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## No.1 Feb./March 1996

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### So, help me God...

I have been clean a long, long time. I have tried to stay both involved and informed to the best of my ability all my clean time. N.A. has grown from a small, provincial California based program that was more a back door into another program than a program in its own right. We have had to earn our keep and pay our prices for advancement. It hasn't been easy and there have been tragic mistakes along the way. Many members have tried to bring these mistakes out into the open so that it would make it less likely that the mistakes would be repeated. Many have ignored the mistakes and others seem to be either apathetic or take the attitude that they are only interested in the good news. It makes it hard to serve or work for improvements. If you say nothing, you feel like you're letting your groups down by denying them the information. If you state the problem, it feels like you get branded with either being the problem or making an unnecessary fuss. Well, guess what! Sticking your head in the sand won't work for us any better than it does for the proverbial ostrich.

Slowly and painfully a movement to collect and disseminate history materials has been underway for the past several years. While there may be many other instances of members photocopying and exchanging material, we hit a new level of ability to deliver selected materials to a maximum number of interested members by coming out with the NAPRESS disks which have been advanced in two versions: NAPRESS1 and NAPRESS2. The contents of the first had to do with the *N.A. Tree*, our first written and approved service structure. There were various other articles and documents included. NAPRESS2 included all that was on the first disk with the addition of some crucial book length pieces like the Grey Review form of our Basic Text, Living Clean, the N.A. Way

of Life, and In Loving Service. Also included were major pieces relating to various aspects of the WSO Federal Court Case against deceased member David Moorhead for printing and distributing unauthorized printings of the Basic Text according to his understanding of what the Fellowship approved through our representative system. Sections merely approved at WSC without Fellowship conscience were altered to the original form. Over one hundred thousand dollars of Fellowship money was spent for attorney fees alone. Considerable hardship and ill feelings were generated on all sides and there are still printings of the material being initiated today. If faith were restored, then some of the WSC documents would be more interesting. Against the backdrop of countless unamended structural improprieties, it is hard to take seriously anything that is being said or considered by World Services today.

To begin with, apparently World Services has sort of shut itself down in the sense of what is described in our approved, written service structure, *The Temporary Working Guide To our Service Structure*. In its stead is a group of people trying to recreate a functional world service structure according to its interpretation of what a group of hired professionals who came together to work on their first job, inventorying our structure. Now, while all this is going on, with the language of the reports becoming ever more cryptic and veiled in paraphrased services and acronyms, the World Service Office is carrying on as if there had never been a problem with the printing errors due to lack of openness and following successful precedents. Oh, should I have said that? Some people might not know what that means... Should I go further into it here - or leave it for the reader to check out on their own. The real deal is that our good old WSO messed up royally and within months our service structure got shut down for repairs and has never been open for service since.

Too far, oh have we gone too far! Oh, far be it from me to go too far. That might be upsetting. That might arouse members and result in needless rehashing of old news that never got out to the Fellowship. If we were to do that, we might as well mention that there was a time when GROUP CONSCIENCE meant that almost every group in the world read, discussed and returned a written voting form to their area which was reflected in the vote cast by their RSR at the World Service Conference. In today's Fellowship, almost NO groups receive, discuss or respond to the Conference Agenda Report. That means that the votes taken at the WSC only reflect the conscience of those who know about them. Now, if there are fifty or sixty people in elected positions in World Services and ninety or a hundred voting participants, that means possibly five hundred people in the world have a reasonable idea of what's going on. Want to make a bet that if you went from person to person at this year's conference you would find several hundred opinions of what is going to be voted on and at least that many opinions as to what effect that vote would have. This is without considering interactive motions. We are being asked to approve IN PRINCIPLE documents we have never seen, or may have seen but are not sure but well, er, uh, vote in principle dot - dot - dot! Oh, have we ever come a long way. We have come a long way from "All in favor", "All opposed", "Abstentions" Motion Outcome with the written regional votes in the hands of their representatives who voted as they were directed by their home regions whether they personally agreed or not.

Well, let's leave these items to discuss elsewhere. As we all know, recovery is going on unabated. We continue to grow and our members are becoming ever more bright and quick minded. Service needs are being met informally where the formal systems break down and this is absolutely God's way of keeping us going. We have so much to be grateful for. So many addicts have learned to live clean and through spiritual growth and attaining levels of warmth and calm understanding that even with the insanity rushing into our rooms there is yet hope that someday we will become more structurally presentable and functional. The real Fellowship is made up of committed members who are not going anywhere regardless of what takes place in the formal structure. These are the members who breathe life into N.A. on a daily basis. They are the people who call, or call you, to keep the linkage loving and kind. In our present day, these members represent the *de facto* spiritual conscience of N.A. and they will take care of business. It is just that their main attention goes where it is needed most, on the needs of our members working, living and carrying our message all over this planet.

While I retain the right to express my displeasure with certain things, it is just reality; not negativity ; that prompts me. It would make me happy to say everything is OK if that were the case. I want to see the day come when we can all look to calm spiritual, loving strength in world service and a robust, positive, grateful bunch of addicts out there carrying our message. That's the way it used to be before some of the ties that bind us together got stretched. I never forget that for every thing that has gone wrong, ten things have gone right or else we wouldn't be here and we would have no Fellowship to share in at all. So, God help us!

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### *New Attitudes...*

We shall attempt to print all articles promoting a change in our intolerance and indifference towards spiritual principles. We seek any and all ideas for this publication to become a venue for change. All materials shall be printed in a spirit of anonymity.

We encourage the use of humor and lampoon to stimulate thought and levity. Our hope is to find ways to transgress the perceived separation that exists amongst members of our society.

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This Newsletter is being provided to any and all interested members of N.A. at COST please feel free to copy and give out as many of these as you like. We will be printing bi-monthly. Our cost is \$0.60 each so 1 yr, subscription would be \$3.60(.60x6)Please send articles and newsletter money to:

New Attitudes  
P O Box 447  
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P.S. We also deal in the barter system if you would like to send supplies instead of \$, we need stamps, paper (#20 8 1/2 x11 or 11x17), toner for Panasonic FP3001 copier, ink cartridges for Lexmark WinWriter 150C.

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## **Heritage**

We need to have access to our historical materials. We need to be able to study, ask questions, and discuss areas of uncertainty with other members who share our interest and concern. After reading and learning about who we are, where we come from, and how we got here, it can be said we have gained an awareness of our heritage. Most members get this in passing from fellow members at the group level with random access to a variety of speaker tapes and informal written materials. A lot of what we learn is only hearsay and there is no opportunity to question or examine the facts in matters that seem crucial to us. Until we create these things, none of the situations mentioned above can possibly get any better.

Few addicts will take the position that they would rather live in the dark and let others control and determine what they know and think. Yet, this is what almost all members are doing today with World services. What we know or think we know determines the positions we take on issues.

Until someone succeeds in collecting and presenting parts of our history and writing, we have to trust the hearsay or just go limp. We are subject to conflicting positions on issues because we lack background material or understanding.

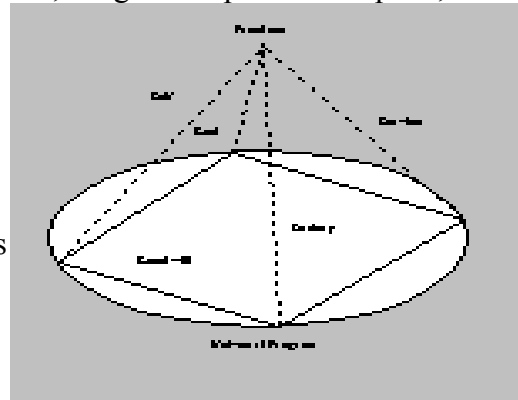
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## **Discover - Recover**

Discovery and real growth involve an openness to the experience and ideas of other people matched by a willingness to reveal and discuss our own internal reality. Frequently, being open to someone else allows us to avoid pain or entrapment by becoming aware of what an action or course of actions will bring to us without actually having to go through it. Other times, we will discover the fault of an idea just by hearing ourselves put into words a thought, belief, or memory that we may have held inside for a long time. When we fully grasp that our happiness and personal fulfillment is bounded by

areas of ignorance, superstition and erroneous beliefs, we gain the power to expand, resolve, and correct those parts of our lives.

Naturally, we don't begin our recovery by doing these things on any grand scale but they are the natural outcomes of working the Twelve Steps and participating in the N.A. way of life. We in recovery are constantly benefitting from what has been discovered by others and transmitted to us through meetings, telephone calls, newsletters and written materials. We will always be amazed by the most recent breakthroughs or disheartened if we have slowed the process by avoiding meetings or step work. The best way to insure our own happiness is to invest in the happiness of others.



When we go forward with an open mind and heart, we can hear what others are saying and grasp parts of their experience increasing our own. We discover recovery every where and every time we go looking for it.

Tired of being told like it is? Still looking for that easier softer way?

Had enough of that same old time-tested direction?

Then you're ready for

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No Reading! - No Writing! - No Deadlines! - Many Models To Choose From!

Standard features include:

tt Listening to your sniveling without constant reference to the steps tt

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tt Working only the steps **you** want, in the order **you** choose tt

YES, at Rent-a-Sponsor We know how unique you are,

and we do understand.

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## Let's talk "God as I understood God."

The steps are numbered and ordered for a reason. They are a learning experience. I need only surrender to begin the journey. There is quite a lot to learn here. My thinking is no longer as black and white as it once was. My brain functions are returning and this allows more ability to learn these new lessons and gain freedom.

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that it is not for me to understand God. The mystery of life and all it's wonderful and horrible twists and turns points this out clearly. For me to say that I understand God, I am trying to be God. Understand seems to me to imply present tense. To believe that I could figure out the wonderful complexity of it all is finally behind me.

No more blaming, no more rejection. Finally an opening to the possibilities. After a life of pursuit, and capture, there is a place of relaxation and release. What a wonderful place, "in Gods care." After repeated attempts to force my will into others dogma and ritual, there is a freedom to see the workings of God in my life and others. No God in a box for me thank you.

Man has always sought ways to explain and package Gods works into ways that others will follow that will validate their own selfish understanding. If I am the image of God and this allows me frailty and mistakes then I can also see Gods attempts at sending me correction. It might have been a better idea for God to not have allowed us freedom of choice. But that would not have allowed for the growth that is possible for us all. For me it is now understood that my God doesn't put anyone in a box, only humans do that to each other.

The learning of these lessons is at a new level of honesty that brings the true credit to where it belongs, and that is not to me.

So very many times in recovery I have been blessed by rewards at the times that they were needed and not when "I" wanted them. So who is actually running this show is much more evident in my life.

I can't change, the color of the sky, the direction of the wind the people in my life or Gods plan. Those have never been within my power, no matter how much I thought they should have been.

It has proven itself over time that the most important part of our evolution away from addiction is spiritual growth. As my spirit grows in goodness, so do the rewards I receive. Be it the sight of new buds in the spring or the rebirth of formally dead spirits, my eyes

are blessed with a new ability to see. What went unnoticed, ignored or discounted before has a new sense of wonder and discovery that allows this growth to know no limits.

We need to continue our search for this God as "we" understood God. The easier it is for the next addict to find theirs the better the world can be. For God has many faces. All we need to do is look for Gods works in others to see this intricacy. The parts are all around us if we only look with unclouded eyes. We must simply pass along the thrill of personal discovery. We can always show the rewards by the way that we live today. We have been given a gift here. Let us demonstrate Gods power in such a way that encourages others to not give up the quest.

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### **Conceptually Speaking ...**

I most certainly like the idea of workshopping these Concepts, to help better educate the fellowship as to what they are all about. Understanding the principles (12 steps) of our program through experience on a personal level, enables us to transfer the power of a loving and nurturing Higher Power, which is expressed in our meetings, into the Traditions. The Traditions, as extensions of those principles, lead us to a greater sense of unity as we do service within, and from without, the group atmosphere. I believe that there are only 12 principles expressed in the program: Hope, Surrender, Acceptance, Honesty, Openmindedness, Willingness, Faith, Tolerance, Patience, Humility, Unconditional Love, and Sharing and Caring. This belief that there are 24 or 36 makes no sense to me as I repeatedly experience the 12 listed above in the Steps and then in action in the Traditions. The

Concepts are not principles, but further identification of ideas which, if you look closely, are already revealed within our Traditions. Are the Concepts there to help guide us, or by virtue of being labeled, "principles", an attempt to bring validity to our service structure as being NA.

If the Concepts are indeed principles, what are they then? Have these principles been already identified previously? If so, then how can they, in and of themselves be principles? Concepts are only "ideas" from the specific. Why are they being called principles? I view them as being further clarification of rules. Nothing more.

In getting back to workshopping the Concepts, I have spoken on them three times: once at a convention, and twice at major Area events. As you can tell, I am filled with opinion re: concepts; but I can tell you in all honesty, I only provided members with history, and then allowed discussion. I encouraged each member to get a copy of them. I encouraged each member to look them over, talk about them with fellow home groupies, and



develop their own experience with 'em. I need to be real careful, as others have shared, not to try and sway the conscience of those I serve, by relaying opinionated information.

Of all the beefs I do have, and I'll close with this...Is that at the Conference, the Concepts were accepted by the overwhelming majority. (when previous to that great objection was expressed) If the overwhelming majority said yes, then why do I hear some folks don't want to use them? Why do I keep getting requests to 'educate' areas...groups,

about the Concepts? Why does it bother me, when I hear dissemination of information is not being had? Are there RSR'S out there who vote "their" conscience? How much of the fellowship "really" took the time to look over that piece in the CAR? How many took the time to relay honest input to those trusted servants responsible for voting "conscience"? Are the percentages tipped toward heavy or light fellowship involvement with such a major piece as the Concepts?

To a degree, I know what some of these answers are. I am not God, and surely the earth does not spin around me. Therefore, I can't assess the entire picture; but what I've seen so far makes me sick to my stomach.

I sit back now and rest comfortably knowing that I have done my part as a member of this fellowship and as a trusted servant in my region.

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## **Coming Clean About N.A.**

Here I am in a dilemma, no matter how hard I try I can't seem to get my carpets clean. I've tried oh so many different brands of vacuums. Some of them work for a while. My carpets get clean. I am grateful. Then some other kind of dirt comes along and the vacuums that worked in one area cannot do the job desired by me. The carpets get dirty. Can't seem to stay clean.

A friend of mine comes along and introduces me to, oh lets say, a Kirby vacuum cleaner. He explains that my carpets needn't have to be dirty any more. They can get clean; and stay clean through regular use. I, of course, am skeptical. I mean I've tried so many different types of cleaners. What makes this one so special? I decided to try it out...for just one day. My carpets got clean! A miracle to me because for so long I tried to get it right with very little luck.



I continue to use it. I'm in ecstasy! I tell another friend of mine experiencing the same problem. He tries it out. He too swears by its' cleaning power. Before you know it, the whole darn neighborhood is using Kirby vacuums. We collectively decide to form a union. "Everyone should have the same opportunity as we have had."

We go out, buy a building to store Kirbys in. Surely others will find it to be a miracle like we did. They will buy and use Kirbys. We print up literature. We go to dept. stores and show our Kirby to them, hoping that they will stock them on their shelves. More exposure, more people to see it, more people who may try it out. Our plan works wonderfully. We're raking in the dough now. We have a product that many people apparently need. Since we have accumulated quite a bit of cash through sales..."Let's go to other cities and other countries...let's expand our market. " We incorporate, we form committees to handle sales here there and everywhere. We continuously ask for input from those who use Kirbys because after all, there may be a way be could enhance the product to meet the demand of different people...different needs. We start printing literature in other languages. We are growing. People's needs are being met. Their carpets are getting and staying clean.

etc. etc. etc.

What's my point. My point is. That Kirby is the miracle, and the people who have found, and use Kirby, are the heart and soul of the organization. They are the spirit behind Kirby. They bring validity to its' cleaning power. The buildings which house Kirby stock is not Kirby. The literature which displays Kirby is not Kirby. The dept stores are not Kirby. They support Kirby because they realize that what Kirby can do for people is of benefit; and they want to share it with others.

NA is like this analogy. NA is something that cannot be described by any one person. Tried and tested though, the miracle is experienced and then graciously shared with others who have a desire to try it out too. The program of NA is a loving God expressed in the meetings. It is the steps, which when worked, reveals to the sick and suffering addict a way to stay clean and have a new way of life. Any thing developed or instituted to carry the message of the NA program is there to support its' message; but how could it be NA? Are we Gods thinking that we in and of ourselves could ever develop any plan that would supersede what God has already shown?

NA is not organized. There are no rules. The only requirement is a desire. How could the service structure possibly be a part of this, when in order to speak on the conference floor you must be wearing a red badge? OR you are wearing a purple badge and the red badge is gone off the floor. Thank God there wasn't using time requirements in order to become a member of the fellowship. How could WSC committees possibly be NA, when I can't view H&I lit. on the table, get abused by the Comm. Chairperson and told that I haven't a right to look at committee work!!!! How is this an expression of NA. How does incorporation fit into the realm of spiritual principles? Isn't this business like? Aren't we a spiritual fellowship? I most certainly could go on.

I have seen people walk out of Area meetings in pure disgust over the circus show that was happening there. They walked out, not because the message was being shared, but because business practices performed by addicts come out sideways. It reveals not our true spirit. The atmosphere that I feel when I walk through the door at a meeting. Yes I have seen people walk out disgusted thinking that this was NA! Some of them have not come back.

I'm sorry it will take a lot more than a well polished article, with fancy sways and twists to convince me of what I feel in my heart that NA is the message, messenger, and the meetings where it is expressed. Our service structure clearly has been designed to support the efforts of the groups primary purpose, to carry the message. It is not NA.

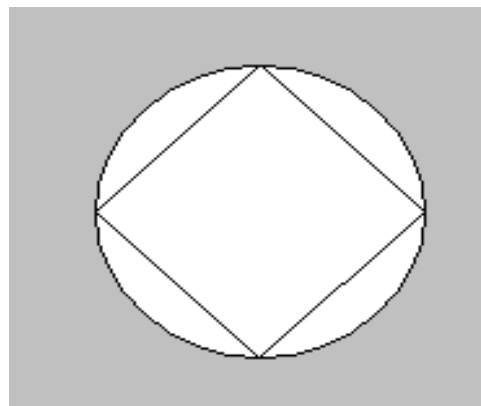
The rock, A loving God expressed in the groups, thrown into a pond, creates a rippling effect that extends to other shores far away from the initial impact. Those ripples, or our service structure, could not possibly ever take on the identity of the rock. It was the rocks impact in the water, which caused the ripples to form. And so is NA, the message experienced by others, is the impact, our gratitude speaks to others through sharing and caring. We have set up a service structure to help the group perform it's primary purpose in a much broader sense; but it is not NA, the message of hope, that any addict, with a sincere and honest desire to stay clean can have a new way of life. This is NA. I am grateful that I found NA, tried it, finally got clean, worked it on a daily basis, and then, through service I share NA with another addict.

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## Going On

Without a Higher Power, human beings are routinely capable of dismissing as unimportant all they have learned about life, all positive associations and accomplishments, all the love and goodwill people have for them. While it is true that none of us is perfect in all ways, it is also true that all of us are perfect in some ways. Most addicts will also dismiss those who love and care about them because they are not the "right ones". Is it any wonder addicts have trouble achieving ongoing recovery?

While clean time is held in high esteem, there is only marginal effort to utilize the principles and strategies of long clean time. I know that without early lessons of gratitude for what I already have, surrender to get results, honesty-openmindedness-willingness to try, and actually letting God run the show, I would not be able to get through an average day. What is learned is passed on in a variety of random processes that perhaps match up





in some way with the Fellowships capacity to absorb. Learning to live happily with our human limitations of memory, comprehension and imagination is assisted or

allowed by a spiritual process of relinquishing my life and will to the care of a Loving God. As befits otherwise self-centered and self absorbed addicts, it seems to me that the only thing in creation addicts will surrender to is an acceptable Higher Power capable of loving us where we are at and moving us towards completion of our deepest aspiration. It may be that in God's mind, we are the same in our fundamental, evolving forms as we will be in our fulfilled, mature forms with the non-essentials dispensed with as blind alleys for growth and development. Recovery may be the capacity to forgo temporal and pleasurable sensations based on fantasy in favor of goals we really care about but felt we could not reach. Now it is different, we can not only reach for these goals, we can achieve them and set new positive goals. It is even fun to do this and we are allowed to rest up between goal achievement and new goal setting. It is the way we experience healthy recovery living.

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## **Your Franchise**

When you buy a MacDonald's Restaurant, you pay money to benefit from the goodwill and quality earned by performance and national recognition of everything from the name to the product and services. Certain things have to be "up to standards", and others are left to the discretion of the owner. Our membership in N.A. is like this. We all surrender, to learn and agree to alter our ways, to become clean addicts and develop our ability to personally carry our N.A. message of recovery.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we stress our personal freedom and our need to develop our own spiritual awakening to form the center of our new lives. Learning how other members work the steps or apply the principles on all areas of their lives is the big deal in N.A. because without it we will flounder and die. Being a part of N.A. as a whole is also part of our recovery experiences. Members have traditionally been the source of clarity and focus. Our World Service branches have traditionally referred group problems to the local area or region believing that such matters can be best resolved by those closest to the problem or disorder. Generalities may apply and guide us, but what we do is largely up to us. This is our franchise, our investment in our program and we are all a part of it.

New Attitudes

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