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**THE**  
**NA**  
**WAY**

*April*  
**1987**

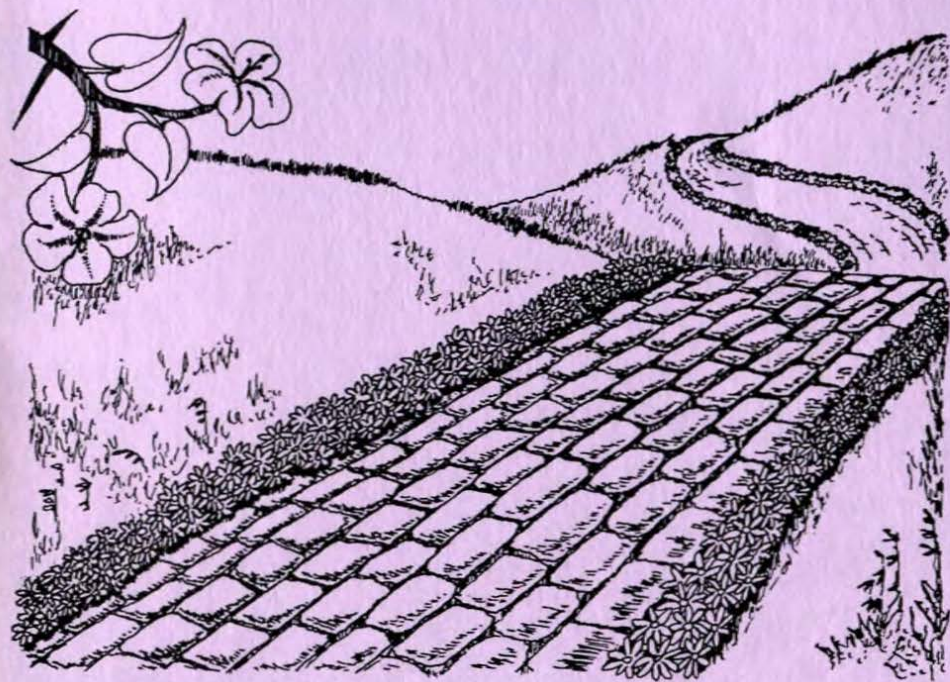
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**VOLUME 5**

**NUMBER 4**

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**Recovery**  
**Road**



## THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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

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THE INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP  
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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## Experience, Strength & Hope



All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input, along with a signed copyright release form, to:

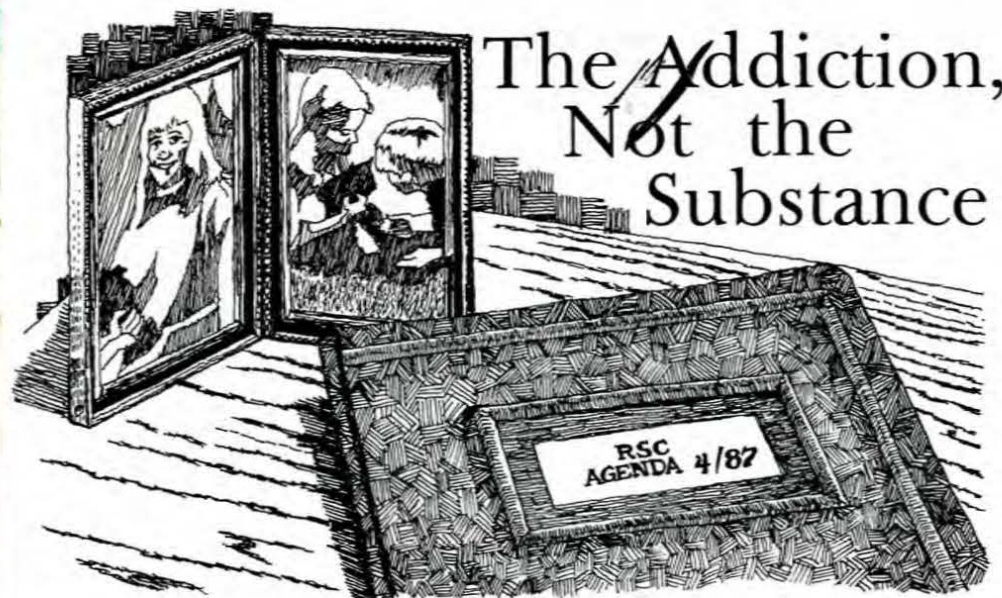
The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.;  
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### What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover.

It costs nothing to be a member of N.A.—there are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that *they work*.

For more information about the N.A. groups nearest you, write us at the address above.



## The Addiction, Not the Substance

As an addict, I met the Twelve Steps in another Fellowship five years ago. Two years later I met a special addict who was trying to understand something in three different programs. He was so confused by his belief that he had to follow three different programs because he had abused legal, illegal drugs, and alcohol. One day his sister came back from Ontario with N.A. literature and it was the beginning of N.A. in Quebec (in French).

Since we started the first meeting things went very fast. Two years later we had more than fifty meetings in the region, with two areas formed and a third coming. We did a lot of work and are only beginning.

Other Twelve Step programs in Quebec are very well developed, and it sometimes causes problems, but N.A. literature is very adequate because it puts the emphasis on the real problem, the addiction, not the substance. It's really what saved the life

of my friend who had problems with solid, liquid *and* smokable drugs.

When he discovered that *he* was the problem, not the drugs, he could start in the right direction—recovery in N.A. That's something which looks like H.P.'s work.

***"When he discovered that he—not the drugs—was the problem, he could start in the right direction."***

Personally, I'm more involved with the N.A. Program since my addicted sister committed suicide last year. When you have lived the other life, as a practicing addict, you know that N.A. is the best. I'm working with the regional committee trying to reach addicts who are still suffering, and I'm very grateful to H.P. who gave us N.A.

J.V., Quebec, Canada





# Recovery Road

I could survive in the forest, but just barely. I can't forget my encounters with the beasts that almost took my life as they lurked in the darkness.

The jungle was as intimidating as the forest. A lion showed me that my courage was false and I simply could not keep the monkeys off of my back.

The terrain began to change as I traveled on. I got so high on those mountain peaks, only to sink deeper into the valleys below. I was glad to reach the desert where at least I could stay warm. But as I walked along, I suddenly found that the place was dry.

Oh, so lonely was I, so hungry, empty, and tired. This sad traveler was in a desperation mode.

In amazement I could just now see someone else in the distance. Out into that field I stumbled with what energy I could find. Was this life on the horizon just barely in my sight? Stumbling, I fell to my knees. Getting up I could see the figure running my way.

I am on a new highway. It's a great road. Didn't get here fast, though. All of the pathways leading here were not smooth and paved. In fact, most of them were dead-end streets. That is the way it was, and what a way to go. But now, it has turned from pot holes and drop-offs to guiding lines and sweet horizons. That's just the way it is.

I remember back before this age of development, there was no road to be found, so the thickness of the woods and the thorns of the underbrush would confound me. The unraveling course that I followed was bringing me deeper into the wasteful mire and untamed wilderness.

I walked until that spirit of determination allowed me to begin to trot, then run! An outstretched hand pulled me in. The warm embrace of love let me know that I was no longer in solitude, nor frightfully alone.

The newfound friends shared a common bond. We were desperate travelers looking for a new way.

New workers arrive now every day. We all keep working together as the places we go are plentiful and better than ever before! Each day we can stop and meet more travelers along the way. It is now a super highway, and we call it N.A.!

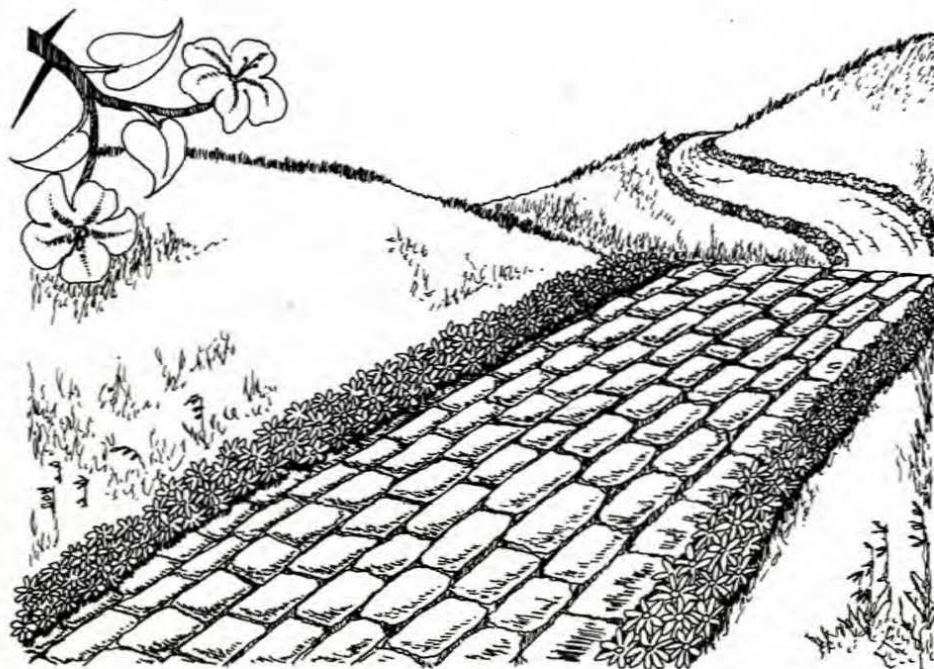
*E.O., Georgia*

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***"I can't forget my encounters with the beasts that lurked in the darkness."***

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Together we worked on the first mile of that road. We built, and shared, and fed each other. We worked through the heat and held out in the cold. We were to change history for me, that desperation traveler, for I could now travel on a surface safe and smooth.





# On My Brown Skin, I Swear!

Beginnings seem always to be so complicated, and above all things I never thought that I would find myself amused by writing to our *N.A. Way* magazine. To be honest, what's closer to the truth is that this is almost as intense for me as some of my inventories.

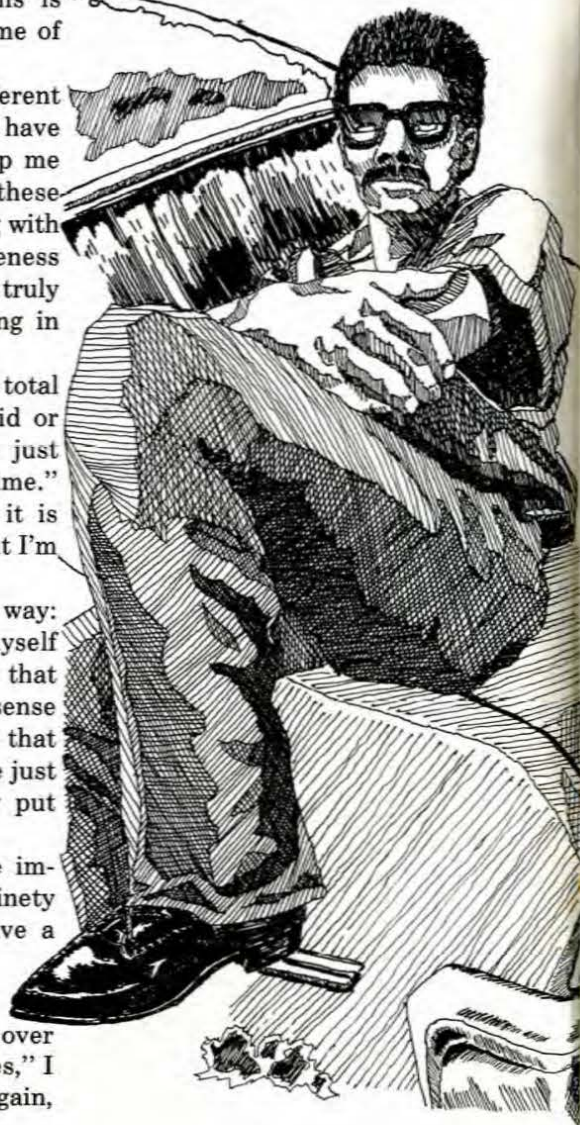
I want to focus on the different points in my recovery which have made and still continue to keep me teachable. Please remember, these are my points of view, and along with each stage there has been awareness of spiritual growth; otherwise I truly do believe I wouldn't be writing in such a serious context.

I'm into my fourth year of total abstinence from all drugs, liquid or otherwise. Many of us say we just have today and "one day at a time." Sure we have just today, but it is important for me to mention that I'm coming up on four years.

A good friend put it this way: "Each day clean helps me lift myself up and dust myself off from that almost fatal collision." So in a sense all the other A.M.'s and P.M.'s that some of us have put together are just as important as "today." They put protection on our recovery.

Secondly, I have learned the importance of the suggestion, "ninety meetings in ninety days." I have a

friend that I hadn't seen in over a year at a meeting. "Hey Holmes," I said when I finally saw him again,



"I haven't seen you in a taste, where have you been?"

"Well they told me ninety meetings, in ninety days, so that's what I did and it's working." But, the rest of the concept goes, "if you don't like it we'll refund your misery." Since when, and I repeat, since when does the Fellowship have a consignment of pain and pressure in a space for safekeeping?

Thirdly, "I have to love you but I don't have to like you." How awfully stated by some of our members. Why don't they just state it this way: "I'll forgive you but I'll never, never, never forget what you did."

I'll be honest with you, there are many people that I learned to love in my recovery and there are others that I like and there is so much love in my life and heart for whoever chooses to embrace it; I can, without any reservations, say that there is no one I hate. I have been resentful and angered but that's not to be confused with hatred.

How about, "If you can make it, I know I can." Why not, "If I can make it, you can make it with me, or us, whatever the case may be." It's not a competitive venture.

There is a spiritual side to all this, and it's fun to share it with you. Now, my first year of recovery was a search for self. I was a mad and vicious person at meetings, to the point where four months into recovery I wanted to commit suicide because my emotions did not want to live with my frame of mind.

This was September 27th, '83 that I made my surrender (there have been more, but that was the heavy one). I was on a bridge ready to jump,

I swear on my brown skin. I learned to get a sponsor, and that I no longer had to hate myself and dwell in pain. I love that man who guided me in the steps of recovery.

At my first convention I found out that I did not have anything to do with my brother's death by an O.D.

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**"The trial was on. 'Don't do it!' said the attorney. 'Go ahead, nobody's here,' said the gorilla."**

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For eighteen years I had bought into that. I found out from my sponsor that God loves me even though I had put Him on the shelf. He still knows I love Him. But I had to learn to get along with all these people, because they were the ones who were gonna bring me home to Him.

I was on my Sixth Step for about four months studying it. Anyhow, I was at a morning meeting and I was low on funds and there was this text and nobody around. The secretary was out there "jack-jawing" smoking and soaking. This was an opportune time to stick that book under my coat, put it in the car, come back in smiling "Good Morning" to everybody.

But the trial was on. "Don't do it!" said the attorney. "Go ahead, nobody's here," said the gorilla. This went on for about ten minutes, but the guilt lasted 'til the next meeting, even though I did not take it. It was a struggle for twelve long hours.

At my next meeting that same day, I bought a raffle ticket. At the end of the meeting I went to the latrine and all I could hear was my name being



called. I must admit, I wet my pants a little. Guess what, I won the raffle? Guess what it was? That same book I was gonna rip off twelve hours earlier. (That dude "God" is so sweet. He's funny at times.)

One other miracle that created a spiritual experience was a pair of shoes. Oh, I love this cadillac story so much; we all have our little stories. I was heavily obsessed with a pair of french toes that were on sale for \$120. Two months later the sign said \$80. Three month later, \$60 and every time I saw them I asked that dude up there (God) to please help free me from the material part of my being.

On the way home (I'm so materialistic that I'm cruising on this beat up broken down '64 Nova that I named "Brown Bandit") I was attracted to a yard sale, and on my brown skin I almost wrecked. I put the car in reverse and ended up on top of the curb.

People were staring. Please believe they were. I kicked off my sandals, my eyes were magnified by a set of shoes while I was driving. There was no doubt in my mind about the fitting. Like a hand to a glove. As God is my witness, on my brown skin, a pair of french toes, brand new, worn once.

"How much for these shoes?" I had them on barefoot and all she wanted

for them was 25¢ cents. I gave her a dollar. She wouldn't understand if I explained.

I got tears right now from sharing this, because God is so sweet in my life today. I don't just *have* good days today, I've learned to *make* good days. It's because of all of you that N.A. is working in my life.

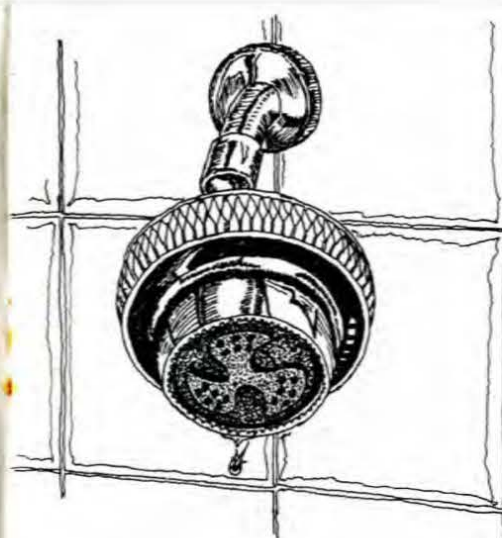
I have a different and better way of using my mind today. I'm involved in service, I'm committed, I can honestly say *dedicated*. Because Narcotics Anonymous has not only helped break down an image problem I have, not with the monkey anymore but the gorilla. The part of me that didn't want to surrender has become my best friend, and looking in the mirror is not enough. It takes application, meetings, sponsor (one), steps and inventories.

I'm no longer a program bum looking for long-term life in programs. I was very institutionalized. I didn't know it was going to work like it is today. If I was to describe Narcotics Anonymous in one word that word would be it's "different." I've gotten more than I could ever earn or deserve in my recovery.

I love you so very much.

Thank you kindly.

*Anonymous, California*



but soon got tired so I began to walk. Sometimes I crawl, hanging on by my fingernails. Being human, I sometimes wander off this path, but when I run into the brambles and the thorns, I get awakened.

This path is all about spiritual principles. Spiritual principles that help me with my own resentments. I can't afford resentments today. I can't afford to allow myself to be run off from N.A.. I cannot give the disease an inch, for it will take my life.

## A Bustle in My Hedgerow

I've had a bustle in my hedgerow. I've been on the receiving end of gossip, rumors, and resentments. What's that old saying? When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping? Well, there are two paths I can go by. These two paths don't have a split rail fence down the middle, for they run in opposite directions.

One path is the path of addiction. I don't like that path. I remember well those old feelings. I was reminded not too long ago by a newcomer what those feelings are about. I remember my final day of using. I got in the shower and turned the water on. I was surprised when water didn't come out of the shower head, it was guilt, that overwhelming type of guilt. You're right, I believe I'll take a look at this other path.

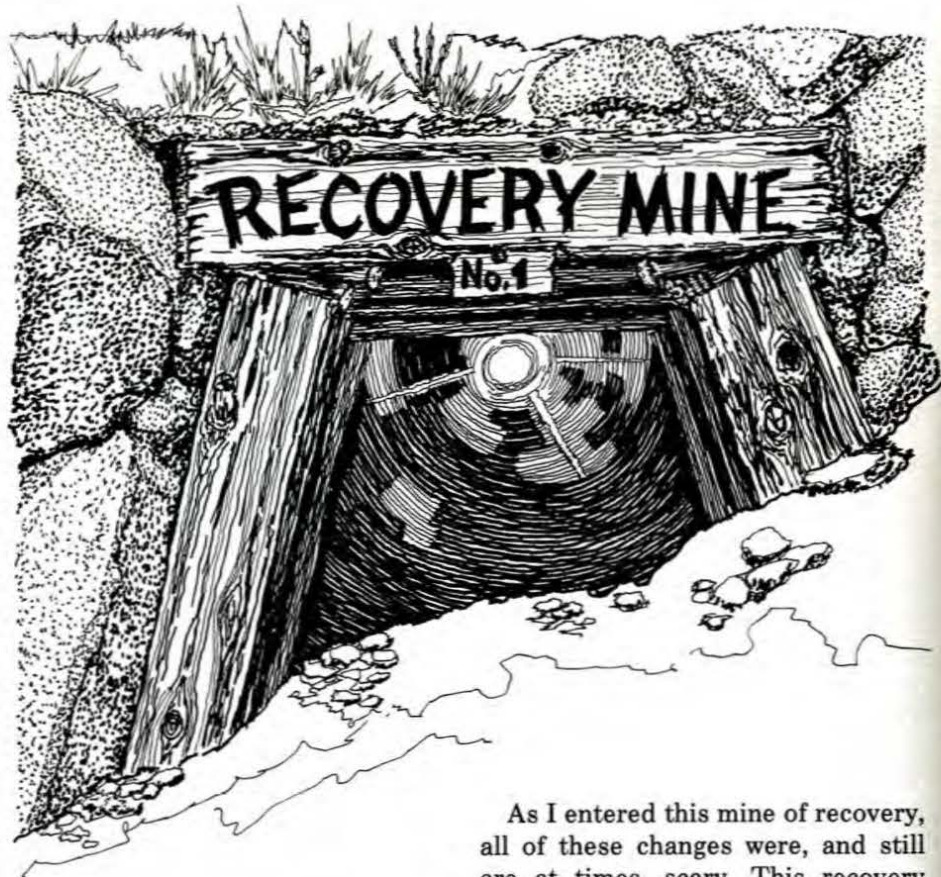
This other path is called the path of recovery. A path that I've been walking for a while. Early in my recovery I tried running up this path

But where do I begin? There's a sign at the beginning of this path of Recovery. It says: POWERLESS. Ah, powerlessness. We begin by admitting that we are powerless over addiction. Powerless over what other people say or think. Hey! Another sign. It says: BELIEVE. We came to believe... Yes. There is a way to cope with no dope. There is a way.

There are other spiritual principles that we can apply, such as love, forgiveness, acceptance, etc. There is a way to live and enjoy life without the use of drugs. There is a way to deal with the bustles in our hedgerows. For me, it's the N.A. way. It could be something as simple as God doing some spring cleaning. Is that really simple?

*C.B., South Carolina*





In retrospect, looking at my recovery from its beginning through today, I can compare recovery to working a gold mine.

When I first came into this program I can remember that I saw things as bleak and dark. It was as if I were standing in the entrance of a mine, and looking into the dark shaft.

Recovery for me meant change. Everything about me was about to change. My friends, hangouts, bad habits (including drugs) all had to change, and probably the biggest change I was going to have to make was me. I was going to have to set out to change me.

As I entered this mine of recovery, all of these changes were, and still are at times, scary. This recovery mine can and does have pitfalls along the way. When I entered this scary and unknown place, I saw a bright light! And this first light was the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I remember that this light was bright and made me feel comfortable and wanted.

In this Fellowship I have received love; at first I wasn't capable of giving a whole lot in return. I have heard others share about their disease, and after some time, I learned and got enough courage to share with them about my disease. I also learned about my higher power, another bright light, and I'm still learning as I go further into this mine of recovery.

So I keep on. I stop and wait until the light of my higher power brightens to send me on down into this mine. To begin to have faith and to trust in a power greater than myself has done a lot to brighten my recovery.

The most assuring and reinforcing aspect of this mine is that I am not alone anymore. There are people in there just like me, there for the same reasons as I am—to live.

I go on through this mine and I pass the lights of honesty open-mindedness and willingness. And there

***"As I entered this mine of recovery, all of these changes were, and still are at times, scary."***

this mine of recovery.

As I have traveled through this mine I have struck a motherlode. Even when I have not avoided a pitfall, today, through the Fellowship of N.A., my life is better than it ever was.

When I don't use drugs in any form, "Just for Today," my today has been a success and a blessing.

I can remember when I first entered this mine of recovery and came into that bright light of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I heard and kept hearing the phrase "keep coming back." I did, and have been coming back for over two years now.

*K.F., Tennessee*

are also the lights of the Twelve Steps, service work and sponsorship.

These lights were different. I had to work to get them bright. The more I worked at them, the brighter they were, to show the way to a successful and rewarding recovery.

As I have gone through this mine I have seen pitfalls and have been the victim of some. There are the pitfalls of relapse, self-will, denial, all my character defects that I possess coming back real strongly to possess me.

There are lights all around me to help me stay clean of these pitfalls. I just have to work harder at making those dim lights brighter. I also have maintain constant contact with those two real bright lights that stay bright; the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and my higher power. And the most important thing for me to remember is I have to stay involved in





BEFORE coming to Narcotics Anonymous I had nothing. I was completely bankrupt in all areas and phases of life. Even before I began using drugs my life was filled with hate, anger, resentment, isolation, loneliness, fear, failure, and total self-centeredness. Self-esteem was non-existent.

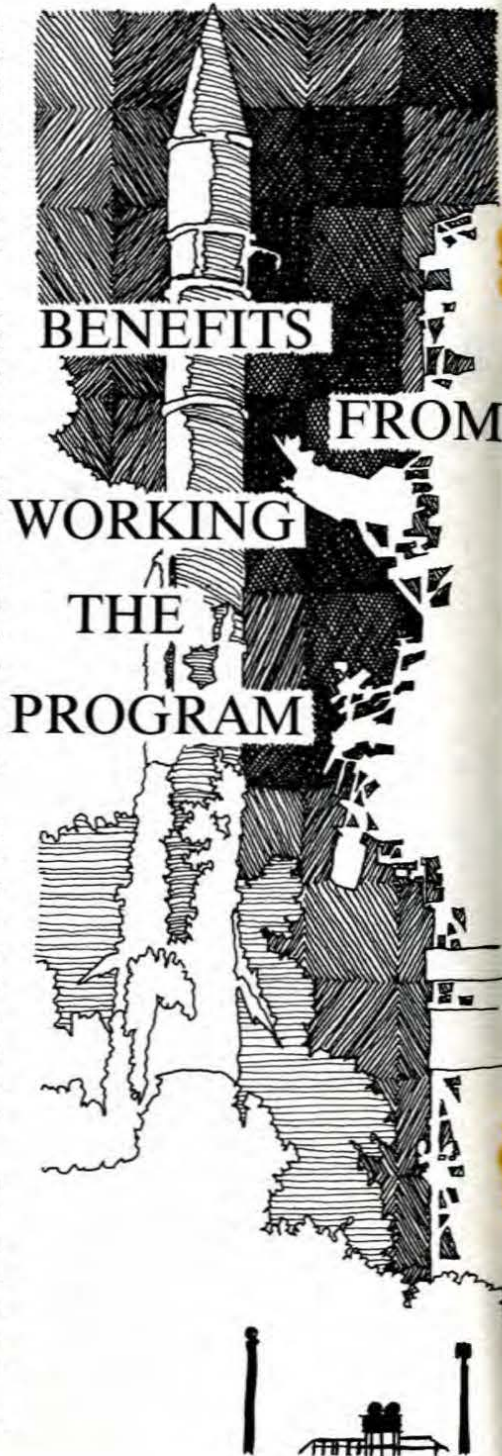
I was always searching for something to ease the pains of living and I thought drugs were the answer. As the disease progressed in my life, drugs became a major problem. The more I used drugs the deeper I fell. I could not stop using. Everything I tried failed.

WHEN I came to N.A. I heard a new type of language. The people in N.A. said to me that I did not have to use drugs today. They suggested to keep coming back to meetings. After attending meetings regularly, I got a sponsor and began working the Steps.

I know today what they mean when they say that the Twelve Steps are the principles that make recovery possible. As a result of trying to live the Steps, a lot of things have been revealed to me. I am learning today that I have an incurable, progressive and fatal disease which can be arrested through abstinence and a working relationship with the Twelve Steps.

Each day for me is a challenge that teaches the meaning of powerlessness and an unmanageable life. I am coming to believe in a POWER greater than myself and learning to humbly rely upon HIM for the strengths, love and forgiveness that I need each and every day of my life.

I am learning how to deal with



feelings, and as a by-product of working the program, I have developed new feelings. That brings happiness, serenity and love. Learning to live spiritually daily has helped to develop faith in GOD as I understand Him, and that faith provides the courage necessary to look at me and ask for the help I need in every day living.

Throughout the course of my addiction, I have harmed other people. The program is teaching me the spirit of forgiveness through the spiritual gift of making amends. Before I got here I was unaware of myself and everything around me. Today, as I am continuing with recovery, I have become more aware of me and the surrounding world. I am learning that I have defects of character which can be lifted if I do the footwork and leave the rest up to God.

WHEN I first started my recovery, I felt hopeless and helpless. As a result of living the program I have faith, hope, open-mindedness and humility. No matter how difficult things get, I do not have to use drugs. I have some very powerful tools which consist of other addicts who do understand, the Fellowship, God and the N.A. Program. I have a twenty-four hour maintenance plan that not only works in my life, but in millions of others' as well.

I am learning to be grateful for what I have. I am deeply grateful for having had the obsession to use drugs lifted away, which was not possible before surrendering to the N.A. Program. The principle of surrender has been more rewarding than I could ever imagine. It has led to a new way of life which is full of

freedom, purpose and meaning.

I used to be jealous of other people who had good quality and quantity recovery. Today I know how they did it. They worked for it. What I put in this program is what I will get back. If I do not put anything in I will not get much in return. It works, if I work it.

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***"I have a twenty-four hour maintenance plan that not only works in my life, but in millions of others' as well."***

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I am learning that the more I give what little bit I have, I always get something in return. I try to the best of my ability to work with other addicts to help them find what was freely given to me. I try to carry the message of recovery wherever I go. I also try to get involved in other service work.

TODAY when I have problems I can find the solutions by working and living the Steps. I am very grateful for recovery. I will not be able to pay back in full what N.A. has given me. However, I can do my part. "Just for Today," I will try to stay clean and help with the continuation and growth of N.A. I hope that every addict finds recovery. Thank you Narcotics Anonymous for the benefits of a full life.

*Anonymous, Georgia*



# RECOMMITMENT

I am a recovering addict who's very glad to be living in the Gold Coast Area of Narcotics Anonymous. I never needed visitors from out of town to inform me of the strength and unity of our local Fellowship,

though they have. Deep in my heart I felt that we were special, that we were strong, and that we had enthusiasm for life. I have felt this way from the very beginning of my new life.

A recent stage I've been growing through has been to focus on the negatives, the differences, the mistakes. I actually went through a period of sorrow for "N.A. as I knew it." N.A. is changing, as growth demands that we do. I was afraid.

I had doubts that N.A. would come through all of this and still be able to serve the needs of the Fellowship. My faith and trust had diminished and I hadn't even noticed. I thought my faith was okay.

I have a habit of working the Steps. I work the first three at least every morning, and the others are worked in order at my own pace. I turn my will and my life over regularly. My relationships with my family, my co-workers, my children, are all in the care of my Higher Power.

I had allowed myself to worry about, get frustrated over, and feel isolated about the most important relationship in my life, and that is my

relationship with N.A. as a whole. I thought the future of N.A. was in the hands of "those who would tear us apart" in their ignorance and apathy for the Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

I forgot that for our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. I also forgot where we came from; I forgot what "the ties that bind us together" really are.

We are addicts seeking recovery. Everyone who does not fit that description usually gets bored or lazy and goes back out. In desperation we sought help from each other, only after everything else failed for us and



we nearly died.

We open our doors to addicts, hoping they will find what we have found, knowing only those who have a desire to stay clean and who want what we have to offer will join us in our way of life.

The only requirement for membership is still just a desire to stop using.

N.A. gave me my life. True, my life was worthless when I got here. I had nothing to lose by using or dying, and so had nothing to lose by trying this way of life. Today, because of N.A.'s program of recovery, I am not only clean—a true miracle—but I have a life today that I cherish. Today, because of N.A., I have a lot to lose if

I fail to use this program.

My higher power brought me to N.A. and then, step by step, N.A. brought me to my higher power.

***"I had doubts that N.A. would come through all of this and still be able to serve the needs of the Fellowship."***

Because of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another," I was shown where my faith and trust had been lacking. I saw where I needed prayer, open-mindedness, and willingness even more than before. Self-honesty is not an inherent quality; it must be acquired by one's own efforts. I was also shown where I do have a choice. I can choose meetings that give me what I need for my own personal recovery, the best atmosphere of recovery for me.

I need to share with others and talk with more and more newcomers. I need to be an example to the newcomer, to be there and share my message of recovery. I need to take responsibility for what I believe.

Through recommitment, I came to believe in Narcotics Anonymous even more.

I believe it works.

*B.L., Florida*



# New Year's Eve



This is an appropriate day to sit down and try and communicate some feelings to you all. A letter came from WSO inviting me to write an article. What a surprise! People used to ask me to leave their bar or their house, some even asked me to relocate to another city for my health. So this is a request which literally frightened me, humbled me, and finally gives me much gratitude that I am clean and able to write this.

Yes, it is New Year's eve. What a difference from last year! I was living in my mother's junk room in a very small West Texas town. I had recently arrived from Arizona, from my tenth treatment center in as many years. Actually, I had run away one more time. Yeah, I've always been a runner. I've spent twenty-seven

years out of thirty-eight running.

Five years ago I first made it to a twelve step program from a psychiatric ward. It was one of those places! A nurse follows you around with pen and pad and records every utterance you make.

I made it to a halfway house about a week later. Lord, I look back to that time and today can have compassion for that me. I can remember the contempt I had for my fellow inmates. There wasn't anything wrong with me of course, but I sure thought they were all nuts! I was so ill I didn't know I was ill.

Those people used to sit around and all of them wanted to be counselors or social workers and go out and save their fellow suffering addicts. One day I confronted the

whole bunch. I said, "You're just a bunch of suckers! You aren't ever going to find M— trying to help anyone!" Oh, how defiant I was! Defiance seems to be one of my greater defects.

I had suffered all the symptoms of our disease for many years. Three years before I made it to that halfway house I had been in an accident with my closest acquaintance at the time. She had died of a broken neck, yet I was thrown into a snowbank without a scratch.

I grabbed a hold of a barbed-wire fence and shouted into the falling snow, shouted at a God I claimed did not exist, "Why didn't you take me instead?"

A few months before that I'd been hooked up to I.V.'s in a hospital because my kidneys had stopped working. Eight months earlier than that I had shot up one afternoon and fifteen minutes later ran over a small boy. Even now I can hear his screams as he lay beneath my wheel. My only thought at the time was to save myself.

The year before last I had lost my own children and had experienced my third divorce. I could go on and on. I've earned my chair in N.A. Like each one of us. We've each earned it through pain, the tremendous fear and loneliness, the lack of self respect. I choose the solution today.

I used in late February 1986. I locked myself into that junk room and got it on. To this day I cannot explain what all happened to me in that room. There is no need. After three days I came out, after all the drugs were gone. The drugs had failed me one more time, there was

no escape for me, not even death. I had tried to die so many times.

To my way of thinking, there wasn't anywhere left to run. I had used everyone and everything up. My mother didn't even want me there. She was afraid of me. I scrubbed toilets for a housing company, and can remember screaming in anguish at God as I scrubbed. I felt, and probably acted, totally insane.

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***"I grabbed a hold of a barbed-wire fence and shouted into the falling snow at a God I claimed did not exist."***

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I put an ad in the local newspaper announcing an N.A. meeting. I did it for myself. A few people did show up. I kept in touch with WSO, and between them and the few of us in the meeting, N.A. literally saved my life.

A rehabilitation man came to see me when I had about one month clean. It was the same man who wanted nothing to do with me a couple of months before. The man asked me to check out enrolling in a program at a nearby college.

Frankly, I wasn't too excited about it and I couldn't believe he really meant to help me go to school. I had been honest with him about my using. I had used myself out of a college in New Mexico with the same program.

I believe I had totally surrendered my life by the time this man showed up. I didn't have a lot of hope, I couldn't think straight, but I was clean.

The end of March on Easter



morning, the sun rose. It was so beautiful and I remember watching it burst up in colors around the pump jacks and houses off across the fields. I felt life in me and I wanted to live. I asked God to help me.

The day I received my three months chip I moved into the dorm room I still live in today. I'll have ten months tomorrow, and I have today.

I really don't feel as if I have done anything. God has given me new friends, another chance to live, to just be. Oh, I've gotten in the way lots of times these months past. I've gotten discouraged. Usually when it happens I get a letter from WSO, a telephone call and someone needs help, or I'm asked to share at a meeting or a jail.

Then too, I've learned I have to ask for help. No one really knows what I need unless I can admit that need. The old fears and paranoia came at times, and I hang on to the program and my fellow addicts.

I was able to travel up to the mountains of New Mexico at the end of my summer classes. I worked in a treatment center that I had been a patient in myself in 1984. What a wonderful feeling it was to look in my old counselor's eyes with clean eyes!

This has been the most memorable Christmas of my life. I didn't receive any packages with bright ribbons, but much greater gifts. Gifts of cards from N.A.'s and clean people I have met in my past five years of

wandering. Some of those people I thought would never want to see or hear from me again. True gifts of love. And really that is what life is all about.

I also completed something for the first time in my life, right before Christmas. I completed that educational program. I journeyed to a job interview shortly after. Folks in the program got together and bought my plane ticket. I didn't get the job but I came back grateful that I'd learned more about myself one more time. I really believe when it's God's time I will have a job where I'm needed and where he wants me to be.

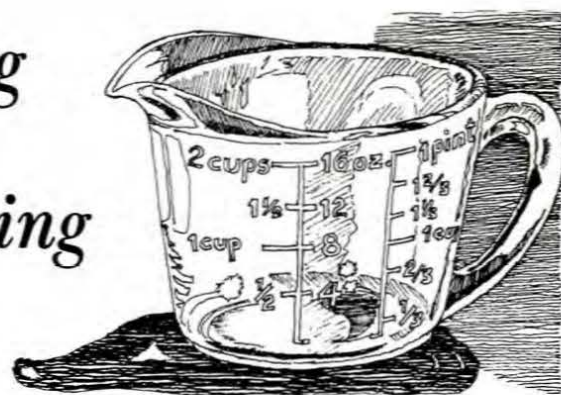
Just the fact I was asked to write this is such a gift. I'm sure they had no idea. I haven't tried to make this a work of art, just tried to tell it like it was and like it is now. I used to write books, and for a long while now those manuscripts have gathered dust on my closet shelf. One more time, I've been given much more than I can ever give. It's time to blow the dust off and get to work in another area of my life.

The television is on and all the people in Times Square are loving in the new year, 1987. I thank God to have been here to spend this time with you. To have been so broken in every way, yet we live today. We each are so human and so loved.

GOD BLESS US.

M.D., Texas

## Measuring Quality/ Maintaining Identity



I hope that we don't measure anything in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. After all, I still believe there are no musts in N.A. It is only from my experience, remaining abstinent from drugs for some time, that I have started to change. I am learning to love and respect

***"Daily I have to accept and accentuate my good qualities, and to accept and work on my defects."***

myself, and in turn, I am able to love and respect others. That enables me to carry the message of recovery just that much better.

Through working the steps I have found the patterns in my life that I need to be rid of, and also those patterns that I need to accentuate. By living this program, my dreams are becoming a reality. I had experience while I was on the streets, but through the steps and my Higher

Power, I have found the *strength*. Today, I have the *hope* that you too may find the beauty of this program in your life and that your dreams may become a reality.

Today I am very proud of my own qualities. I love myself, and it shows from the outside and the inside. It seems that the better I feel on the inside, the better I look on the outside. I maintain my own identity only by accepting who I am and loving me for me. Daily I have to accept and accentuate my good qualities, and to accept and work on my defects. I need to love myself, regardless of my wrongs. Sometimes I stand in front of the mirror and tell myself I love me! Staying out of a sexual relationship for the first eighteen months has allowed me to find my identity, understand it, and come to terms with it. I no longer have to pattern myself after someone else. I am free to be me and I love it.

R.C., Florida



# Willingness

From time to time I read statistics in the press regarding the "recovery rate" for addicts. It seems presumptuous for anyone to pin a fifty percent or eighty percent recovery rate on us, so I do not believe these figures. I prefer to adhere to the more positive projection which I have heard around the tables: One hundred percent of the addicts who want to recover, will do so.

Do I want to recover? Before answering this question with a flippant, irritated "of course I do!" I must look at myself more closely. Do I want it badly enough to go to any extreme? Do I really believe that nothing can happen to me terrible enough to use over? If you told me to stand on the corner and sing nursery rhymes, would I do it to stay clean?

Willingness is the key ingredient for me. Since I began to work this program a couple years ago, I have had to do a lot of things I would have scoffed at in my using days.

Tell someone about all the disastrous relationships and all those hidden fears? Pay back the money I stole from an employer? Pray before making a decision? These kinds of actions are entirely out of character for an addict; yet I am told that I cannot continue to do the same things over and over if I want to make changes in myself and in my life.

An enormous amount of willingness is necessary for me to work the Seventh Step. For, after discussing and admitting my character de-

fects, and asking my higher power to remove them, I find I must take action myself.

If I am to be free of my intolerance, false pride, and resentment, I must show my willingness by ceasing to act them out. They are not removed by magic, never to return; I must work against them constantly, showing tolerance and love and humility, until the defects begin to fade.

***"If you told me to stand on the corner and sing nursery rhymes, would I do it to stay clean?"***

After a recent meeting, I was standing around talking with some people when a young woman approached me and asked me shyly if I would have time to be her sponsor. Before I had the chance to consider the facts that I work full time, am married, and have a busy social schedule, I blurted out that I would be happy to sponsor her.

The book tells me that I have to give away what I have found in N.A. in order to stay clean. And so I am willing to give time and energy and attention, because I want to stay clean more than I want to worry about my precious time.

Whenever I get on the pity-pot, I have discovered an unbeatable way to get out of it. I force myself to think of just one thing to be grateful for. Then I try to think of a couple more reasons I am grateful. Before long the good things in my life have overpowered the bummers.

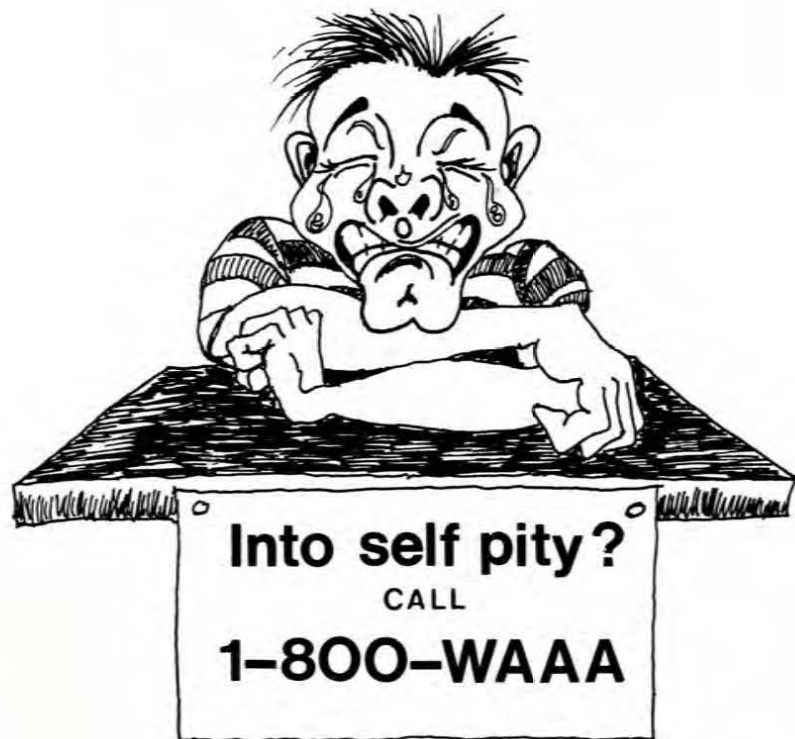
Once I am feeling grateful, it is really difficult to continue feeling sorry for myself.

"You don't have to use today," you shout at me as I walk out the door. "I'm so glad to see you again," you tell me as I come in. "Keep in touch—I care," you write to me in your letters. "It works!" you print in block letters on your envelopes.

The frightened, lost, hopeful look on the face of a new member keeps me remembering where I came from

and how far I have come with the help of my higher power, the N.A. program, and my own willingness. I will take action, I will pray, I will work the steps, and I will make changes, because I want to keep recovering. And because I sincerely want to stay clean, no matter what happens, I believe that I will.

K.K., Alaska







## What Can I Do?



I feel inspired to write, so there's no use in putting it off. Of course I'm taking a risk of inflating my ego if this gets published, but that will give me another opportunity to practice surrender. Before I begin, I'll just play it safe and take a moment to surrender.

I have an eight-year-old daughter with whom I have yet to build a

***"Dad may be just learning  
how to express love and  
accept love,  
but Dad loves you."***

relationship that amounts to anything. God willing and the creek don't rise, it will happen. But what can I do in the meantime?

I can work with others to ensure that N.A. remains alive and free! For who knows, she may or may not pick up one day and will be needing a place to go to learn how to recover. I can work to ensure that I stay clean and recover by becoming willing to

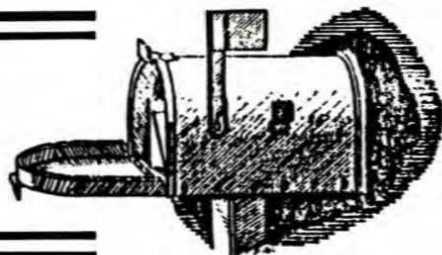
learn how N.A. works (the Twelve Steps), why N.A. works (the Twelve Traditions), and to learn how to apply these principles in all my affairs. I wouldn't be of any use to her or myself using, I'm convinced of that today.

So what can I do? Make meetings on a regular basis, get involved, try to be open and receptive to God's guidance, and work my own personal Program of recovery. Learn how to live and enjoy life, without the use of drugs, just for today. There's so much more for me to learn.

Daughter, a message to you: Dad loves you. Dad may not know how to express love, or may not even know how to love or be loved. But Dad's clean today, and Dad feels really, really good about that. And Dad has new associations today who help me stay clean. We help each other stay clean. Everything is gonna be alright.

*C.B., South Carolina*

## From Our Readers



### PLANTING THE SEED FOR RECOVERY

Dear N.A. Way,

This month our area tried something new. Instead of hosting a one-day service workshop lasting four to eight hours in an attempt to introduce newcomers to the service structure, subcommittees, and responsibilities of service positions, we brought the message of service and recovery into the meetings. I guess it was the Mohamad and the Mountain story.

In accordance with our Second and Fourth Traditions, the groups were given the opportunity to individually decide if service structure discussion meetings would be of benefit and still within the scope of Tradition Five. Seven of our area's ten groups chose to hold a special meeting, and decided that it would not be a violation of our Fifth Tradition since, "All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do their work."

Tonight was the end of a week-long effort to effectively carry the message of service in recovery. I believe more individuals were reached than would have been had we hosted a one-day workshop.

All of our area service subcommittee chairpersons were asked to participate in an informational question-and-answer meeting. The intimacy of their sharing and caring in service was clear and heartwarming, as the need for support and involvement was stressed. It reinforced our belief that "...in pulling together we learn that we really are part of 'something greater than ourselves'" and that "...as long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well."

I would like to thank each of those who took the time to share their message of service and recovery and who participated in our effort to plant a seed. Thank you.

*Anonymous, Washington*

### THE N.A. COP

Dear N.A. Way,

I'm a forty-six-year-old recovering addict, here by the grace of God, and clean through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I led a miserable, hopeless, godless existence all my life. Nobody ever told me I didn't have to use. People told me I should stop, but I didn't know how. I tried so hard and so many times and always



failed. I finally made it to an N.A. meeting, very sick, very confused, and in the most emotional pain I had ever been in. Dying was all I could think of because I was so desperate I felt I didn't have the strength or the will to keep going.

At that first meeting I heard a few things but I did not believe any of them. A fellow addict asked me how I enjoyed the meeting and I said "it sucked." He asked me what I didn't like about it. I said the people were crazy, that they were religious bible thumpers, talking about God, about getting on their knees and asking for help, I said I didn't believe in any of that stuff, that I was different than they were and therefore it wouldn't work for me.

He was patient with me and explained things to me. I did listen because I was willing to try anything. I kept coming to meetings and people told me I was going to be all right. I didn't believe them, but I kept coming and I didn't pick up.

My journey in recovery was not easy. I got involved in service work early in my recovery. I accepted a lot of positions in service work. I was so grateful to N.A. for helping me get clean that I couldn't do enough.

I was very active in service work, and when we were a new young area I attended a lot of meetings. At some meetings people would raffle literature from another Fellowship. I told them they couldn't do that, that it was a direct violation of our Sixth Tradition. They said they could do anything they wanted because they took a group conscience. I told them they could not take a group conscience to violate traditions. They

asked me who I thought I was, *the N.A. Cop?*

They said they needed the money for the group. I quoted the Seventh Tradition. I told them all I am is a member of N.A. and that I shouldn't be telling anyone what to do, but I that I was concerned about what message was being carried, and about our unity.

That was a long time ago. Since then I don't give advice, good or bad. I work on my own recovery and practice the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability. My Higher Power helps me by keeping me clean, allowing me to serve, and I try to set an example by my actions, caring and sharing the N.A. way.

I am not the same person who came into these halls. Because of N.A. I think I'm becoming the person I always wanted to be.

*B.L., Massachusetts*

## SOME ARE SICKER THAN OTHERS

Dear N.A. Way,

I've heard in the Fellowship that so and so is really sick. Certain addicts have done dirty deeds and said, "I'm sicker than you," or, "I'm not well yet" to excuse their behavior.

I used that phrase to make me different than you. I never wanted to be like everyone else. I saw myself as one-of-a-kind, having special needs.

When I say, "I'm sicker than you," and wallow in that negative thinking, my character defect of pride has free reign over me. My pride is making me

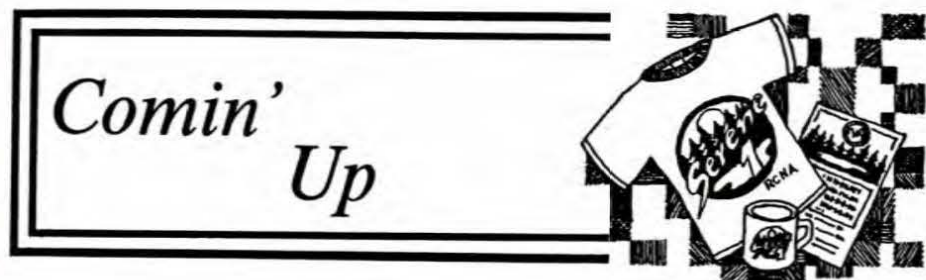
inferior to you. Pride is blocking my being part of. It makes me think I am different than you—sicker; therefore, I am apart from you. I isolate. Self-pity sets in. My disease tells me I need a special program. My problems are worse than yours. Recovery is then out the window, and staying clean is in jeopardy.

My recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is dependent on my being just another addict to carry the message. I must exercise humility by being no

better or worse, no sicker or more recovered than you. I cannot afford to be different than you. I need you in order to stay clean. I must work the same spiritual program of Narcotics Anonymous as you do, in order to stay clean and recover as you do.

I don't use that phrase anymore. You plus me is We, in recovery together.

*M.S., California*



*This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.*

**ARIZONA:** May 22-24, 1987; 1st Annual Arizona Regional Convention; ARCNA-I; Doubletree Hotel, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711; (602) Jeff 841-0046; Connie 398-9442

**AUSTRALIA:** Apr 17-20, 1987; 3rd Australasian Convention Easter '87; Glenelg Town Hall, Moseley Square Glenelg; Tony M. 085-366124

**CALIFORNIA:** July 10-12, 1987; San Diego Imperial Regional Convention III; Holiday Inn at Embarcadero, 1355 Harbor Drive, San Diego; (619) Elisa 563-1759; Olga 296-2920; Ron 282-6777

**CANADA:** June 12-14; Edmonton 2nd Annual Convention; Garneau Community Hall, 10943 84th Avenue, Eventon,

Alberta; (403) Neil 465-5424; Sue 464-2805

**2) (CANCELED)** Apr 10-12 1987; 1st Annl Ontario Reg Conf

**CONNECTICUT:** June 5-7, 1987; G.W.A.N.A.'S 1st Annl Family Campout; Lone Oak Campsites, Route 44, East Canaan, Ct.; (203) Jim 264-0911; Ken 734-2416; LuAnn 792-6643

**FLORIDA:** July 2-5, 1987; FRCNA 6; Diplomat Hotel, 3515 South Ocean Dr., Hollywood, FL 33019, (305) Mike 564-1262; Chris 891-1867; Bee Gee 565-7312

**ILLINOIS:** June 26-28, 1987; 3rd Annual Flight to Freedom Campout; Coy's & Wilma's Campground, Rend Lake, Sesser, IL; (618) Vicky 242-5968; Mark 532-1327



2) July 24-26, 1987; 3rd Mid-Coast Convention; Holiday Inn, 7550 E. State St., Rockford, Ill 61107; (815)398-2200; Greg 963-5811

**IOWA:** July 3-5, 1987; IRCNA IV; Civic Center Holiday Inn, 4th & Commercial, Waterloo, IA; (800)465-4329; Don (319) 233-2906; Paul (515) 274-4347

**KENTUCKY:** April 10-12, 1987; KRCNAI; Ramada Inn, 4767 Scottsville Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101; Deanie (502)843-8209

**LOUISIANA:** Sept. 3-7, 1987; World Convention; WCNA 17; Sheraton New Orleans Hotel & Towers, 500 Canal St., New Orleans, LA 70130; (504)525-2500

**MASSACHUSETTS:** Apr 17-19, 1987; 2nd New England Reg Conv; Marriott Hotel, Springfield, MA; NERC II, Box 422, Chicopee, MA 01021; (413) Steve 736-3979; Nancy 593-3809

**MICHIGAN:** July 2-5 1987; Freedom III MRCNA; Hyatt-Regency, P.O. Box 525, Flint, MI 48501; (313) Jim 233-4704; Mike 232-7490

**MISSISSIPPI:** April 3-5, 1987; MR-CNAV; Best Western Trace Inn; (Hwy 6 & Natchez Trace) Tupelo, MS; Allen (601)862-7334

**MISSOURI:** June 5-7, 1987; 2nd Annual Show-Me Regional Convention; Ramada Hotel, 2431 N. Glenstone, Springfield, MO; Bob R. (417)358-5800; (800)781-0500

**NEVADA:** July 10-12, 1987; 1st Sierra Sage Regional Convention '87; Peppermill Inn & Casino (702)826-2121; (800)648-6992

2) Aug 27-30, 1987; 5th Annual Stampede for Serenity Campout; (702) 322-4811

**NEW JERSEY:** May 8-10, 1987; 2nd Annual Jersey Convention; P.O.Box 597; Manasquan, NJ 08736; (201) Nancy 223-2909; Karin 483-0310; Interested Speakers submit tapes to Program Comm, Rd 1, Box 222, Pennington-Mt. Rose Rd., Pennington, NJ 08534, Tom (609) 737-8791

2) July 17-19, 1987; 4th Annual Powerless in the Pines Campout; Sonya

F. (609) 227-2319

**NEW MEXICO:** July 3-5, 1987; WSUC IV; Box 37558, Albuquerque, NM 87176; Susan (505) 984-2305, Debra (505) 982-8650, Bill (505) 984-1469

**NEW YORK:** May 29-31, 1987; Freedom Three; Third Annual Greater NY Reg Conv; Stevensville Country Club, Swan Lake, NY; (718) Danny 347-6643; Tina 342-5233

**NORTH CAROLINA:** June 26-28, 1987; Carolina Regional Convention; Marriot Executive Center, I-77 & Tyvola, Charlotte, NC; David (919) 847-5682; Rich (803) 235-7485; (704) 527-2091

**OHIO:** April 4, 1987; Buckeye Region Unity Day; St. Patricks Ch. W. 38th & Bridge, Cleveland, OH

2) May 22-24, 1987; Ohio Reg Conv; Holiday Inn Cascade Plaza, Akron, OH 44372; Please submit speaker tapes for consideration to ORCNA V; Box 5837, Akron, OH 44372; (216) Meredith 832-5361; Curt 453-1758; Gary 864-8175

3) June 12-14, 1987; 8th ECCNA; Kent State University, Kent, OH; P.O. Box 1492, Youngstown, OH 45501; (216) Bob 545-4387; Laura 898-2176; Roy 638-7895

4) July 17-19, 1987; 3rd CCANA; Camp Vention; Summit Valley Park, Summitville, OH 43926; (216) Rusty 385-5761; Bill 424-7681

**OREGON:** Apr 4-5, 1987; OSI Regional Service Conference; Bend, Oregon; (503) Tom 382-3324; Ericka 382-2480; Joyce P. 388-2168

2) July 24-26, 1987; 2nd Annual Oregon & Southern Idaho Reg Conv; Black Angus/Executive Inn, Salem, OR; (503) Barry 371-7928; Larry 371-7782

**WEST VIRGINIA:** May 8-10, 1987; WVCNA-IV; Cedar Lakes Camp & Conference Center, Ripley, WV; (304) 372-7000

**WISCONSIN:** Oct. 23-25, 1987; WSNAC IV; P.O. Box 1688, Oshkosh, WI 54902-1688; If interested in speaking or chairing workshops, submit speaker tapes for consideration. (414) Gene, Phil or Steve 231-6219



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## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.  
*For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving*
2. God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.  
*An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
6. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
7. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
8. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
9. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.  
*Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*
10. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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**My Gratitude Speaks  
When I Care  
And When I Share  
With Others  
The N.A. Way.**