all the time. Drugs
seemed to take a lot of that fear away.

I started to get hooked on speed and diet pills. I
lost twenty-three pounds in five weeks. My friend convinced
me that the diet pills were no good and I threw them away.
But I still kept losing weight. I didn't realize that it
was the cocaine that was doing it. I started getting black
and blue marks on my arms and legs from vitamin deficiencies.
I ignored that and continued to get the drugs I needed. I
was failing almost every subject in school. I was always
depressed and I didn't want to live. I couldn't keep a
decent conversation because I would lose my train of thought.
The most important thing to me in my life at that time was
drugs. One night I got so wasted, I attempted suicide.
Luckily a friend of mine caught me and stopped me in time.

I finally decided that it was time for me to do some-
thing about my problem. My psychologist and I both agreed
that I should go into a therapeutic community. This was a
week before school ended. Since I knew that I would not be
doing anymore drugs, I decided to go for it. I did some LSD,
three grams of coke, and smoked a lot of pot.

1 I told my parents the night before that I would be going
2 into an institution. My psychologist was there to ease the
3 pressure. My mom drove me to the place the next day. I was
4 absolutely terrified and wanted to turn back. My experience
5 of getting straight at this place was beautiful. I owe my
6 life to a lot of people. It had been five years of continual
7 drinking and drugging and I was glad that it was over.

8 I stayed in the institute for eight weeks. I had many
9 flashbacks and a lot of tears. I had a seizure on the seventh
10 week I was there. The doctor said it was a drug delayed re-
11 action from all the garbage I managed to dump into my system.
12 I learned a lot from that.

13 After leaving the institute, I went to California to work
14 for my aunt. When I got there, I found that my cousins were
15 well on their way to becoming drug addicts. I had a slip
16 there and decided to return home. Someone once told me that
17 if I ever started using again, it would be just as if I never
18 stopped. I found this to be very true.

19 I've been going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings for four
20 months. I've been clean for a month. Without N.A. I don't
21 know where I'd be. It's been one day at a time for me and
22 I've never been happier. Things are beginning to work out much
23 better than before. I don't ever want to go through the hell
24 I did, ever again. My security is in N.A., not in drugs.

TODAY IS ALL THAT MATTERS

All my life I have felt like the square peg in a round hole. My earliest recollections are of anger, frustration and resentment because I felt misunderstood. As a small child, I was extremely emotional and highly sensitive. I cried easily. My feelings were constantly being hurt.

As I grew older, I learned to internalize most of my feelings. I thought that if people--family, friends, peers--didn't know they had "gotten to me," they wouldn't be able to hurt me as often, at least, not intentionally.

I grew up in a large family, in a small town. Coming from old Southern, pioneer stock, I had dozens and dozens of peripheral relations because we had lived in the area for generations. In addition, everybody knew everybody else, as in any small town. But I was very lonely. I never fit in wherever I was. I just knew, somehow, that I was "different".

As a young child, I was overweight, bookish and a sissy. I was teased a lot by my peers, as well as the immediate family. Early, I began running away. I simply could not handle "reality" as I perceived it, and retreated into an inner world of fantasy. If I didn't like a particular situation I merely pretended it did not exist. Because I read a great deal, I spent most of my time being whatever hero I was enamored of that week.

My behavior took on some rather bizarre aspects while still in grammar school. One entire summer, I spent much of the daylight hours literally in the closet. At night I came out after the family had gone to sleep to replenish the flashlight batteries, hoard up on sandwiches and gather a new book.

I was despondent much of the time. I was constantly in depression. I became a loner. Yet, much of what I really

1 I felt I covered up with "rousing good fellowship," when I
2 could not avoid social or familial contacts. I began think-
3 ing about dying, and plotted my suicide as early as age
4 eight or nine. By age ten, I had just quit crying, completely.
5 And I never cried again, under any circumstances, for more
6 than 20 years. Sadly, when I stopped crying, I also stopped
7 laughing. Eventually, I even stopped smiling except by a
8 rather half-hearted pretense.

9 By age twelve, I had discovered alcohol. I had stolen
10 some of my step-father's whiskey, and managed to get a few
11 swallows to stay down. I felt like I had discovered the elixir
12 of the gods. I believe I was alcoholic from the start. That
13 first drink made me feel on the inside like everybody else had
14 always looked on the outside. From that day forth, I drank.
15 Never successfully, and not constantly for a number of years,
16 but I drank--every chance I got.

17 By age 15, I knew two things about myself. I knew I
18 was an alcoholic and I knew I was homosexual.

19 I didn't know what an alcoholic was, but I knew I was
20 one. All I knew about alcoholism was that my paternal grand-
21 mother had recovered from alcoholism in Alcoholics Anonymous.
22 She had been a skid row denizen for a number of years and
23 suddenly was clean, serene and sober. I figured I would just
24 have to get as bad as she, and then maybe I could recover too.
25 I think at that point I semi-consciously set out to drink
26 myself into real alcoholism, whatever that is.

27 I didn't know for sure what homosexuality was either, but
28 I knew I was not like other boys. All I knew was that being
29 "queer" was the most horrible sort of social depravity around,
30 and the only two known "queers" in town were not very good
31 role models. I literally lived in terror of being found out!

32 I drank more and more, and I drank more often. I did
33 not establish a single lasting relationship with anyone dur-
34 ing my teen years. Every time somebody got too close, I ran.
35 I was in constant terror of gym class, and was always very
36 conscious to sit, walk, talk and act in a "masculine" manner.

I don't think I looked at anyone below the neck until I was over thirty. (Only "queers" are crotch watchers, remember.)

After high school, I managed to get in college, but it was a men's school and I couldn't handle the accumulated pressures. I was from a really poor background and most of the students (and my God they were all boys) were well-to-do. It was a religious school and rather strict, so I had problems adjusting as I had not had any real discipline for years. Too, my drinking had suddenly become chronic and that kept me in constant trouble with the dean, especially after I started "bootlegging" to other students.

Another student and I quit at the same time and literally dropped out of sight. We wound up in New Orleans and for months my family had no idea where I was, if I was alive, nothing.

I picked New Orleans for two reasons: you could buy whiskey legally at age 18 and the liquor stores and bars are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I hit New Orleans with a bank account, new clothes, a nice apartment; I got a job and just knew I was going to make my mark in the world.

Within a matter of days, I had discovered, in order, pot, LSD, speed, downers, hash, inhalers, poppers, cough syrup, belladonna and several other varieties of "trash" drugs. Belladonna was one of my favorite drugs of choice, and I overdosed, intentionally, on more than one occasion. Of course, I mixed the drugs liberally with all available varieties of alcohol, but mostly wine, beer, bourbon and scotch.

Within four months, I had hit skid row, and didn't recognize it. I hung around the French Quarter and Irish Channel mostly. I lost all motivation except to stay high. I spent the bank account, I got kicked out of the apartment (leaving the clothes behind), and I lost the job. I became unemployed and unemployable. Most of the time I had no place to live, and slept many nights on the levee under some azalea bushes.

1 I learned to panhandle and practiced my shoplifting skills.

2 If I got really hungry and was too shaky to boost at the

3 French Market, I could always eat at the "Sally".

4 I had no hygiene (azalea bushes don't come with hot and
5 cold running anything). I got to the point that I was thrown
6 out of a "hash house" because I SMELLED bad!

7 And I did not recognize that this was really skid row.

8 Too, I never knew I was a drug addict. I couldn't be a jun-

9 kie because I never knowingly took any Class A narcotics and

10 I never put a needle in my vein.

11 In a moment of clarity after an arrest for vagrancy, a
12 really bad acid trip and my worst belladonna overdose, I knew
13 I was in serious trouble. I was 19 years old and about to
14 die. I had been suicidal for years, but suddenly I didn't
15 want to die. Also, I had to get out of New Orleans. The
16 sexual problems had become more difficult to deal with. There
17 was a very large and visible gay community in New Orleans,
18 and for where I was coming from, I was disgusted. I only saw
19 the drag queens and other bizarre members of the community
20 and I knew I would kill myself before I became like "them".

21 I did the only thing that looked practical, from my warped
22 perspective; I got some responsibility. In order, I joined
23 the Navy, got married and had a family.

24 I had "dated" to avoid suspicion and I had even gotten
25 "engaged" once, but I never really had a meaningful rela-
26 tionship with a girl. My wife was no exception. I never let
27 her get close. Out of fear, I avoided any kind of "drug" for
28 the next few years, but I began drinking more and more. I
29 was by now a daily drinker. I had to. I couldn't function
30 without help. I had no sex life without a drink, I could
31 not work without a little help from time to time, and every
32 social situation was so fraught with stress I needed a drink
33 or two or three just to make an appearance.

34 The marriage did not last long. We fought constantly.

35 I was a genuine brute, both to her and the children. We were
36 heavily in debt because most of my income went for booze.

She worked literally to buy food.

When the marriage really began breaking up, I started hanging around dopers and chipping with uppers, downers and pot. I moved in with a girl whose problem appeared even worse than the one I had begun to suspect I had.

That relationship didn't last long. Most of the time, I just stayed home alone and drank and drank and drank.

I recognized in a second moment of clarity that I was headed back to the same scene I had left behind in New Orleans five years before.

Again I did the only thing that appeared practical. I got married again and started another family. I got another job, moved to another town, and later to another state.

My new job interfered with my drinking, because I worked irregular hours at various locations throughout the deep South states. Because I wasn't drinking as much, I managed to make a fairly decent employee, although I am sure that I was a miserable husband and lousy father. I secured a promotion at work that sent us to the Southwest.

We moved in December, just after Christmas, and in mid-January I developed several frightening physical symptoms. A general practice physician sent me to a diagnostician. The diagnosis was that at the age of 26, I was dying from "old age". I was literally worn out. I was drinking nearly a quart of whiskey a day. I was more than fifty pounds underweight, as I had practically stopped eating altogether. I had some severe organ damage and I was in the initial stages of heart disease.

Amazingly my drinking was never discussed, other than I casually mentioned that I drank a little "occasionally."

The marriage began to fall apart. We were in serious financial difficulty. I was more and more depressed and more and more suicidal. But, superficially, it looked okay. We had a nice house and car, I had a good (high-paying) job, we attended church... And I just knew I was losing it! I could feel reality slipping further and further out of reach. I

1 have never been more scared, frightened and confused.

2 Counseling with a priest finally sent me to A.A. I was
3 in such a state of mental deterioration that I don't know for
4 sure in which month I attended my first meeting. I just know
5 it was during the summer. I will probably never know what
6 happened, for sure, after that. I started stopping drinking.
7 I had only tried to stop one time before in the past several
8 years. That was after the lengthy session with the diagnos-
9 tician. That 36-hour period showed me what compulsion, ad-
10 diction, and obsession really were. I could not quit. I
11 had to have a drink. I was in the complete thrall of alco-
12 hol, and I no longer cared if it were expensive scotch or
13 vanilla flavoring.

14 I did not come into A.A. with enthusiasm. I did not get
15 "sober" at my first meeting. I had a bad attitude. I was
16 angry, intolerant, smug, and just too damn smart! I con-
17 tinued to drink off and on and go to meetings. Slowly, I
18 began to hear the people when they said "come back, glad to
19 see you, we are here to help." I made thirty days on sheer
20 will power. I discovered the true nature of the disease then,
21 because I did not replace the "power" of addiction with the
22 "Power of the Program".

23 After thirty days of "dryness" I found it necessary to
24 "commit" suicide. There was a trip to a psychiatric ward,
25 visits with the shrink, antabuse, guilt, remorse, shame...
26 But I kept going to those damn meetings and hating every single
27 minute of it. I got five weeks of sobriety and had one more
28 "slip". Something happened during that last slip that I will
29 never understand. I received the gift of hope, out of no-
30 where. God knows I had not put forth even the least bit of
31 willingness. I didn't even have "the want to, to want to".
32 But I knew I could really get sober and stay sober.

33 I was lucky. I had a sponsor and people around me in A.A.
34 who believed in a program of TOTAL abstinence--absolutely no
35 mood-changing, mind-altering chemicals in any form. I did
36 go to some N.A. meetings, but I couldn't get anything there.

All they did was talk about "being back on the streets" and "remember when".

A.A. did not fulfill all the needs of my recovery program, maybe because of my own shortcomings, but I was never comfortable talking about the "drugging" and I was in the program and sober nearly four years before I got comfortable enough to really open up and talk about ME. I was still character acting much of the time.

A.A. tended to be an older crowd in that area. Most of the "old-timers" were old timers, and straight. There was talk about "dual addiction," but that didn't feel right. Somehow I knew that addiction was addiction was addiction. I did learn, by this time, to open up more freely, but there was little spontaneity.

Finally, I moved a third time to another state. I got involved with a "meeting" whose members who were from different 12-step groups (A.A., N.A., O.A., Al-Anon). The N.A.'s kept inviting me to N.A. meetings, but I wouldn't go. The N.A.'s I had met earlier didn't have very good recovery records, and the few meetings I had attended were disappointing and unfulfilling.

Seemingly by accident, I was on campus of a local university shortly after moving to the city where I now live. I was attending a seminar in another area of the campus and "stumbled" unintentionally in to a service conference of N.A. I sat in on one meeting and was hooked. It was a week-long conference and I called work and laid off, I stayed at the conference nearly round the clock. I went home only to shower and change and slept and ate at the conference.

I was overwhelmed with love and something spiritual that I couldn't identify. Although I could, if I had to, talk openly about myself to just about anyone, it was never a really comfortable situation. Usually I felt rather apologetic and had an intense need to explain myself. I guess I was still seeking approval at all costs.

1 I had come into A.A. with an absolute, unequivocal "hands
2 off" policy--you do not touch me, ever...physically or emo-
3 tionally. The N.A. conference changed that. I seemed par-
4 lyzed every time somebody got too close and I couldn't run.
5 I literally got hugged into happiness, on a 'round-the-clock
6 basis. The intense spiritual feelings were electric--love
7 literally pervaded the atmosphere in a tangible manner.

8 I had, because of the kind of sponsorship I had received,
9 always been active in A.A. service work. I chaired, answered
10 the Central Office tape at night, made twelve-step calls,
11 emptied ashtrays--whatever seemed needed. It was genuinely
12 satisfactory, and I received many blessings as a result of
13 trying to live the program to the best of my ability. How-
14 ever, there had always been some secret inner feeling of
15 "I have got to do this in order to stay sober." I am grate-
16 ful for A.A. and the A.A. program. I attained degrees of
17 serenity, peace, compassion, love and many other wondrous
18 joys beyond my wildest imaginings during the five years of
19 sobriety preceding that N.A. conference.

20 But, everything I received from N.A. is geometrically
21 more wonderful. I am still, at times, in awe of this experi-
22 ence. Today, I no longer am involved in the program because
23 I need to be; today I am involved because I want to be.

24 I still have many of the same problems today that I
25 brought with me to the fellowship. I am still, I think,
26 a square peg in a round hole. Now I understand though, that
27 I am where I am because of my own actions.

28 I am still gay, and still married. That means I don't
29 fit "properly" in either society. I still have financial
30 problems from time to time, because I still let my will take
31 charge. I have learned that God's way is better, but am not
32 yet ego-free.

33 One of the greatest benefits I have received from N.A.
34 is that today, I do not need to explain who or what I am.
35 All that matters is that I am a fellow addict, suffering from
36 an incurable disease. I feel truly a part of the whole.

My past is only important in that it got me here. My today 1
is all that really matters. 2

THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

1 My father warned me, the day I was caught taking "over
2 the counter" ups, when I was 14, "This is the way it starts,"
3 he said. "First these, and someday you'll end on heroin!"
4 I laughed at him...

5 I was an addict from the day I took my first mind-
6 changing chemical, beginning innocently enough, with that
7 handful of "over the counter" ups. This launched a career
8 of addiction spanning every drug I could find, a downhill
9 road taking me through institutions, jail, attempted suicide
10 and insanity. I did not know there was a way to live with-
11 out drugs until I found the program at age 25. It is still
12 a miracle to me after six years of clean time and sanity.

13 The roots of my unmanageability reach far back into child-
14 hood, long before I took my first drug. I had a psychologi-
15 cal make-up ripe for addiction: I was overly sensitive,
16 easily frustrated, had trouble accepting life the way it was,
17 and always wanted to be someone else. I lived in a fantasy
18 world of books and movies; when reality was not colorful or
19 happy enough to suit me, I withdrew to this private world
20 where I could become anyone I chose. I do not remember being
21 very happy. There was conflict in my home over my father's
22 alcoholism and my mother's emotional problems, but my un-
23 happiness stemmed from my inability to accept people and cir-
24 cumstances the way they were and myself the way I was. I was
25 also plagued with constant fear and anxiety--fear that I
26 wouldn't get taken care of, that something would happen, that
27 I wasn't good enough. Fear in one form or another has haunted
28 me all my life and is only now beginning to fade.

29 When I was 11, I was taken out of school for being "too
30 nervous." This intensified my feelings of being inadequate

and different. I started believing there was "something wrong 1
with me." I also learned to hide, to avoid things that were 2
painful. 3

These feelings fed my addiction later; I decided I would 4
belong at any cost and that I would no longer suffer emotional 5
pain. I soon discovered that mind-changing chemicals had this 6
magic about them; they would kill the pain (any pain), help 7
me feel "comfortable" anywhere, and take the rough edges off 8
the world. I began drinking at age 14, and for the next three 9
years that was the only drug I used; however, I used it the 10
same way I later used speed, acid and heroin--to change the way 11
I felt and to blot out unhappiness. To me there is little 12
difference between the two, and I thank N.A. for helping me 13
see this with its program of total abstinence. I stay away 14
from the first fix the same way I stay away from the first 15
drink, for any mind-changing chemical interferes with my 16
clean time. 17

But I did not know this at age 17. I only knew that alco- 18
hol was the greatest friend I had ever had, and when I became 19
paralyzed with depression and hospitalized that year, I had 20
no idea how much it had to do with addiction. I rationalized 21
that it was just the strain of being away at college and over- 22
looked the fact that I had been drinking daily for that whole 23
year. Then I was introduced to other drugs by a well-meaning 24
psychiatrist, and it was just like Christmas to me! They 25
shot me up with chemicals to make me talk, speed to make me 26
happy, and tranquilizers to relax me. From the first injec- 27
tion all I knew was that this was the most wonderful stuff 28
in the world! It was five times better than alcohol because 29
I wasn't sick at my stomach and I flew much, much higher. 30
And I knew that when I was high on that stuff, I felt OKAY! 31
I was psychologically addicted from the beginning--I loved 32
the feeling and wanted it always. 33

I don't remember much of that time; I drifted in and out 34
of reality, which was the pattern of most of my addiction. 35
I totally flipped out and began hallucinating and was given 36

1 shock treatments. The doctors called it a "psychotic break"
2 but today I wonder how much of it was due to my drinking and
3 the "anti-psychotic" medication I was taking.

4 After the shock treatments, I spent almost a year in a
5 hospital recuperating. It was a year marked by crippling
6 depression, my first suicide attempt and isolation in seclu-
7 sion rooms. Thus began a pattern that lasted for the next
8 seven years. I bought the theory that I was crazy and played
9 that role to the hilt. I never spent a clean day in an insti-
10 tution because there were always plenty of pills and I usually
11 could sneak out to drink. For a long time I remained bitter
12 toward psychiatrists and therapists, claiming they had never
13 helped me, but how could they help someone who was always
14 stoned and rarely honest?

15 Although the hospitals were private and very good, as soon
16 as I emerged from my fog I began to rebel. After all, I never
17 asked to be there, to get screwed up or to "be born!" Play-
18 ing victim was one of my star roles and I gave it one hundred
19 percent, blaming my parents, doctors, and fate for my "mis-
20 fortune" and never once guessing where the real responsibility
21 lay. To this day that feeling persists and it's difficult
22 not to blame "God" when things don't work out the way I want
23 them to. The doctors at that hospital finally threw up their
24 hands and said they'd done "all they could do." I was to
25 hear that phrase often in the next seven years. They told
26 me not to use any drugs or the psychosis might recur. Natur-
27 ally, the first thing I did upon release was to get drunk and
28 score some pills.

29 It didn't take long to find some cooperative psychiatrists
30 to keep me supplied with amphetamines and tranquilizers. I
31 became obsessed with staying high; I lived in a synthetic
32 world where there was a pill to deal with every emotion. I
33 attempted college again, but soon school interfered with my
34 drinking and drugging. Also, I had discovered the wonderful
35 world of psychedelics! And there was plenty of marijuana,
36 plenty of parties, and plenty of friends at last. I had some

good times at first: drugs bridged the social gap I had al- 1
ways felt and gave me something in common with others.. Al- 2
though I always drank to get drunk and did dope to get loaded, 3
in those days the consequences weren't too severe. I could 4
still get by in the world. 5

Then I heard about San Francisco and Haight-Ashbury. It 6
sounded like a paradise to me and I split for the West Coast. 7
It was far out at first, all love and sunshine and flowers. 8
I felt I had found my home at last! I moved right into the 9
middle of the Haight, threw away my dresses and let my hair 10
grow longer. It was pure fantasy, full of strange sights and 11
people, just like my dreams. There I never had to be anyone 12
I didn't want to be; I simply donned another costume and 13
changed names for the night. Nothing was permanent, every- 14
thing was possible. I thought I had found true freedom. I 15
didn't realize it had chains. It soon became apparent, 16
though. My first summer in California was spent searching 17
for a way to stay permanently high on psychedelics. I 18
alternated acid, mescaline, psilocybin and STP, and almost 19
succeeded in staying permanently crazy. I discovered many 20
other mind-changing substances along the way. Soon the only 21
objective was to get as high and far away from reality as 22
possible, however possible. I used everything I could get 23
my hands on, although my drug of choice was speed. The 24
streets were a virtual supermarket of drugs, and I found 25
lots of support for staying loaded. There were uppers and 26
downers, acid and peyote, speed and cocaine, smack, THC and 27
always marijuana. I surrounded myself with people who were 28
at least as stoned as I was, for that way there was no guilt. 29
Drugs were first and foremost in my life, before any person, 30
place, or thing. 31

One by one my values began slipping away. I began doing 32
all the things I said I never would do: trading my body for 33
drugs, stealing from friends, ripping off places, and get- 34
ting farther and farther from myself. I lost track of time; 35
I was unable to hold a job, so I got on welfare and started 36

1 dealing. Nothing mattered but staying loaded. Then I started
2 hitting the hospitals again, several times waking up in a
3 locked ward without knowing how I got there. The fantasy
4 rapidly turned into a nightmare. Soon I could not come down
5 from speed any longer, so I started fixing smack. However,
6 I couldn't even be a good junkie because I was getting too
7 crazy and erratic. My behavior was totally unpredictable.
8 And one drug by itself was never enough for me.

9 I wanted to get absolutely wasted. But no matter how high
10 I got, I always had to come down, and that was when the agony
11 hit. I never felt uncomfortable except when I was so loaded
12 I couldn't move. I never seemed to fit anywhere. I changed
13 drugs to change that feeling, "Maybe if I become a speed
14 freak," I thought, "I'll belong," and when that didn't work,
15 "Maybe if I'm a junkie...". I changed groups of people I
16 hung out with, from straight to gay people, from acid-heads
17 to characters, but nothing worked. I could never run away
18 from myself, and that was the person I hated most.

19 Days and nights faded into each other in a blur; I woke
20 up in strange places with strange people, not knowing how I
21 got there; I would go to the store for groceries and end up
22 freaking out and running home; I started making skin flicks
23 for easy money and found myself in L.A. in a porno studio one
24 day and wandering the streets in a daze that same night.
25 People slipped in and out of my life like shadows on a movie
26 screen. I could not maintain a relationship with a man and
27 moved in with anyone who would take me. I holed up for days
28 at a time, too afraid to go out on the street. There were
29 times when I literally could not function and would lie in
30 bed staring at the ceiling. And there were always drugs. I
31 could not get up in the morning without something in my
32 system.

33 I used to wander down the street and wait for someone to
34 take me home! I felt like a leaf in the wind. I started
35 cutting my arms with razor blades, not knowing it was anger
36 and self-destructiveness.

In desperation I went home to my parents in Texas, thinking that a change of scenery would help. I was finding it hard to take care of myself. Little did I know that geographic cures never work. My illness simply progressed. I can remember that time only in bits and pieces. There are chunks of my life that are totally blotted out; to this day I do not remember them, and the things I do remember I have many times wished I could forget. Except today I know that with the program those same painful things can become valuable tools. I have found that even the most humiliating and hurtful memories are valuable in sharing with another addict who may feel that he is the only one who ever experienced that.

I went downhill fast after I got to Texas, and today I consider that a blessing. It got me to the program that much faster. I spent six months in a psychiatric ward and barely remembered it. I could feel the walls closing in and pray desperately for some kind of sanity; then I would hear myself screaming, black out and wake up in restraints. I stopped believing in "God" altogether then. I overdosed several times. I became pregnant, had a miscarriage and found out when they put me in the hospital that I had a malignancy. After my initial shock, I realized that this was what I had been waiting for all my life, a socially acceptable way to die. This really appealed to me and I went home to my parents' house to die. I languished in vain for six weeks but kept getting healthier. And the healthier I got, the angrier I got. I can laugh about this today but then it was tragic. I felt like the butt of some huge cosmic joke, and hit the streets determined either to kill myself or become a vegetable so I wouldn't be aware of anything anymore.

I very nearly succeeded. I hit another mental ward and finally ended up on a methadone program, thinking that at last I had found the answer. This drug would certainly kill the pain, the anxiety and torment I felt most of the time. But I ended up more strung out on methadone than I had been

1 on junk, and I didn't even think it made me high until I
2 kicked it! My life was falling apart rapidly and I knew I
3 was out of control. I couldn't even hold a job as a top-
4 less dancer because I was too stoned. I had the sense that
5 time was running out. I was living over a warehouse in a
6 ghetto with the rats and the roaches and a psychopath who
7 stole my methadone while I was asleep, who once tried to
8 strangle me. After a year on methadone and all the speed,
9 coke, downers, and alcohol I could consume, I reached my
10 bottom. I got beaten up at the methadone center one day and
11 refused to fight back because I was afraid I would get kicked
12 out of the program. I felt as though something broke inside
13 at that moment. I knew I would do anything for dope and
14 wasn't even human anymore. I couldn't seem to die and was
15 afraid to live. I was desperate. I decided to "kick" one
16 more time.

17 I had to go "cold turkey" since the hospital didn't have
18 a methadone license, and while it was painful, it is some-
19 thing I hope I never forget. Many times in the beginning
20 I stayed clean only because I didn't want to end up like
21 that again. I was too sick to take care of myself for weeks.
22 My faithful parents let me stay with them one more time, and
23 often I would sit in the same chair for hours, unable to move.
24 Everything was too bright, too loud, too close. I really
25 believed I was going crazy, that I had burned out my brain
26 for good. When I found out that I had written some bad
27 checks several months before, I didn't know how I was going
28 to cover them. I couldn't work and couldn't even hustle.
29 I wrestled with the fear of going to the joint and the grim
30 relief it might bring. If I were locked up, at least some-
31 one else would manage my life. I knew at that point that I
32 was unable to manage my own life. Despair and hopelessness
33 engulfed me and I prayed to die. Instead, I ended up at an
34 A.A. oriented women's halfway house and learned how to live
35 again.

Some months before I had been dragged to some A.A. meetings but remember nothing about them. However, in my despair I decided to try it as a last resort. Today I know that it was my Higher Power working in my life. There was no N.A. to support me in staying off all mind-changing chemicals, but the A.A. program gave me hope in the beginning. As far as I'm concerned, the Twelve Steps can work regardless of where you learn them.

I had no trouble admitting my life was unmanageable, but it took me almost a year to admit I was powerless over all mind-changing chemicals. I thought if I stayed off hard drugs I'd be straight. I thought it didn't hurt to drink, smoke grass or take muscle relaxants to sleep! After all, I had too many "emotional problems" not to take something. I was "sicker than everyone else!"

I lived this lie for months, although I did stay clean most of the time I was in the women's house. I was in that house just long enough to give me a taste of something better, something beautiful. Small miracles began happening. When I called about the bad checks (which were 4 months old and should have been turned over for prosecution) I was told that they had been "lost" and yes, they would be glad to make arrangements! Also, I began to get a sense of a Power greater than myself. Every day I stayed clean convinced me that there was a God. After all, I had never even lasted one day before. Doing any kind of mind-changing chemicals was never quite the same after that. Although I was only using what I considered "minor" drugs, I couldn't deceive myself anymore; I knew it was slow suicide. I finally snapped one day--why kill myself slowly and painfully again? Why not just get it over with? And that is when I realized that I didn't want to die; I just didn't know how to live.

I went back to meetings and started praying constantly. "Even if I end up in the nuthouse, God," I'd pray, "just let me go cold stone straight." I met some other people who had been strung out and we decided to start an N.A. meeting. We

1 talked to people from other cities who were in the program and
2 finally started a little group. It was for our benefit more
3 than anyone else's. We had very few members in the beginning
4 but it didn't matter. We learned how to open up, share, and
5 love each other. It was the first meeting I was ever able to
6 talk in. I felt accepted and understood there. I learned the
7 value of service, too. Since there were so few of us then, we
8 all had to pitch in and help, and that's when I got my first
9 feeling of self-worth. I felt at last that I might have some-
10 thing to contribute after all.

11 That was six years ago. Since then, the group has grown
12 to six groups in the city. Most of the original members are
13 still clean. Through the grace of my Higher Power and the help
14 of this Program I have stayed clean, also. My life which was
15 once so dark is filled with light and beauty today. The miracle
16 was gradual but complete. Once I got involved with the Program,
17 going to meetings, sharing with others and working the Steps,
18 my life cleared up. I am happier today than I ever dreamed of
19 being. More than that, I belong and my life is of value. I
20 want to live today. And I, who was so afraid of closeness, now
21 have a wonderful (clean) husband with whom to share my life. I
22 can face things I once ran from and am slowly conquering the
23 fear that controlled me. I have more peace, self-acceptance and
24 sanity than I ever had.

25 And most important, I have a Higher Power who loves me and
26 from Whom all these gifts come. Without that, I am nothing.
27 But with God and the Program, my life has purpose and direction,
28 beauty and meaning at last. If I continue to give freely of
29 the blessings I have received, they can only multiply and grow
30 stronger.

31 The Program is more than a way to stay clean, it is a
32 transformation, like that of a caterpillar unfolding into a
33 butterfly. It is a way to become what you would like to be.
34 It is an awakening to the realization of a tremendous Power
35 within you that can overcome anything in your life. You will
36 not necessarily be free from problems but you will be able to

handle them. We who have survived have that rarest of chances
a new life to live and freedom in choosing how to live it.
What greater gift is there?

1
2
3

CLEANED UP AND SOBERED UP, WITHOUT BEING LOCKED UP

1 I grew up in what I call a nice area of Florida, with two
2 good parents, two brothers and one sister. The first time I
3 ever remember getting stoned was on alcohol at age thirteen.
4 This was also my first drink without supervision. I felt very
5 free; I loved getting loaded, but I remember feeling very sick
6 for two days and staying in bed. I hated being sick, but I
7 loved the attention I received for having a "virus." I started
8 running around with some guys who drank regularly. We stole
9 most of our booze from grocery stores. We would drink mostly
10 on weekends before going to dances. I had this brilliant idea
11 once, "If only the scientists of this country would invent
12 this liquid in a pill form it would be a miracle." Little did
13 I know...

14 Before I found pills, a friend turned our group onto the
15 fact that airplane glue would do a job on us! I sniffed quite
16 a bit, despite being aware that I was killing brain cells,
17 lungs and liver. One time I bought an entire case of glue.
18 I told the store owner I was building my own surf board. I had
19 never surfed in my life. Later, during the beginning of the
20 "love and peace" movement, in the mid-sixties, pot, pills, acid
21 and speed replaced the booze and glue.

22 Four of us traveled by van from Florida to Mexico to surf.
23 To this day I have not yet surfed. I felt a need to get away
24 and besides I could get high in Mexico legally and be myself.
25 I ended up in jail there. I felt like this was no big deal,
26 because by this time, age seventeen, I had been locked up a
27 dozen times or more. I had done sixty days for driving while
28 intoxicated.

29 I went back to Florida, ended up in Los Angeles, back to
30 Mexico, then back to Florida. I was in and out of jail. The

police were starting to take me a little more seriously and began filing felony charges against me, all drug related-- from possession to theft.

I began shooting a lot of dope (heroin) and could not stop. I went to a methadone clinic with lots of hope that all would be well, after the twenty-one day detox. Three or four years later, still on methadone, still shooting whatever I could find, that hope had completely gone. That was the longest twenty-one days this addict ever spent.

I went to Lexington, trying to get an angry probation officer off my back. Finally I was placed in a religious, drug-free rehab where I was kept for fifteen months. I stayed clean and sober and became very sanctimonious. During the stay in rehab, I stayed clean and sober about seven months.

In between the drinking and drugging, I had married and become the father of two wonderful sons. Later, after the rehab, I was reunited with my wife and sons. Now I was clean, a family man again and back to business. We bought a nice home and a new car. My wife was graduated from nursing school. I joined Kiwanis and was a successful business man. My life was looking real good to me and everybody else, all except for a few beers here and there. I mean, what the hell; I had quit shooting dope. Now I felt like I was a hero or something. People congratulated me and told me how proud they were to know me. I knew I had an alcohol problem and knew sooner or later I would probably start drinking alcoholically. Little did I know; I already was. I felt as though I would be able to drink about fifteen years before I would be in trouble. I didn't know I had a disease, a progressive disease. Within five years there was no wife, no kids, no home, no business, no car, no money, no hope.

I got really paranoid. I could not stop drinking! The compulsion was as strong and uncontrollable as heroin, cocaine or methadone. I couldn't go on. I feared total insanity. I feared being locked up again. Loneliness had set in. I was in a bad way. I hated myself, God, you and everything.

1 Today I am a happy grateful addict who loves life. (I
2 used to hate to hear anyone say this, I felt like throwing
3 up.) I went to N.A. or A.A. meetings every day, sometimes
4 three or four per day. I didn't drink or take anything else
5 to get high on. From day one, the Twelve Steps became part
6 of my life. At first, I allowed only Step One to take hold.
7 Today I have no fear whatsoever of going insane or getting
8 high. I am constantly turning my will over to the care of
9 God. Why not? I sure screwed it up when I took charge
10 myself!

11 Through listening to the experience of others and learn-
12 ing how to apply this to me, life has become pleasant, beau-
13 tiful and sometimes very exciting. Laughter is a common part
14 of my day. Smiling doesn't hurt at all and I am able to look
15 anyone in the eye. At times when the going gets rough, I can
16 turn to my sponsor, group, God or literature--not necessarily
17 in that order either. On different days it works different
18 ways.

19 Recently I was fortunate enough to experience the ninth
20 N.A. World Convention. Words cannot describe the unity felt
21 there in Atlanta. I brought back so much more than I took,
22 just as it is in the meetings.

23 I really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions but
24 I can honestly say this program works. I had never cleaned up
25 or sobered up without being locked up before N.A. Each day,
26 one day at a time, is another record of success for this ad-
27 dict. So long as I listen to what I'm told it keeps getting
28 better and better! What they tell me is, "Keep coming back,
29 it works!"

WHY GOD?

I hope I never forget how I felt that day. I was under
a porch, sobbing. I could hear the police sirens as they
raced by heading to the scene I kept trying to blot out of
my mind. "Why, God? Why?"

This day started out like all the rest. And once again,
I was terrified, my chest was pounding and my head was throb-
bing. Over and over I kept asking the same question, "Why,
God? Why?"

Why?

I stayed in that position for hours, wanting to be a
little boy again, held in my mother's arms with her telling
me, "Everything is going to be alright."

I remember once, when I was a tall and skinny little
boy, walking onto the schoolyard where the neighborhood boys
were choosing sides for a baseball game. I stood and watched
each captain pick players for his team. There were three of
us left, and one of us was not going to be able to play.

I stood on the side lines watching everybody else play.
I felt so alone. I left, wandering through alleys, alone.
When I came to the railroad tracks, I just sat and let the
train block out the morning, and the noise cover up that
misery.

I didn't want to be alone, so I began running with a crowd
of street toughs with destructive habits. We were into
breaking street lights and car headlamps and windshields.
As we got older, we became more bizarre. All the time I
felt lonelier and more scared. All the time, I was quietly
asking, "Why?"

By the time I was fifteen, I gave up hope of ever being
like other people. I started running with a street gang in

1 Chicago. On weekends we went to dances, but mostly we just
2 stood around on street corners or cruised around in cars.
3 I was looking, I guess, for something or someone to make me
4 feel alright.

5 I remember the day I thought I found the solution. I was
6 in a basement on the West Side of Chicago. Someone fixed me
7 with my first shot of heroin. For the first time in my life,
8 I felt like a whole person. The fears and loneliness were
9 gone. Thus began a love affair that was to last for twenty-
10 two years. Heroin saw me through a marriage, two children,
11 a divorce, county jails, penitentiaries, and many geographic
12 "cures."

13 There were to be many days in the fetal position--feeling
14 so utterly alone and so terribly afraid. And all the time I
15 kept asking, "Why, God? Why?"

16 I was thirty-seven and living in California with the same
17 sick relationship-Heroin. By this time, I had lost the
18 ability to survive. I wanted out; it was impossible to keep
19 up any fronts. I had tried everything and failed.

20 I reached the point that I did not want to live, yet did
21 not want to die. It is the saddest place in the world, and
22 totally isolated. By now all self-respect and sense of dig-
23 nity had gone. I knew the situation was hopeless.

24 I had no place left to go. My prayer turned from, "Why,
25 God?" to "God help."

26 Jim (not his real name) came into my life. I know now
27 that God put him there in response to my prayer. Jim invited
28 me to my first N.A. meeting. It was the first place I had
29 been invited to in years; I would have gone anywhere with
30 anybody at this time. Thank God it was an N.A. meeting.

31 I knew I had arrived at a place where I just might find
32 some happiness, right after I said, "My name is N_____ and
33 I'm a drug addict," and everybody said, "Hi, N_____!"

34 Before my first year clean, Jim died of an overdose, and
35 for the first time, I cried for someone else. In one month,
36 I will have ten years clean time, and God has put many Jims
37 in my life; God has given me many miracles.

I no longer have those feelings of hopelessness, fear and
loneliness. My life has meaning; I feel fulfilled. Many
wonderful people have touched my life and for that I am grate-
ful. I pray in turn that I have touched the lives of others.
Today, I ask why and God says, "Why not?"

GOD PUT OUT THE FIRE

1 Being a young man just out of high school I was ready to
2 conquer the world and give lessons on how a real man could
3 live and lust forever. That was the only goal I had at the
4 time, and it turned out to be short-lived. Within one year
5 I had gotten married in the name of lust only, and ended up
6 divorced that same year.

7 I had joined the fire department to honor my parents'
8 wishes and as a means to support my wife, so I was now a
9 single man making good money with a lot of free time on my
10 hands. All of my friends were older and well-learned in the
11 art of drinking. They ran the ballrooms at night and the
12 pressure cooker bars during the day and I was a willing pupil.
13 I was like a dying man in the desert, the deeper I went into
14 it, the more lost and insane I became, with no purpose but to
15 experience and conquer everything. There was a fire inside
16 me which I could not seem to satisfy or put out and it con-
17 stantly demanded more fuel.

18 To be the best fire fighter was another great challenge
19 to me and I soon became obsessed with it. Early in my pro-
20 bationary period I discovered the adrenalin flow, compounded
21 with blind fear of the unknown put me on a high that no drug-
22 taking experience has ever come close to reproducing.

23 It wasn't very long before I was known as a top fire
24 fighter in Houston and had lots of pats on the back for jobs
25 well done. I received each award like a well-trained dog.

26 Speed way my drug of choice, and I was soon hooked on it
27 as if it were my life-support system. Many times my ego
28 overrode my common sense and the results were disastrous.
29 I went to work so high that I didn't need ladders to get to
30 the tops of the building and I continually put myself into

dangerous situations that give me nightmares even now. I was told by a few "old hand" fire fighters that I was a suicide jockey and that I was running with a death wish.

I had been on speed and downers so long that I began to lose touch with reality. I honestly believed that smoking pot was socially acceptable in all circles except in the older groups. Blowing a few joints, or even a lid every day was not harmful and surely pot was not a drug, so I enjoyed my smoking habits. I became a connoisseur of exotic weed, traveling all the way to Alaska just to try some better stuff.

Women seemed to come with the drug addiction and I started at the beginning. I wanted to let all the ladies in Houston know that I was available, and had a pocket full of pills and a bag full of goodies to take care of all their fantasies. My ego was constantly being dropped and shattered by these demons in lace. I was a puppet with my strings just waiting to be pulled.

Once more I was married, to a master puppeteer. Disaster was upon me once again. I did not know how to cope with this woman who put her drug addiction before my selfish male ego. The rent money was being spent on drugs and sexy clothes for her, while I was wearing my uniforms on and off the job, and even to my second job.

I was working two full-time jobs, putting in one hundred to one hundred thirty hours per week, and still I was always broke. I was consistently going into fits of rage over her addictions and bad money managements. It was impossible to think of my addiction as a contribution factor to our financial problem because I could rationalize my need for speed or cocaine, just to go to work and my need for downers in order to sleep.

The Houston police narcotics division came to visit my home rather abruptly and uninvited one evening while I was having a quiet party with a few friends with the same interests as my wife and myself. These party crashers were not

1 very polite but did invite us to join them in a ride downtown
2 to visit the facilities at the main lockup. As I sat behind
3 those bars, I came to the conclusion that this also was my
4 wife's fault and all I had to do was get rid of her and all
5 my problems would be solved.

6 Being a city employee the courts were very lenient with
7 me, but assured me they would be watching my activities in
8 the future so I had to walk on egg shells for a year. Cutting
9 my wife loose was another mistake. I had no connection for
10 my addiction problem; she knew all the street people that had
11 what I needed and also every known "script" doctor on that
12 side of town. I again started searching for a new lady to
13 supply my needs physically and egotistically once more. This
14 time I was smart; I figured a very naive and non-addictive
15 type woman would serve me better. I found her in a very nice
16 bar downtown. I was drinking there and she was serving me
17 in a short skirt with a nice smile and told me how much money
18 she brought home every night. I was in love once more and
19 moved in that night.

20 Everything was on the upswing, in my favor once more.
21 This lady made me feel like her hero, praising and pushing
22 my ego to greater heights. She thought my drug problem was
23 a little out of hand and rather expensive. I could not take
24 her out because I was always broke or too loaded to go out
25 in public.

26 My job was in danger now as the other fire fighters were
27 complaining of my being loaded on the job. I was caught
28 several times going to the backyard of the fire station to
29 cop a high just to get through one more hour or to get some
30 sleep. I remember one freezing winter night we responded
31 to a fire alarm at a popular disco; the whole back end of
32 the building was on fire. I ran into the back door right
33 in the middle of the burning room, shooting water on the
34 blaze and cussing and screaming at the fire like it was a
35 person. Today I realize how insane that action was and how

uncontrolled I was over my actions. After that "battle", I
crawled to the front of the disco and found the beer tap
coming out of the wall. I was just going to have one quick
cold beer to settle my nerves, but it did not end up that
way. I was found laid out on the floor so drunk I couldn't
stand up. My captain thought I had been overcome by smoke and
heat and sent me back to the station to recuperate.

From then on every fire my company responded to was an
open invitation to a quick high. Every night club and restau-
rant had booze of some kind and every house or apartment had
cold beer in their refrigerators and usually some kind of drugs
or pot in the medicine cabinets, or some hiding place in the
bedrooms, and I was acting like a Saint Bernard on a rescue
mission. It didn't matter where you hid your stash I could
find it and I ribbed myself that I was doing these people a
great service by stealing it before one of my redneck officers
came across it and turned it over to the man.

At a major apartment fire one evening in November 1976 my
partner was electrocuted when the ladder he was on swung into
a high voltage power line. I had this terrible feeling of
hopelessness. This man was more than just a friend to me; he
had saved my life several times and I knew that any time I got
into trouble or dangerous situations, this guy was always
there to pull me out.

Here he lay dying in my arms and I couldn't do a damn
thing to help him. I wanted to run away and hide, to just
get away, because I just could not stand to see him suffer
like this. He was hauled away to the hospital finally, and
I didn't know if I would see him alive ever again. I was
hurting in my guts so bad I got sick.

I got off my knees and went back into the fire ground
feeling loss and shame. I needed a drink or anything that
would get me over this situation. A friend walked over and
handed me a joint. That wasn't enough, so I started opening
every refrigerator in this burned-out apartment complex. I

1 got wiped out in less than an hour on everything I could put
2 my hands on. I don't remember anything after that for three
3 days. By the grace of God, I watched my partner recover even
4 after the doctors said there was no hope.

5 Even then, as sick as I was, I knew there was a God work-
6 ing in my life. I honestly believe today that this Higher
7 Power was trying to tell me to stop the insane behavior. I
8 could and would die if this game of destruction I was playing
9 did not stop. Out of thireteen men at my station, nine of
10 them were hurt on duty and had to be hospitalized in an eight-
11 month period.

12 I did not think I could be the next one to fall, but it
13 did happen. The night of February 9, our company responded
14 to an apartment complex fire. I made my approach through the
15 second story balcony and ran right into the main body of the
16 fire. After knocking the fire down, I started back out the
17 sliding glass door leading onto the balcony. The heat inside
18 and the cool weather had caused the glass in the sliding door
19 to become brittle. As I tried to open this door the glass
20 shattered and the top sheet fell out towards me. I put my
21 hands out to keep the glass away from my face. When it hit
22 me it felt like a sledge hammer. I fell backwards into the
23 middle of the room; I couldn't feel my right hand; I thought
24 it was gone. I had been cut at the wrist and my hand was
25 pulled back and blood was shooting everywhere. I remember
26 very well this scene, as it brought nightmares for two years
27 after the accident. I did not want to die in that dark and
28 dirty place and I was scared right then more that I ever had
29 been, in the ten years of fire fighting.

30 After leaving the hospital, all I did was hide from
31 everyone and feel sorry for myself. I thought I was a mis-
32 fit and cripple and didn't want people to see me like this.
33 The doctors were a big help. Everytime I asked for pills for
34 the pain or my nerves, they gave me a prescription.

35 As an addict, this was my escape from reality. I stayed
36 fixed and doped up for two years before a gentleman that

"read my mail" offered me a chance to live. He introduced me
to a group of people that had similar problems. The only
difference was they were facing and doing something about
their problems. These people seemed to be happy and this
was something I had never been. They accepted me with open
and loving arms; they really cared about me. They shared
with me their experiences and gave me guidance on how to
handle my problems.

Today I am happy, joyous, and a free man. I no longer
hide in drugs or any kind of chemical high. I still have
problems in my life today, but the action I chose to take by
turning them over to a power greater than myself and not
hiding from them makes all of them easier to cope with.

I have three beautiful things in my life now. I have a
God that is loving and easy to understand. He will help me
overcome all obstacles in my life if only I ask for His help.
The second is this group of beautiful people that I love
and claim as my family. The third is I have found the per-
son inside myself that I always wanted to be.

THEY CALLED ME "HOPELESS"

No one in my family ever used drugs, except as pre-
scribed by a doctor. In fact, no one in my family even
drank, and I was taught that people who were drunks and
addicts, or couldn't solve their own personal and emo-
tional problems were really bad-degenerates.

In high school, I started to use drugs, because they
helped me feel good about myself. I was so self-conscious
and embarrassed about my looks that sometimes I just felt
sub-human. As a result, I started to get high and became
an over-achiever.

College was a bore, until I discovered pot. I became
a "hippie", and met a girl who liked to party and we were
married. After school, I started using "speed" while
traveling in my work. Soon, the constant traveling and using
caused my first wife to divorce me. This gave me a good
excuse to go wild. I had always wanted to try all the dif-
ferent drugs I could get my hands on. I soon came up with
a combination of narcotics, sedatives and hallucinogens that
became my favorite.

I started to lose the small business I had built up and
felt guilty about what I had become--a business and social
failure. I had to use something every day to obliterate my
feelings of self-hatred, shame and guilt. I decided to get
rich and go "big time" dealing between Chicago and New York.

In order to finance the trip East, I set up my fifteen-
year-old lover and had her selling acid to her schoolmates.
I began buying other drugs at Midwest wholesale and re-selling
to students at a major eastern university. Traveling loaded
and peddling dope gave real meaning to the words "fear" and
"paranoia".

1 Then I met a woman I thought I could change for. I thought
2 everything would be O.K. She helped me control my use and I
3 set out to impress her. My legitimate business revived for a
4 while, but then I began to use heavily again; things got worse.
5 My second wife left me. My business failed.

6 I felt hopeless. All I could think about was drugs. I
7 tried to stay high and began drinking heavily and daily again.
8 I just did not want to feel anything. I didn't like me. I
9 just wanted to escape from myself. I overdosed on Demerol and
0 wound up in the hospital. While still in the hospital, I began
11 to feel better and publicly declared my intention to stop
12 using. I was going to enter the mental health out-patient
13 clinic, solve all the problems drugs had caused and never
14 have to use again. Of course, I continued to smoke pot and
15 drink beer, because after all, everybody did.

16 My business gradually fell back together and I had money
17 in my pocket again. That was my downfall-I could now afford
18 that most glamorous, "non-addictive" substance--cocaine.

19 How wonderful was my new chemical lover. She made me feel
20 so, so good again and again. I began to cheat, lie and steal
21 to get the money for my new habit. I went to several doctors,
22 feigning symptoms appropriate to prescriptions for large
23 quantities of sleeping pills and sedative hypnotics. I used
24 some of the prescribed drugs, but mostly sold them to get
25 coke. Often I used too much coke, and was always in fear of
26 a heart attack, but I could shoot some downs to knock me out.
27 Eventually, I overdosed this way.

28 Again I wound up in the hospital. Once again I started to
29 feel better after a few clean days in the hospital. I re-
30 solved to stop using again, this time I would get help from
31 a psychiatrist. I tried. I told him how bad I was, how I
32 felt about myself, and sometimes how good I felt being clean.
33 I stayed away from the old crowd for a while. The psychia-
34 trist seemed to want to help me. He suggested I take some
35 mood-balancing pills, so I bought some and tried them.

that risk, I can now attend N.A. meetings every day of the 1
week in my area. 2

I want to keep what has been given to me, so I actively 3
share through loving service to N.A. wherever and however I 4
am asked. The Spirit of this Fellowship is in me today. I 5
have come to know unconditional love. 6

RELAPSE AND RETURN

1 My marriage was on the rocks. My wife had sworn out a
2 warrant on assault charges and had confronted me about my
3 addiction. Although I admitted the addiction to her, I
4 was not ready to accept it myself. She told the other
5 family members about my addiction and asked me to accept help.
6 I was not ready for help, but during the court hearing, she
7 told the judge she would drop charges if I would agree to
8 go into a treatment program. Needless to say, I was more
9 willing to go to treatment than to jail, so I did--for all
10 the wrong reasons.

11 While in treatment, I decided to listen to what they
12 had to say. I was soon admitting my addiction, but had
13 difficulty embracing the concepts of a Higher Power. Be-
14 cause of a series of spiritual experiences, I finally began
15 to accept the idea of God. This enabled me to become very
16 involved in my treatment effort and I tried to put aside all
17 outside problems, investing myself totally in my recovery.

18 Treatment went by quickly and I really believed I was
19 equipped to go back into society and pick up where I left
20 off. It only took three days for my security and confidence
21 to be shaken. Three days after my discharge, my wife entered
22 treatment. In the beginning, I was happy she was admitting
23 her addiction. Soon, she was requesting that we have no con-
24 tact and I resented that. I became jealous when she told me
25 she had been advised to get rid of her problem and that I was
26 it. The feelings of rejection were a deep kind of pain and
27 I was resentful over not having been given my second chance
28 to put my family back together. The pain was unbearable and
29 the only way I knew to relieve it was to return to my imme-
30 diate reliever--drugs.

In much less time than I thought possible, the reality of the progression of the disease, as I had been taught in treatment, came true. In a period of five months, I lost a family, all my material possessions except the clothes on my back, my job and all my friends, and most certainly, any control over my drug usage. I had married again, was heavily in debt and resorted to one thing I had never done before--stealing. The bottom I had hit before treatment was "Ned in the First Reader" stuff compared to this. I felt alone and desperate. I realized that I was no longer comfortable with the drug life.

I isolated myself in my apartment and withdrew myself to be rid of the drugs in the physical-self. The mental craving was still there after withdrawal. I finally decided I couldn't make it by myself. I began to pray again and to try and make conscious contact with the Higher Power. For the first time I got honest about my powerlessness and reached out for help. I called old acquaintances in the Fellowship and asked for help in getting transportation to meetings.

In the beginning of my return to the Fellowship, only the body was present, but at least I had the willingness to get the body there. I felt so hopeless and helpless I considered going into treatment again. After a lengthy conversation with a member of the Fellowship, she told me that I knew what to do; my mind finally caught up with my body and I began to work the Steps.

I went to every meeting available each week and soon I began to feel differently. I was aware of a sense of peace, some of the fear left and for the most part, I was relieved of the craving. Although my material world was still non-existent, I began to distinguish my needs from my wants and got comfortable with what I didn't have. The Higher Power seemed to be taking care of business for me and many of my problems disappeared or resolved themselves.

I became involved in the Fellowship, spending all my time with recovering addicts. I knew I was getting clean

1 and that I wanted to be clean. I became aware of how people
2 care about me and that if I listened to them, God would
3 speak to me through them. Without any effort on my part, my
4 world began to fall into place. I was soon employed again,
5 reconciled with my parents and sister and was able to cope
6 with the outside world just as it was.

7 My feelings of gratitude spilled over. I finally felt
8 I had something to share with other recovering addicts and
9 I couldn't wait to give it away. I became heavily involved
10 in Twelve Step work and returned to the treatment center
11 where it all began, to offer myself as a volunteer for any-
12 thing they needed me for. I drove van-loads of patients to
13 meetings, shared with the patients my experience, strength
14 and hope and became willing to become God's instrument to speak
15 to others in any way He chose.

16 My life has taken on new meaning and I am able today,
17 with the help of the Higher Power, to feel feelings I never
18 allowed myself to feel before. I am more confident, but I
19 know it is God-confidence. I am more reliant, but I know it
20 is God-reliance; I am more independent, but I know it is God-
21 dependency. I am free today to be exactly who I am because
22 I know who I am.

23 Recognizing my dependency on God as I understand Him,
24 continuing to work the Steps of the program and my sincere
25 desire to give away what I have, I can truthfully say, I am
26 a

Happy Drug Addict!

INSTITUTIONAL STORY

1 I am a junkie. I am also an inmate who has gotten clean
2 through Narcotics Anonymous in an institution.

3 I came into the program because I was hurting and I knew
4 I needed help. At first, I didn't really know what it felt
5 like to be clean. I came to my first two meetings high. I
6 listened a lot and did very little talking. After my third
7 and fourth meetings, I began to understand the people who
8 were sharing their troubles with dope. Funny thing, I knew
9 where they were coming from.

10 I started smoking pot at the age of eleven. I really
11 started before then, but it was at eleven that I started
12 regularly. After about a year, I couldn't get as high on pot
13 as I used to, so I started chemicals. I used THC, crystal
14 meth and acid for a couple of years. I know now I was really
15 hurting myself and the people around me. I got thrown out
16 of the house at the age of fourteen. I lived off other
17 people's parents by telling them my folks died and I didn't
18 want to live in an orphanage. By then, I was really strung
19 out on meth. I lived from place to place, stealing whenever
20 I needed some dope.

21 Finally, I ran out of places to stay and schools to go
22 to. I called my parents and conned them into letting me come
23 back home. I was eighteen at this time. I started my fourth
24 high school in four years, and was introduced to MDA.

25 I thought this drug was the answer to all my problems.
26 When I fired a half-gram, all my problems would go away and
27 the whole world was beautiful. I got strung out on this drug,
28 but really didn't care. A couple months after I turned nine-
29 teen, I was up to doing two to three grams a day. I lived
30 for and needed this dope. I ripped off a large amount of money

and decided to throw a party. I bought a couple of ounces
of MDA and a pound of pot. With these drugs and a few friends,
we headed for the lake. We got to partying real heavy and
found three more friends of mine. They asked me if I had some
drugs. I told them I did and they were welcome to party
with us. They got high and two of them overdosed and died.
Now I'm in prison doing time for their deaths. It really
scared me to realize it could have been me instead of them.
I needed people like N.A. to help me.

I have been in the program nearly nine months, clean and
sober. I really have begun to understand and relate. I
thank my Higher Power and the fellowship of Narcotics Anony-
mous for my recovery. I haven't been on the streets yet, but
I know when I get out I am really going to need the program.
May God bless all my brothers and sisters in Narcotics
Anonymous who have shown me the way to stay clean and sober
one day at a time.

GEOGRAPHICAL CHANGES

1 Drinking had always appealed to me. I remember my dad
2 and his every-present bottle. Throughout childhood, I was
3 carried off again and again by his many geographical changes.
4 When he died as a direct result of alcohol, I became with-
5 drawn, silent and morbid. I lived in daydreams of my father.

6 The first opportunity to drink was afforded me at age
7 twelve. I blacked out after one beer. Upon coming to, I
8 promptly secured another one. Drinking and pill-taking were
9 my source of amusement for the next two years. I became
10 enamoured of an older man, and together we explored the
11 realms of marijuana, hashish, hallucinogens and cocaine. I
12 achieved an amazing sense of power when I began reaping the
13 material benefits of drug dealing. I lived in a world of
14 defiance; tolerable only when there were enough chemicals
15 in my body to deceive me into seeing life on my own terms.

16 My attention was attracted by heroin, and I toyed with
17 the drug for a while. Second, preceding my first fix, a woman
18 said, "You'll never feel this good again." Those words have
19 resounded in my head ever since.

20 Several years after my initial orientation to drugs, I
21 received an urgent phone call from my lover. He asked me to
22 come to his house concerning a matter of great importance.
23 The car radio played, "Lonely, wanna die, if I ain't dead
24 already, girl you know the reason why...". Upon entering his
25 room, I found him serenely lying in bed, needle in arm. When
26 we reached the hospital, he was D.O.A.

27 It was my turn to make a geographical change. I flew to
28 a Middle Eastern country, where I married and had two children.
29 During the following eight years, I became a responsible wife,
30 mother, lover, cook, maid and farmer. I chopped wood, picked

cotton and hand-washed diapers in a basin in extreme heat and in snow. The children and I were subjected to physical and emotional battering. I used alcohol to relieve my feelings of inadequacy, rejection, loneliness and despair. I was convinced that I was to live a life of martyrdom, and consciously set out to become an alcoholic and an addict. I abused mood altering pills and cultivated an opium habit.

One day my husband informed me that we were to leave the Mid-East for America. I had become so passive and submissive on the outside that it was easy to control my inner joy. I knew that if I appeared to be overjoyed to go home, I would be forbidden to do so. At that moment, a spark of life rekindled itself within, and I waited.

I thought that our return to America would terminate my lust for drugs and alcohol. For some insane reason, I thought my husband would change his abusive ways. This was not to be. I delved even deeper into the madness of American alcohol and continued to consume large quantities of opium.

One morning I made a decision not to be beaten again. My children, our backpack and I traveled many miles to an obscure city. Here the battering ceased, but the unfathomable terror of being found, coupled with the effects of drugs and increased alcohol, drove me toward insanity and death. After an unsuccessful suicide attempt, I was introduced to a chemical-free program of recovery.

For the first time since childhood, I was offered unconditional love. This genuine caring gave me enough hope to try life once again. I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous, where I was welcomed and accepted for myself. I was shown kindness at a point when I was bitter and filled with self-loathing. I went to a meeting every night for months and didn't use. The concept of "one day at a time" became meaningful. I began to use the power of prayer. Today, God, as I understand Him, is in my life. Since I began consciously to apply the Twelve Steps of the program of Narcotics Anonymous to my life, I have experienced spiritual growth. I maintain

1 that through working the Steps, we may be freed from the
2 bondage of self. Here and now, I am overcome with immeasur-
3 able gratitude for N.A. and the people of the Fellowship who
4 loved me when I could not love myself.

5 Today I have that occasional inner peace that comes with
6 spiritual well-being. For the first time, there is a commu-
7 nication between myself and my children. I have friends whom
8 I love and respect. My life-long dream of being a student in
9 a field that I admire, has been realized. Today there is
10 laughter in my life.

11 "I was willing to change when the pain of not changing
12 became worse."

13 I have learned that "the way to enlightenment is to
14 lighten up," because as the song says, "I haven't got time
15 for the pain."

"SPECIAL EDITION"

Even as a child I can remember feeling on the "outside."
It seems as though I was always searching for something,
searching and wanting to be "special" in some undefinable
way. When I was a young girl I tried to be "special" be
being a good girl and helping around the house and doing
what my parents asked. When I was in grade school I was
able to get some feelings of being "special" by being popu-
lar.

But being "good" and being popular were hard work and
there was a lot of insecurity because it all depended on
how other people would react to me. When I was twelve I
was able to find the feeling of specialness that I was
searching for. We lived near a boy's home and one of the
guys there had a "still." My first taste of moonshine was
not pleasant, but the feelings that went with the unpleas-
ant taste were more than worth it. I felt good and warm
and pretty and secure and special. I had found it. I began
drinking about every other week and began running with
people who were quite a bit older than me.

The second time that I ever drank was at a party where
I only knew a couple of people. It's not real clear what
happened, but somehow I wound up at this party all alone with
only one other guy. He raped me that night and I remember
feeling that somehow I had asked for this and that if I ever
told anyone about it they would blame me. But it didn't
matter cause I was already blaming myself.

After this incident I began drinking a little more often.
We would go out almost every weekend and get drunk. I had
begun to have blackouts. Part of the insanity of my disease,
I think, is that I believed that the blackouts were normal

1 and that everyone drank to blackout.

2 I began to feel restless and began feeling less and less
3 special, so I began to look for other highs. I started
4 smoking pot and doing speed. When I finally entered high
5 school my drug usage was already out of hand. I was always
6 in trouble at school. I felt very insecure there. That
7 need to be special had intensified and there was a lot more
8 competition in high school than there had been at any other
9 point in my life. I was skipping morning classes a lot and
10 going out to smoke pot and drink wine. I was coming to
11 school loaded almost every day and was having a lot of problems
12 with my peers and teachers. The people that I was running
13 with at school were confronting me on my behavior and usage
14 so I found a new, older, group of friends and began attend-
15 ing school less and less. At one point during my "career" as
16 a student I got in a fist fight with a priest and I quit
17 school at that time.

18 A few weeks later I was out getting drunk and decided it
19 was time for "the kid" to be on her own. I talked a guy into
20 stealing his girlfriend's car and we left for Denver that
21 night. I had a hundred dollars in my pocket and no place to
22 go. I tried to go into a bar, but they carded me and I was
23 only fifteen. I walked next door to an acoustic shop where
24 three guys were working, and asked them if they knew of a
25 place where I could stay. They offered to put me up at their
26 place so I left with them. Up 'til this point my experiences
27 with drugs had been minimal. These guys were coke freaks and
28 I was soon doing coke on a regular basis. I got a fake I.D.
29 while I was there and I used to sell blood twice a week, for
30 cash. I also did a lot of panhandling. It never entered my
31 mind that I should go to work to support myself.

32 While in Denver I was arrested for public drunkenness and
33 taken to jail. I tried to escape and was handcuffed behind
34 my back, beat up and taken to Juvenile Hall. I think that's
35 when I was forced to do some growing up. There were a lot of
36 folks in the hall who were much more street-wise and tough

than I was. I had a smart mouth and wound up getting myself 1
beat up a couple of times there. Finally a Mexican girl there 2
took pity on me and taught me how to fight and defend myself. 3
I also wound up in isolation for fighting with one of the 4
matrons there. I did a lot of fighting and talking tough in 5
the hall. What was really going on was that I was scared to 6
death but I was afraid to let anyone there see this, for fear 7
that they would take advantage of me. This soon became a 8
pattern for me, acting tough. 9

After a few months they finally let me out of Juvenile Hall 10
and flew me back home. I'd only been home for a few weeks 11
when I started back to school, at my parents' insistence. 12
I was enrolled in school for 90 days and only attended three 13
days of class during this time. When I began school I also 14
began dealing pot. It was also during this time that I fell 15
in love. I quit school and left home again to move in with 16
him. He was also an addict. He was strung out on narcotics 17
and was into shooting up. He was also into robbing drug stores 18
for a living. I had a lot of drugs available to me at this 19
point and I was hungry to try them all. I was too scared of 20
needles at that point to shoot up. He and I lived together 21
for about a year and decided to get married. 22

About this time when he started talking about quitting 23
drugs, this was really threatening to me, so I did my best 24
to discourage him. I was getting pretty burnt out at this 25
point. I could do a lot of drugs and they would affect me 26
little, so I began drinking even more. 27

One night after I had just finished a pint he decided 28
to quit drugs for good. He took an overdose. By the time 29
the ambulance got there he was already dead and I was taken to 30
jail. In jail I had some time to do some thinking. I de- 31
cided that I would never do drugs again. I was feeling 32
scared and guilty. I felt that it was my fault that he was 33
dead. I was laying guilt trips on myself like, "If you hadn't 34
been so drunk maybe you could have helped him," and, "If I'd 35
only quit drugs with him when he wanted to." My resolution 36

1 lasted for three days. His brother came to pick me up for
2 the funeral, and we were both really wasted by the time we
3 got there. I was so drunk that later, when I went up to put
4 flowers on the grave, I couldn't remember where they had
5 buried him. After that I made another resolution to myself.
6 That I would never experience another straight day.

7 I took a job as a bartender and was going to a trade
8 school in the evenings. I was also selling pot and speed.
9 Around this time I had invested quite a lot of money in getting
10 some pot from Arizona, but the pot connection got busted and
11 my friends wound up bringing back heroin. Well, I had to try
12 it to sell it, I reasoned. I watched a couple of other people
13 shoot up before I did. I was really scared but didn't want
14 anyone to know. The guy that hit up before me convinced me
15 that heroin was the escape I was looking for. He booted it
16 up, broke out in a cold sweat, stood up, wet his pants, and
17 passed out on the floor. I thought, "This is for me".

18 It didn't take me long to develop a pretty expensive habit,
19 but it did take me a long time to realize it. We would make
20 a run to Arizona about every three weeks and bring back more
21 heroin.

22 Again, I began having problems in school. I was having
23 to shoot up before I even got out of bed in the morning and
24 again after I got to school. My school counselor knew some-
25 thing was wrong but I wasn't admitting to anything. A couple
26 of girls that I ran with at school became concerned about me
27 after they walked in the bathroom at school one morning and
28 caught me fixing. They were threatening to turn me in "for
29 my own good" but I talked them out of it. A few days later
30 I went to school all beat up. I had gone to a party the night
31 before and had gotten beat up and raped by some guys there.
32 Needless to say my self-worth was pretty low at this point.
33 My school counselor requested that I see a doctor of their
34 choosing before I could attend any more classes so I went.
35 I was really scared and something didn't seem quite right to
36 me. When I got to the doctor's office, he asked me to roll

up my sleeves (it was the middle of summer and I was into
wearing long sleeve shirts then). He took one look at the
holes in my arm and he asked me to hold out my hand. I did and
he slapped it saying, "You've been a bad girl." He then asked
my school counselor to come in and told my counselor that I
was an addict and that I needed to go into treatment.

A few days later I went into treatment to get the pressure
off. I truly believed that they were going to teach me how
to use drugs socially. I should have stopped to think that I
had never heard of a social shooter before. I stayed in treat-
ment for a total of eleven days and decided that this was
definitely not what I needed. I left that night. By that
time I had decided that I would never allow myself to go
through heroin withdrawal again so I decided to switch my
drugs of choice to other narcotics. Obviously, my thinking
was somewhat impaired at this point.

I soon had built my tolerance level back up to what it had
been before treatment. Only this time, I was shooting Demerol,
dilaudid and morphine instead of heroin. I also began over-
dosing a lot during this time, and occasionally thinking about
suicide. For a long time I had wondered what the purpose of
my former lover's death had been, and it was during this
time that I found out. I truly believed that had I not experi-
enced the pain and guilt of his suicide I would have taken my
own life.

Instead of becoming suicidal, I became homicidal. Whenever
I shot narcotics, I would become increasingly more mean and
violent. A lot of the anger was about not being able to
achieve the escape and peace that I used to find in drugs.
I was beginning to feel trapped but did not know where to
turn. Sometimes I thought I was going insane. Then I would
remember some of the things I had heard during my brief stint
in treatment and I would question my usage. These thoughts
were fleeting; I always thought of myself as strong and tough.
Being dependent meant weakness so I would not allow those
thoughts to continue for long.

1 In the year that followed treatment, I overdosed four
2 times and wrecked my car an equal number of times. Almost
3 a year after leaving treatment, I went back in. This time
4 I was able to grasp the first step, though not totally.
5 After I got out of treatment, I was sent to a halfway house
6 where I stayed clean and dry for about a month and a half.
7 My behavior did not change though, and I was still unhappy.
8 I continued to frequent bars and run with people who were
9 using. One night, in a bar, I met another heroin addict and
10 began using again. The difference this time was that every
11 time I shot up I knew I was an addict who was choosing to do
12 nothing about my addiction. My feeling of self-worth went
13 even lower. My behavior became even more bizarre. My life
14 became more hopeless. After about six months of using I
15 decided to try N.A. again. I began going to meetings, but
16 I still continued my old behavior. Something was wrong and
17 I knew it, but I didn't know what it was or how to change it.
18 During the following year my longest period of sobriety was
19 three months.

20 I began bartending again. Thinking I could stay sober
21 as I had not yet admitted my alcohol addiction, I was able
22 to stay clean for two months while bartending, but finally I
23 became so miserable I began drinking again. This time I was
24 determined not to begin shooting drugs. That lasted about two
25 weeks and I was back to shooting again. This time was dif-
26 ferent than my other relapses.

27 My old using friends knew that I had been clean and were
28 reluctant to help me to continue my addiction, so it became
29 increasingly harder for me to copy my drugs of choice. I
30 began feeling afraid. People in the program were no longer
31 trusting me because I had told them after my other relapses
32 that this was the last one. I had used the people in N.A.
33 and had taken them for granted. I always knew that they
34 would be there for me when I came back and I used them for
35 shoulders to cry on. Now I was afraid that they would no
36 longer accept me. A few of the members had told me that they

could only maintain their cleanness by hanging around with 1
"winners". I was a loser and they could no longer jeopardize 2
their clean time for me if I was not willing to work the pro- 3
gram. My using friends were telling me that my behavior was 4
too bizarre and that I should get straight again. I was look- 5
ing ahead at my entire life and saying that there was no way 6
I could stay sober for forty years so why start only to fail 7
again. 8

One night I found myself again searching for narcotics. 9
I was unable to get any and wound up with a bottle of valium 10
in a rented motel room with just me and my syringe. I was 11
sitting there shooting valium crying and looking back at the 12
insanity and hopelessness of my life. For the last two months 13
I had been living in a condemned house with a guy who was also 14
dependent and into bizarre behavior. I felt as though it was 15
never going to get better and it was going to continue to get 16
worse. My feelings of self-worth were at an all time low. 17
I called an N.A. member and began going back to meetings. 18

At first I was afraid of rejection. I had used the people 19
in the Program so often that I was afraid they would not give 20
me another chance to use them again. But once again they 21
accepted me back with open arms. They took me to meetings 22
every day for ninety days and sat up and talked with me until 23
all hours of the morning. I was finally able to tell someone 24
of my loneliness, fears, insecurities, and self-hate. No one 25
laughed or told me I shouldn't feel that way, as I had feared 26
they would. No one looked at me strangely or told me I was 27
nuts. They shared that they had felt the same feelings and 28
shared what had helped them to feel better. 29

They shared their hearts, souls, homes, time, and love 30
with me--all unconditionally. They loved me so much that I 31
began to believe that there must be something there that was 32
worthwhile. I had not believed that for many years, but I was 33
finally able to believe it again. 34

Looking back, I am able to see that the key to my clean 35
time has been taking risks and allowing people to get to know 36

1 me. In my previous experiences with the Program, I had only
2 gone to meetings and nothing more. I did not share; I did
3 not develop any kind of spiritual program; I changed none of
4 my old behavior. Without the willingness to do these things
5 it was impossible for me to have a happy clean time. I have
6 now been into recovery for more than three years. I have
7 finally found that specialness for which I searched so long.
8 The specialness does not come from other people or outside
9 things; it is in me. I am special. The program and the
10 Fellowship have helped me to find this.
11 You have given me life, hope and a sense of belonging.
12 You have given me a chance to be somebody and to grow spiritually.
13 You have given me hope. I am grateful.

I FOUND THE ONLY N.A. MEETING IN THE WORLD

1 Getting to the subject of people, places and things, my
2 story is not much different from the executive--just the
3 opposite end of the stick.

4 I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks; poor, deprived,
5 during the Depression, from a broken home. The words of love
6 were never spoken in my household. There were a lot of kids
7 at my house.

8 Most of the things I remember about my life are in retro-
9 spect. While they were happening, I didn't know anything
10 about it. I just remember going through life feeling dif-
11 ferent, feeling deprived. I never felt quite comfortable
12 whenever I was with whatever I had at any given time. I grew
13 up in a fantasy world. Things on the other side of the fence
14 always looked better. My grass was never green enough. My
15 head was always out to lunch. I learned all the short cuts
16 in order to make it through school.

17 I always had a dream of leaving home. It was not the
18 place to be. My great fantasy was that there was going to
19 be good out there somewhere.

20 I started using drugs fairly late in life. I say late in
21 comparison with what they are doing today.

22 My mother ruled her house with a big stick. That was her
23 method. The constant way I gained attention was getting my
24 ass whipped on a daily basis. I found another way of getting
25 attention was to get sick. When I "got sick," I got the
26 things I felt were necessary: love and attention.

27 I blamed my mother because she didn't make a better choice
28 in choosing the people to take care of me. I carried that
29 long after I left home.

30 I went into the military because that was a place to run

to. I stayed in the military a long time because they offered
me the same opportunities I had at home: three hots and a
cot and no responsibility. I can say I was a responsible per-
son because I had rank and did this or that, but it was only
because they gave me advance directions of what to do and
when to do it and how much.

This was one of my first bouts as far as drugs were con-
cerned. My first drug, at the time, was alcohol. I found
there were two personalities when on alcohol, and later when
on narcotics. There was a personality change.

I found out later, however, that this personality change
went back even further. I was two people before I ever
started using. I had learned how to steal early; I had
learned how to lie early; I had learned how to cheat early.
I used these processes "successfully." I was addicted to
stealing long before I was addicted to drugs, because it
made me feel good. If I had some of your "goodies" to spread
around, I felt good. I had a thing about stealing. I
couldn't go into a place unless I took something.

I started using drugs late in life, but still fairly
early. I say "late in life," because when you get to be
eighteen years old today, they figure you've already done
all these things.

Talk about being naive, I knew nothing about drugs.
Drugs were not something that was talked about in the 1930's,
and 40's. It is not that drugs have changed, they just
didn't talk about them. They didn't talk about sex or drugs
or religion, at least as far as discussing them. It just
wasn't one of those things that was talked about.

I first experienced my drug of choice, heroin, in the Far
East. I heard about opium and tried that. I found you could
cook up heroin and put it in a spike. There was a great
variety of drugs in other countries that you could get just
by walking into a drug store and asking for them. So I
stayed out of the country nine years. That way, I wasn't

1 confronted with the attitudes here in the United States.

2 I knew nothing about the progression of my disease. I knew
3 nothing about addiction. I ran around in the "ignorance of
4 addiction" for a lot of years--not knowing. Just not knowing.
5 Nobody explained to me that when you use drugs over a year's
6 time, you can get hooked. Nobody told me about withdrawal
7 from drugs. The only thing anyone told me was don't get sick,
8 and the way you do that is keep drugs.

9 One of the problems I found being in the military was that
10 they give you orders and ship you, and they don't take the
11 connection with you. You get sick. You try to back that up
12 the next time by trying to get a big enough supply, and your
13 month's supply lasts a week, or two or three days.

14 I knew nothing about progression or the disease nor the
15 consequences of my actions. The progression of my disease
16 caught up with me as far as the military was concerned when
17 I started transporting and smuggling. Also, when you use drugs
18 to the extent that you can't be there for duty, they frown on
19 it. The next best thing they do is lock you up and take you
20 away. Then the military did a cruel thing; they put me out
21 on the street.

22 I was ill-equipped to take care of me. I had gone from
23 mama to another mother. They had taken care of me, and then I
24 found myself on the street with no equipment to be taking care
25 of me. I knew nothing about paying rent, working, being re-
26 sponsible. So I had to give that responsibility to whomever
27 I could give it to. I rant through a lot of "mothers." I
28 had to learn about how to hustle on the street. You have to
29 realize that military has a lot of equipment they can sell, and
30 I used to sell it, because I like to steal. You see, I have
31 that habit of taking things that aren't nailed down. I had to
32 learn other processes like running through stores swinging
33 steaks and cigarettes under my arm, jumping from second story
34 windows, and running from policemen.

35 I think there is a certain excitement that goes along with
36 drug addiction. It was a lot like childhood games of "cops

and robbers." I found out they have more policemen than drug addicts, it seems. They were standing around watching you. I could never understand how they could go into a crowd of people and pick me out, and say, "Let's get in the car; let's go." Nine times out of ten they had me dirty.

During the process of me finding mothers, one mother found me. I thought I should hem this one up and get papers on her. Then she couldn't run away.

I chose correctly in that you choose someone who's not using. I knew about the ones that are using. They were never there when I got locked up. They never had bail money. They could never visit, because they were too busy taking care of their habits.

So, I found one of those unsuspecting ones. She was in school, working, had a place to stay. She had one shortcoming. She didn't know that he needed somebody to take care of. I was a prime candidate. I wanted to be taken care of. She was going to help me get my shit together, and I always wanted somebody to help me get my shit together. She proposed to me in jail, and I said, "Yes, I do. Just go down and pay the bail." And for the next three years, I ran her crazy trying to keep up with me. Then she went out and found the only Narcotics Anonymous meeting in the world. How she did that, I don't know. At that time, there was one meeting in the world, and she went out and found it, and I sent her off to the meeting. I had her go check it out.

You have to realize that in those days, drug addicts were very unpopular. To just intimate that two drug addicts were going to congregate anywhere would constitute a police stake out. That's the way they treated drug addicts at that time. There was very little understanding about addiction. I was very leery about anything to do with helping drug addicts. I knew what they did with drug addicts; they locked them up. Period. There were no programs to go to, except Ft. Worth and Lexington.

1 I always had a sad story to justify my using. One day
2 after one of those six-month trips to go get a loaf of bread
3 at the corner grocery, I came home and my bags were sitting
4 by the door. She had told me fifty times or a thousand times,
5 "You got to go." This time was different. There was something
6 in her voice this time.

7 So I took my bags and went to the only place there was to
8 go: the streets. I had become accustomed to living in the
9 streets. I knew how to live in the back of old cars, old
10 laundry rooms, any old empty building, your house, my house.
11 Of course, I never had "my house." I couldn't pay rent. I
12 never knew how to pay rent. If I had \$3.00 in my pocket, \$3.00
13 was going for drugs, before a place to stay. It was that
14 simple. I think I paid rent one time while I was using drugs
15 and living on the streets, and that was just to move in. It
16 was called "catch me if you can" from then on. It usually
17 didn't make any difference, because I was a ward of the state
18 much of the time anyway. I just ran out there fast in the
19 streets until they locked me up. Then I had a place to stay.
20 I could rest up and get my health back together in order to
21 come back out and do it again.

22 I came to Narcotics Anonymous nearly twenty-one years ago.
23 But I didn't come for me. I came just to keep her mouth shut.
24 I went to meetings loaded. They talked all that funny stuff
25 out of them books like "rarely have we seen a person fail," and
26 "this is how it works," and I just couldn't understand how
27 that applied to my problem of addiction.

28 I didn't have a driver's license. I was unemployable.
29 I had no place to stay. I was the wrong color. I had no
30 money. I didn't have a car. I didn't have an old lady, or
31 I needed a new one. I took all these problems and they would
32 tell me, "Keep coming back." And they said, "Work the steps."
33 I used to read the steps and thought that was working them.
34 I found out years later that I even read the steps and didn't
35 even know what I read. I did not understand what I read.

They had told me in many places that I was an addict. 1
I had been labeled: Addict! From the military to the jails 2
right on down the line, I had been labeled. I accepted that, 3
but I didn't understand. I had to go out and do some ex- 4
perimenting before I got back to the program. 5

One of the things I had to learn to do was understand 6
what the program was all about. I had to be made willing to 7
find out what the program was about. Only after standing at 8
the Gates of Death did I want to understand. I think Death 9
is Counsel Permanent. I had OD'ed a number of times, but 10
that was kind of like the place where I always wanted to be. 11
It was just before going over the brink and everything seem- 12
ingly O.K. Coming out of it, I could say, "Wow, give me some 13
more." That's insanity. 14

The final case for me was that I was about to be shut off 15
of a fence, and not by my own doing. That I didn't like. 16
Playing cops and robbers is dangerous "out there." They got 17
the gunds, and I don't like being used for target practice. 18
There were more and more cases of policemen sticking guns in 19
my mouth and upside my head and telling me to lay up side a 20
wall. 21

My last day of use of narcotics, drugs of any type, I had 22
just fixed and two policemen got me spread-eagled on a chain 23
link fence I was trying to get over. I became immediately 24
sober, clean. Everything became very clear, and I didn't 25
want to die that way. Something clicked on in my head; it 26
doesn't have to be this way. 27

After that last "rest and recuperation," I found out I 28
could work these steps and that the sum total of my life has 29
changed as a direct result. I got involved in working the 30
steps, trying to understand what they were talking about, to 31
really understand what they were talking about. I found there 32
is a certain amount of action that goes with every step. I 33
had to get into action about how the steps applied to ME. 34
I always thought the steps applied to you, not me. 35

When it got down to talking about God and spirituality, 1
I had shit-canned that a long time before. I put that in 2
church, and I didn't have anything to do with churching. I 3
found out that God and spirituality have nothing to do with 4
church. 5

I had to learn to get involved. It has been one hell of 6
an adventure. My life has changed to such an extent that it 7
is almost unbelievable that I was ever there. However, I know 8
from where I came. I have constant reminders. I need that 9
constant reminder of newcomers and talking with others. 10

This program has become a part of me. It has become a 11
part of life and living for me. I understand more clearly the 12
things that are happening in my life today. I no longer 13
fight the process. 14

I come to meetings of Narcotics Anonymous in order to 15
take care of the responsibilities that have been given to me. 16
N.A. gives me the tools to take care of the responsibilities. 17
Today, I crave, I am addicted to the love and caring and 18
sharing that goes on in N.A. I look forward to more of these 19
things in my life. 20

My problem is addiction; it has nothing to do with drugs. 21
It has something to do with that within, that compulsion and 22
that obsession within. I now have the tools to do something 23
about it, the Twelve Steps of Recovery. 24

SLOW LEARNER

1 I'm the kind of person that never learns. If I touch a
2 stove and it burns me, I will go back and touch it later to
3 see if it is still hot. If someone touches the stove first,
4 then tells me it is hot, I don't take their word for it; I
5 got to check it out for myself. That's the story of my
6 life. I don't learn from my mistakes, nor from the mistakes
7 of others.

8 I was reared a military brat. My father was an officer
9 in the Marine Corps and my family would travel with him. My
10 mother died when I was young and I was taken care of by house-
11 keepers until after my father left the service. My father
12 drank heavily all of my life, but after he left the service, he
13 went downhill. At the age of eight, he beat me so badly that
14 he broke my nose and left arm and cracked two ribs. He would
15 get drunk, come home and take everything out on me. Both of
16 my brothers took up for me, but they soon had enough of him,
17 and left home. When I was twelve, my father shot me and I
18 figured it was also time for me to cut a trail.

19 I spent that summer living in the woods near a friend's
20 house. I found a way to pass the time by huffing lighter fluid.
21 I was later turned on to reefers by a girl I had a crush on.
22 I didn't want to smoke it ("That's what those 'drug addicts'
23 use"), but love conquers all and I was soon introduced to the
24 world of drugs. By the end of that year, I had done acid, barbs,
25 coke and speed. But my big thrill came two years later when a
26 buddy of mine and I ripped off a wholesale drug warehouse and
27 I met my true love, morphine.

28 With all the dope we had, I thought I would try my hand at
29 selling some. I soon got busted and had to serve some time,
30 but, like I said, I don't learn from my mistakes. When I got

out, we hit the same warehouse, some doctors' offices and a drug store.

I got a girl pregnant and we were married, but she dumped me when she found out what I was really like. That night, I got really messed up and had my first blackout. I did some crazy things that night and was committed by the court for psychiatric evaluation. I was found sane and released to my brother's custody and charges were dropped.

I made it through most of the year with my "friend," morphine, for I had found out early that I was hooked. My warehouse stash was running low, and I didn't know where to cop any of my particular drug. I went back to my old hometown to see my buddy and talk him into hitting the same warehouse. He copped me some smack to hold me over until we did the job.

The day we were to do the job, I was waiting to cop and while cleaning my buddy's gun, shot myself. A few minutes later, I was paralyzed and being carried out on a stretcher. Six months later I was out of the hospital, off junk and had a prescription in my pocket for some really powerful downers. I was soon out selling again.

I found some backers to front me money, and I did well dealing. I prayed that I would make it big. Pretty soon, I looked around and all of my friends were dying! I couldn't figure out why the police were pulling me over, hassling me and holding me for questioning, or why I was always getting beat up or shot at. My backers decided that it was time for me to lie low. All I did for six months was have parties and live on booze and reds. I was finally booked on some charges, and being in a wheelchair, they didn't know what to do with me. They finally decided to drop charges on the condition that I leave the state. I put myself in a psychiatric hospital for drugs, and after that, a drug treatment center, where I attended my first N.A. meeting.

By that time, I was sure that drugs were causing my problems and I was ready to quit. When I went to N.A., I

1 knew that I was in the right place. The people there cared
2 and understood. It blew my mind! I had met good people on
3 the street, and I found out that the good people either died
4 or cleaned up. I had found the ones that were still alive.

5 I have it rough at times. I know what it is to crave my
6 drugs. With the help of my sponsor and friends, I am learn-
7 ing to handle my emotions, and to live one day at a time. I
8 have found the friends and ahppiness for which I had been
9 searching seven years. Now I am back in college, and my
10 life is falling back into place. It's still hard at times,
11 but with the help of my Higher Power and N.A., I am clean today.
12 My life is now centered in N.A., but, hell, anyone who sub-
13 scribed to a medical journal to keep up with the new drugs
14 has to do something to fill the void.

15 At age of twenty-four, I have been shot five times,
16 stabbed twice and spent a year and a half in institutions.
17 I am a slow learner, but I have learned that N.A. has saved
18 my life.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN MELBOURNE

When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1974 I knew instinctively that staying sober meant staying off all mood changing drugs as well. As A.A. was for booze I didn't talk about my drug taking very much. I only occasionally mentioned my midnight drives to the paddy fields outside Saigon when I was stoned or drunk, and the paranoia I felt the last time I smoked hashish in Algeciras, Spain. My taking of Stelazine, a major tranquilizer, I put out of my mind altogether. When I got involved in A.A. I came across the name of Hazelden, and wrote to them for their catalogue. While I was reading it, I found there was a fellowship called Narcotics Anonymous, and also one called Families Anonymous. So among a pile of other stuff I ordered the White Book "Narcotics Anonymous" and "A Guide For the Family of the Drug User".

In 1975 and early 1976 I was getting more and more tired, and consequently more depressed and irritable. The doctors thought my tiredness was caused by depression; I thought my depression was caused by my tiredness. Eventually, after coughing up blood for six months it was discovered I had tuberculosis, so into hospital I went. Shortly after I went into hospital my wife left me for good. So I had nothing to do but concentrate on getting well. During the latter period of my stay in the hospital, I decided to become a counselor for alcoholics and drug addicts. I then contacted a foundation on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, and was taken on for training. It was during this time that I found out just how little there was in Melbourne for the addict who wanted to get clean and stay clean. There were only methadone programs for heroin users, and very little for anyone else. Some

1 months before, I had given the White Book to a friend of mine
2 in A.A. whom I knew to be interested in getting N.A. going in
3 Melbourne. Tom was an addict as well as an alcoholic. I con-
4 tacted Tom again and we discussed the possibility of starting
5 Narcotics Anonymous. By this time I had some literature from
6 W.S.O. and a contact in Sydney. I had been given the address
7 in Melbourne of two ex-Sydney members of N.A. Tom and I de-
8 cided that if they would support an N.A. Group, the we would
9 start one.

10 One Sunday afternoon Tom and I went to see Kate and Bill.
11 They told us about Narcotics Anonymous in Sydney, and how the
12 N.A. meetings differed from A.A. meetings. In N.A., we were
13 told, the members concentrated on how they felt, not what they
14 did, and recovery was talked about much more than in A.A. They
15 said they would support the meeting.

16 In the meantime plans had been going ahead to start Fami-
17 lies Anonymous in Melbourne; The Director of Counseling at
18 the Center had arranged a meeting room for Families Anonymous
19 at a Community Health Center. Tom went ahead and booked a
20 meeting room there on Saturday nights for Narcotics Anonymous.
21 As far as I know the first meeting took place in August 1976,
22 with seven members present.

23 From the start the theme of the meetings was recovery. We all
24 knew how to use drugs and we all knew the effect they had on us.
25 The primary thing we were all interested in was how to stay
26 clean, how to cope with life without the use of drugs, how to
27 handle unpleasant feelings and emotions, in other words, how
28 to get better.

29 At these meetings I learned that I was an addict, and that
30 my addictions started as a child, long ebefore I ever picked
31 up a drink or a drug. As a child I became addicted to fantasy,
32 because fantasy was much for preferable than reality. When I
33 got older I basically didn't change, I just used alcohol and
34 drugs to shield me from reality.

35 I broke through many emotional barriers in N.A., and learned
36 a lot about myself by identifying with other addicts who were
37 also.

I'D TRY ANYTHING ONCE

For almost eleven years I was hopelessly addicted to drugs. I felt that I couldn't live with or without them. My whole existence during that time was centered around drugs, not realizing that I was actually committing slow, agonizing suicide. I was dying out there in the streets and I had lost all control of my own life. I have gone through hell to get where I am today, but I'm happily recovering and I am clean and sober today. I tried it my way for so long, which never worked, but I am thankful to my Higher Power for letting this crazy junkie live long enough to make it to the N.A. program and find a loving, understanding Fellowship of other recovering addicts.

I guess I was doomed to be hopelessly addicted way back in 1969 at the ripe old age of thirteen when my family first moved to Atlanta. This is a town where you can find it all and do it all. I was a popular person during my teenage years, and I had lots of different types and kinds of friends, but I always chose to steer more toward the wild crowd. I loved thrills and excitement. I grew up with three brothers and a father who loved to race cars and build and ride motorcycles, so to me, the name of the game was thrills, being daring and bold and trying the things that made me feel good. I'd try anything once and if it felt good, I was hooked. I did it again and again, so it was with my drugs.

I experimented with all kinds of chemicals during high school. I learned which ones I liked the best and which ones just weren't for me. It was a lot of fun then, but the drugs really hadn't gotten out of control yet. I went through the turbulent seventies, the rebellions, the drug

1 and hippie cults. It was alluring and exciting and it was
2 just plain cool to be doing all those things. It was a
3 major part of our lives and a very major part of mine. I
4 did drugs at school, at concerts, at home and every chance
5 I could.

6 My next big move in life was to marry a rock musician.
7 This was seventh heaven to me. I was constantly exposed to
8 drugs when we traveled on the road. We did drugs to stay up
9 late at night. We partied and swapped drugs with other musi-
10 cians, then we would do drugs to go to sleep. You name it;
11 we did it just to survive in that type of life.

12 After five years of marriage, my husband and I were
13 living like strangers and we divorced. As the initial shock
14 hit me, I became miserable and depressed. My marriage had
15 failed and I felt like a total failure. I wanted somebody;
16 I needed somebody, some type of secure relationship, love
17 and companionship. I sought companionship and comfort with
18 my drugs. I stayed in a zombie-like state for quite a while
19 drifting from sick relationship to sick relationship. This
20 was also the point in my life where my "Lady Jane" symptoms
21 started happening: the ability to attract trouble and the
22 ability to attract sickies. I still continued to use heavily
23 as the way to escape my problems, but in the back of my mind
24 I knew the main reason for my problems was drugs. The drugs
25 gave me such a feeling of power and of being invincible. I
26 developed lots of acquaintances through my jobs and social
27 life the next few years. We all had one thing in common--
28 drugs. I had several good jobs during this time, two with
29 the government and one with an insurance company. It's
30 amazing how white collar, jock executives don't look like
31 drug addicts, but I could sure pick them out of a crowd every
32 time and I sought their companionship and sickness.

33 By this time everyone around me could see that I was
34 having some kind of problem, but I don't really think they
35 put two and two together. I became a good liar and manipu-
36 lator. I was one of the best con artists. I did seek some

counseling and therapy at this time in my life, but I gave
up after a while. Professionals had never been down the
same road as me and none related to my particular problem.
It wasn't just the drugs that were my problem; it was also
my distorted personality and all my ways of life that had
developed over the years.

I tried many times to stop using and associating with
the same old crowd, but I was weak and I knew it would take
a miracle to get me on the right track. So, until that
miracle came along, I continued to use hard and heavy.

I had various live-in relationships with men and knew
all the tricks of the trade. Their personalities were just
as sick and warped as mine, but somehow we met each other's
needs--the getting and using of our drugs. I always picked
the ones that I could manipulate easily to get what I wanted.
My needs were going to be met, regardless of the price. I
was using the needle pretty heavy at this time and it was
obvious that my meagre salary could not support the tremen-
dous habit I had. I started dealing with armed robbers and
people with connections in organized crime. This is where
the big money and the big dope was. I became paranoid be-
cause of the large amounts of illegal drugs I had and be-
cause of the large amounts of drugs I was using. Drugs
seemed good to me at one time, but they were getting way
out of control. I stayed loaded twenty-four hours a day.
It's like the N.A. program states, "We lived to use and used
to live."

I was strung out. I've always been violent to some de-
gree, and during those years of heavy using, my violence
ragged out of control. I carried guns, knives and other
weapons and I know that I would have killed anyone who tried
to take my dope. Whenever my "big time" associates were dry
and there was no dope available for a while, I learned to
take care of my habit the way a lot of girls learned; I sold
my body. I learned quickly that you could make good money
selling your body, but the money never lasted when it all

1 had to go into your arms. I started staying out of work a
2 lot now; I was too loaded to make it in half the time. When
3 I did make it in, I had to take my little dope kit in with
4 me and I'd spend much of the day locked away in the bathroom
5 getting off. Eventually, I lost my job. Slowly but surely,
6 I was dying and I was beginning to get a taste of what it's
7 like to be sick and tired of being sick and tired.

8 It was then that I decided to try and do something about
9 my problem. I had legal problems out the ears, an uncontrol-
10 lable addiction, a family that avoided me like the plague and
11 a lot of mixed-up, confused feelings. I had thought many
12 times of giving up this way of life and trying to meet new
13 people and maybe trying to get myself into a drug program.
14 My ideas were in the right direction, but I never followed
15 them through. I was seriously sorting my life out or trying
16 to at this time, when an old lover and using buddy popped
17 up on my doorstep out of the clear blue.

18 I knew right then where we were headed and I had a feel-
19 ing we weren't going to make it, alive, through this one,
20 this time. We went after what we wanted, and soon the drugs
21 were plentiful and we were back on that same twisted path
22 to hell. Things got way out of hand; the dope started run-
23 ning low; this time I felt more desperate than I ever had
24 before. This, my friends, is where the party ended. We
25 were arrested. The next few days in jail were living hell.
26 I was sick and hurting, mentally and physically. I wanted
27 to die!

28 My family and attorney urged me to seek help with my
29 problem before it was too late. What did they mean, "too
30 late?" Hell, look at the mess my life was in. There was no
31 hope for me now. I agreed half-heartedly to seek help at a
32 drug clinic and undergo drug therapy. What more did I have
33 to lose? At first, I wasn't sincere about giving up drugs
34 or even putting any effort into the drug program. I didn't
35 even know how to begin living without drugs. I knew I
36 couldn't stop through my own power. It was while I was

attending this drug therapy clinic that N.A. was mentioned
to me quite often.

I knew what the N.A. program was. I had heard about it
and had gone to a few meetings, but I had never fully taken
the time to understand the program. I thought it was a big
joke. But, I went to an N.A. meeting that night with some
other people from my drug clinic and saw all kinds of people
there with the same problem as me. They were drug addicts.
I don't remember too much about the first meeting, my mind
was still jumbled and the drugs were still not all out of
my system. But certain things that were said at that meet-
ing stuck with me and impressed me. There were people there
with the same, or worse, problems, yet they were clean. They
had learned to live their lives without drugs. I saw then
that there had to be hope for me. I couldn't love myself at
that time, but everyone in the program loved me for what I
was. I kept going to meetings and I started meeting lots of
understanding and wonderful people--people that I felt com-
fortable around and I knew they could relate to my problems.
I really had a willingness in my heart, at this time, to try
and I wanted to do it for me instead of my family.

I have come a long way and I've gone through hell to get
here, but I know recovery is possible and I have seen some
good things happen to me since I've been in the N.A. program.
I've become a trusted servant of a local N.A. group, which I
love. I'm getting in touch with my Higher Power, as I under-
stand Him, and He is working miracles in my life today that
I never thought would be possible. I am beginning to love
myself and I have finally found freedom for the bondage of
drugs and I have found a new way of life, clean and sober,
one day at a time. I have stopped using and started to live.
What a great feeling! The Narcotics Anonymous program works
and I love you all.

THERE'S NO COMPARISON

1 I started using drugs at about age fifteen. I was basi-
2 cally a very shy person and I had trouble getting along in
3 social situations, like talking to girls. I never felt like
4 I fit in anywhere.

5 I found that by taking a few drinks, I could feel like I
6 was in a whole new world. I could relate to people better and
7 I could be the life of the party. I started drinking at par-
8 ties and on weekends with friends. I did not think I was using
9 alcohol as a drug. My drinking got worse when I got in high
10 school. I got in trouble several times with the law.

11 I would come home drunk and my parents would scold me and
12 ask why I was doing the things I was doing. I really couldn't
13 tell them, and I would feel really bad. They tried to help,
14 but nothing they did could stop me once I started drinking.
15 Drinking caused me a whole lot of trouble going through high
16 school; I spent four years in a three-year high school because
17 of drinking.

18 I didn't use any other drug until I was twenty, when I
19 went away to school. I started taking speed. It was "in" with
20 the crowd I hung around with. During that time, I gradually
21 started using more and more speed and continued drinking at
22 the same time.

23 I came back home and started working in a hospital and be-
24 gan smoking grass. Grass wasn't "in" in those days and only
25 "dope fiends" smoked grass. I felt the same way too. At that
26 time, "using drugs" was something I would never have done, even
27 though I drank like a fish.

28 But I was into being rebellious, and being weird, and I
29 was hanging around with musicians and artsy-craftsy types and
30 we got to smoking a little pot. I thought that was great. I

just thought it was cool. I liked the idea of feeling different from other people. The drug experience seemed real neat. I also said at that time that I would never use any hard drugs; I would never use anything other than pot. That didn't prove to be the case, because about a year after I started using pot, I had to use pills. People came around with other drugs and I tried them. I liked the way they made me feel. They made me feel different from the way I was and if I wanted to feel "up" I could take speed, and if I wanted to feel "down," I could take tranquilizers.

Getting drugs was never a problem. There were always people with drugs around. Drinking and drugging got to be a crazy thing with me--a real nutty kind of lifestyle. I was sponging off my parents, living at their house, because I was spending most of my money on booze and drugs and having a good time. My moods became real intense; I'd stay in my room all the time, unless I was partying, boozing or doping. I became intolerable for them to be around. They didn't know what kind of person I would be from one minute to the next. I had been in jail previously, for being drunk and doing all kinds of crazy and bizarre things--nothing major, never any felonies; but I was always being hauled in for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. My father was a policeman and it really made him look bad. It didn't seem to matter that I hurt everyone around me when I was loaded. What I said to them didn't mean much to me as long as I was loaded.

I didn't have to face anything--chemicals would help me face any situation. It seemed like with drugs and alcohol, I didn't want to act "normally"; I wanted to stay wasted. I'd been in trouble several times. I had been in car accidents. I had been in jail on several occasions, but it didn't seem to matter to me. None of these things stopped me from getting high or drinking. I'd clean up for awhile, but I'd start back again and it just got worse faster.

When I was twenty-two, I ended up in a state hospital for depression. During that time, I started seeing psychia-

1 trists because I thought I was crazy and being crazy sounded
2 pretty attractive to me. I didn't have to face my drug use;
3 I didn't have to face my alcohol use. The psychiatrist sug-
4 gested that I might have problems with drugs and alcohol, but
5 I side-stepped the issue. I spent a year in the hospital.
6 At the hospital, they kept saying, "Maybe one day, when you
7 get your inner psychic problems straightened out, you'll be
8 able to use alcohol successfully." They never said anything
9 about drugs, and during that whole time, I was on sleeping
10 medication every night. I found I could take my chloral hy-
11 drate at bed time and sit in the men's lounge and enjoy the
12 high--cop a buzz. Then I could go back for seconds. It got
13 to be a real habit with me in the hospital. Every night I
14 got loaded. I began to look forward to bed time.

15 After I got out of the hospital, everything went fairly
16 amooth for three or four months. Then I got a roommate that
17 was in to being "hip" and cool, and so was I, really. I never
18 had a program; I didn't look for a program that would help me
19 stop drinking or doping. I didn't want to; I did not have
20 the desire to never do it again. I started smoking pot again
21 and eventually got into other drugs. I remember the first
22 time I used LSD; I freaked out. Some "real good friends" gave
23 me electric kool-aid at a party and I didn't know it was elec-
24 tric. I was crazy for a week. I was psychotic and had to go
25 get tranquilizers to come down. But that didn't keep me from
26 doing LSD again. I really got into psychedelics.

27 I had a series of jobs after the hospital and later got
28 married. My wife used drugs and alcohol. One New Year's Even,
29 I started drinking again. I thought, "Well, maybe I can handle
30 it now." My drinking got to the point the marriage broke up.
31 During that time, I was using drugs too. Really, I'm a poly-
32 addict, I guess. It seems like whatever chemical, once I
33 use it, I abuse it. That's the way it went for me, regardless
34 of the hell I went through with the stuff; I just kept using it.

35 I felt really good about the divorce, like I was a free
36 person again. I had a good job teaching at a technological

institute, but I began to jeopardize my position by selling
dope on the job. A lot of people working at the institute
were "heads" and there was a lot of dealing going on at that
time.

I moved in with two or three other people and we made
some money on the side selling some speed and other drugs.
We had a lot of parties at our house. It got to the point
where my job just didn't matter to me a whole lot. My per-
formance began to go down a whole lot. I finally lost the
job after an incident that occurred when I came to work
after partying until seven in the morning.

I was living with these people. Our drugging got to the
point that no one wanted to be around us. It seemed like
everybody was doing a lot of drugs. Drugs I thought I would
never do in my life started ending up in the house. People
were bringing over all different kinds of drugs.

One of my favorite drugs was MDA. I got introduced to
heroin. I didn't do a whole lot of heroin. I chipped a
few times and liked it so well I figured I'd better not do
any more. But I got just as bad with other drugs. I got
to the point that all I was living for was to use; all I
wanted to do was use.

I lost my job and moved out of a nice apartment into a
really cheap, cockroach-infested apartment. I started
driving a taxi, and that was convenient. Most of the people
who worked for the cab company drank and a lot of them did
drugs, and they didn't care that I didn't show up for work.
That was okay. I didn't have to work all the time if I
didn't want to. It gave me a lot of time to do the things
I wanted to do. I got to the point where I was drining or
using drugs all the time.

I moved in with a "friend;" he was dealing heavy. We
started giving out MDA and other junk like pounds of mari-
juana and hash. We were dealing to all kinds of people.
There were people coming to the house that I didn't even
know. On top of that, we were dealing to high school kids

1 and I was thirty years old. I never thought I would sell drugs
2 to kids, but I did. It was easy for me to rationalize as
3 strung out as I was. I was into MDA so heavy that I was using
4 a gram in the morning, just to get the ball rolling. It got
5 to the point that although I was dealing, I owed my dope man
6 money because I was using up all the profits and I wasn't
7 working much. Things I said would never happen, did; like
8 people were bringing over stolen stereos.

9 Something happened and I got fed up with it all. I
10 cleaned up my act and got a straight job in a liquor store.
11 Working in a liquor store wasn't very good for me, but it
12 was something. I moved out of that dumpy apartment and got
13 my shit together pretty good for a while. But, again, I
14 didn't have any people who really cared about me and I didn't
15 have a program to go to. I had gone to A.A. once and didn't
16 feel like I fit there, when I really did. I went back to
17 school. I started taking some classes in drug and alcohol
18 abuse and ended up at an N.A. meeting for the first time.
19 That's where I met the people in my area who were just start-
20 ing N.A. I saw something in these people, but I wasn't
21 ready yet. I went to a couple of meetings and then stopped.
22 I started using again and started drinking again; I never
23 really went straight.

24 The next two or three years rolled by; I was out of
25 school again, working in a liquor store and drinking all the
26 time. I was stealing my employer blind. I was marginally
27 functional. I was trading booze out of the store for dope
28 and selling dope out of the store. The owner trusted me
29 implicitly when he hired me. He gave me the key to his store.
30 One of the nicest people I have ever had the experience of
31 working for in my life...yet I stole from him simply because
32 I needed the booze and I needed the dope.

33 I never ended up in the penitentiary, but I certainly
34 qualified to be there and it's just by the grace of God that
35 I never did end up there. I got to the point where I was
36 using and drinking every day. I had to use Quaaludes and

I had to use tranquilizers to feel good. Drinking and drug- 1
ging because something I had to do just to feel alright. 2
The parties were gone. The people that I used to associate 3
with were pretty neat people. They had their lives together 4
and just used and drank a little bit socially. They didn't 5
want to toak to me anymore. Nobody wanted to say anything to 6
me, to see me any more. The only time anyone wanted to see 7
me was to buy something or to get something from me, and it 8
got to the point where I didn't want to see anyone either, 9
unless they could do something for me. I didn't care about 10
myself or anyone else. 11

One day, following a week bender on booze and downers, 12
I think I reached that moment of sanity that people in the 13
Fellowship talk about. I was living in a sleazy dive in an 14
area of town where I had never thought of hanging out in my 15
earlier days. I really saw myself and knew I was an addict. 16
I was an addict, and an alcoholic. I couldn't handle drugs. 17
I had made a mess of my life. I had known it intellectually 18
for a long time, but this was the first time I really felt 19
it in my guts. I didn't handle booze and I didn't handle 20
drugs--they handled me. I would do anything to get my hands 21
on drugs or alcohol. They ran my life. I didn't have any 22
control once I started, once I took that first fix, pill or 23
drink. 24

I had reached the point where I would black out for days 25
at a time, and I would end up places not even knowing where 26
in the hell I had been, with people I would never have thought 27
of hanging around with anyway. I was doing things I never 28
conceived of doing when I first started. I was hurting people 29
that were very close to me. I realized that I was thirty- 30
five years old and I didn't have shit to show for my life. 31
I had nothing to show for it, except withdrawal when I got 32
up in the morning, when I didn't have anything to take, 33
when I didn't have anything to drink. I hurt my family; 34
I had sponged off of them most of my life and I was on a 35
dead-end road. I thought I was either going to die or I was 36

1 headed for the penitentiary or going crazy. If I went crazy,
2 there wasn't going to be any getting well to it. I knew that
3 I needed help.

4 I had some friends that had gotten straightened out. They
5 had been in N.A. for three years. One was a girl I had been
6 loaded and drunk with a lot. There were a couple of other
7 friends who had gone through a treatment center a couple of
8 years before. I called my father and asked him to come and
9 get me; my car wouldn't run and he came and got me.

10 My father asked me if I wanted to go home, and I said,
11 "No, I want to go to the hospital." He asked why, and I said,
12 "Because I'm an addict and I'm an alcoholic and I can't
13 handle my life. My life is a shambles, and I need some help."
14 He asked if I was sure I wanted to do that and I said I was
15 sure. I went to the hospital and then to a detox center where
16 they didn't give me any drugs or alcohol to come down with.
17 There was a part of me that was thinking that when I get to
18 the hospital, I'll get a lot of drugs and I'll come down easy
19 and then I'll be alright. Maybe I can get squared away doing
20 the same thing I had done before, many times. I spent a week
21 once in a state hospital doing it. Another time, I spent a
22 year in a state hospital doing it--having the cushy ride.

23 I had gone to doctors' and emergency rooms to get prescrip-
24 tions that just led to more drug use eventually. I finally
25 realized that I couldn't quit this thing by myself; I couldn't
26 handle it.

27 I didn't like the sound of this detox center when I got
28 there, but I went in anyway. The next day I woke up so sick
29 that I knew I couldn't make it to work that day, even if I
30 could leave the place. I called my boss from there and told
31 him where I was and what had gone on. Everybody who worked in
32 the detox center were alcoholics or addicts and they were
33 giving me support. I stayed five days in detox and then went
34 to a treatment center out of town. I was shaking so bad that
35 I could hardly keep food on my fork. I stayed in treatment
36 for thirty-seven days.

During treatment, I got a solid education about A.A. I learned a lot about me, and I learned a lot about feelings. I learned a lot about God. There was a real spiritual base to this treatment center. I not only learned a lot about A.A., but I learned some about N.A., and I knew there was N.A. back home. I knew that when I got back to town, I would have some place to go. I would have meetings to go to.

At the treatment center, I was told, "Don't drink when you get back; don't use any drugs and go to meetings. Stick with the winners and work the Steps. And don't take on anything you can't handle. Back home I moved into a halfway house and went to my first N.A. meeting--the first one I had been to in a long time.

This time I was serious about N.A. I saw people still there who had been there four years before. No one told me to leave because I had been such an ass at that first meeting a few years before. They said, "We're glad to see you and we love you and we'll help you, if you want us to; if you'll let us." I was home. I knew I was with people who cared about me. I could just feel it in the room. I knew that God was looking out for me because I could feel His presence in that room with those people. I have never felt that I could get any kind of spirituality in church, and it suddenly hit me that God works through people.

For the last year and a half, I haven't found it necessary to use any drugs or drink because of my involvement with the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It's just been a completely different life. I've gone through a lot of changes and I've had some bad times, but things are really Okay. My best day drinking and getting loaded is ten times worse than my worst day straight and sober. I have my problems today, but it seems like there's one thing a lot of people say in the program: "This too shall pass." I have found that to be true, but it passes quicker the longer I stay straight and sober one day at a time.

1 The neatest thing about N.A. is that I don't have to
2 quit using for the rest of my life. I can just quit for right
3 now and it's a whole lot easier for me to think about because
4 I can't handle thinking about the rest of my life.

5 I hear neat little slogans like "God doesn't give me what
6 He and I can't handle." That's true as long as I don't drink
7 and I don't use; good things happen to me. It's a program that
8 gives me a way to work on character defects of characters.
9 I'm not the person I used to be. I now believe that I'm a
10 good person, and I can accept other people caring about me.
11 I can care about others. It's all possible because of the
12 Steps and the Fellowship. I don't have to worry about my little
13 playmates or playgrounds or playthings now, because I've got
14 a whole lot of friends that really care. These friends are
15 not like the ones who just wanted something out of me when I
16 had dope or booze. These new friends really care and I can
17 depend on them.

18 Life today is just so much better, I don't even know how
19 to describe it. It is so completely different from what it was
20 like when I was using and drinking, there is just no compari-
21 son.

BEING CLEAN AND SERENE IS FUN

Thank God, I'm clean. I love being clean and serene.
I love being a member of N.A. I love all of you, my fellow
addicts.

Without God's grace and you people, I wouldn't have sur-
vived drug addiction. I thank each and every one of you for
helping me save my life and enjoy a satisfying cleanliness.
You gave me the unconditional love of one addict for another
that's essential in my recovery. Your unjudging acceptance
enabled me to drop the rock of Old ideas. You helped me
enjoy living in the here and now. Today, life's worthwhile.
Being clean and serene is fun.

Now that I'm clean, the worse is over and the best is
happening to me on a daily basis.

I'm so grateful for today clean, I love to go to a meet-
ing in order to celebrate cleanliness with you and to carry
the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. To
me, service is like a commitment to God that we'll help new-
comers through the grace period early on and beyond this
transition into a healthy, enjoyable and spiritual cleanli-
ness.

Yet, it's the responsibility of those of us who have
cleanliness to remind addicts: "WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR
GROUP EXPERIENCE THAT THOSE WHO KEEP COMING TO OUR MEETINGS
REGULARLY STAY CLEAN."

I don't tell newcomers to use drugs if they're having
doubts about being an addict because I don't know what the
next use of drugs might do to them. I don't kill my fellow
addicts with such insane advice.

Instead, I welcome them unconditionally to N.A. and
offer them what the program suggests: "MANY OF US HAVE HAD
SOME RESERVATIONS AT THIS POINT, SO GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

AND BE AS THOROUGH AS POSSIBLE AT THE START. GO TO STEP TWO,
AND SO FORTH AND AS YOU GO ON YOUR WILL COME TO AN UNDER-
STANDING OF THE PROGRAM FOR YOURSELF."

I use meetings like I used drugs. Since I used drugs
regularly, I now use meetings regularly to stay clean. I've
been able to adapt to N.A. meetings because they really work
well with me. I love the caring and sharing. I love the
cheerfulness and laughter. I love having a place where I can
enjoy Fellowship with people just like me who are clean and
serene.

I was so desperate to have to go to meetings; I got into
the habit of going. After the first year and a half of my
mind telling me every tenth of a second, "It's all over, for-
get it, you're dead;" it suddenly dawned on me, "Well, looks
like I'm going to survive; now, what do I do?" I go to meet-
ings.

I have a positive addiction to meetings. My dose is five
meetings a week. Take away that many or attend less per week,
and I'd go through physical withdrawals. My nose would start
to run again. Palms would sweat; I'd feel like an itch.
Speech would stutter, hearing would nod, vision would be as
shaky as me and a strange look would come over my face. My
emotions and stinking-thinking would play basketball with my
head. I'd crawl up the wall with my fingernails. The third
day in a row away from meetings, I'd forget they ever existed.

Other addicts may have their rate of grasping and develop-
ing the program; mine is at least five meetings per week. I
need regular attendance of meetings in order to survive and
I need the 12-Steps to help me enjoy cleanliness. Like we
say in N.A., "IF IT WORKS DON'T FIX IT."

Arrived at the program, my first meetings seemed like
something I was stuck having to do. Being in meetings gave
me some place to be while I died. Whether stuck or not, I
survived to love celebrating cleanliness at a meeting. I'm
no longer fighting into, during, out of meetings; and crying
waterfalls after it. I'm enjoying smiles, hugs, kisses and

1 peace of mind. I'm no longer knocking the money basket across
2 the meeting room nor throwing a candle through the tabletop.
3 I'm clean and serene, and into service.

4 Gratefully, I see stinking-thinking as proving my mind
5 isn't the best indicator of what's happening. Things aren't as
6 bad as my mind tries to paint them. By doing the footwork and
7 depending in God, there's lots of room to survive. I've done
8 a lot of things the program suggests, thinking, "God, you're
9 really wrong this time." And afterwards, admitting, "Okay,
10 God, right again."

11 On days I'd get to a meeting too early, my head would try
12 to take over and I'd sit debating whether I really wanted to
13 stick around for it. Did I really want to deal with me? A
14 meeting was like a "House of Mirrors"--so many sizes and shapes
15 of me being reflected back. Did I really want to go in there
16 and face it? Then, the secretary would show, the door would
17 open and the habit of going to meetings would save my cleanli-
18 ness by automatically getting me into the room regardless of
19 what I was thinking.

20 In the meeting, there'd be a tremendous relief of not hav-
21 ing to decide about going to it. I was in it. Once it started,
22 I felt better and usually uplifted after it ended.

23 One meeting, I was having difficulty feeling a part of the
24 program. In the middle of my stinking-thinking, a friend of
25 mine jumped up, yelled at everybody in the room, stormed out
26 of the meeting and gave me some serenity. I knew I wasn't
27 alone. I wasn't the only crazy person going to meetings. This
28 fact saved my cleanliness that day and my staying clean, saved
29 my life.

30 You see, my stinking-thinking at times has a lot to do with
31 my addictive personality. My addict's mind tries to isolate
32 me, then divide and conquer. Just like we say in N.A., "AN
33 ADDICT ALONE IS IN BAD COMPANY." My addictive mind doesn't
34 want to give up control, so it will try getting me upset enough
35 to go back out and die in drug addiction. And it seems to me,
36 when one addict's mind can't get an addict to use drugs, several

of our minds will gang up and try to get a whole group of
us to go out and die.

Sometimes, it's simply the feeling of togetherness that
I love. A simple thing like picking up cups during the clean
up was to me like "WE CAN DO WHAT I CAN'T." This participa-
ting in the clean up made me feel a part of the meeting and
glad to be a part of the N.A. recovery team.

It's easier for me to enjoy cleanliness when living with
what we have in common. The support we give each other in
N.A. and the welcome we give newcomers are important.

Now that I'm in a safe harbor sheltered from the storm of
obsessive drug abuse I've a tendency to forget about the
storm. I need seeing the new people because they remind me
how progressive and fatal is the disease of drug addiction.
It's also necessary for me to be with clean addicts because
they encourage me to stay clean and keep on boogying the path
of happy cleanliness.

My spiritual progress is like being chained to a truck.
I can keep on trucking smilingly or get dragged. In either
case, I'm going one way--the way God has in store for me in
living the principles of this Fellowship. I find both hope
and help in N.A. meetings.

Before this, there'd been years of drug addiction without
hope or help. I'd lost the power to do anything about my drug
addiction. My life became extremely unmanageable because
drugs reached a point with me where they failed to work. With
or without drugs my life was a mess. As my tolerance and
adaptability to pain and drugs collapsed, I finally went from
being very casual one day to a casualty the next.

Turning my will and life over to my automobile and going
home, I got in it, locked the doors, pulled on the emergency
flashers, got on the freeway, put the pedal to the metal and
drove between the traffic in the fast lane and the green
fence--right down the middle, following the "Yellow brick
road" warning tiles until it totalled in a chase with another
greater power, the highway patrol. H.P. said, "Come with me,"

1 and I did.

2 My family bailed me out, there was a person in a newspaper
3 article we got to be my lawyer who later turned into a member
4 of the program right before my eyes, during the arraignment pro-
5 ceedings. I went up to school and just as I was about to let
6 them know I wouldn't be there at finals week because of impending
7 court appearances, my mind decided it wanted to run somewhere
8 deep inside my head and hide.

9 I was afraid of dying, so everything suddenly jumped into
10 tenths of a second. Using the ideas of a traffic signal and
11 the mouse looking for green cheese in a maze, I went on green
12 and stopped on red. When I saw a person wearing something red
13 I'd stop and when I saw green I went. Finally, there was another
14 arrest.

15 At court lockup, there was an argument with the jailer over
16 our manliness. I took off my clothes, climbed the bars to the
17 ceiling and tried shaking the bars while screaming like a monkey.
18 I'm told my case jacket reads; the trial judge came back to see
19 about the commotion. We exchanged greetings and I was sent over
20 to a county hospital for observation because he felt I wasn't
21 ready for court that day. I don't know anything about the judge
22 being real or not because I don't recall what happened between
23 going up the bars and the two policemen coming to take me away.
24 I do remember everything was okay at the hospital until they
25 put me in a room by myself.

26 Somehow, I found matches inside the sheetmetal of the room
27 heater and soon had the bedding, pillow and mattress going up in
28 yard high flames. The staff ran into the room. I ran out and
29 made good my escape. Except the double doors I jumped through
30 at the end of the hall were locked.

31 Crashing to the floor, I crawled away, found a shower and
32 hid until an orderly found me. A nurse stuck me with a shot and
33 they shipped me via Sheriff's certification to a state hospital.

34 From reading a newspaper in the lobby while waiting for the
35 entry interview, my mind came up with the story about being a
36 depressed alcoholic who occasionally experimented with other

drugs socially. The interviewer placed me on the alcoholic
and drug wards one week each.

After the state hospital and medical isolation at the
county jail, I was finally well enough to have a nervous break-
down my third or fourth day in "Restraint #3" and casually
admitted it to the nurse who brought the next meal. The nurse
said, "What stamina."

Fortunately, one of the other restraint units was broken,
so I had to give mine up when someone started a screaming jag.
At the end, I was brought before the judge and given the
average nudge of automatic 90 days at the state institute for
the criminally insane or would I like to go to the program?

While my mind was thinking about the nurses at the state
institute, my mouth was given the grace to say I'd go to the
program. I was given two years probation for reckless driv-
ing and disturbing the peace, warned not to get a traffic
ticket and restored to society in the custody of my lawyer
who took me to a meeting the night of my release.

Having been criminally insane one moment, the judge
declaring me legally sane the next and this program being
the society I was restored to when out of jail, I can't hon-
estly tell whether the people here in the program are crazy.
All I know is that I've been restored to sanity as far as the
compulsion to use drugs is concerned because through God's
grace and the 12-Steps of N.A., I've gotten my priorities in
order. I'm clean and my number one priority as a drug addict
is staying clean one day at a time. I don't use drugs.

Instead, I use the N.A. program of 12-Steps and helping
the addict who still suffers. When I'm helping someone else
stay clean, seems like all the spiritual wealth of the pro-
gram surfaces. Today, I use all the tools of recovery like
inventory, sponsorship, telephone therapy and service. I have
all the tools necessary to help me through the day.

Someone told me whatever was happening, "To expect a
miracle." I find a pocketful of N.A. phone numbers is like
having a pocketful of miracles. Any time I need a miracle.

1 I can call one on the phone.

2 I always suggest getting lots of phone numbers because of
3 my first experience with telephone therapy. I'd been driving
4 myself crazy as par for the course back then and finally could
5 no longer handle another moment of it. So, I went to the tele-
6 phone even though I disliked having to use it. Contempt prior
7 to investigation.

8 Anyway, I pulled out my one telephone number. No answer to
9 dialing it. Naturally, I think, "That don't work." And I hang
10 up. I get so upset about it not working that I had to go for a
11 walk. It worked. I found a vigorous walk could bring my blood
12 pressure down to normal; whatever that is.

13 I also got more phone numbers. I got into the habit of using
14 the phone regularly by calling people up "Officially" rather than
15 personally, and asking them whether they're going to the meeting
16 and could I catch a ride, or would they like a ride? From the
17 official calls my habit progressed to the point that telephone
18 therapy has saved my cleanliness and helped me smoothly through
19 some rough spots. I even make unofficial, personal calls to
20 people in N.A. today. I'm even enjoying sponsorship now. The
21 only reason I had a program sponsor to begin with was to have
22 something to say when people asked me, "Who's your sponsor?"

23 I went through a lot of sponsorship relationships getting
24 clean. I had to learn to "LIVE AND LET LIVE" with them. Rubbing
25 up against some of the personalities before principles I've met
26 here occasionally has surely sandpapered the rough exterior I
27 had and turned it into a smooth work of art in my living situa-
28 tions.

29 Any time sponsors in the program appear to be human and fall
30 off the pedestal, I'd put them back up there because I don't
31 want them in the trenches trying to clutter up my life. At
32 least, that's what I used to feel.

33 As a result, amends were necessary when I also got into
34 sponsoring situations. However, I'd rather be friends.

35 I remember I used to put sponsors on a pedestal, paint a
36 big target on them, and the, fire insanity at them to see what

they did with it. Watching what sponsors do to survive it helps a lot. They go to their sponsors and say, "You should see what's come up this time."

And their sponsors say, "We know. We went through it with you."

I watched them turn it over. Do inventory. Call sponsors on the phone. Do steps. Go to meetings. And not use drugs. So, when insanity struck me, I'd do the same as sponsors do to survive it.

Sponsors can help make up the difference between what it takes to finally stay clean. Having someone nearby who knows how to swim can be important when I'm diving off the deep end.

Yet, most importantly, I go to meetings regularly.

Being in a meeting is very significant to me because the moment I heard about "A LOVING GOD" as may be expressed in our group conscience, I thought, "Maybe, there's hope here for me."

I find I can go to a meeting and someone will say what I need to hear or while I'm talking something will air that I didn't know was about to surface, and the loving God in the group conscience gives me the support I need in order to face, accept, admit and survive being me without having to use drugs.

Of course, I've been into all the talking from the start. My first meeting was a topic discussion. It was on the 12-Traditions. "If I had any, they're the dirty dozen," I said and you went on with the rest of the meeting.

I felt like a dead battery those first meetings. I was like a dead man with moveable parts. I had completely used up my energy. I feel God's grace simply gave me the energy to get to the program. And a loving God charges me up ever since. Talking about God in a meeting helps me store up God conscious energy. At any low point during the day, thinking about what was said about God taps into this reserve and helps me get through it.

1 My early program days were ghastly. Socially, all my sur-
2 face communications seemed burnt like melba toast. From the
3 face back there was a void filled with stinking-thinking and a
4 continuous buzzing. My emotions were bare like panic buttons
5 worn on my sleeves. Every time I met someone, these emotional
6 buttons would get pushed and stick on pushed. I was like a
7 bizzaro. Like an emotional vampire flying to latch onto some-
8 one at a meeting and suck up all the self-esteem I could. I
9 drained or strained one relationship after another. It's all
10 I had as a survival kit besides drugs.

11 I used people, places and things to get drugs; now, I was
12 using you up to get clean.

13 I simply couldn't handle energy once it reached a certain
14 level. Someone would say, "Hi, how's it going?" that would be
15 okay. The third or fourth person saying it would get a chair
16 to duck. I could seem all hugs and kisses, friendly, then flop
17 into annihilation over little more than a look or comment. Any
18 question to me was like an incoming attack. Any time someone
19 asked, "D'you know?" I thought it was directed at me. I had to
20 sit in the corner alone in a room full of clean addicts because
21 of the fear of hurting people I loved. I felt like I had, "Two
22 chances, slim and none. I could tread water all I liked; until
23 I picked a direction, I was going to drown." So, I used to sit
24 in meetings drowning in my slim or no chance. Talking my head
25 off during discussion meetings, yet drowning.

26 Here's where the first Three Traditions are important to me.
27 I love the common welfare and unity; the loving God, and the
28 only requirement for membership in N.A. being the desire to stop
29 using drugs.

30 Our common welfare coming first brought a lot of clean addicts
31 over to shake my hand at the meetings. The loving God through
32 you people broke down the walls of my self imposed exile. Your
33 care and acceptance broke through my false pride and self-hate.

34 I'd been afraid to trust you because I couldn't trust me.
35 Needing you to help me stay clean was frightening. Yet, your
36 love did it. I was hugged back into caring about myself. It

dawned on me, as long as I was willing to grow along spiri- 1
tual lines, this is all the direction I need to keep me bou- 2
yant in life's changes. 3

I had difficulty living life on life's terms in the past. 4
Good, bad or indifferent, my reaction to life on life's terms 5
was using drugs. 6

By the grace of God and using the 12-Steps, I'm living 7
life on God's terms. Anything that happens in cleanliness, 8
I know God's in it and a lesson of trust in God's love is 9
available. 10

I still have addictive tendencies. When there's a half 11
pint of food at the deli, I buy a full pint to make sure. 12
When someone invites me to dinner, I eat dinner first, then 13
go. This way I'll get enough. I occasionally buy fruit 14
juices and go sit in the park to drink. It's helped my 15
cleanliness sometimes when the urge to use drugs came on me. 16

Basically, I know I'm clean only by the grace of God. 17
God is the cure. 18

God is giving me the gift of cleanliness. My cleanli- 19
ness is a proof to me of God's reality. 20

My powerlessness and unmanageability as the result of 21
drug abuse had already been recorded long before this in 22
jails, institutions and near death situations. I was unable 23
to stop using drugs on the basis of self-will or self- 24
knowledge. I was unable to start a run or stop a run. I 25
was using or not, depending upon what I was doing when other 26
people met me. I had no control over it. 27

I'm incapable of being clean one day at a time. Yet, 28
I'm clean. As far as I'm concerned, a power greater than 29
myself is giving me the grace to be clean. God is working 30
in my life to keep me clean. 31

Even though I first admitted being an addict at the meet- 32
ings because I'd rather say that than crazy, I'm glad there's 33
a room of clean addicts because your saying you were addicts 34
made it easier for me to break through the alibi system of 35
denial and admit, "I'm an addict." 36

1 I need to be with clean addicts in the meeting. I have
2 a tendency to seek the approval of the people with whom I
3 socialize. When I'm with clean people regularly, knowing
4 you're here helps me get through the day clean so I can go
5 to the meeting and have your approval.

6 I'm glad the only requirement for membership is a desire
7 to stop using drugs. Or even a desire to have the desire to
8 stop. I feel the desire to stop is a gift from God.

9 The fertilizer of my drug related experiences brought the
10 desire to stop using drugs to the surface. That's what it
11 took to get my attention. That and the watering of the seed
12 of abstinence.

13 A meeting is like a pool of cleanliness.

14 At a meeting, someone may say, "EASY DOES IT." I go to
15 a hundred meetings and "EASY DOES IT" gets watered a hundred
16 times. The next thing I know, I'm going around saying, "EASY
17 DOES IT," and I'm not really sure where it came from. I just
18 know it works because I'm clean.

19 Today, I know a lot of my insanity was drug related. Yet,
20 a lot of it was me. I used drugs as a defense against how I
21 felt and an excuse for what I did. Even having no excuse was
22 an excuse to use drugs. I had a pyshological addiction to
23 drugs long before it progressed into a physical one. Being
24 me meant using drugs.

25 Whenever I'd be me, friends would say, "Don't mind him,
26 he's crazy." So, I started doing what they did and they'd
27 say, "Don't mind him, he's loaded." Now, I'm a member of N.A.
28 they say, "Don't mind him, he's clean."

29 What's different? I don't mind being me any more. It's
30 okay being me. I have value simply being human. In the Great
31 Chef's favorite recipe, I'm the ingredient who's supposed to
32 be me so that I can gradually merge into God's love. By
33 being clean and serene, I'm able to have cake and eat it, too.

34 God helps me face what's happening today. I accept my
35 actions, thoughts, feelings and emotions. I admit them. And
36 everything isn't such a big deal any more.

My most frightening times are when I feel "Meeting'd
out." I remember this ha-pening to me very seriously between
my first marriage and divorce in the program. I had moved to
another state after the separation and in the city where I was
going to meetings, there was one I'd attend in the morning of
a weekend day, then return for the afternoon meeting at the
same place.

This one moring, the meeting just wasn't doing it for me.
So, after it was over, I wandered out in to the city not know-
ing whether I was ever going back to any meeting let alone
the afternoon. I got into what my head calls, "The flow."
Ending up in the transportation system of the subway, I sat
at one of the green benches in the middle of the station
platform.

The bench had a divider and curled up a la fetal position
in the other portion was a person who hadn't waked up yet.
As I looked, his body started to tilt off the bench. I
reached over to help, the thought, "A person has to be allowed
the dignity to suffer what has to be suffered in order for it
to take what it has to take to make the program" And I
watched him roll off the bench and fall head first onto the
concrete where the contact acted like an alarm clock that
rang his bell.

He came to and shook himself awake. He saw me sitting
there and reached up a hand to me. I reached down and helped
pull him onto the bench. He began to talk in a very fast
whisper of unknown sounds more like scratches than words.
Finally, I gave him a card with the 12-Steps and 12-Traditions
on it. He focused on what it was and spit on it. So, I
felt there's nothing more I could do and caught the next sub-
way train as it came into the station and stopped.

I went in and sat across the aisle as he got up and
followed, sitting opposite me as the doors closed and the
train left the station. Again, there's the fast, low pitched
whispers of a conversation he's having. This lasted until
the conductor came by saying we'd have to move to the first

1 four cars in order to get off as the next station platform's
2 shorter than the number of cars in the train.

3 I was given the grace to get up and move forward. He re-
4 mained behind. At the next station, I got off. He remained
5 behind. The train left the station. Suddenly, I realized as
6 the car went by with him sitting alone--all the other cars in
7 the train had their lights lit. Not the one we'd been in during
8 our short trip. The car was completely unlit.

9 It now dawned on me what people meant when they say, "We
10 can arrest the disease of drug addiction at any stop along
11 the way. We don't have to take it to the very end."

12 God's grace through that experience s =aved my cleanliness.
13 I hurried back to the afternoon meeting at the same place on
14 a weekend day.

15 Feeling "Metting'd out" can mean, I'm going through a phase
16 of recovery that's difficult for me or I feel incapable of
17 surviving. Sometimes, God walks me through things where my know-
18 ing about it while it's happening would totally blow me away.
19 So, God allows me to feel "Meeting'd out" or uncomfortable with-
20 out my having to know what's really the matter until we're out
21 of my danger zone.

22 As long as I keep going to meetings, letting you know where
23 I'm at, how I'm continuing to use the program and depend in God
24 even though I may not know what's bothering me at the moment and
25 stay clean--it passes.

26 To me, a human being is normal only when turning will and
27 life over to the care of God.

28 As long as I had the choice whether to use drugs--I did.
29 Thank God, I got to a point where I no longer had a choice--drugs
30 had destroyed me. I was powerless to do anything except sit
31 in those meetings and wait to die. I felt doomed and the only
32 concept having my attention was survival. Later, I was happy
33 to consider the program in terms of from five to life. Any-
34 thing I'm going through now compared to those days--today is
35 better.

Drug addiction has proven to me it's a progressive
disease. I went from parties on the holidays to partying
weekend nights to weekend days to partying weekday nights
to weekday days to partying and nothing else, so help me
God, until the party was over.

I used drugs because I could not stop using them.
I lost the power of choice whether to Use drugs. When I
used drugs I could no longer guarantee my actions. To
think I could just do one whatever was insanity because
using it once would give drugs power over my thinking
again. "ONE IS TOO MANY AND A THOUSAND NEVER ENOUGH."
Finally, drugs controlled me, drugs used me and drugs
killed me. And today, God saves me.

God gives me the gift of cleanliness. God gives me
the 12-Steps and the tools of the N.A. design for living
clean. God gives me you people my N.A. family to enjoy
being clean together. We're all in this together. There
is nobody against anybody in N.A. We all get well
together. God gives me the newcomers to cave my clean-
liness by carrying the message.

I no longer have to go out and take in order to
stay clean. I can live within the grace of God's love
and simply accept what's being freely given to me on a
daily basis. God is giving me the energy and love to
put in the footwork.

God's grace and doing the footwork. The footwork
releases more energy to do the next indicated action in
cleanliness until everything eventually solves itself.
Through the footwork, I have the maturity gained to
respond to living in the here and now.

Doing the footwork is like healing a mental or
emotional disorder as it's surfacing on schedule in God's
time to be let go of here and now. On God's schedule,
the preparation is also happening that let's me grasp
and develop what God gives. As I concentrate on the 12
Steps and do the actions based on staying clean, God

1 cleans us the rest of my act.

2 To me, the 12-Steps are like a present given to God's
3 children. As I play with the Steps, my mind focuses on
4 the program and not on messing up my life. I use the
5 program, letting God deal with the total picture.

6 In my case, it's like having a circle, triangle and
7 square. As an addict, I pick up the triangle peg and try
8 putting it into the circle space. I keep trying to get
9 the triangle to fit the shape of the circle. God lets
10 me do it until, finally, on God's schedule; the triangle
11 peg must go into the triangle space. So, God gives me
12 the square peg and try fitting it into the circle space.
13 And while I'm doing this, God places the triangle peg
14 into the triangle space. All on schedule. Peg by peg,
15 step by step, action by action, God gets everything into
16 place until there's only the circle peg to to into the
17 circle space.

18 I don't mind being powerless because God's powerful.
19 I don't mind being unmanageable because God manages quite
20 well. God's alive and well, and living inside the here
21 and now.

22 Once I got to N.A., my drug career ended and
23 recovery began--"There's nothing worse than a body full
24 of drugs and a head full of N.A.".

25 There may be relapses while I'm in N.A., however,
26 they are no longer part of my drug career. They are part
27 of my recovery career.

28 In drug addiction, it's natural to have relapses of
29 the disease on a mental or emotional level because of
30 the process of learning how to let to and let God.
31 Stinking-thinking and emotional benders let me know the
32 tension is building up inside me. I'd better start
33 applying the tools of the program or the tension of the
34 emotional or mental relapse will snowball into the
35 avalanche of a physical relapse into drugs.

The tension I have comes from the stress of letting
go and letting God; letting go of the things that have
served their purpose and letting God help me develop
what works here and now.

All my old ideas are like having both my hands
squeezing my throat--I need to let go absolutely in order
to breathe. Living in God's will for me rather than mine,
everything happens on schedule while God is actually
preparing me to handle what's coming up next.

This is where not being too Hungry, Angry, Lonely,
Tired or Serious (HALTS) helps me stay clean. I mention
serious because I may get by a while being too Hungry,
Angry, Lonely or Tired--my danger is taking myself too
Serious about it. When HALTS happens I may need food,
a meeting or rest.

Sometimes, I'll go, "I'm not tired, I'm not tired,
I'm not tired;" until I collapse of nervous exhaustion.
As I'm denying any area of my HALTS maintenance, the
tension inside me is starting to build.

I ignore where neglecting HALTS is taking me and
just as I am about to snap, I will get the urge to use
drugs. Or I will start thinking about them more frequent-
ly. Thinking about drugs is a red alert to look at my
HALTS maintenance system. Where am I getting too HALTS?

Just because my mind is thinking about drugs to get
my attention, doesn't mean my body is asking for drugs.
It may be asking for a meal to ease the hunger; some rest
to ease the tiredness; or a meeting to ease the loneliness,
anger or seriousness.

When I'm getting enough food, rest and companionship
in this program, almost nothing can happen to bother my
serenity. Take away the meeting, the food and the rest--
watch it.

Today, I shake hands instead of throats. Each moment
of the day is a turning point either to continue spiritual
progress or turn back into drug addiction. I need complete

1 faith in God's Care and protection.

2 An inventory helps me keep pace with clealiness.
3 When looking back at all my turning points I know God
4 can develop the potential in my living situations. Just
5 because I got into drug addiction at one turning point
6 doesn't mean I can't enjoy spiritual progress now. An
7 inventory of turning points in life can be useful
8 step in learning about my potential interests.

9 Of course, even procrastination can work for me when
10 it gives me the opportunity to stop using drugs, regroup
11 and start fresh with the 12-Steps. However, I'd better
12 start addressing what is bothering me and talk about it
13 or I may never get to it. I need to start participating
14 in my own recovery by doing some of the suggested steps
15 in addition to showing up at meetings to be with you
16 people.

17 Your example shows me the importance of the 12-Steps.
18 Without your clean example, I would have hurt a lot longer.
19 You people are special with me. One of you told me as a
20 newcomer, "I'd like to see you make the program." Thanks,
21 you helped save my life.

22 Three months into the program, I met another of you
23 at my first convention. Conventions are fantastic. I
24 went from poor me in a room full of people to a meeting
25 hall internationally clean and serene with hundreds of
26 people praying, sharing, loving and living in unity. Yes,
27 conventions are great.

28 Though I have had to learn how to pace myself through
29 a convention using the HALTS maintenance, I feel conven-
30 tions can really aid the recovery process. They are a
31 place where we can carry the message by showing people
32 it is possible to have fun clean.

33 Anyway, I was introduced to someone who actually sat
34 with me and gave the time to freely share experience,
35 strength and hope of what it was like, what happened and
36 what it's like now. This person taking what I thought

was time out from busy activities to share with me also 1
served to help save my life. It made me feel, "Hey, 2
people really do care." 3

As a result of this, I am available to the new people. 4
I feel it is important for us to sit one on one and share 5
what the program really has to offer. It's important to 6
let people know what a beautiful gift cleanliness really 7
is. I'm as happy or happier than I've ever been before 8
I came to the program. Living clean is indescribably 9
lovely. 10

Yet, the only real way a person can know how happy 11
or worthwhile is recovery and being clean is to do the 12
suggested steps. 13

I was so energized by that convention, I lost my fear 14
of failure about doing an inventory. I started writing 15
everything I could remember on paper. My first inventory 16
was more like a written Fifth Step of admitting the exact 17
nature of my wrongs. I had so much garbage to dump that 18
I simply wrote a fearful, immoral inventory. 19

Afraid of facing anyone with this inventory, I 20
mailed it to the person who had shared with me at the 21
convention. One day, I got a phone call, "I got your 22
letter; how's it feel to be like all the rest of us?" 23

It felt so good, I hung up. I had to call back 24
immediately and apologize. I was told, "That's okay." 25
From actually doing this inventory to the best of my 26
ability at the time, I learned, "I'm like all the rest 27
of us and it's okay!" This was news to me. This was 28
the first time I'd suffered innocence by association. 29

Family had said before this, "You're okay it is those 30
friends you keep." It was guilt by association though I 31
was doing as much or more than anyone. 32

I no longer feel guilty nor ashamed with what I 33
used to do. The morals I had were necessary to live with 34
what I was doing back then. I find all my liabilities 35
can be turned by God into assets when helping a new 36

1 person achieve cleanliness.

2 Admitting all of it helps me lighten the load and
3 helps them identify with someone in N.A. Telling them
4 what I used to be like may also help them let go of shame
5 and guilt. However, the Fifth Step is taken with someone
6 who can handle it. Getting clean at someone's expense
7 doesn't work.

8 When I share with newcomers I am careful about what
9 I say and how much. I do not force information on them
10 like a pusher. Too much information overloads their input
11 system. It is better to just remind them to go to meetings
12 and don't use drugs.

13 Removing drugs from me, brought a lot of thoughts,
14 feelings and emotions up at once which was confusing. I
15 couldn't handle it. My switchboard blew fuses. Inventory
16 helped.

17 I have a tendency to think negatively. Writing
18 inventory puts it in a different light and I can look at
19 it more positively.

20 Confusion is best handled by writing all of it on
21 paper one thought, feeling or emotion at a time until
22 every bit of the confusion is inventoried. This gets it
23 out of the head and onto the inventory where I can deal
24 with it by using the program on it.

25 I can call someone and talk about one of my feelings.
26 I can inventory one item in depth. Or I may just turn it
27 over. Gradually, I'm in touch with a wide range of
28 feelings because I know what they feel like when I am
29 clean.

30 I know what it feels like to go to meetings, to share,
31 to write inventory, to do what actions a day of clean-
32 liness indicates. I've developed through the 12-Steps the
33 ability to survive being me.

34 Serenity happens sometimes because I am used to the
35 process of living clean. I'm not as fearful now. God
36 doesn't make any mistakes. We are all part of God's plan.

We are a vision of hope to the addict who still suffers. 1
In N.A., people who are hopelessly and helplessly addicted 2
to drugs can and do recover to live clean and happy lives. 3

Keep is simple--SMILE. This is important to me be- 4
cause it gives me a positive way to look at K.I.S.S. 5
especially smiling about the way I learned something of the 6
power of love. 7

I was stopped by a patrolman and there wasn't a 8
license tag on the bicycle I had borrowed from a friend 9
in the program. I refused to sign the ticket because some- 10
one reading cards had told me not to sign any legal docu- 11
ments. So, the bicycle was impounded and I went to jail. 12

At court, everyone had a nice laugh about the explan- 13
ation. I was released on condition of getting the bicycle 14
a license. 15

Three of us from the program; the owner, myself and 16
a friend of ours went to pick up the bike. At the police 17
station, the detectives on the case were arranging its 18
release when I kissed someone's hand. 19

Suddenly, a detective came barging over to us, eyes 20
bulging. He asked, "Do you know this person?" 21

"No," I said. 22

"Don't you know you can be arrested for assault?" 23

"I love all my brother's and sister's. . ." 24

"I'm not your brother. . ." he said. 25

"I know. Your're older--you're my father." 26

And he quickly backed against the wall away from me 27
as if I'd pulled a loaded gun. And he didn't bother us 28
anymore. We got the bike and had a license tag put on it. 29
And I learned something about the power of love. 30

I smile a lot more. My pilot light is always lit. 31
When I react to what people are doing it's not because I 32
dislike them. I'm reacting to what they're doing. Their 33
actions may show me something I need to deal with by using 34
the program. Usually, it's an area I've been avoiding. 35
So, I get upset because the actions of others tend to 36

1 remind me what I need to be working on in order to stay
2 clean. Applying the program calms me and I can once more
3 get along with people.

4 Anytime the ability to be agreeable begins leaving,
5 I get the person's attention before it gets physical. I
6 explain it may have to be settled later because I can't
7 deal with it now. Talking to the sponsor in this case,
8 helps me ease the tension so it's not taken out on a third
9 party. Feelings are okay. I just need a kinder way of
10 communicating them. Gentle words are more acceptable than
11 throwing chairs.

12 The Fourth Step inventory takes the lid off what's
13 happening and admitting it in a Fifth Step exposes it to
14 the sunlight of the spirit. Once the sunlight touches it,
15 the emotional and mental disorders begin to evaporate.

16 My formal Fifth Step was with a member of the program
17 because it was hard for me at that time to go up to some-
18 body on the street and say, "Heay, I'm a drug addict. I've
19 got to talk to you." Civilians rarely understand where
20 I'm coming from during a conversation.

21 Sometimes, I feel like a coward of internal warfare.
22 An unknown soldier who almost died from selfinflicted
23 wounds.

24 After the Fifth Step, I was told, "Be good to your-
25 self." Thank God, I can't think of any other way for an
26 addict like me to be clean than N.A.
27 Being clean in this program by living the 12-steps
28 of recovery, really is being good to myself.

29 If I'd come up with one other thing to do besides
30 this program, I'd be dead now. Sometimes, I think I
31 really did die. I'd get afraid that God's simply keeping
32 me alive long enough to show all the beautiful life I
33 could have had. After I admit it, the plug's going to be
34 pulled.

35 Now that I admit it, somehow, it's okay. It doesn't
36 bother me as much as it did. I like whatever God has in

store for me because I have been shown the program works. 1

During my probation, I had an investigation for a homi-2
cide I did not do where my alibi was the fact I was out of 3
state at the time while hitch-hiking to a convention. I 4
got two traffic tickets in one week then had an arrest and 5
jailing for reckless driving. There was also a totalled 6
automobile in another accident. And I still got off pro- 7
bation on schedule because the program works. 8

The whole truth is that while I was going to meetings 9
and letting you know what's happening with me and how I'd 10
applied the 12-Steps to it, God brought another lawyer to 11
the program. 12

My first Probation Officer who's so capable and 13
friendly got promoted. So, I was given a rookie to train 14
who felt it's necessary to go to court to be taken off 15
probation. 16

On the way up the elevator the day of the court 17
appearance, I noticed my newcomer P.O. looked nervous 18
about something. Perhaps this was a first time before the 19
bench. "It's going to be okay," I said, sharing some 20
"Easy does it," don't worry support. 21

When my case was called the Prosecuting Attorney 22
turned and looked smiling at me, and asked if this was all 23
that stuff I'd been talking about in meetings the past 24
two years? 25

"Yes," I smiled and the P.A. went into Judge's 26
chambers. When they came back I was taken off probation 27
and told to keep going to meetings. 28

I loved it because I now knew the importance of 29
meetings. Having gotten away from meetings for a month 30
while hitching to that convention, I'd been taught quickly 31
I was too new on the program to be that long away from 32
meetings. Someone offered me drugs and I got loaded. When 33
I got to the convention I had to move my cleanliness date 34
up from my first year. 35

1 I admit today, "The exact nature of my wrongs was the
2 inability I had to turn my will and life completely over
3 to the care of God."

4 I am glad the 12-Steps work because I lost faith in
5 my decisions. My feelings and thoughts based on my
6 emotions are all part of my using drugs pattern. I am
7 incapable of having faith in my choices. I need to apply
8 the principles of this program to all my living situations
9 and depend in God.

10 That is why it's important each person in the program
11 develops a contact with God that works for that individual
12 member of N.A. Go with whatever works for you to keep
13 you clean. I'm not writing these attitudes or opinions
14 here as a roadblock to someone else's recovery. This is
15 not intended to trigger any reactions in you. This is
16 simply the insanity I've been having the need to apply 12
17 Steps to in order for my survival and continuing spiritual
18 progress in cleanliness. It's the simple slogans in the
19 program that are easier to remember.

20 I'm so far over the edge, it just seems the part of
21 the edge I've been given to deal with. Only I deal with
22 it by turning it over to God. In order for me to survive,
23 I must turn not only my will and life over to God; I must
24 also turn everybody else over to God.

25 I don't expect things of a meeting; I don't expect
26 things of people, places and things; I don't expect things
27 of me; and I don't expect things from God because my mind
28 is not the best indicator of what things to expect. As a
29 result of having no expectations of life; it's very easy
30 for me to be without feelings of frustration. I'm also
31 able to pace myself more realistically. I set short range
32 goals and am willing to let them go or accept whatever's
33 the result. I'm living at my rate of grasping and develop-
34 ing.

35 Though sometimes I may fail at something a thousand
36 times and on the 1001st accomplish it, then think, "Those

weren't failures, I'm merely improving the technique";
I'm still willing to let go of my schemes and go with God.

Someone once told me, "God takes away the things we're proud of and gives us the things we're grateful of."

So, I'm learning to be grateful; to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. It's the altitude of my attitude that helps most times. And when my attitude is one of gratitude, I feel naturally high.

I find this attitude of gratitude works in every bothersome area of my life. Gratitude even heals my resentments. I'm given constant opportunities. Having gratitude always helps me develop my conscious contact with God and enjoy God's love being freely given inside me.

Any time I'm bothered, I use it as an opportunity to find an item of gratitude. With resentments, I list what's bothering me on one side of a sheet of paper and balance it with at least one item of gratitude. Usually, I can find many items giving me gratitude in each situation.

When I don't know what's bothering me exactly, I give thanks for getting through the insanity of the resentment or situation without having to use drugs. Generally, I can always find some gratitude even when it's just, "I'm grateful for this situation because it gives me an opportunity to look for an item of gratitude."

Hitting an intellectual bottom in the program, I felt all my intellectualizing was simply rationalizing and justifying fear.

Fear isn't a big deal as far as I'm concerned, it's only natural. Not discounting anyone's feelings about fear; mine are very strange.

I feel the way my mind acts is like a filter blocking me from the tremendous amount of energy God has available for me when I can let go of all my fears.

What my mind does it get me into unmanageable situations and when it discovers no way to deal with these because it doesn't have experience in them, it simply bails out and

1 leaves me holding the bag.

2 With my mind going out to lunch, there's no longer as con-
3 scious a filter separating me from all the energy God has
4 ready to deal with the situation. Since the feel of this energy
5 is something I'm not accustomed to at the moment, I think it's
6 fear. Actually, it's a tremendous surge of God's energy
7 without the mind filtering it. Oh, well, so much for the
8 strangeness of my thinking. I can't think about the disease
9 of drug addiction with my rationale because it's an irrational
10 disease. I must deal with this disease by applying the 12-Step
11 to it.

12 I don't necessarily buy into anything my mind comes up with
13 as real. Reality is a phase of recovery. Taking the big deal
14 to a meeting, talking about it in terms of the program and de-
15 pending in God--all the big deals pass. And the ones that
16 don't, I use the tools I have to survive and stay clean long
17 enough until God lifts them from me or lifts me from them.

18 I was at a state hospital. I got myself into a lifestyle
19 where I was forced to live on a drug ward. And I was writing
20 what I thought was the most revealing stuff ever written. Like
21 each word in each sentence was the tip of the iceberg, keying
22 massive concepts at once. Fantastic rainbows of vision.

23 Later, well after my release, I happened upon part of this
24 masterpiece in some of my belongings. It was barely readable
25 and what could be read, could not be understood at that moment.

26 What I think is appropriate may be completely inappropriate
27 the next moment. That's if I survive the mistake of acting on
28 the insanity of my decisions. And just because I know better,
29 doesn't mean I'll do better.

30 I was really set up once for spiritual awakening. In the
31 city, I was applying for some financial program to help an addict
32 go to school. After we talked about my addiction, the counselor
33 asked if I had any other problems.

34 "Yes," I admitted, "Jaywalking." I'd been doing this instead
35 of working the program. Any time I felt tense or needed an
36 adrenalin rush or I don't know what, I simply jumped into six

lanes of traffic. I was having difficulty not doing it. 1

"Do you have any friends?" 2

"Yes, God." 3

"God I!" 4

"Yes, God is the only friend I have." 5

The counselor okay'd the application. Only I decided to 6
let it go. 7

Then, I'm in another city. I've a letter to mail. I'm 8
in the "flow." I don't find a mailbox. I'm catching a bus 9
and suddenly there's a mailbox across the street. I go for it. 10
The bus driver or somebody honks. I clear the curb parked 11
bus. At full stride, I'm hit by a green van and flipped 12
about twenty feet into the intersection. I land on my sit- 13
ting muscles and get up; make it across the street; mail 14
the letter; then, settle back into the energy of the accident. 15

Emergency personnel arrive; I'm asked if I want to go to 16
the hospital. "No," I answered. I got my ticket for running 17
the red "Don't walk" sign. Apologized for the van. Was 18
told something like it was okay. Then, caught a bus to the 19
office of a therapist. 20

"Here I am." 21

I was in so much shock I looked like I was on drugs. I 22
was given something to deal with the shock. I took it. And 23
I moved my cleanliness date up simply because at the moment 24
I didn't want my mind having the slightest chance to open 25
the door on my addiction to drugs. I'm very grateful that's 26
what I did. 27

I've been clean and serene ever since. It made me grate- 28
ful for having survived something. And then, I realized I'm 29
grateful for having survived my drug addiction. 30

Besides, it knocked a lot of hostility out of me. 31

I'm not suggesting this as a way to get gratitude that 32
works. It's the spiritual awakening I had that got me over 33
my fear that my mind was always trying to set me up for ill- 34
ness and accidents so I could use drugs. I knew no matter 35
what happened to me, I was determined to stick with the pro- 36

1 gram even when a relapse happened. I'm grateful to have sur-
2 vived the relapses of this disease.

3 Please be assured...this isn't a signal for others to have
4 similar experiences in order to get spiritual awakenings. It's
5 not necessary to go to such an extreme length. Gratitude can
6 come from the joy of having survived a day clean. It can come
7 when we thank God at the end of the day for our cleanliness.

8 My gratitude is being clean. A lot of experiences get my
9 attention. Yet, I love being clean. Being clean is a spiritual
10 awakening.

11 Making amends is also a spiritual awakening. We're ready
12 for our final steps into God consciousness when we make amends
13 and balance the books by God's grace and the principles of this
14 program.

15 I'm learning not to discount someone's efforts to make
16 amends. A lot of spiritual progress goes into amend making.
17 When people come up with amends, I let them know it's okay. I
18 thank them and thank God. I like to forgive others as I would
19 like to be forgiven. I forgive them and I forgive me.

20 A person came to me with amends, saying my showing up at
21 meetings was the cause of a resentment. However, the resentment was
22 no longer there.

23 "It's okay," I said. "we're getting well together."
24 Besides, I couldn't think of a nicer person to resent then.
25 Even I resented being me when I got here. I don't any more. I
26 enjoy cleanliness.

27 It seems to me the program's been working whether or not I've
28 been keeping track of it. Amends are being made. Bills are
29 getting paid. A lot of my character defects have simply vanished.

30 Most of my shame, guilt, remorse and resentment is lifted
31 from me. My load's much lighter. There's nothing else left that's
32 seriously bothering me at the moment. I'm stuck being calm and
33 happy. I'm doomed to being happy, clean and serene. Guess I'll
34 have to accept it and be grateful. It's a miracle.

35 Using drugs is not part of my basic makeup, otherwise I wouldn't
36 be able to give it up.

What I've had all along is a spiritual disease. Once I'm given the ability to turn will and life over to God, serenity comes along and stays with me. God's love is an infinite love. God's love for each of us is infinite. Inside, we have a contact with the infinite love God has for us.

I'm no longer worried about the problems of living. Now I concern myself with applying the program. As a person who ran from life, I'm running to the program instead of the problem. I'm picking up the phone, shaking hands and writing inventory instead of using drugs with my automatic reach for it.

Of course, it's been a matter of practicing the program until it became easy to do. It's hard at first because I've no practice at being clean. Once I did apply the footwork of all the suggested steps put into practice in my living situations, I got clean feedback from the actual doing it. I know what works. Thank God, it's a simple program. It just takes practice.

Now when I get up from whatever side of the bed or fall of my cloudy perch, I automatically fall back into the old ideas of doing inventory, calling someone on the phone, going to meetings and helping others help me stay clean.

Some of it's also very trying to everyone involved. That reckless driving offense during probation happened as the result of my not wanting another ticket for something I felt I didn't do.

I'd been to the meeting, to the after meeting meeting and was giving someone a ride when I backed out of the restaurant parking lot because the parking lanes were blocked with people parking and talking, and I didn't have the patience to wait. As I backed onto the highway, the only traffic happens to be a police car. The person in it gave what I thought wasn't the loss of love. So, I signalled to turn. He turned around and came after me in order to warn me, as he explained later, about the hazards of entering the road-

1 way in that manner.

2 I turned at the corner and on came the pursuit lights.
3 The siren wailing as we drove into the foothills, I headed
4 towards a sponsor's house. I'd been told to come visit if I
5 ever had a problem.

6 The sponsor came to the front yard to see what the noise
7 was as I pulled up at the curb, telling the person with me not
8 to move because the officer was going to pull a gun. The patrol
9 car drove up and parked diagonally across the front of us.
10 He got out, positioned himself behind the roof of it and
11 kept his gun drawn on us. As I was being frisked, I said,
12 "That feels good."

13 The sponsor said, "Shut up." And I did. Seems like I can
14 take direction very well when there's someone on hand to direct
15 me. Left to my own devices--it's a high speed chase.

16 I was taken to jail and my passenger let go. It was sug-
17 gested by the court that I could volunteer for a program if I
18 wanted to participate in some community service since it didn't
19 appear like jail or fine would do me any good. The court felt
20 I was a person who got nervous when the police came and would
21 thus take off.

22 I nodded approval and was released on my own recognizance.
23 I served 80 hours volunteer action doing clerical work.

24 This proved a blessing in disguise, later when I was in the
25 same court. Because of this O.R. I was able to also be released.

26 I'd been to pick somebody up at a recovery house and drove
27 back to the place where several of us on the program were living.
28 As I arrived, someone was making sandwiches. As that person
29 went to the phone, I moved the sandwiches over, got out some more
30 bread and started making more for those of us who had just
31 shown up. I guess someone thought I was taking the other sand-
32 wiches because I was right in the middle of watching peanut butter
33 swirl when I felt a lot of energy coming my way. In one motion,
34 I turned and watched myself slapping someone down to the floor
35 and then have another person rush into the kitchen to get me.

36 After sticking that person with the knife, neither of us

could believe it, so I was charged again with the same consequences. Fortunately, the knife being used to swirl peanut butter had been a dull metal one instead of a sharp steak.

The police were called. An arrest for assault and trespassing followed when I was living there and the other person who was visiting had attacked me. Because of the previous O.R. requirements having been met, I was released even though people were trying to detain me for some testing.

On the trial date, I was freed of the charges because the other person had failed to appear in court. Thank God. All of us have since made amends and we're friendly with each other now. We're no longer fighting over peanut butter sandwiches. So, I'm glad nobody was dead because we have a lot in common now that we're clean and serene. A kiss on the cheek to each of them.

My feelings about people, places and things may seem the same today as when I first got here, yet, my reactions to them are much more serene. That is--my reaction to my reactions to people, places and things is better. The program is working to help me be a fellow among fellows in N.A. and the community.

Being clean is one amend being made because I'm no longer part of the problem. I'm part of the program. Being clean is an important amend. I'm no longer being an intentional problem to the community. A clean addict in N.A. is one of the community's most important assets. We're all a resource in helping the addict who still suffers. I remember going back to all the meetings I'd gotten my early cleanliness and making amends for my actions new on the program. The people said, "That's okay." I was told not to be so hard on myself; I'd reminded them what it used to be like. All of it had served its purpose.

The 12-Steps have a lot of meaning to me because they helped me understand the power of prayer. Praying can lift negative thoughts. The Serenity Prayer is very helpful. However, I've progressed to the point that gratitude speaks

1 a lot.

2 There was a job once that taught me a lot about prayer.
3 I was going up the elevator on the outside of a building
4 under construction and the foreman was explaining the need
5 to clean the stairwells at the end of the floor we had now-
6 reached. I went from listening closely to looking off the hori-
7 zon and it felt like everything had suddenly jumped off the
8 building. I was shaking when at the stairwell. So, I prayed
9 to have God remove my fear of heights. No sooner had this
10 happened when the foreman came back and handed me a wire
11 brush.

12 I was told to get a safety belt and clean the couplings
13 that attach the prefabricated walls to the structure of the
14 building. These had been covered by the fireproofing being
15 done. I went to the construction box, got a safety belt and
16 went over to a girder, -rabbed it and started cleaning a
17 coupling.

18 The foreman came up and asked what I was doing. "I'm
19 cleaning the couplings."

20 "Where's your safety belt?"

21 "Right here, " I said, pointing to the belt around my
22 waist.

23 "Where's the hookup?"

24 "I couldn't find one."

25 "You're safety tools aren't going to work unless you
26 use them."

27 Having a tendency to think of things in terms of the pro-
28 gram, I thought, "The 12-Steps aren't going to work unless I
29 use them."

30 "If you have a problem, come see me," he said.

31 "If I had a problem, go see the sponsor." I already knew
32 that one.

33 He got me a hookup and I concentrated only on doing what
34 was immediately in front of me to do. As a result, my fear
35 was gone. I moved from hookup to hookup until the task of
36 cleaning the couplings resolved itself. However, I promised

myself to be careful what I prayed for because I might get it. 1

Then one night, I was walking beside a road and thinking 2
about a course I was taking and the certificate being offered. 3
I thought, "I'd sure like to get that certificate." And a van 4
swerved to avoid a rut, straightened up and just missed me. 5
"Not that certificate," I said. From now on, not only was I 6
going to be careful what I prayed for, I was going to be very 7
specific. 8

I began to actually realize the power of prayer. This 9
stuff works. It got to a point I had to be very careful what 10
I even wrote on paper. During one phase of recovery, I was 11
writing some short range goals and it dawned on me as I re- 12
read the list that there was nothing I could do to accomplish 13
any of it besides just stay clean and continue going to meet- 14
ings. I turned the inventory over to God. A month or so after 15
this, I'm looking for something at my desk and I find the list 16
of short range goals that had seemed so impossible back then. 17
Every item on the inventory had been taken care of. And I 18
hadn't done anything besides turn it over to God and keep 19
going to meetings clean. This had an impact on me. 20

I no longer wanted to have the responsibility of prayer. 21
I began praying for just God's will for me and the power to 22
do it. Then, it dawned on me. As a person whose life and 23
will were turned over to God, prayer seemed a lack of faith 24
in God's ability to know what's best for me. I now use my 25
God given energy in the act of giving thanks. Whatever the 26
day brings, I give thanks. I know God has a plan for my 27
spiritual progress. I'm willing to accept whatever God has 28
in store for me. It's no longer a bad day or a good day; 29
it's just, "Thanks for the day." 30

Thank God for a day clean. Any time an addict gets through 31
a day clean by the grace of God, that's a successful day. 32
Everything else is an opportunity to grasp and develop the 33
spiritual principles of this Fellowship. The opportunity is 34
also here to depend in God and merge into God's love. 35

1 Practicing this program in every living situation, helps
2 me give my using time to N.A. All day the 12-Steps work to ease
3 the tension. Sometimes there's so many things happening that
4 seem crazy, I don't have to act crazy any more.

5 As a clean member of N.A., I'm doing 12-Step work by being
6 an example of the program working and by applying the princi-
7 ples in all my affairs. Nothing else works or worked until
8 letting go, coming into N.A. and letting God develop my spiri-
9 tual progress. I love this society of clean addicts. I didn't
10 get me clean. We did. God and all of us living clean together
11 did it.

12 Now that I practiced the 12-Steps on my drug addiction, I
13 know they work. KNowing they work, I apply them to every area
14 of my life. Like I'm powerless over being happy, and my life
15 is unmanageable because of it. I'm coming to believe God will
16 restore me to sanity as far as being happy is concerned. I'm
17 turning my happiness over to the care of God. Now I'll do some
18 inventory of being happy and admit it's possible to survive back
19 to back days of being happy clean.

20 There's something about the Fellowship of the Spirit that's
21 noticeable at the meetings. We actually are in this together.
22 There's a climate. An atomosphere of cleanliness. An environ-
23 ment of serenity. When it's raining it's not just raining on
24 me. It's important to show up at the meetings and help form a
25 recovery pocket system for each other. Being together with
26 clean addicts is very encouraging.

27 Even when I was new and thought I couldn't sleep, knowing you
28 were here in case I needed to call on the phone, helped me get
29 the body rest I needed to function even though my mind was off
30 somewhere in a thinkathon.

31 As I progressed in recovery, the realization came that I'm
32 addicted to being in the here and now. Not being in the present
33 has caused me to feel withdrawal pains. I'm addicted to the
34 energy God has available to enjoy living in the here and now.
35 I'm addicted to God's love.

When I'm thinking about the past--I feel guilty about
not being in the present. When I'm thinking about the
future--I feel anxious about not being in the present. So,
I use guilt and anxiety as signs of the severance pained of
withdrawal from the present. I'm withdrawing into the past
when I feel guilty and I'm projecting into the future when
I feel anxious. I need to have the faith and the courage to
live in the here and now. God and the 12-Steps provide what
I need. The 12-Steps are a way back into the present. I
love being clean.

I love it when people say, "When we got what we needed
we found it's what we wanted all along." Of course, some
languages the terms need and want are reversed. Thank God,
cleanliness is the language of the spiritual heart.

What I need to hear in meetings today is the same thing
I needed to hear in those first meetings. "Don't allow
yourself to stop going to meetings. Moderate your life;
continue going to meetings; give as you would receive; live,
laugh, love and be happy."

Drug addiction is a progressive, fatal disease. Once
drugs become a problem, either the problem is removed or
the problem takes over complete control--and then, the prob-
lem removes the person.

God removes my dependency on drugs and gives me the
faith and courage to live clean in the present by going to
meetings regularly and traveling the 12-Steps as guides to
spiritual progress.

I'm told by the people with lengths of cleanliness that
unresolved reservations seem to allow people to pick up the
first whatever, "Some people feel they may be able to do
it and always come back. It's tough to get back. It's
tough to stay back. It's easier said than done.

I'm grateful I've given all my reservations to God.
I'm an addict. To use drugs is to die. I can no longer
deny drugs are a problem. I can't deny my life is un-
manageable. I'm powerless over drug addiction.

1 Living a life of cleanliness and serenity is a beautiful
2 way of being. I'm glad God's given me cleanliness, and the
3 ability and opportunity to attend meetings regularly. Contin-
4 uing to go to meetings, applying the 12-Steps and depending
5 in God are the best insurances for cleanliness and serenity.
6 Every bit of it has been worth it.

7 Slowly, gradually, it happens. Being clean and serene is
8 fun.

9 Keep the clean and serene faith.

10 God works. The meetings work, The 12-Steps work. The
11 tools and Fellowship of N.A. work. Whatever works for you to
12 keep you clean and enjoying spiritual progress is more impor-
13 tant now than it's ever been. We don't ever have to use drugs
14 again. Be clean. Here in N.A. is a way to be clean and happy.

15 The joy of being clean and helping others live clean is
16 with us. Welcome to N.A. The literature, the 12-Steps, the
17 meetings and God are yours to enjoy. God is loving every
18 moment of it--we might as well.

LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY

My name is Jim, and I'm a junkie. When I was about nine years old, my dad, who was a truck driver, turned me on to speed and juice. I started using these heavily and got into glue. I was mostly looking for some camaraderie, and I spent most of my early teens just hanging out.

I got into cough syrup and inhalers. I really cut back on the booze, because I didn't like the hangovers. I started to think that there might be something wrong with me, and I asked my parents to get me some kind of help from a psychologist or psychiatrist. They told me that I was all right, and that this was just a stage I was going through.

I was working by this time and I was a hard worker. I would always throw myself into anything I did.

When I was 16, I was jailed for the first time. I had done a hit and run while I was loaded. I started devoting my time to raising hell.

When I was about 17 or 18, I killed an old man in a car wreck while I was loaded. This didn't affect me too much at the time. I just thought it was something that happened and was just a bit of bad luck for both of us.

I started making excuses for my behavior, and that turned into my main occupation when I drank. I would drink to black out. I first started thinking about stopping everything and just killing myself.

Though I was a good worker, I tended to miss days and going loaded. So, I changed jobs often. In one year, I had 13 W-2 forms. It was when I was about 19 that I first hit "skid row". I did odd jobs, panhandled and occasionally rode the rails. I owned what I had on and nothing else.

1 After doing this for a bit, I decided to clean up. So, I
2 took a bath, got some clothes and a job. I managed to stop
3 using for about 18 months. I met a lady during this time
4 that I married. She was an epileptic and I started eating
5 her barbs and copping extra scripts.

6 We had a child and I thought that I was finally going to be
7 able to stay under control.

8 I had an accident while working that landed me in the
9 hospital for about two months. I got introduced to Darvon
10 and other pain killers there.

11 When I got out, the bills were really piled up. I de-
12 cided that I was going to pay them all fast. I got a second
13 full time job and started using speed to keep me going. I
14 would get up at 10:00 P.M. and do some speed to get me up.
15 I would work until 7:00 A.M. and then eat, some more speed
16 and go to a bar until 8:00 A.M. when I went back to work. I
17 went back to the bar with the guys for lunch. I went home
18 at 4:00 P.M., ate dinner, drank some whiskey to pass out so
19 I could get some sleep.

20 After about six months of this, I was doing so much drugs,
21 my wife and I separated.

22 I was drafted shortly after that and wound up in the Army.
23 In the Army, I did booze, drugs, LSD, mushrooms, peyote, pot,
24 anything to keep me screwed up.

25 I hated people. I thought that I had been shit on and I
26 was going to shit on them back.

27 I started dealing and other crimes to support my habit.
28 I had no motivation at all. I started to run with some "peace
29 freaks." I was just another low life with high ideals.

30 I hit the stockade a few times. I got sent to the Army
31 shrinks, who were no help. I was having a lot of trouble and
32 went to see a priest, even though I ranked God somewhere be-
33 tween Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

34 I got boosted out of the Army with an honorable discharge.
35 I got that only because of the people that would have come
36 down with me otherwise.

In the Army, I had been called "Joe Shit the Rag Man." I had no self-respect. People treated me like I was crazy and I did my best to live up to their expectations.

I got into cheap thrills. I did a lot of using and abusing the ladies. I was really screwed up.

I was still legally married, which I had done because of my son. My wife finally sued for divorce. That hurt really bad, even though I had been living with this girl for a year. She walked out on me about the same time, and that hurt a lot too.

I was always drunk and had booze nearby, so when I got picked up, the cops wouldn't look for anything else. After a long series of DWI's, public drunk charges and other alcohol-related offenses, I was paroled to A.A. for one year.

In A.A., I found a little hope. I was able to identify with the alcoholics there, somewhat, but it was not perfect. After about six months in A.A., I found N.A. There I could talk freely about my drug experiences, which I wasn't allowed to do at A.A.

It was at that first N.A. meeting that I felt really at home.

I was deep in debt and had no resources, but I stayed clean. I was still going from job to job and even tended bar for a while. I would still work the streets for a buck. I couldn't put two sentences together. I didn't know anything about prayer. All I could say was, "If there's anything up there, and I don't think there is--then help!" Eventually, from this beginning I was to get comfortable with my own Higher Power.

My ego continued to get me in trouble. I was either super high or super low--on some kind of ego trip. I was still hurting people and getting hurt by them. I had lady troubles. I finally got divorced. My girl friend moved out and then got killed. I got very depressed, but I didn't use. My attitude was, "I'll show you, you S.O.B.'s."

1 I finally found an N.A. meeting and got a copy of the
2 "White Book," and started reading it. I was really begin-
3 ning to feel at home in the meeting. There was one other
4 junkie in town that was staying clean, and he got loaded.
5 After that, I felt that N.A. had let me down.

6 I moved to Iowa and experienced the same problems I had
7 had in Kansas. I tried to get the local drug council interested
8 in N.A., but they were too interested in their own program,
9 when they weren't arguing over money problems.

10 I heard a couple of good Fifth Steps during that time,
11 however, and that inspired me and taught me to be more open
12 about myself.

13 I had a lot of telephone contact with W.S.O. in Califor-
14 nia. When I couldn't take it any more, I would call W.S.O.
15 and just talk.

16 I went to A.A. meetings in town and sat quietly in the
17 back. I tried to get as much out of those meetings as I could.

18 I heard there was good A.A. and some N.A. in Lincoln,
19 Nebraska, so I moved there. In those early days, there was
20 only four or five of us in that first N.A. meeting in Lin-
21 coln. That group is still going today.

22 I learned to live just one day at a time. I started learn-
23 ing to be responsible. I did a lot of service work and did a
24 lot of praying.

25 I was running with a new girl, and she got cleaned up and
26 got some education. Life started to get a little easier. The
27 financial problems started going away. There were still some
28 hard times. I would get depressed and sometimes, I thought
29 about getting loaded. Sometimes I just had to stand still
30 and hurt.

31 N.A. in Lincoln would start to grow and build up, and then
32 it would drop to one or two clean addicts. But it got better
33 each time when I stuck it out.

34 I now had enough money to travel a little and could get to
35 new meetings outside Lincoln. I started attending N.A. con-
36 ventions which were a real shot in the arm.

I enjoy helping junkies trying to recover. I try to do what I can so they won't die loaded. I have been to a lot of funerals.

Early on in A.A. I picked up the slogan KISS--Keep It Simple, Stupid. I try to work a simple program.

The fellowship in Lincoln began to grow. Today, we are active in world service.

I am more comfortable with God and myself today. I have all kinds of mood changes: sometimes I was a lazy, no good SOB; sometimes I was Okay; sometimes it seemed I was back-sliding. No matter what, however, I haven't had to use.

It is still a struggle, at times. But the longer I am clean, the more responsible I am. The longer I am clean, the more I am somebody. Today, I do live one day at a time. Today I care. I try to live and love somebody. Today, I can dream and make plans. But most importantly, I accept it as it is today. I thank God for both the good and the bad. I try to handle my fears as they come up.

Today I am not lonely. I have learned to be myself. I can let others get close.

I have learned that I am not unique. I have learned that I am not strange. I am just a junkie doing whatever I need to do in order to recover.

I have been re-united with my family. My ex-wife and I are on speaking terms. We are friends. My parents accept, respect and admire me. My son accepts me as I am.

I have changed my attitude to one of gratitude. My serenity is taxed from time to time, but I know more serenity is just around the corner. There is always hope.

I have learned that I grow by studying the steps and traditions and putting them into practice in my life to the best of my ability. I grow by going to meetings.

I am especially grateful for the principles of spirituality and anonymity. Today, I am part of a large and growing, beautiful fellowship. I have hopes for it to grow even more. I feel we best grow when we are most anonymous

working the program and working with others. I look for a larger fellowship so that we can all become more anonymous in our service work.

THE MONKEY

I came into the program from the streets. For me there was no medical detox. The whole weight of what I had physically done to myself came down when I stopped using. I had a job I could not afford to lose and a host of living responsibilities I could not afford to walk away from. In my addicted head, I had sold myself on the notion that it was as bad to go into an institution as it was to keep using. So I got sicker in an attempt to get better.

Too, I was scared of putting myself in an institution. I was melted into the passenger seat of the car that delivered me to my first meeting. I was too sick to drive and too busy thinking up excuses for changing my mind about the meeting to notice "it was time."

What I heard at that first meeting made me uncomfortable. Even though I was hurting so bad, I could still pick up on the sincerity and caring of the message. By the end of the meeting, I had convinced myself that this was just a room full of psychos who could not handle dope, not addicts, so I made a steady pace for the door. I was stopped by a no-nonsense member who began to talk program. It was straight, up-front program spoken like one street addict to another, with no group therapy overtones.

I left feeling lousy, hurting, sick, but with the illusion shattered about recovery of people like me. I left with the first hope of my recovery. I believed that if I was going to do this without signing into the hospital, I had to completely surrender from the beginning or there would be no beginning.

The first week I was so raunchy with the green sweats that I could only make it to three meetings. All three were in institutions. After each meeting I felt so bad, and I had

1 this inexplicable feeling that I would never make it without
2 enrolling in a hospital for the full course. I had the mon-
3 key telling me that I would be back out in a couple of weeks,
4 so what's the use! But, one day at a time, I made it the
5 first week. At the end of the first week, I made a non-institu-
6 tional meeting where I could relax and listen without looking
7 over my shoulder. There was something in the ease with which
8 these people accepted my misery that there was no doubt they
9 were of my kind. With this meeting, I found a solid footing
10 for riding out the first weeks of the fog.

11 I felt like a reptile crawling onto a rock, waiting to be
12 stepped on by civilization. That first morning, I had to make
13 myself get up and go to work. All the while, I could sense
14 that big foot overhead about to crush me. I made it by making
15 it from hour to hour, from one break to the next break, from
16 lunch to the end of the day. It was the longest day of my
17 life. However, because people were used to seeing me in an
18 unusual state of being, the withdrawals did not stir any out
19 of the ordinary comments at work. I guess people around me
20 just knew I did not have much longer on this earth.

21 The first day I took time to memorize the Serenity Prayer.
22 Saying the prayer over and over in my head did not work a
23 major miracle, but it overrode the voice of that constantly
24 babbling monkey, saying, "It ain't no use...It ain't no use...
25 It ain't no use..."

26 I felt really awkward praying; my monkey would say, "Who
27 are you kidding...Who are you kidding...Who are you kidding..."
28 It was no coincidence that I heard about the monkey at my
29 first meetings. It was this image that saw me through detox.
30 I hated the self-doubt and feelings of uselessness the crea-
31 ture fed me. I hated the monkey enough those first few days
32 that I acquired the Power not to hand my life over to the
33 monkey. Hate for the monkey enabled me to find the softer
34 way, handing my life over to spiritual principles. Those
35 first days, it was hate for the monkey, and not love of God,
36 that kept the dope out. I knew that I was fighting

for my life and it was a melodramatic struggle for which I
was poorly prepared.

I don't know how I looked the first week at work, mud-
dling through the job, but I made it. My erratic behavior
had long been accepted there and the withdrawals brought
no comments or complaints from either co-workers or manage-
ment. Only once did some active "users" offer to turn me
on to a few Quaaludes and a little smoke to cool my jets.
I yelled that nobody was going to kill me, and they backed
away. The subject never came up again.

My memory was so shattered that I had to carry a note
pad and make notes concerning everything. I could trust nothing
to memory. I was sure of only one thing. I had been beaten
by the dope and I was going to recover. I felt I couldn't
afford to walk away from the job in a daze, because I knew
I could handle it when I got better--"courage to change the
things I can." So I carried my note pad, making notes and
hoping the strange sounds and nauseous sweats would soon go away.

The saving grace of detox was that during the ever-chang-
ing mood-swings, just as I was about to climb the wall, there
would come a period of simple ease, with some degree of com-
fort and a feeling that I was okay.

After the first week of realizing how I had been physi-
cally raped by the monkey, I stepped into the emotional
struggle. The emotional battle is where the Program made its
greatest impact on my monkey. The Fellowship could not take
the hurt out of detox for me, but they did set in motion the
wheels which led me to what recovery is all about--the
spiritual awakening just around the corner waiting to stomp the
life out of the monkey.

I believe the Spiritual Awakening began for me when I
stopped backing away and allowed the hugs and smiles into
my life; I let the Fellowship replace the running mates.

Meetings every night filled the bill on what to do about
my self-centered, pitiful condition, how to handle the
miserable problem. The meetings kept me out of the presence

of my old friends and their well-intentioned poison. I could
2 take my compulsive nature to a meeting and let myself be sur-
rounded by "It can be done," instead of "When are you gonna
4 backslide?"

After the first couple of weeks, I was able to pray
6 without feeling like a jerk. With the comfort of prayer
came the conviction of recovery. It has gotten better.

ONE THIRD OF MY LIFE

Today has been one of those days. It was Friday and Monday all together. Trying to get something done was like trying to make a connection when the heat was on. It was a panic all day, but when I got home and lay down for an hour, it felt good. I can go on a natural nod, because I have nothing up here now but a clear conscience. The old hassle is gone, I can lie down, take it easy and be comfortable. The longer I stay clean, the better it gets for me. It's real groovey to get up in the morning and not care whether it's foggy or the sun's shining, just so long as I'm clean. No cramps and no sweats now. I remember the times when I'd be afraid to go to sleep, because I had a "git up" there on the dresser; but if I took my "git up" I'd have nothing when I got up and then I'd be sick again.

I never thought I'd feel good being out here with the squares, but now I think sometimes I feel the same things they do. I don't have all those petty little things going through my mind now, like I did when I thought I was hip--so slick. The only one I was being hip and slick with was me. Everybody else could see right thru me. I don't have a running nose anymore and no itches unless it's an allergy or something. I can go home now at night to clean sheets and blankets, say my little prayers, and go to sleep. It's real good for me. Yesterday was pay-day. I went out and bought myself a few presents--not X-mas shoplifting you know. Now, I can go thru these stores and not even a temptation to steal. I was thinking of this when I said X-mas shopping. This is my third X-mas on the bricks and I can't think of anything I've stolen since I've been out of the joint. I feel that I was basically honest from childhood, I stole to keep up my habit, to get my stuff, to keep my head on

1 my chest to keep my stomach from grinding and to keep my nose
2 from running--that nose, it was always running whether I was
3 sick or not.

4 My story is similar to many others, I hit one nuthouse
5 when I was 13, I really don't remember much about it. That
6 was on an O.D. of amphetamines, they thought I was a manic-
7 depressive till I cleaned up off the pills and then they figured
8 I was just a neurotic.

9 It progressed though. I started to make the joints. I'm
10 thirty now and there's twelve and a half years gone out of
11 my life like this, and twice at Ft. Worth. Man, I sure don't
12 want anymore of it. Since I've been out of the joint about
13 three years I can't say I haven't had the temptation. I
14 can't say I haven't had some obsession, I can't say I haven't
15 had the passing thought of wanting to use because I have had
16 at times. Now, however, it's like the passing thought of
17 "There is a real nice car there. I'd like one like that," and
18 then it's gone and so is the thought. I notice that the times
19 and the periods are getting farther apart when they happen.
20 I haven't had a driving obsession to get my head on my chest
21 for over two years now, and this is really something. I now
22 try to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I
23 understand Him. Sometimes I like to try to play God and run
24 everything but it doesn't work that way. The longer I stay
25 around and stay clean, the groovier it gets. The last time
26 I came out, I was a scared, sniveling little snot, double
27 hip, double slick, still walking that walk and talking that
28 talk. Now, I go back to the institutions every week I can
29 make it. I went back to my home group a while back and it
30 was greater than my birthday. This was a T.1. Federal and
31 you know those guys accepted me back and were glad to see me.

32 I gave a lot of them a hard time, with the attitudes
33 I used to have. At that time nothing was any good, everything
34 was rotten, except dope. Sure, I had a craving for narcotics,
35 but anything that would get my feet off the ground at that
36 time I was ready for it. Now, however, I know that anything

that would get my feet off the ground that isn't an airplane, 1
will head me for real trouble. I sincerely believe this, I 2
don't know if I work the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability 3
or not, but I do know I've been clean about three years by 4
practicing them the best I can. 5

When things start buggin' me now, I know where most of 6
the trouble lies: me. Now, I find I have a greater toler- 7
ance for people and a lot more patience all around; this is 8
a big change for me. Practicing the principles of this pro- 9
gram, the way I understand them and staying clean a day at a 10
time and sharing experiences with other addicts who are new 11
to the program, has changed my whole outlook on life. It's 12
a good way to live. 13

I CAN'T DO ANY MORE TIME

1 I came to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as an
2 addict, out of the California Institution for Women at Corona.
3 I came the first night I got out and it's been here that I've
4 learned how to live, so that it hasn't been necessary for me
5 to drink, or to use pills--barbiturates, amphetamines, or
6 tranquilizers--or to use any narcotics, in my daily life. It
7 has been here that I've learned a lot about myself, because
8 we are so very much alike. I've always seen another side of
9 myself, whenever problems and suggested solutions have been
10 discussed at our meetings. I have learned, from those who
11 are following the program of recovery to the best of their
12 ability, how I can do the same if I am willing to make the
13 effort. Also I have learned from those who have made mistakes.
14 I feel bad when I see that some leave this Fellowship to try
15 the old way again, but I know that I don't have to do that if
16 I don't want to. Also it has not been necessary for me to
17 steal or to write any bad checks.

18 My addiction goes way back. I was drinking alcoholically,
19 when I first started at sixteen, and I realize today, that
20 the reason for that was, I was sick to being with. I had this
21 emotional illness and it was very deep. I don't think that if
22 I hadn't been emotionally ill to begin with, that I would have
23 been carried away with alcohol and drugs. When it became
24 noticeable that I was using alcohol more and more, being in
25 the nursing profession, I tried experimenting with drugs. It
26 grew and grew and became a horrible problem. Altho' this is
27 certainly a suicidal path in itself I did, when I was aware
28 and in lucid moments, realize I was hopelessly addicted. I
29 did not know that there was any answer. There really wasn't at
30 that time. It was in San Francisco, not knowing which way to

turn, that I tried suicide and was unsuccessful. I was twenty-
six years old at that time. I now think that if it had been
possible for me, I would have come to this program like a lot
who are here today, at that same age. My pattern, however,
continued and when I finally reached Camarillo I had lost not
only my self-respect but the respect and love of my family, my
children, and my husband. I had lost my home and my profession.
Somehow or other, I hadn't reached the point where I wanted
to try this way of life or to try it all the way. I just had
to go on and try in my own way. I tried drugs again and
alcohol again and was finally committed to the Institution
at Corona three times. The last time I went there I just
felt that I couldn't do any more time. I didn't immediately
connect it with my addiction. I just couldn't do any more
time. It wasn't the thought I can't use drugs, just I can't
do any more time. I just felt completely hopeless and helpless
and I didn't have any answers. All of my emotional and spirit-
ual pride had gone. I'm sure that at Corona they doubted my
sincerity in ever wanting to do anything about my problem.
However, I did want to do something about it, and I know that
this program doesn't work until we really do want it for our-
selves. It's not for people who need it but for people who
want it. I finally wanted it so bad I knocked on the doors
of psychiatrists, psychologists, chaplains and anywhere I could.
I think one of the counselors at Corona, who just naturally
loves all people, gave me a lot of encouragement, for I
thoroughly took my first three steps. I admitted I was
powerless over alcohol and my addictions, that my life was
unmanageable. I had tried so many things so I decided a Power
greater than myself could restore my sanity and to the best of
my ability I turned my life and my will over to the care of
God as I understood Him and tried in my daily life to under-
stand God. I had read all kinds of metaphysical books, I
agreed with them and thought they were great, but I never
took any action on them. I never tried any faith in my daily
living. It's amazing getting just this far, how I began
to get a little honesty and could see myself as I was. I

1 doubted that I could get honest but I became aware of my-
2 self by looking outside myself, at the addicts around me
3 and getting to know them and understand them, and be friendly
4 with them. I would like to give credit where credit is due
5 and I do believe that my daily attendance at psychotherapy
6 groups in Corona with very understanding psychologists helped
7 me become aware of myself so that I might do something about
8 my problem; that when I came out, I thought, Oh! can I make
9 it outside? So many times, institutions took so many years
10 out of my life, that I wondered if I could stay clean and sober
11 and do ordinary things. I doubted whether I could go ahead
12 with just normal living but God has seen fit to see that I
13 have been provided for in this last year and a half. I've
14 been able to work regularly, I didn't have steady jobs at first
15 but there was never any long period in between them. Although
16 for a time I threw out the idea of going back to my profes-
17 sion, which is nursing, I have since reconsidered this and
18 am now in the process of perhaps returning to full-time nurs-
19 ing. With the help of some very understanding people I have
20 met, the future here looks very bright. In the meantime, I
21 give myself, as best I can, to my job every day and have been
22 doing it successfully, despite the fact that when I left
23 Corona everyone thought I was unemployable.

24 To me this is a spiritual program and the maintenance
25 and growth of a spiritual experience. Without the kind of
26 help and the therapy of one addict talking to and helping
27 another, I know that it wouldn't have been possible for me.
28 The obsession to use drugs or to drink has been completely re-
29 moved from me during this period, and I know that it's only
30 by the grace of God, I now give my attention to my daily
31 problems. It's amazing, having had a pattern of fear,
32 anxiety and resentments and self-pity, how much of this
33 too had been removed. No longer do these sway my life. I
34 ask for help every morning and I count my blessings every
35 night and I'm real grateful that I don't have to go through
36 the sickness that accompanies the taking of drugs of any kind,

including alcohol. I think one of the biggest things that
helped me here, was that this is a program of complete
abstinence. I got over the idea that I had a dual problem.
I don't have a problem with drugs or alcohol, I have a living
problem, and this is all I need to think about today. I have
a lot of help from my sponsor, it seemed that everyone had
let me down, both family and friends. I don't know what I
would have done had it not been for the doors that she
opened in her letters. She shared her experience, her
strength and her hope with me, and it was very beneficial.
She continues to be my very good friend. Here in N.A., I
have found a family, friends, and a way of life, my own
family has also been restored to me through working these
steps, and not through directly working on the problem. A
lot of wonderful things have happened to me, I can't con-
ceive of anything ever happening that would make me want
to forget this way of life.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

1 In writing this I hope that I can help other addicts like
2 myself, who are trying to overcome their addiction by sub-
3 stituting one thing for another, that was my pattern. I
4 started drinking, whenever possible, at the age of fourteen.
5 With this I added weed so that I could feel at ease and be
6 comfortable with my surroundings in the social activities
7 in high school. At seventeen, I started on heroin and quickly
8 became addicted. After using heroin for one and a half
9 years, I decided to turn myself in to Ft. Worth. When they
10 accepted my application, I got scared and joined the Army
11 after kicking at home. I thought that being away from my
12 environment, I would be able to solve my problem. Even
13 here I found myself going AWOL to get more heroin. I was
14 then shipped to Europe and thought that if I just drank,
15 that would be the answer, but again I found nothing but
16 trouble. Upon my release I came back home to the same en-
17 vironment, again I was using heroin and various other seda-
18 tives. This lasted for two years. The rat race really be-
19 gan when I tried to clean up--cough syrup, bennies, fixes,
20 etc. By now, I didn't know where one addiction left off and
21 the other started. A year before I came to Narcotics Anony-
22 mous I found myself hopelessly addicted to cough syrup,
23 drinking five or six 4 oz. bottles a day. I needed help so
24 I went to a doctor; he prescribed dexedrine and would give
25 me a shot that made me feel good; I found myself going to
26 him practically every day. This continued for about eight
27 months and I was very happy with my new found legal addiction.
28 I was also getting codeine from a different doctor. I now
29 became insanely afraid and began drinking, too; this went on
30 around the clock for a month and I ended up in a mental
31

institution. After being released from the hospital, I
thought I was free from narcotics and now I could drink
socially. I soon found out I could not. It was then that
I sought help through N.A.

Here I learned that my real problem did not lie in the
drugs, including alcohol, that I had been using, but in a
distorted personality that had developed over the years of
my using and even before that. In N.A. I was able to help
myself with the help of the others in the Fellowship. I
find I am making progress in facing reality and I'm growing
a day at a time. I find new interests now, that mean some-
thing, and realize that that was one of the things which I
was looking for in drugs. Sometimes I still find it diffi-
cult to face things but I'm no longer alone and can always
find someone to help me over the rough and confused spots.
I have finally found people like myself who understand how
I feel. I'm now able to help others to find what I have, if
they really want it. I thank God, as I understand Him for
this way of life.

I WAS DIFFERENT

My story may differ from others you have heard, in that, I was never arrested or hospitalized. I did, however, reach that point of utter despair which so many of us have experienced. It is not my track record that shows my addiction but rather my feelings and my life. Addiction and dependency were my way of life; the only way of life I knew for many years.

Thinking back, I must have taken one look at life and decided I didn't want any part of it. I came from a "good-old-fashioned, upper-middle-class broken home." I can't remember a time when I haven't been strung out. As a small child, I found out I could ease the pain with food, and here my drug addiction began.

I became part of the pill mania of the 1950's. Even at this time I found it hard to take medication as directed. I figured that two pills would do twice as much good as one. I remember hoarding pills, stealing from my mother's prescriptions, having a hard time making the pills last until the next refill.

I continued to use in this way throughout my early years. When I was in high school and the drug craze hit, the transition between drugstore dope and street dope was a natural. I had already been using drugs on a daily basis for nearly ten years; these drugs had virtually stopped working. I was plagued with adolescent feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The only answer I had, was that if I took something I either was, felt or acted better.

The story of my street using is pretty normal. I used anything and everything available every day. It didn't matter what I took so long as I got high. Drugs seemed good

to me in those years. I was a crusader; I was an observer; I was afraid; and I was alone. Sometimes I felt all-powerful and sometimes I prayed for the comfort of idiocy (if only I didn't have to think). I remember feeling different-- not quite human-- and I couldn't stand it. I stayed in my natural state...LOADED.

In 1966, I think, I got turned on to heroin. After that, like so many of us, nothing else would do the thing for me. At first I joy-popped occasionally, and then used only on weekends; but a year later I had a habit, and two years later I flunked out of college and started working where my connection worked. I used stuff and dealt, and ran for another year-and-a-half before I got "Sick and tired of being sick and tired."

I found myself strung out and no longer able to function as a human being. During this last year of my using, I started looking for help. Nothing worked! Nothing helped!

Somewhere along the line I had gotten the telephone number of a man in N.A. Against my better judgment and without hope, I made what may well be the most important phone call of my life.

No one came to save me. I wasn't instantly cured. The man simply said that if I had a drug problem, I might benefit from the meetings. He gave me the address of a meeting for that night. It was too far to drive, and besides I was kicking. He also gave me the address of another meeting a couple of days later and closer to home. I promised him I'd go and have a look. When the night came, I was deathly afraid of the dope fiends I would find there. I knew I wasn't like the addict you read about in books or newspapers. Despite these fears I made my first meeting. I was dressed in a 3 piece black suit, black tie, and 84 hours off a two-and-a-half year run. I didn't want you to know what and who I was. I don't think I fooled anybody, I was screaming for help, and everybody knew it. I really don't remember much of that first meeting, but I must have heard something that

brought me back. The first feeling I do remember on this program was the gnawing fear that because I'd never been busted or hospitalized for drugs, I might not qualify and I might not qualify and I might not be accepted.

I used twice during my first two weeks around the program, and finally gave up. I no longer cared whether or not I qualified, I didn't care if I was accepted, I didn't even care what the people thought of me. I was too tired to care.

I don't remember exactly when, but shortly after I gave up, I began to get some hope that this program might work for me. I started to imitate some of the things the winners were doing. I got caught up in N.A. I felt good, it was great to be clean for the first time in years.

After I'd been around for about 6 months the novelty of being clean wore off, and I fell off that rosy cloud I'd been riding. It got hard. Somehow I survived those first doses of reality. I think the only things I had going for me then were the desire to stay clean, no matter what; faith that things would work out "OK," so long as I didn't use; and people who were willing to help when I asked for help. Since then, it's been an uphill fight, I've had to work to stay clean. I've found it necessary to go to many meetings, to work with newcomers, to participate in N.A., to get involved. I've had to work the 12 steps the best I could, and I've had to learn to live.

Today, my life is much simpler. I have a job I like, I'm comfortable in my marriage, I have real friends, and I'm active in N.A. This type of life seems to suit me fine. I used to spend my time looking for the magic; those people, places, and things, which would make my life ideal. I no longer have time for magic. I'm too busy learning how to live. It's a long slow process. Sometimes I think I'm going to go crazy. Sometimes I think "What's the use." Sometimes I back myself into that corner of self-obsession and think there's no way out. Sometimes I think I can't stand life's problems any more, but then this program pro-

1 vides an answer and the bad times pass. Most of the time
2 life's pretty good. And sometimes life is great, greater
3 than I can ever remember. I learned to like myself and found
4 friendship. I came to know myself a little bit and found
5 understanding. I found a little faith and from it freedom.
6 And I found service and learned that this provides the
7 fulfillment I need for happiness.

SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

1 I am not the great leader or philosopher that I tried to
2 make people believe I was. The great man that I tried to
3 make believe I was, I know now, I am not. After fifteen years
4 of trying to live this illusion, I now find that I am being
5 accepted for just what I really am. All my life before this, I
6 did things my way. If anyone else ever offered advice or
7 suggestions, I rebuffed them with a closed mind without ever
8 trying what they had to offer, to see whether it would suc-
9 ceed or fail. It seems, that, though my way always failed,
10 I had to use or drink again, until repeated trips to jail
11 began to convince me that something was wrong. I reached
12 the point of desperately wanting to do something with my life
13 that would be meaningful. I had to try something else that
14 would work. I had found N.A. several years previous to this
15 decision, but then I was not ready to change and although I
16 closed the door on N.A. on many occasions, I have always been
17 welcomed back every time.

18 Since I have become willing to do something about my life
19 with the N.A. program, it has been fuller and with more
20 meaning. I could not experience life before on a daily basis,
21 without drugs, sedatives or alcohol. I needed these just to
22 face each day. I know I have to alter this pattern of think-
23 ing and living if I am to stay completely clean. This I am
24 doing through the principles of our program. Although I do
25 not now desire or need narcotics, I have to fill the void
26 left, with something worthwhile. I have found this in the
27 fellowship of N.A. I have to stick with the winners and go
28 in the same direction that they go, and as long as I follow
29 the steps of the program, I know I can make it, too. Although
30 I don't find the program easy, it is simple enough for a
31 complicated person like me to follow.

FEARFUL MOTHER

I thought an addict was a person who was using hard drugs, was on the streets or was in jail. My pattern was different, I got my drugs from a doctor or friends. I knew something was wrong yet I tried to do right, in working, in marriage and in raising my children. I really tried hard. I would be doing well and then I'd fail. It went on like this and each time it seemed like forever; it seemed like nothing would ever change. Wanting to be a good mother. Wanting to be a good wife. Wanting to be involved in society yet never feeling a part of it.

I went through years of telling my children "I'm sorry but this time it will be different." I went from one doctor to another asking for help. I went for counseling feeling everything will be alright now, but the inside was still saying "What is wrong?" I was changing jobs, changing doctors, changing drugs, trying different books, religions and hair colors. I moved from one area to another, changed friends and moved furniture. I went on vacations and also remained hidden in my home. So many things through the years. Constantly feeling, I'm wrong, I'm different, I'm a failure.

When I had my first child I liked it when they knocked me out; I liked the feeling of the drugs they gave me. It was a feeling that whatever is going on around me, I don't know and I don't care, really. Through the years the tranquilizers gave me the feeling that nothing is really that important. Toward the end, things became so mixed up I was not sure what was and what was not important. I was shaking inside and out. Drugs and alcohol (another form of drug) would not help. I was still trying, but very little. I

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

1 had quit work and was trying to go back but I couldn't.
2 I was trying to communicate with my family but I couldn't.
3 I would be on the couch afraid of everything. I was 103
4 lbs. and had sores on my lips and in my nose. I had dia-
5 betes and shook so that I had a hard time putting a spoon
6 to my mouth. I felt I was out to kill myself and people
7 around me were out to hurt me. Physically and mentally I
8 had a breakdown. I had just become a grandmother and I
9 could not even communicate with a small child. I was al-
10 most a vegetable. I wanted to be a part of living but did
11 not know how. Part of me said I'd be better off dead and
12 part of me said there has to be a better way of living.

13 When I started on the program of N.A. there were a
14 lot of people who suggested just everyday things for me to
15 do. Things like: eat, take a bath, get dressed, go for
16 a walk, go to meetings. They told me, "Don't be afraid, we
17 have all gone through this." I went to a lot of meetings
18 through the years. One thing has stuck with me, one thing
19 they said from the beginning, "Betty, you can stop running
20 and you can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you
21 want to do."

22 Since being on the program I have listened and watched
23 many people and have seen them go through many ups and
24 downs. I have used the teachings I felt were best for me.
25 My work area has had to change and I have been going to
26 school. I have had to relearn all the way back to the gram-
27 mer school level. It has been slow for me but very reward-
28 ing.

29 I also decided that I need to know me better before I
30 can have a meaningful relationship with a man. I am learn-
31 ing to communicate with my daughters. I am trying many things
32 which I wanted to do for years. I am able to remember many
33 things that I had pushed out of my mind. I have found that
34 Betty is not that big pile of nothing but is someone and
35 something that I never really stopped to look at or listen
36 to. April 1 will be my fifth N.A. birthday. How's that for
37 April Fool's day!

FAT ADDICT

I am an addict. I used at least fifty different types of drugs on an on-going basis for a period of eighteen years.

I didn't know it when I started using, but I used drugs only for one reason; because I didn't like the way I felt. I wanted to feel better. I spent eighteen years trying to feel different, I couldn't face the everyday realities of life. Being a fat kid, fat all my life, I felt rejected.

I was born in ARizona in 1935 and I moved to California in the early 1940's. My family moved around from state to state and my father was married several times. He was what you would call a periodic alcoholic, either he was in a state of self-righteousness or a state of complete degradation. This is one of the many reasons we moved so often.

As I moved from school to school, I would relate various experiences that I had and I would talk about my various step-mothers, for some reason, I was thought to be a liar. It seemed the only company that accepted me, no matter where I went, was the so-called lower level people and I never felt I was a lower level person. It made me feel like I had some self-worth by being able to look down on them.

My family life was confused and painful but a lot of sound moral values were passed on to me in my upbringing.

I always made the attempt to stay employed and as a matter of fact, on most occasions, I managed to be self-employed in some type of business. I was even able to maintain some civic status by belonging to fraternal organizations.

I was 5'5" tall, and weighed 282 lbs. I ate compulsively to try to handle my feelings and emotions and to make me

1 feel better. As a matter of fact, this is how I originally
2 got into using heavy drugs. I wanted to lose weight so
3 desperately that I became willing to use heroin. I thought
4 I would be smart enough not to get hooked and that I could
5 use and lose my appetite, feel good and out-smart the game.
6 I ended up in penitentiaries and jails and bounced around
7 the country.. This was the beginning of the end; not only
8 was I a compulsive overeater and remained fat, but I was
9 also addicted to the drugs I was using.

10 Somebody told me about the fellowship of Narcotics Anony-
11 mous when I was in the complete stage of degradation and
12 desperation. Seemingly, having no place to go, I walked into
13 this fellowship feeling as low as a person can feel, like
14 there was no way out; I was completely and totally morally
15 bankrupt. I knew nothing about spiritual values. I knew
16 nothing about living. Life ultimately was nothing but pain
17 on a daily living basis. All I knew was to put something
18 in me, food, drugs, alcohol, or to abuse sex to feel good;
19 which just didn't do it for me any more. I couldn't get
20 enough of anything.

21 When I came to this program, I found something that I
22 had never experienced before - total acceptance for who and
23 what I was. I was invited to keep coming back to a fellow-
24 ship that told me there was no fees or dues, that I had
25 already paid my dues, via my past life; and that if I kept
26 coming back, I would find total freedom and a new way of
27 life.

28 Today, many years later, I find that I am free from
29 drug addiction, compulsive overeating, and I have status
30 in the community. I have a nice home, family, executive
31 position and most of all I have a personal relationship
32 with my God, which has made all these things possible. I
33 am able to feel good, to feel joyful, blissful and to feel
34 serenity, even when things are not as good as they might be.

35 There is no question about it, I owe my life to the
36 Narcotics Anonymous fellowship and God. I can only extend
37 my hope that if you, too, are suffering as I once was,

that you will practice the principles of Narcotics Anonymous, 1
and find freedom from pain and a meaningful, prosperous life. 2

APPENDICES

"A PHYSICIAN'S VIEWPOINT"

The subject presented in this book is of lifesaving importance to those afflicted with drug addiction and chemical dependency. I say this with a background as a clinical associate professor of both medicine and psychiatry with two years of formal training in addiction and alcoholism. As one of a new breed of medical specialists know as "addictionologist," I have a real sense of satisfaction and regard in being asked to contribute to the book of Narcotics Anonymous, a blueprint of recovery for the drug addict.

Six years ago, I attended my first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. Three years ago, I sat on the floor of a small house in Marietta, Georgia, in another N.A. meeting. Because of my professional training, as well as my personal life, I was in-depth knowledgeable about Alcoholics Anonymous. I quickly recognized the need that this largely young group of drug addicts and alcoholics were responding in this meeting of N.A. Some years later, when one of the originators of the literature movement in N.A. suggested that I might contribute to the N.A. book from a medical specialist's standpoint, I was both flattered and humbled, because William D. Silkworth's letters of more than 40 years ago came to mind. There are profound truths and wisdom presented in his correspondence, and I would hope to be able in part to replicate this worthy contribution.

Since that first meeting, I have cared for many addicts, those suffering from addiction to narcotics, sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs as well as alcohol. It is now apparent that these individuals are not weak-willed, ignorant, lack guts or will power, nor are they bad or evil. They are certainly not crazy and most have no primary psychiatric disease. They do, however, suffer from a biochemical-genetic disease called drug addiction. As an addictionologist, with training in both medicine and psychiatry, I have watched and participated

in many forms of treatment. It is established truth that the self-help groups of Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous are the single most effective treatment tool we have. It is true that many individuals suffering from the diseases of chemical dependency and drug addiction will need hospitalization for detoxification. Many greatly benefit from treatment centers where education into the disease concept is taught and new, non-chemical coping concepts are tutored. But critical to after-care in the drug addict is Narcotics Anonymous.

In addition, as I have observed N.A. through the years, an increasing number of adolescents and adults have achieved cleanliness through regular attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meetings alone. So, I have come to appreciate N.A. and its value both as a partial and a total treatment program.

There are many stories of recovery in this book which are similar to those I have witnessed, played a part in. A pattern runs through each of the "miracles of recovery" that are documented in these pages. First, the individuals recognized that they were ill, sick, and needed help. Then through the precepts and teachings of Narcotics Anonymous, they recognized the need for a moral inventory and an acknowledgement of their faults and weakness in their personality structure. Following was the requirement to make amends to those they have harmed, either psychologically or physically. Then, appreciating that the best way to keep their cleanliness and recovery was to give it away, they embarked on a life of helping others. Invariably in those who achieved cleanliness and serenity, this was accompanied by a feeling, often initially vague, tentative and undefined, that they could no longer do this by themselves; that they needed a power outside themselves. Many called this a Higher Power. Some referred to it as the group; others called it God as they understood Him; some combined them both. All agreed they couldn't use mood-changing drugs and they couldn't get well by themselves.

I have watched the Narcotics Anonymous growth, as a complement and a derivative of Alcoholics Anonymous. I saw that tradition and practice had made A.A. a fellowship of usually older people where the primary drug of choice was alcohol, al-

though Dr. Bob had used sedative drugs as well. A need existed for the new generation of chemically-dependent individuals where the drug of choice was narcotics, sedative-hypnotics, hallucinogens or stimulants and Narcotics Anonymous was born. Taken in perspective, there is no substance or excuse for conflict, as both fellowships are directed toward helping different segments of people suffering from a common illness--the disease of chemical dependency.

As the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has grown, so has the need for a primer, a guideline, a recovery map similar to the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have witnessed a segment of the effort in Atlanta, Georgia. A dedicated, unselfish group of individuals entirely without financial profit motive have banded with N.A. members throughout the United States to write this book. It is needed, indeed it is critical reading for those who wish to recover, using the guidelines of N.A.

Current medical and scientific evidence indicates that addiction to any and all drugs is a disease, a biochemical-genetic disorder, but we have no pills, no shots, no insulin to effect a cure today or in the near future.

Those of us who are medically trained and work with these addictive diseases are numbed by our impotence utilizing traditional medical and psychiatric techniques in curing people suffering and dying from drug addiction. Likewise, we are both impressed and humbled by witnessing the positive effects on the drug addicts who attend and follow the program of Narcotics Anonymous. As I used to give the drug inserts from the boxes of antibiotics to my patients, I will give those patients with drug addiction the book of N.A. It's simple; it's inexpensive; and above all, it works.

I am so reminded of Silkworth's words in the big book of A.A., as I say to you, "I sincerely advise you to read this book. Though you may have come as an unbeliever, or even to scoff, you may remain to pray and begin recovery." Cleanliness, peace and serenity await you at the end of its chapters.

G. Douglas Talbott, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Ridgeview Institute
Smyrna, Georgia

II.

¿QUIEN ES UN ADICTO?

La mayor parte de nosotros no tenemos que pensar dos veces acerca de esta pregunta. Nosotros sabemos. Nuestra vida entera y pensamientos estaban centrados en drogas en una forma u otra el conseguir y usar y encontrar modos y maneras para conseguir más. Nosotros usamos para vivir y vivimos para usar. Muy simplemente, un adicto es un hombre o una mujer quien su vida está controlada por drogas. Nosotros somos personas en las garras de una enfermedad continua y progresiva que termina siempre en los mismo: Carcel, Instituciones y Muerte.

¿QUE ES EL PROGRAMA DE NARCOTICOS ANONIMOS?

N.A. es una sociedad de hombres y mujeres para quien drogas eran un problema muy grande. Nosotros somos adictos recuperados que nos reunimos regularmente para ayudar uno al otro para quedarnos limpios. Este es un programa de abstinencia completa de todas drogas. Hay solamente "UN" requerimiento para hacerse miembro y eso es el honesto deseo de para de usar. No hay ningun "tener que" en N.A. pero nosotros sugerimos que tengan su mente abierta y que se den una chanza. Nuestro programa es una serie de principios escritos tan simplemente que nosotros podemos seguirlos en nuestra vida diariamente. La cosa mas importante de eso es que "DAN RESULTADO."

No hay ninguna cuerda sujetos a N.A. No estamos unidos con ninguna otra organización, no tenemos directores, no hay cuotas de iniciación, o precio de entrada, no hay que firmar ningun contrato, o prometer nada a nadie. No estamos conectados con ningun

grupo politico, religioso, o grupo de cumplimiento forzosa. y no estamos bajo ninguna inspección en cualquier momento. Cualquiera puede asociarse sin hacerse caso de edad, raza, color, creencia, religión, o falta de religión.

No estamos interesados en que o cuanto has usado, o quienes eran tus conexiones, que has hecho en el pasado, que gran cantidad de cosas tienes, o que poco tienes, nos importa nada mas lo que quieres hacer acerca de tu problema y como podemos ayudarte. El recién-llegado es la persona mas importante en cualquier reunión, porque la unica manera que nosotros podemos quedarnos con lo que tenemos, es dandolo. Con nuestra experiencia de grupos hemos aprendido que las personas que siguen viniendo regularmente a nuestras reuniones son las que siguen limpiando.

COMO TRABAJA

Si tu quieres lo que nosotros tenemos que ofrecer, y estás bien dispuesto a hacer el esfuerzo para obtenerlo, entonces estas listo para tomar ciertos pasos. Estos son sugeridos nada mas, pero son los principios que hicieron nuestra recuperacion posible.

1. Admitimos que estabamos sin poder sobre nuestra adicción, que nuestra vida habia llegado a ser inmanejable.
2. Llegamos a creer que un poder mas grande que nosotros mismos podia restablecernos la cordura.
3. Hicimos una decisión de dar nuestra voluntad y vida al cuidado de DIOS como nosotros lo entendemos.
4. Hicimos un inventario examinante y sin temor de nosotros mismos.
5. Admitimos a DIOS, a nosotros mismos y a otro ser humano la especie exacta de nuestros malos hechos.
6. Estabamos enteramente listos para tener que DIOS nos quite todos los defectos de caracter.

7. Le pedimos humildemente a EL que nos quite nuestras faltas.
8. Hicimos una lista de todas las personas a quien le hicimos daño y nos hicimos voluntarios a hacerle compensacion a todos ellos.
9. Le hicimos compensacion a esas personas cuando posible, exepto cuando las lastimara a ellos o ostros.
10. Continuamos a tomar un inventario personal y cuando éstabamos equivocados lo admitimos puntualmente.
11. Buscamos por rezo y meditaci3n para mejorar nuestro contacto consciente con DIOS, como nosotros lo entendemos rezando nada mas que por el conocimiento de la voluntad de EL para nosotros y el poder para llevarlo ha cabo.
12. Haber tenido un despertamiento espiritual al resultado de esos pasos, tratamos de llevar ha cabo este mensaje a adictos y practicar estos principales en todos nuestros asuntos.

Esto suena como una orden muy grande y no lo podemos hacer todo a una vez, no llegamos a ser adictos en un día, asi que recuerden--LLEVA CON CALMA LAS COSAS.

Hay otra cosa que mas que nada nos vencera en nuestra recuperacion, eso es la actitud de indiferencia o intolerancia hacia principales espitituales. Aunque no hay ningun--tener que--en N.A. hay tres cosas indispensables, estan son, Honradez, Tener la mente abierta, y la Voluntad de tratar. Con esto andamos muy bien en nuestro camino.

Nosotros creemos que nuestro modo de plantear el problema de addiction is completamente realistico, porque el valor terapeutico de un adicto ayundando a otro adicto es sin apralelo. Nosotors sentimos que nuestro modo es practico, por que un adicto puede entender y ayudar mejor a otro adicto. Nosotros creemos que lo mas pronto que nos afrontamos con los problemas dentro de nuestra sociedad, en la vida do todos los dias, asi más rapido vamos a llegar a ser miembros aceptables, responsable y productivos de esa sociedad.

La unica manera de mantenerse de obtener o continuando un vicio es que no se tome esa primera aguja, pildora o trago. Si tu eres como nosotros, ya sabes que uno es demasiado, y mil nunca van a ser suficiente. Nosotros ponemos, gran enfasis en esto proque sabemos que cuando usamos drogas en cualquier forma, o sustituimos una por otra, soltamos nuestra addiction de nueve o creamos una nueva.

La sustitución de alcohol a causado que muchos adictos se formen una nueva addiction, que en su progresion trae tantos problemas como antes. A nosotros se nos parece alvidar que alcohol es una de las drogas mas viejas. Aparentemente, parecemos ser gente con personalidades adictivas quienes son fuertemente susceptible a addiction alcoholics.

¿POR QUE ESTAMOS AQUI?

Antes de venir a la confraternidad de N.A. no podiamos manejar nuestra propia vida, no podiamos vivir o disfrutar de la vida como lo hacen otras personas. Nosotros teniamos que tener algo diferente y pensamos que lo habiamos encontrado en drogas. Habiamos puesto el uso de drogas antes del bienestar de nuestra familias, esposas, esposos y nuestros hijos. Teniamos que tener drogas a toda costa. Le hicimos daño a muchas personas pero mas que nada nos hicimos daño a nosotros mismos. Por nuestra inhabilidad de aceptar responsabilidades personales, estabamos creando nuestros propios problemas. Pareciamos ser incapazes de enfrentarnos con la vida en sus propios terminos.

Casi todos realizamos que en nuestra addiction, estabamos cometiendo suicidio despacio, pero tan astuto enemigos de la vida son narcoticos y sedantes que habiamos perdido el poder de hacer nada acerca de ello. La carcel no nos ayudo para nada. Medician, religion y psiquiatria no parecian tener ninguna respuesta que pudieramos usar. Todos estos metodos no fallaron, y en desesperacion buscamos ayuda de uno al otro en Narcoticos Anonimos.

Despues de venir a N.A. realizamos que eramos gente enferma que sufrian de una enfermedad come Alcoholismo, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. Noy hay ninguna "CURA" para estas enfermedades, pero se pueden controlar a algun punto y entonces "Recuperación" es posible.

En N.A. seguimos u programa tomado prestado de Alcoholicos Anonimos. En los ultimos cuarenta años, mas de un million de gente se ha recuperado en A.A. casi todos estaban tan desesperadamente adictos a alcohol como nosotros estabamos a drogas. Estamos profundamente agradecidos a la confraternidad de A.A. por haber apuntado el modo para nosotros poder encontrar una manera nueva de vivir.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

A CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- June 1953: Six people met at Sun Valley, California for the purpose of organizing the first "AA-NA" group. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were adapted for use by the group from the very beginning. Between mid-June and September 14, 1953, this original "governing" or "steering" committee held various meetings for the purpose of writing by-laws.
- September 14, 1953: After checking with the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office, the committee voted to change the name from San Fernando Valley AA-NA to "Narcotics Anonymous."
- September 21, 1953: The committee met one last time to iron out details for the first N.A. meeting.
- October 5, 1953: The first meeting was held in facilities rented from the local Salvation Army Dad's Club, Sun Valley, California. Seventeen people attended that first meeting. These original members made a commitment to continue for one year, agreeing that one recovery would be "significant."
- 1956 (or later) The first N.A. (unofficial) publication, "Narcotics Anonymous," was printed. This was a brief (eight-page) information pamphlet containing the "20 Questions," a brief outline of N.A., the Twelve Steps and the addresses of groups at Studio City and San Diego, California.
- November 1959: N.A., per se, disbanded briefly. It was almost immediately revived by several original members. The early years of N.A. were a period of slow growth.
- 1960: Entering the new decade, N.A. again entered a period of crisis. The Fellowship was still in a state of slow growth. During the early 1960's only four groups contributed to support of a general service office. All in California, they were at Studio City, Hollywood, Burbank and Los Angeles.

1962: The original white book, the pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published without stories.

1963: In order to insure unity of purpose, the general membership in California established a Board of Trustees. A literature sub-committee was established as part of the service arm of the Board of Trustees.

1966: The new white book with stories and a white cover was printed.

1967: The Board of Trustees was expanded in size.

February 1968: Volume I of the Voice appeared.

1969: Because of continued growth, the limited capacity of the Board of Trustees to adequately coordinate a unified "world" effort and frequent regional conflicts, a decision was made by the Board of Trustees and the general membership to establish a central office. This central office was to function as a clearing house, rather than a legislative body.

As a result, the Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous was created.

197-1971: The name, Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous, was changed to Narcotics Anonymous Central Office Committee.

July 23, 1971: The Board of Trustees authorized a central office.

November 5, 1971: The first "world" convention was held at LaMirada Country Club, LaMirada, California. The convention ran November 5 through November 7.

November 6, 1971: At a business meeting during the world convention, the general membership voted to elect a Narcotics Anonymous business manager with a "formal" office. Various problems followed the establishment of a business manager/business office--primarily money. There were inadequate resources to pay the manager and he was unable to serve without pay.

November 15, 1971: The financial statement for the general service office for January 15, 1971 through November 15, 1971, reported income received from groups in Georgia, Nevada, Colorado and Idaho, as well as California.

December 13, 1971: The Narcotics Anonymous Central Office Committee announced by letter the firm decision to open a "world central office: in January 1972.

January 1972: The world central office opened at 2335 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, CA.

February 15, 1972: The Board of Trustees authorized by letter the publication in hardback of an N.A. book on recovery--not yet written.

October 23, 1973: The first Area Service Committee, the San Fernando Valley (CA) A.S.C., was created.

November 1974: Following moves to 1346 Highland Ave., Los Angeles; a room in the Suicide Prevention Center, Los Angeles; a room above a bail bonding company on Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys; the World Service Office was moved to its present location in Sun Valley.

Following the move to Sun Valley, it was discovered that several boxes of records and other historical data had been lost.

Prior to the move to Sun Valley, the name had been officially changed from World Central Office to World Service Office.

November 15, 1975: At the California Service Conference, Arroyo Grande, CA, the first "N.A. Tree" was accepted for publication. In addition, the California Service conference authorized publication of a World Director.

November 17, 1975: The "N.A. Tree" was published. This publication is the parent Service manual of Narcotics Anonymous.

January 7, 1976: The Board of Trustees accepted the "N.A. Tree" as an official N.A. publication.

August 28, 1976: The first foreign language (Spanish) publication was authorized. This was followed by a German translation in late 1976, early 1977.

October 24, 1976: At the general business meeting of the Ventura County Convention, Ventura, CA, three major decisions were rendered: an "N.A. Tree" Committee was established to revise and republish that pamphlet; the qualifications for Trustee as they now exist were established; and the decision for a "World Service Conference" was made.

November 13, 1976: The "first" World Service Conference was held at Ventura, CA.

January 25, 1977: The World Service Office was incorporated.

April 17, 1977: The first Regional Service Committee, the Southern California R.S.C., was created.

July 1977: The first "N.A. Newsletter" outside California (Kansas) began publication.

November 1977: The "second" W.S.C. was held in conjunction with the Seventh World Convention at San Francisco.

The conference was cancelled due to lack of quorum as defined by the "N. A. Tree." Only three people showed for the conference.

November 11, 1977: The Board of Trustees predicted by letter that the next two or three years would hold greater growth for the Fellowship than that of the preceding twenty-five years.

December 1977: Two more "N.A. Newsletters" appeared outside California, in Georgia and Pennsylvania.

During this period, through early 1978, printed copies of the white book were in short supply, and groups were furnished emergency photocopies.

February 1978: W.S.O. assumed publication of the Voice.

April 1, 1978: The "third" World Service Conference (the first as it is now known) opened at Van Nuys, CA. The basic concepts of world service and the World Service Conference as they now exist were formulated at this two-day conference.

The Literature Committee as it exists today was established at this conference.

Early 1979: Mainline began publication.

April 28-29, 1979: The World Service Conference, meeting in Los Angeles, directed the Literature Committee to conduct a World Literature Conference for the purpose of collecting material to write an "N.A. book on recovery."

May 19, 1979: The groundwork for a World Literature Conference was laid at a meeting in Atlanta, GA.

May 27, 1979:

The steering committee for the World Literature Conference meeting in Atlanta, tentatively scheduled the conference for Wichita "in the fall."

August 26, 1979:

The conference committee in Wichita held the first planning session for the conference.

October 6-7, 1979:

The first W.L.C. was held at Wichita, KS. Attending the conference were a total of thirty-five members from Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, Georgia, California, Tennessee and Virginia.

This conference established an initial style guide for the proposed book and began the task of cataloguing hundreds of pages of material submitted by the Fellowship worldwide. The Wichita conference staff guide was later edited and released in pamphlet form as "The Handbook for Narcotics Anonymous Literature Committee."

The Wichita Conference opened at 9:00 A.M. Saturday, October 6, at Ash House. Morning details included a presentation by various members of the steering committee on the history of N.A. literature and the need for a definitive text. The members then were presented a proposed workshop agenda and the session closed for lunch.

The conference reconvened in the Offices of Home Owners' Trust Insurance, Parklane Shopping Center, in workshop form at 1:00 P.M. The Saturday sessions closed at 4:30 P.M.

The conference reassembled at 9:00 A.M., Sunday, and continued in workshops until noon break. Reconvening at 1:00 P.M., the workshops presented a report to the full assembly. The conference ended with a group consciousness session to approve the two-days' work. The conference closed at 5:00 P.M.

In addition to preliminary work on the basic text, the Wichita conference established general guidelines for the Literature Committee concerning the need for a treasury, ways and means of raising money, the need for area newsletters and guidelines for publication, and expanding and improving the I.P. library.

Respective of the basic text, the conference proposed a Fellowship-wide effort that would be an N.A. work--not a supplement to the A.A. big book. Guidelines for collecting material were established. Of 62 proposed topics of material to be included, 59 topics were accepted. Fourteen chapter outlines were proposed and twelve were adopted.

More than 500 man-hours of effort went into the Wichita Conference.

Sept. 8-12, 1980:

The second W.L.C. was held at the Lincoln Federal Building, Lincoln, NB. Attending this conference were thirty-six members from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, British Columbia and Oregon.

The meeting opened with a background report on the growth and development of literature. Five achievable goals were proposed for the conference: establish an outline of chapter headings; inventory materials collected; collate material into outline form; select material ready for print; and determine further material needed.

The first goal was tentatively achieved on day one when the assembly, reporting back from workshop, adopted a ten-chapter outline with additional preface, introduction, dedication, personal stories and appendix.

Beginning with day two, the actual sorting of material began. Due to the large volume of materials, each chapter was subdivided in various categories. By the end of day three the inventory and sorting process had produced an initial draft of "Chapter One" ready for rewrite. By the end of day four, the ten chapters had been divided into nearly 100 sub-headings.

Prior to the end of the conference on day five, the various workshops had sorted through hundreds of pages of raw material and had produced 511 sheets of paste-up material, the genesis of the book. These 511 sheets were the basic outline of a rough draft. Of 42 pages of paste-up devoted to Chapter One, six final "rough draft" sheets were set aside as the "first draft." The conference ended with a book in recognizable form.

The members at the Lincoln conference worked around the clock during the last three days of the assembly. More than 1100 man-hours of labor went into this conference.

January 31 -
February 8, 1981:

The third W.L.C. was held on campus at Memphis State University, Memphis, TN. The conference opened with 27 people from 8 states in attendance. The initial meeting of this conference established two goals: complete the final draft of the N.A. book; and submit the approved text to the Fellowship as a whole two months prior to May 1, 1981, the date of the World Convention, with final approval for a hardback publication to be sought at the Los Angeles convention.

Day two of the conference began with a consensus on workshop guidelines. It was decided by group consensus to divide into smaller groups and to put each chapter through more than one workshop. It was also decided to "workshop" one chapter at a time until a final draft was achieved.

Beginning with day two, the assembly began daily contact with the local areas. Members in various areas and regions were located to accept long distance calls for the purpose of further input, as well as to solicit funds.

From day one, January 31, through day nine, February 8, the conference worked nearly around the clock in shifts. Each line in every paragraph, on each page of every chapter went through several group-conscious workshops before reaching "final typing." Chapters were rewritten, revised, expanded, cut and edited several times. Not all of the final effort was done at Memphis. One chapter was roughed out in California and air-expressed to Memphis. One chapter travelled to Ohio with a committee member, and was re-written on the plane back from Ohio to Memphis. Long distance calls were made from coast to coast to verify input, assemble new data and to collect stories.

Some of the chapters were found to be in an acceptable first draft stage, based on the work performed at Lincoln. One chapter was incomplete through day six of the Memphis conference.

During the course of the Memphis conference, more than 70 people from 13 states were in actual attendance at some time during the nine days. In addition, dozens more members from coast to coast were consulted by telephone and contributed either by phone, mail or air express.

At Memphis alone, more than 4,500 man-hours were expended in the various stages of writing, rewriting, assembling and final compilation. Nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette players, two telephones and a dictaphone were kept in almost continuous use; and more than 20,000 sheets of paper were used to produce 200 pages of basic text.

February 9, 1981:

The Memphis conference ended and the files, equipment and now-approved text of the review copy were moved to a local member's home. A small group of committee members from Kansas, Ohio, Georgia, California, and Tennessee remained to carry out the conference directive to have the work printed and assembled for mailing.

The members from Georgia, California, Kansas and Ohio eventually returned home and the few dedicated members from Tennessee continued working around the clock to coordinate efforts with the stenographer and printer. This group remained in constant telephone contact with committee members from Georgia, California, Oregon and Ohio.

The eleventh hour efforts of the group in Memphis included dozens of telephone calls to Georgia, Oregon, California, Missouri and other areas, as well as miles of driving from the work area to the stenographer to the printer; lengthy visits with a lawyer (for copyright of the review copy) and post office (for mailing permits); trips to Western Union to collect money orders and to the bank for deposits; the slow, tedious task of proofreading and final assembly of 1200 copies; and the actual addressing and mailing of the review copy to the Fellowship worldwide.

February 27, 1981:

The review copy is mailed.

IV.

STYLE SHEET FOR COMPOSITION REVIEW

Use the word/phrases:

In reference to (instead of):

CLEAN

Condition of abstinence from drugs (Sober)

CLEAN TIME

Sobriety

ADDICT/ADDICTION

Identity as people powerless over chemicals (Drug Addict, Alcoholic, Drug Dependent, Drug Abuser, Dope Fiend)

USING

Operating, Practicing

STOP

Quit (i.e., I didn't quit, I stopped using drugs)

WE/US/OUR

Those, These, They (in reference to experience with addiction/recovery)

THEM'THEIR

He/She/His/Him/Her (remove gender)

USEFUL

Normal

WORKING THE STEPS

Taking steps

LIVING A DAY AT A TIME/LIVE TODAY/JUST FOR TODAY

One day at a time

TAKE IT EASY

Easy does it

IT WON'T LAST

This too shall pass

PRIORITIES

First things first

ACHIEVE ADEQUACY NOT PERFECTION

Strive for progress rather than perfection

THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP | BT | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 2) NO EXCUSES FOR LONLINESS | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 3) REALIZATION OF A DREAM | | | | | | | |
| 4) DAMSELL IN DISTRESS | | | | | | | |
| 5) ALWAYS LOOKING | | | | | | | |
| 6) I'VE COME A LONG WAY | | | | | | | |
| 7) NO WHERE TO TURN | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 8) MID-PACIFIC SERENITY | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 9) JUNKIE MOTHER | | | | | | | |
| 10) I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER | | | | | | | |
| 11) TODAY IS ALL THAT MATTERS | | | | | | | |
| 12) THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME | | | | | | | |
| 13) CLEANED UP AND SOBERED UP, WITHOUT BEING LOCKED UP | | | | | | | |
| 14) WHY GOD | | | | | | | |
| 15) GOD PUT OUT THE FIRE | | | | | | | |
| 16) RELAPSE AND RETURN | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th |
| 17) INSTITUTIONAL STORY | | | | | | | |
| 18) GEOGRAPHICAL CHANGES | | | | | | | |
| 19) SPECIAL EDITION | | | | | | | |
| 20) I FOUND THE ONLY NA MEETING IN THE WORLD | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 21) SLOW LEARNER | | | | | | | |
| 22) NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN MELBOURNE | | | | | | | |
| 23) I'D TRY ANYTHING ONCE | | | | | | | |
| 24) THERE'S NO COMPARISON | | | | | | | |
| 25) BEING CLEAN AND SERENE IS FUN | | | | | | | |
| 26) LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY | | | | | | | |
| 27) THE MONKEY | | | | | | | |
| 28) ONE THIRD OF MY LIFE | | | | | | | |
| 29) I CAN'T DO ANY MORE TIME | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |
| 30) THE VICIOUS CIRCLE | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |
| 31) SOMETHING MEANINGFUL | | | | | | | |
| 32) FEARFUL MOTHER | | 2 nd | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th 6 th |
| 33) FAT ADDICT | | | 3 rd | 3 rd | Rev. | 4 th | 5 th |