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Passing It On

While many things have changed for the better in the last decade, one thing remains the same. Most of us come in knowing little about NA history and origins and have to have a sustained interest to overcome all the irritating obstacles to getting answers to our questions. Even relatively simple items like who we are and where we come from get sticky when we go beyond our West Coast origins and consider our East Coast origins. Did the first meeting take place at Lexington, KY? Was there a Saturday Evening Post article on NA in 1952? Who ever you are as a reader, you can't care much about NA and not have a surge of interest over these lines.

Many of us set out to answer these questions about our Fellowship as if it were a quest for the Holy Grail. We travel, run up huge telephone bills and submit ourselves to all sorts of discomfort and inconvenience to become informed. Then, only if we are successful, we achieve our goals to some degree. Suddenly, we are not listened to as open mindedly, we have become 'informed.' We are usually assumed to have some sort of axe to grind and often are upset over something uninformed members don't understand or show evidence of being upset on some particular item or another. Our mission has set us apart from the very Fellowship for which we undertook the mission in the first place! Oh, how our addiction must love this quixotic victory of confusion and misdirected hostility.

Oh, how very easy it is to attack the messenger and avoid the message.

What can we say, in all honesty? That things have gone smoothly for NA? That there has always been a lovingly directed cadre of inspired individuals dominate in world services? That those who have worked for the good of NA have been rewarded with a quiet yet firm affection. That world services is composed of our best talents when it comes to doing good for the Fellowship, carrying our message and opening the world to recovery? Excuse me, but these are things that have always and must always come from the Fellowship. Their existence and the pathways they take must of course be divinely inspired and are never subject to the control of any bureaucracy or management control system. Those techniques and abilities have to do with coordinating fund flow and carrying out day to day routines in an effective and spiritual manner. The breakthroughs, the miracles, have to do with the definite fact that G-O-D really does break through and enter our world making changes that cannot be accounted for in merely human terms. Part of our minds resist this type of occurrence because it raises questions that are not easily answered. To me, the spiritual life exists as a way to live in such harmony with God that the miracles don't require me to shut down the rest of my life to view them or to participate if there is some thing I can do to help.

If I consider that theoretical first clean addict trying to suggest to another addict that it may be possible to stay clean for just another five minutes, I can see the courage it takes to carry our message. We come from a spiritual reality that reinforces us and gives us the strength to convey a very heavy thing: that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions really work. They really take raw, unclean, suspicious, damaged people and help them find their way back or forward to everyday humanity. Is this your commonplace event? Is this the result of something learned in college or that someone does at work from 3:00 to 11:00? Does anyone even know exactly how this miracle takes place?

The reason we don't have a history is that certain individuals, still in power, find it inconvenient to publish what really happened in the simple, common sense terms of open, honest writing. For this reason, we all have to wait. Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely and power attracts the corruptible. Those very spiritually motivated people who played a great role in our Fellowship growth and expansion in the early eighties backed off from the politics. This view is an opinion but it is the opinion of a witness, someone who saw it all and was in on a lot of it. And witnesses are taken very seriously whether in the world, a court of law or in spiritual reality. Witnesses aren't afraid and can bear the weight of descriptive elaboration. Compare their statements with the written minutes and reports and see what you get. We will not be free until we are open. It is only an ego trip to cover up the truth. There have been no great crimes to my knowledge, just human errors blown out of proportion by addictive disease. Remember, knowledge is power and power belongs with the people. This power is energy and it is needed to power our recovery program else it collapse in a mishmash of hearsay and conjecture.

As you grow in recovery, you have or will encounter some things that will relate to what this article has alluded to.. What will you do when your time comes? The only way out of the present state of affairs is a broad based information campaign that will allow more and more average members to see and hear what is happening with comprehension and

recognition. Any other path requires one variety of fearless leader or another. Addicts get in trouble when they follow fearless leaders. They will kill for them on a Monday and lynch them on a Tuesday. Addicts are quick to lay off personal responsibility onto someone else only to blame that person for their lack of understanding. Spiritual laziness will NEVER get you what you want! As you pass on what you have found to be true, we all benefit and we all get stronger in the spirit. Don't let our growth isolate us in information jails where we dare not tell what we know for fear of condemnation by the uninformed.

The situation, as most of you know, has only worsened in the last few years. There are more and more members out there who have gotten used to not knowing, not caring and not having a say. When they are presented with confusing reports, they have no thought of sending the reports back, demanding clear statements. They just sit there confused and feel less than.

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.

HOW'S IT WITH YOU?

There is a growing reality in front of me. I got clean in the seventies, so I have been watching NA progress for sometime now. We seem to be suffering from a visualization deficiency. We are good at setting up boards and committees but we are tragically entangled in a status quo. This means we give lip service to taking our problems seriously when we set up the boards and committees but we really don't want to be bothered. Recovery is a bother. Change must occur for our lives to get better. Without change, we have no basis for hope! People will disagree with us. We will make mistakes. Things will go wrong! So what! Things going wrong never stopped me from getting what I wanted before. It'll settle down. Will the 'real' reality please stand up? As long I am busy adapting to life on life's terms, my life is getting realer, not better, realer. My capacity for taking personal responsibility and calling a spade a spade increases as I live more in faith and

less in fear. It seems more that sensible, almost required, for like minded members to band together to study, become informed on a subject of interest and undertake to improve some aspect of the service structure as it is. This is more difficult yet the immediate feelings of hopefulness and accomplishment will be with you from the start. Plus, you don't have to be against anyone or straighten anyone out. If a service board or committee tried to hog tie you in red tape, just surrender and approach areas of concern or interest in another way. For instance, if you are in P.I. or H&I you probably don't have these problems. Especially the H&I effort in NA has always been ready to meet its own needs. We even had a separate basket for H&I for several years in the early eighties to fund H&I needs. It was World Service Conference approved policy and nearly every group in the world wide fellowship passed two baskets.

In policy work and literature, you might be in another situation. You may be in an area or region where members don't block your efforts to be creative in service. If you want to work on a piece of writing, they will back you all the way. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and you may have to work quietly to avoid triggering the hostility and rage of those members who see our strength and guidance coming from certain service boards and committees instead of from the Fellowship. There is a disparity of viewpoints on this subject. Certainly, we would all hope for a world service structure that stressed saying "yes!" to members wanting to work on something to help the addict who still suffers. Still, there are many cases where this just isn't the case and creative efforts are stifled.

So, that's how it looks from here. I hope there are others out there who care to share their es&h on these matters. I can't believe there is any 'just one way' to do any of this but whatever the way is, I hope it can include all of us because where else can we go.

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:

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please make checks payable to "New Attitudes/I Can't We Can"

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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.

Keep Your Eye on the Black Jack

We read with bemusement that an NA (Way of Life) Foundation has been recently formed to prevent the WSO from altering the *Way of Life* book. This Foundation was previously announced in the September 1994 *Way of Life Chronicles* and proffered as answer to questions of financial accountability and direct responsibility. It of course was not. Such valid questions lingered from the days when 70 ragged tractor-feed pages sold for \$30 - or more, if you *really* "trusted your trusted servants".

Today, questions looming larger than ever include: If you don't sell the *Way of Life* out to the WSO how can they alter it? The legal rights of authorship and a simple © protects any work quite adequately. Have you seen those bylaws? Why would we want to sell it back to the WSO? What would the price be and who will collect it?

There was a time that at the very least what held the Traditionalists together was an understanding that service boards and committees were no longer directly responsible as per the Ninth Tradition. We rejected all decisions not made by the Groups of NA in accordance with the Traditions language approved by the Groups of NA. There was a time when we agreed that we would never again write a book for the bastards. But before that there was a time when some who had scant Traditionalist credentials from bygone years found a rebirth of money, property and prestige by opportune attachment to the court case which focused these issues, and rode that back to the Traditions-negotiation tables of World Services. And after that there came a time that the NA History on which we all once worked, hobbled by personal agendas, came finally to a halt with the writing of a limited public domain copyright which would allow all to own and none to profit from. In NA we take our payment on the spiritual plane and are grateful. The Way of Lifers bailed out in favor of the above mentioned \$30 product and shut down lines of communication as they went.

In time *The Way of Life* came 'round to endorsing the new professionally written non-Conscienced literature as it cited *It Works: How and Why* as evidence of good progress that would be taken further (pamphlet, *An Introduction to The NA Way of Life Book*, 1994). It doesn't strike me that a resurrection of the allergy theory of addiction enhances "what we know more about ongoing recovery" but that brings to mind the issues of dilution, another whole molly.

Now the Way of Lifer who once wrote in reference to the World Service Conference, "Had Enough Yet?" finally got to be a Conference participant. The Founder, skillfully hedging, describes Our Book as one dead guy's interpretation while the "Baby Grays" are being made up to resemble the free Group-Conscienced books.

So service boards and committees directly responsible to the hooks and by mechanisms of the shill, once the problem, are now re-announced as the solution. Happy, joyous and free. Are you following along carefully or were you temporarily diverted in the blizzard of Extra-spiritual sounding gobbledygook? Watch, we'll do it again. Have you got sixteen bucks?

I think what we prefer about the WSO'ers is that there is at least consistency there within their unacceptable system of reasoning and the knife is in plain view; it comes from in front because we keep ourselves positioned that way.

Special Invitation

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Who Do Understand

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and

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We can always separate the True World Service Trusted Servant from the common addict scum.

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WORLD APPROVED

There are three sorts of brains in the world. The first can think and bring together relevant information to result in workable or effective solutions to whatever problem or demand is at hand. It can also follow directions and work efficiently with others. The second can follow directions and work effectively with others, yet is not comfortable taking the lead and looks for this skill or ability in its leadership. The third can neither think nor follow directions and never works effectively alone or with others. The best it can do is hold back until it is forced to do something and then begrudgingly come forth to put on a good appearance.

When I first got into service there were two sure ways to kill a new project or idea. One was to say that the idea would require a Fellowship wide group conscience. The second was to say

God is revolutionary. God requires a unified being to come into this world. I suspect this means a person in whom both the right and left lobes of the brain are open, working and in harmony with one another. This means the feeling, holistic, task oriented portion of the mind is joined up with the analytical, time, word oriented part. It takes both to function optimally.

World approved means that a statement, project or policy has come to the attention of and met with the approval of the world wide fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This is what gives strength and validity to a mere idea or suggestion. In certain situations, there may exist items taken as world approved that have never actually come to the attention of the world wide fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and these may have the force of being approved only until the fellowship becomes aware of them and then they are rectified. While a sort of balancing act may be required to get the attention of the fellowship without being so disruptive that any item or suggestion will be dismissed out of hand as interruptive, honesty occasionally forces action.

What is intended by those who say that the NA Way of Life book is not world approved is that: 1) there exists a comprehensive plan for the betterment and function of NA as a whole and, 2) that this work does not fit into that plan. On the first score, I know of no better plan than the approved service structure, and that allows members to gather and write recovery material any where and any time they wish to do so. Second, for a work like this to succeed, it must involve and attract a vast number of members to gain the world wide fellowships support. Only the writers of the original literature could foresee a way to do this, within Traditions and our approved service structure. In this case, both

criteria have been met and while keeping world service informed with periodic updates of the material, the NA Way of Life project, originated by a member of the World Service Board of Trustees continues to attract a certain kind of thoughtful, loving member who understands the structure as well as being a person so full of love and devotion to NA that they just have to have an outlet.

Those who have been working on the book for a while are committed to introducing the book gradually to the fellowship to minimize culture shock and to allow persons who may not yet be completely apprised of the facts in this case time to change their minds and public positions. The work is definitely different and does definitely require a degree of guts with little glory in sight. Still, carrying our message has never been an easy thing and that which comes cheaply, is not likely worth much.

RECOVERY REALITY

The longer I stay clean and try to live life by my new recovery principles, the better I feel most of the time and the more I have to be grateful for in my day to day life. Really, the only time I feel uncomfortable, usually, is when I have freshly awakened from a dream that brings back to mind what it used to be like for me all the time. Almost the same as when my life was going down the tubes and steadily getting worse, my life now steadily gets better. Better means friends, amends and extension into things I used to wonder about and appreciation of what God's already granted me.

I was reading in my study the other night some materials on Eastern religions. It had to do with the relation between their notion of the creative force and human love and caring, tenderness. I came across several lines about Buddhism that I never heard before. Maybe I did and I wasn't able to register it the same. It said, Hinduism freed the people of those times from the fear of death by making them part of God and stressing oneness. Gautama came along and saw priests levying oppression over the people and gave them in time a new blessing, freedom from desires. After this, yoga took on a new meaning and became one or another way of loving God. Hatha yoga is physical, karma yoga is the yoga of action, bhakti yoga is the yoga of love, and so on. My life and my recovery will always be better from now on from this simple learning. One of the great things about recovery, is I can build up the good things of life and even combine them into forms that a more busy life wouldn't allow. It gets simpler the more I learn about what's important to me. I really care about people, interesting oddities, especially things having to do with the spirit, life including biology, music, especially the guitar, painting and the arts in general. My disease has regularly punched holes in the tires of the car of my life and kept me from getting too far. Recovery lets me read more without fear that what I encounter will go against what I have learned so far. More often, it reinforces what God has revealed to me almost like a painter layering clear coats with tints to make a painting come alive.

I hope that as we grow and adapt to the real world, we continue to make wide the doorway so that all kinds of addicts with all kinds of ideas can come into recovery and be right at home. I think there is always a real danger that present actions will fail to live up to aspirations born in those moments of original relief and that may be something we have to live with through time. Still, just waking up clean everyday is such a blessing, such a miracle. It still turns me on to be alive. I spent a little time in jail, very little but it was enough to appreciate being able to walk down the street, go shopping if I want or just look: not be locked up.

The Necessary Leak

Necessary = inevitable, inescapable, certain, predetermined, compulsory, positively needed, indispensable, imperative, essential, fundamental, significant, obligatory and mandatory.

Hermetically sealed, totally self contained, leak proof, that was the unnatural state of my whole life before I reached the rooms of N.A. and even for a few years after I got here. It wasn't always that way however, as a matter of fact, it was just the opposite when I was a kid, I was really proficient crier. You see it was only when I cried and screamed real loud that my mom would stop beating me. The victim gambit was a real good tool for me for a while until I was sent off to school and all of the sudden it not only stopped working but it became a tremendous liability because instead of leaving me alone if I cried the other kids in school would only increase their attack and ridicule me even more.

Good little addict that I was even then I swung all the way to the other extreme and became the 'number one stone face dude of all time.' Never again did a smile or a frown ever cross my face. Even if I was melting or exploding inside nothing ever showed on the outside for you to be able to use against me. There was not even a hint of a chink in my armor. Now, some of you may be thinking that this sounds like a totally negative state of affairs, but let me tell you there is a positive side to everything, even though I am 50 years old, I have the face of an 18 year old, not a wrinkle on it.

Unfortunately the petrification process spread inwards and I became something akin to a zombie, shuffling through life in total emotional isolation. Then the miracle started to happen. I wasn't really aware of it at first. It must have started to happen on the inside, where no one could see it happen. It was a softening, healing process very slowly brought about from the inside out. I am not quite sure but I think it began with the good will in the rooms and continued as I experienced the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. Try as I may I could not ignore it. The rooms were a sanctuary, I had found a safe place where people accepted me and wanted to help me no matter what. Coming around to

many N.A. meetings in my first few years had started something like a 'defrost cycle' inside me and I started slowly melting without knowing it.

Then the Anonymity and the Unity kicked in and I was sucked right into the vortex of this thing called Narcotics Anonymous Recovery and the transformation happened, I became We. I'll never forget it, I was sitting in a meeting feeling very, very sorry for myself, as usual, doing my best invisible man imitation when this other addict started to cry while sharing some pain and fear and all of the sudden something started coming up from my abdominal area past my throat and into my eyes and then it actually came out of my eyes in liquid form and started to run down my face. I desperately tried to stop it with all the power and all the knowledge that I had accumulated in all these years of perfect control, perfect isolation, but I failed miserably. There I was leaking vulnerably in a room full of people. My armor was in smithereens, my soft insides were totally exposed. What would happen now.

I looked around, fully expecting to see you pointing and laughing at me, but instead what I saw was that I was not the only one that was crying in empathy, you were also crying, exposed, just like me right there in the room. I was not alone, even through the fear I felt a part of, I felt safe. I liked the feeling of empathy and compassion, it felt soft and warm and comfortable. Ever since that day I have been leaking more and more. Not just in empathy but from the natural flow of my own full range of feelings as I experience life on life's terms.

At times I even feel at peace, like I can relax instead of living in constant stress. I no longer have to cover up who I am or what I feel. I am not forced any more to put on an act and try to become what I think you want me to be so that you will not hurt me or reject me.

I like what has been happening to me, it feels right. I feel like I belong in the human race after all. My feelings, thoughts and actions seem to be synchronized, balanced as they should. If I feel sad, I cry. If I feel happy, I laugh, etc.

However, my disease is like one of those automatic door closing machines, if I don't stay vigilant about keeping myself open to you at all times, my disease will automatically close me back up and I won't even know it. I'll revert to 'stone face man' and go back to living in the 'zombie zone'. Let's keep on leaking.

NEW ATTITUDES
P O BOX 447
VESTABURG MI 48891