

# THE N.A. Way<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E

December 1988

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What does God look like?  
See "Photograph"

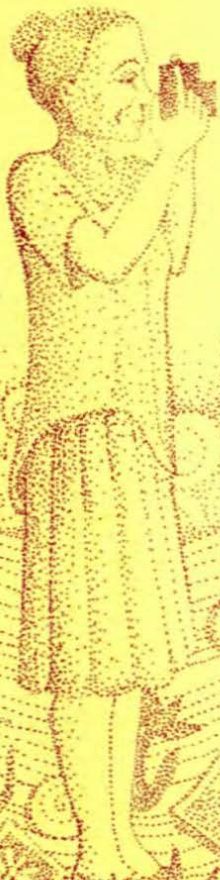
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WCNA explosion!

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Special holiday gift  
subscription offer

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## 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.

# THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

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volume six, number twelve

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The N.A. Way magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

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## Staying clean on the inside

I have a tremendous amount of gratitude today, because my higher power has given me my life back in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. I was one of those addicts who truly believed I would use until it killed me, or until someone out there on the streets killed me (my devotion to the crime that supported my addiction was quite serious).

I heard of N.A. in detention while facing a prison sentence. During my eighteen year addiction, I'd spent nearly eleven years in different prisons and institutions. I'd also spent two years of my life in different therapeutic communities, only to come back out and use all over again once I was released.

I was raised by decent, hard working parents who did their best to lead me in the right direction. But being accepted by my peers was much more important to me than what my parents wanted. At that time, "dressing 'fly' and getting high" was what was happening, and if you weren't about either, you were a "lame." I was determined to be part of what was happening if it killed me. As I look

back I realize that God, as I understand Him, was with me then, because many times I nearly *did* kill myself.

My "war story" started out with cheap wine and hangovers that made me feel as if I had slept in the gutter during a hail storm all night. It progressed on through just about every kind of drug, and every method of delivery. I was always looking for a drug like no other drug I had found before. Every time I thought I had found it, my addiction would bring a great deal of pain and misery into my life and into the lives of people who loved me.

Throughout it all, it never occurred to me exactly what my problem was. I was always an addict who looked outside of myself for the answer to my problems. At various times I looked to women, religion, philosophy and physical fitness as the forces in my life to keep me on the right track; but each time I returned to the same madness.

I did a lot of time in prison. Sometimes I could stay clean inside for a while through religion and therapy, but it didn't take long to get back into drugs again once I was released.

After two final busts (which I managed to get around), two parole violations and a stay in a therapeutic community, I got arrested for the last time. I remember sitting on my bunk when the reality of my addiction finally hit me. I was miserable, beaten and desperate. I recall silently praying to God as I came to understand Him, asking Him—begging Him—to please stop the pain in my life! That pain had always managed to lead me back to prison or to put me back out on the street with nowhere to go. At that moment, I heard the corrections offi-

cer on duty shout "N.A." to the inmates. I went along with a few of the others to my first meeting.

I wasn't as open-minded as I would like to have been at that first Nar-

I recall  
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cotics Anonymous meeting. My disease told me there was *no way* that any dope fiend who had used drugs for over fifteen years like myself could stay clean without getting high off something. Yet, I was actually impressed with the two recovering addicts who brought in the message. Their honesty, humility and love made me ask myself how long I could continue to go on using drugs and doing burglaries. I felt like a desperate rat who had run out of holes to escape into.

After that first N.A. meeting, I had prayed to the God of my understanding for direction. Two nights later, they called out "N.A." once again. This time, I was much more receptive. I looked forward to hearing that message of encouragement, and to feeling in that little room the love so lacking in the rest of the detention center.

The second meeting was even more powerful than the first. I was able to

identify with the speaker from that meeting even more. I suddenly wanted what these guys had. After all, my way of thinking and living had led to a dead-end street in hell. I wanted no part of that lifestyle and all the pain it brought me anymore. It then dawned on me that my Higher Power had answered my prayers by leading me to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous.

I stayed clean from that point on. For the rest of my two year imprisonment, I attended N.A. meetings whenever they were held. I got hold of an N.A. Basic Text and incorporated the steps into my life "behind the wall" as best as I could. In spite of the environment where drugs were easy to get, and the many pressures and mishaps I experienced during my stay, I chose to stay clean. N.A. was my bridge back to life, and with God's help I was determined to walk over it.

I made parole in March of 1988. I got connected with Narcotics Anonymous in the "free world" within the same week. Since then I've attended meetings regularly, got myself two sponsors, and got a chance to give what I got back. I've gone into a few prisons to speak, letting the men inside know that if it can work for a cynical addict like I was, it can work for anyone. What more can I say? It works if you work it!

D.W., New York





# Walking through it—with help

I'm sitting here reading a copy of the *N.A. Way*, recovering from my second surgery since I've been clean. This one was pretty minor compared to the last one, but no surgery is minor to me, a recovering addict, if I have to be exposed to mind-altering chemicals. You see I was a "prescribed medication" addict for fifteen years behind multiple spinal surgeries.

The truth is that once my disease surfaced, I used anything that was available. It just so happened that, because of my physical issue, I had lots of enablers, and my justifications and rationalizations seemed more acceptable. If I had found one more enabler out there, I probably would have died.

Now that I look back at it, I realize that I had to go through everything I went through in order to get here. I thank God that it stopped working, and that I was introduced to N.A. and found a new way to live. That includes coping with daily pain without having to use.

The first time I had surgery in recovery was a big deal to me. Until then I had this "black cloud" behind

my head telling me that this being clean stuff is great, and you people in N.A. are great, and I can sure see how it works for you, but—here comes the "yeah-but"—I'm different. I have this physical issue. I love you guys, but with this broken bone in my neck something probably will happen, and when my first surgery becomes necessary I won't be able to stay.

I worked my ass off. I wrote a special inventory, shared it with my sponsor, told every doctor and nurse at the hospital that I was a recovering addict, and turned it all over to God. I came through it with flying colors, and only had to use medication for three days. My black cloud was gone.

Now, a few years later, when another surgery became necessary, I still remembered what I had to do. I asked for a lot more help this time, and I sure got it. My friends in N.A. helped

**I'm different.  
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me through once again. My God is so kind to me, he carries me through anything; all I have to do is ask.

Sometimes I can't understand why I need these "opportunities for growth" right now. Of course, if it were up to me, based on my old best thinking, I'd still be locked in my room with the



drapes drawn and the phone off the hook. So I think I'll let God handle it today.

I've never had it so good. On September 22, 1988, I'll have four years clean. Amazing! I am looking forward with curiosity and faith for the changes to come. All I know today is that through God, the steps and the Fellowship of N.A., I don't ever have to use again—regardless. And life can be wonderful.

Today, I have a wonderful rela-

tionship with a man in recovery. I have been given the gift of some awesome women friends. I have the privilege of working with newcomer women. I'm allowed to be of service in the fellowship. I have a loving God who carries me when I can't walk, and rejoices with me when I can. We are wondrous people. Please stay and enjoy recovery with us. I will. I know I can now—no matter what. Thank God!

*B.M., California*



# The mistrusted servant

How or where do I begin? Step Nine is difficult. God help me be honest and humble enough to do what I need to do today: "Narcotics Anonymous, I am sorry for my unacceptable behavior as a servant you trusted."

I was the H&I secretary for a Monday night meeting at the clinic. That year and a half of monotonous service kept me clean. The rewards were so great, and I was unable to give back that miracle. Few are still around who remember the incident. I, however, remember it always.

I was extremely angry over our H&I chair's irresponsibility, and the ASC's unwillingness to take action. Personalities were heavily involved. On my high horse, I got to the point of striking back—the only coping skill I was familiar with. I walked off in anger with hundreds of dollars in literature, the contact list for that facility, and all the batteries and wires to our sound system. Everything except the literature is on the bottom of a lake today.

Shame for my actions drove me

away. For several months I went to the other fellowship because N.A. "was so immature." While I was away from N.A. I moved to another city. I snuck out of town, never saying goodbye. That's what hurts. I really did love you.

I justified the stolen literature by packing it with me. My new town was into photocopying literature (the undeveloped fellowship in growing pains). The stockpile I gave them was used wisely—but it was stolen literature. Still, the move did get me back to N.A. and once again into service work.

Denial of my behavior broke when I took on a service position at the regional level. Overwhelming guilt consumed my daily life, sharply affecting the quality of work I was able to put forth in this committee. I felt the shame of not being able to look into another servant's eye. If they ever knew what I had done, they would certainly never have nominated me.

The process of dealing with what I had done was a long one. At a convention this past summer, I got stuck with this woman as my Step Nine partner in a workshop. She was also on the Regional Service Committee, and her old man is our RSR. Certainly she would see to my resignation if I got honest. (Our fellowship frowns upon that sort of thing.) Nonetheless, I went ahead.

For the first time in my recovery I told another addict the whole true story, cut and dried, without any justification. I had acted immaturely out of a sick desire for revenge. That ASC had been doing the best they could at the time. Unfortunately, the H&I system was just not good enough for my expectations.

My Step Nine partner, whom I expected to judge me with no mercy, still loved me. The region wasn't going

**"Narcotics Anonymous, I am sorry for my unacceptable behavior as a servant you trusted."**

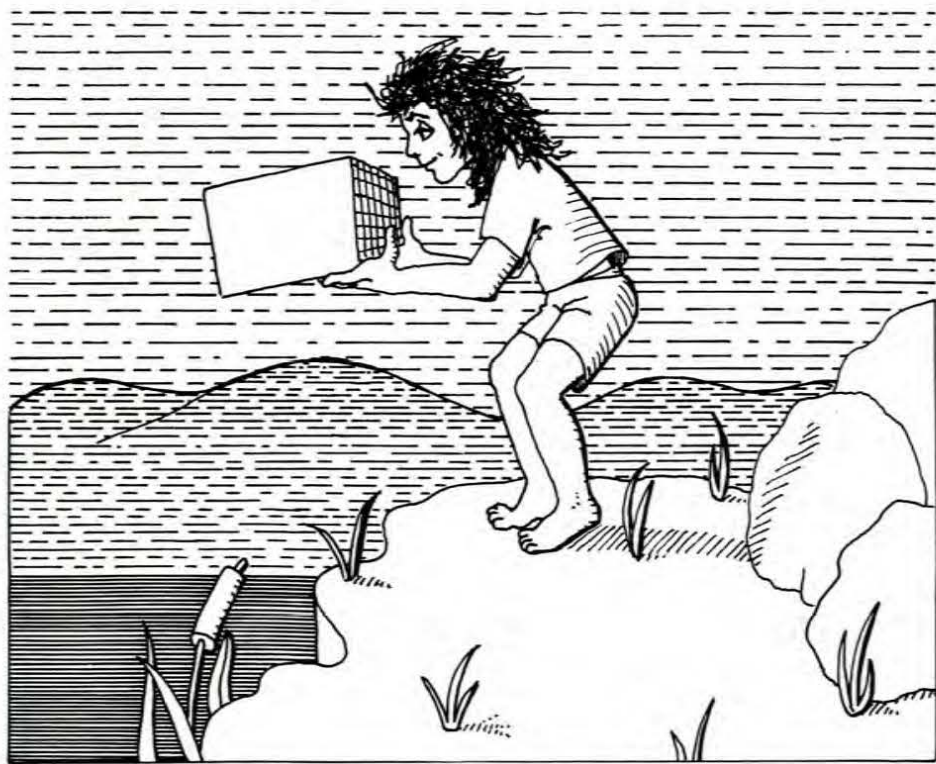
to fire me over something two years and two-thousand miles ago. What a relief to share that shame! She hugged me and said, "Keep coming back." I

believed I was okay again. She reinforced that faith in unconditional love.

To that H&I meeting and that area, there is not much I can do except give back the literature stockpile and begin to live a more spiritual program today. And what I can do for myself is not to repeat the action that causes guilt.

I seem to be hearing a lot lately about group treasurers disappearing with our money, recovery texts vanishing by the boxes and other materials that grow legs. Who am I to judge that? I have been there, and I know what it's about. But to the mistrusted servant: don't use, go to meetings and one day it can be made right. Narcotics Anonymous does not need us, but how we need N.A.!

*Anonymous*





# Photograph

Yesterday my husband and I decided on impulse to call all our friends back home. The ever-familiar voices of people who loved us when we could not love ourselves. His sponsor, my sponsor, and everyone in between.

So many have stayed clean. We got the "scoop" on who married whom, how many program babies have arrived, who's working where, and how many new groups have started. Just think when once upon a time we were frightened newcomers hanging on for dear life. The good ol' days when life was simple. When food, water, air and N.A. were all we needed to live.

I felt slightly homesick. I asked the husband if there was ever a chance to return. It's time we started planning another family. I would like to raise kids who know their relatives, and have my step-daughter involved in our lives. I feel displaced here. This could never be a real home.

Two years ago we moved to this place not knowing anyone. Lifestyles had to drastically change. Don't ask why; I am still trying to figure this whole thing out.

Today the husband and I were sharing about how our recovery has changed here. One good thing is that he has come over to N.A. (he chose recovery elsewhere prior) and loves what we have.

For myself? If somebody had told me I would have to travel hundreds of miles for a meeting, I would not have believed it. But now there is nothing unusual about taking a Twelfth Step call from the next town, seventy miles down the road. When my life depends on reaching out, that extra effort becomes real. There is no choice anymore—do it or die.

After we moved, guidance was no longer offered on a silver platter. I did not understand the underdeveloped N.A. community, nor did I know how to be of service. I had been used to being told what to do—and doing it. Here, there were no easy answers. The N.A. I knew back home was not comprehensible to people here. Nobody could even imagine the fellowship I described to them. It was a strange, alien concept. Fitting in here was most difficult. "The Yankee from

I kept hoping for  
a lightning bolt.  
Instead, I received  
a sunset.

Yankee N.A." Today that nickname has stuck, and I don't mind it anymore.

I found myself going through the pain of the "founder's ego syndrome," even though I did not found the group (I simply introduced the service structure). I met challenges like pride, self-centeredness and ego. After twenty months, I missed my first ASC. They survived without my "words of wisdom." They got what they needed from each other. They know where the regional committee meets if there are

any questions. That's a personal miracle in my life. I know through experience—through major mistakes, in fact—how *not* to be of service.

With N.A. no longer on every street corner like it was back home, with meetings so few and far between, how I have grown to appreciate the little things. How desperately we need newcomers! I no longer take recovery for granted. My passion for this fellowship has multiplied a hundred times here. I have seen loners traveling into town from all over to the nearest "addicts' sanctuary." Our little group is the only one around. Words cannot describe the gratitude.

I learned there is a wilderness outside my front door just calling a Yankee to come and discover it. "So this is what a lizard looks like." I took up photography, and found out there is much beauty here. I used the time I spent in silence to search for who I am. My God had a purpose in our moving here. He knew there was only one way to make me listen, so He placed me where His voice could be heard a little more clearly.

To be honest, at three years clean there was still no Higher Power in my life. I was unique and did not need one. On an excursion one day, I discovered the most awesome paradise in the whole state! Like a child, I sought out every beautiful sight. I told my husband that if there is a heaven, surely it looks like this. He did not agree, and questioned how that could be if I don't even have a loving God in my life? Well, maybe there is something I don't know.

Throughout that summer I kept

going back, hoping for a lightning bolt. Instead, I received a sunset. Maybe I am the first person who ever captured a spiritual awakening on film. My sponsees laugh at me when I introduce them to my loving God: "See that picture—that's my God. Who's yours?" My concept sure beats no concept at all. When evening comes my girls watch west and help me decide what pictures would be nice. It's always best after a storm.

My sponsor is presently helping me learn how to pray. The suggestions have worked, and miracles are happening faster than I can give thanks.

I am glad this place has been a part of my life. Yet we've pretty much decided to head back east in a few years. In any case, I know these gifts can continue. I can go back home with recovery, with a passion for N.A., and with a loving God.

Anonymous





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## Step Six: I had to do the first Five

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Step Six reads like it wants us to turn into saints: "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." However, I believe that this step describes a star that we shoot for. It's the direction in which we should be heading. I know that I will never do it perfectly, but if I am *willing* to work this step, I will probably stay clean.

I could not take Step Six at the beginning. I had to do much work on the other steps first. Our Basic Text prefaces the explanations of the steps with, "We learn to work the steps in the order that they are written..."

First, I had to accept that I did have defects. Then I had to put them down on paper and to tell someone about them. Going to meetings and hearing others relate their defects greatly helped me.

Some are sicker than others. I had to do more than simply list my wrongs; I had to discover the threads which connected my character defects. None of them existed in isolation. I had to see how problems throughout my life

were all linked together. My sponsor was an enormous help.

Along with much work at meditating, sharing with others and writing inventories, I had to become motivated to change. I could not be forced to stop using. I had to want to be clean. I had to have the desire. The same held true for my desire to change in other areas. No person or institution could give that desire to me.

Pain was my great motivator—the pain caused by my patterns of thinking and behaving. My pain forced me to share with others, and it gave me the desire to change.

Nevertheless, changing was not easy, nor was it quick. I suffered the same emotional pain over and over again. Very gradually I became aware—and then accepted—that I had myself contributed to the pain in my life.

### Pain was my great motivator—the pain caused by my patterns of thinking and behavior.

This acceptance was humbling. For years, I had blamed my parents, my teachers, and my bosses. I had enjoyed making others laugh as I described how the nuns in elementary school had pounded by head against the walls and desks. It never occurred to me to mention that I did not behave, and that I would not or could not follow any directions.

My efforts to change in recovery did not occur in a vacuum. I believe that God speaks through the people in the meeting rooms. Going to meetings and sharing with other members has made my journey of self-discovery easier. Most importantly, my brothers and sisters in the program have given me trust and faith in the steps. I saw their lives transformed, and I wanted what they had.

My explorations into my head have produced many revelations. I have felt as though I were peeling an onion. Each time I came to something that looked smooth, I thought I was finished; hence, I thought I should move on to something else, like amassing a fortune.

At one point, I found that I caused myself much pain by not practicing HALT: I let myself get too hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. My characteristic pattern was to work long hours, getting hungry, lonely, and tired, then getting angry since others were not killing themselves working like I did. Typically, this cycle would conclude with a bad cold, a case of strep throat, or a depression.

I really thought I had discovered myself with this insight. But this was just a start. For my serenity, I had to uncover my reasons for pushing myself to work so much. Later, I realized that I was trying to overcome inferiority feelings from my childhood. I was trying to overcome inferiorities that were really not even there.

At the time, I inwardly believed that no one could love me because I was not good enough to be loved. I thought that, in order to be lovable, I had to be

a natural athlete as well as a super-intelligent person who never had to study to get good grades.

My efforts to correct my "inferiorities" went on for many years. I became a better than average wrestler, and an extremely educated man. But it wasn't enough. Each athletic or academic height scaled seemed only to spur me on to look for bigger mountains to climb. Well, back to the trenches, back to the steps I had to go.

As I "peeled the onion" in my efforts to be relieved of my defects of character, I continued to find deeper layers in my soul. I did not want to be just as good as others—I wanted to be better. I wanted to be the best. I wanted to be number one, and I wanted everyone to know it. Most of all, I wanted others to praise me endlessly for my accomplishments. I learned to see these defects on a deeper level, and began to learn to let go of them.

Being clean now for a number of years, and looking and smelling like a "normal" person (having two cars, a VCR, and a computer), I tend to forget where I came from. Meetings remind me of how far this fellowship has carried me; they fill me with gratitude. In my last years of using, I did not want to live. Today, I do.

I am sure that I have not uncovered all of my defects with all of their ramifications, and that I have a ways to go in getting entirely ready to have them removed. But I am sure that if I continue attending meetings and continue being willing to work the steps, I will get better.

J.S., New York



## Travelin' recovery

I just went on my first real vacation. That may not sound like a big deal to you, but after fifteen years of active addiction and a little over three years of N.A. recovery, it was a big deal to me. Once again this program and that power greater than myself afforded me an opportunity to experience things I had never dreamed possible.

A little over six months ago some friends and I decided that we would go to the East Coast Convention, and that as long as we were there we would make it a vacation. I don't know how many times I had made similar plans, only to let my addiction take control and fail to fulfill them. But this time it was different. I entered a savings plan at work, and part of each paycheck was taken out and placed in a savings account. With this money—enough to purchase an airplane ticket with a little left over—we were off.

On the night before we were going to leave, I was haunted by that old familiar defect. Fear had haunted me all my life. It had kept me from becoming that person I dreamed of becoming, and it had kept my addiction running for a long time after I thought I had enough.

I became entirely ready to give my

ticket to a friend and stay home.

Once again, had it not been for this program, I would have done just that. This fellowship has given me the tools to combat my fear. I know that to give in to my fear is to feed my disease, so I surrender instead, trusting that I am not alone. My H.P. is always with me to protect, guide and love me.

After a relatively uneventful flight we landed in Boston, and a friend I had met in California last year was there to meet us. We did a little sightseeing, and then went to a meeting. I didn't know that the meeting would be in the city's high crime and drug area. While we were driving to the meeting I started to regret going. "What the hell am I doing here?" I asked myself.

After trying to follow directions, but taking what seemed like endless wrong turns, we finally arrived at the meeting hall. I reluctantly got out of the car and scurried across the street. I was feeling scared, alone and different. A fellow came up to us and introduced himself. He related to what was apparently our obvious fear, because he

**I became  
entirely ready to  
give my ticket to a  
friend and stay  
home.**

said he would probably be feeling the same in our neighborhood as we did in his. He also said that he was there for the meeting. Upon hearing this my fear left; I felt safe, cared about and at



home. We stayed for the meeting, met a few people and headed out for New Hampshire and the convention.

We spent four days at the convention site, and because our friends were on the committee we were able to help. The convention was good, and I met a lot of new recovering addicts. I left with the feeling of renewed hope and vigor, and a reaffirmed commitment to Narcotics Anonymous. I also felt some uncertainty as to what we were going to do next.

This time I didn't get a chance to feed that fear before another friend from Florida found us and invited us to take a trip up to Maine for the night. We went to Maine, and the next day New Hampshire, and then New York, New Jersey, back to Boston and

up to Montreal.

Every place we went, we met recovering addicts who made us feel safe and at home. They took us to meetings, and as if that weren't enough, they fed us and either paid for a hotel or allowed us to stay in their homes. I never imagined that I would get to know so many people, or be so willing to share myself and my feelings. I got a new feel for "the ties that bind."

I got home ten days later a little sad, yet feeling good. I had an even greater commitment to Narcotics Anonymous, the program that not only saved my life, but more importantly, is teaching me how to live and enjoy it.

And now on to Orlando.

D.M., California



# Requiem

They told me when I got here that we have a fatal disease, and that some of us die from it. I believed it then, I was so close to death myself. In time I forgot; I let you into my heart and my life, and trusted that you would always be here with me. I forgot that some of us die.

I do remember the despair I felt for so many years. I remember the hopelessness of my using days, when death would have been a relief. But I don't have to feel that despair today. It's been replaced with faith, and when my

**We struggle so hard to carry the message to the addict out there. How did we forget the addict who still suffers in these rooms?**

faith slips, at least I have hope, the wanting to believe.

What pain or frustration or anger was great enough, what feeling did you lack, to send you back to the spoon?

Why do we throw away this gift? I remember throwing it away once and not coming back of my own will. I was powerfully aware then that it was a power greater than myself that got me back safely. When my willingness slipped, something bigger than me did the work.

But I forget so easily. I had already forgotten by the time the first friend threw away the gift and died. And then I forgot again. And each time one of us throws away the gift, the pain is brand new.

We struggle so hard to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, so "that no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life." How did we forget the addict who still suffers in these rooms?

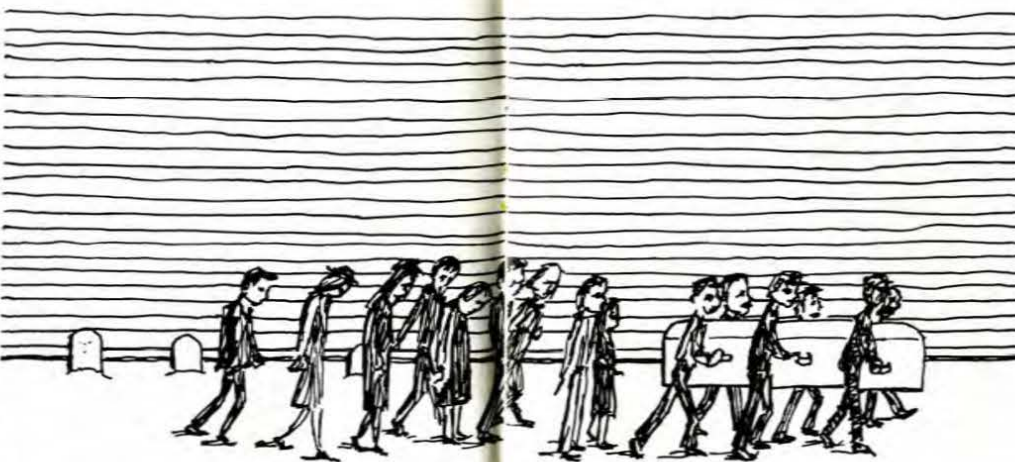
The day I heard about your death, I got a painful gift. I had an opportunity to carry the message to several addicts who wanted to stop using—and they were using the drug that killed you. As I looked at each person I

thought, "Why couldn't you have called?" And each time I asked God to work through me, to let me carry the message so that others may live.

Some day I hope we can dispel the idea that when we have a few years clean, everything gets wonderful. Some day I hope it will be okay for those who have been here awhile to express their pain, their anger and frustration; to be human and ask for help. We need that help as much as the newcomer at times. For some of us, that pride is as much to blame as the drug that finally finishes us off.

So our lives go on without you. We continue to recover, feeling the pain of your loss. The death of any one of us diminishes us all. It also makes us whole: the shock of that death wakes many of us from complacency. We will work the steps with greater intensity, go to more meetings to share our grief and fear. We will reach out more often to those we see suffering. We will breathe the air and feel the sun a little more gratefully, for awhile...until we forget again.

*Anonymous, California*



## We need stories!

Remember, this section of the *N.A. Way* is *your* meeting in print. Like any other meeting you're a part of, you'll get the most out of this one by participating.

### Who writes stories?

You do!

The stories you see in this magazine are written by *N.A.* members—like you! You don't need to be a "great writer." All you need is your personal experience in recovery, and the willingness to share it. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. In every sense, that's the *N.A. Way*.

### What do I write?

Share as you would at any other meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about at a recent meeting? Are you on a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a recent turning point in your personal recovery? Share it with your fellow *N.A. Way* readers. We'd love to hear from you!



## God's will as I understand it

Today, I have an understanding of what my God's will for me is. I no longer have to wonder and wait for it to be revealed. It's been in front of me the whole time during my recovery.

It's in the steps, the traditions, the meetings and other addicts. I had only to become aware of it. Today, as I understand God's will for me, it is that I experience this love by learning to love myself and others, and to let others love me. With His help, usually through other addicts, I'm given the power to carry that out.

I am able to love myself by letting go of defects and replacing them with spiritual principles. Loving myself comes when I accept the fact that I suffer from a disease called addiction, and I stop beating myself up for the things I did in the past.

Loving myself comes when I no longer have to wear any masks and can be myself in front of others. Accepting that I'm not perfect, and that it's okay to make mistakes, helps me to learn to love myself. Realizing that I have choices today and am no longer at the mercy of my childhood, my religion, my spouse or my addic-

tion allows me to love myself. Through the Fellowship of N.A., my Higher Power gives me the necessary tools to learn to love myself again—to realize I'm worth loving.

Also through the N.A. Fellowship, God allows me to be able to love others. I care if an addict stays clean; I listen to another addict's pain, sharing my experience, strength and hope. All this teaches me to love.

I also get the opportunity to learn to love others by showing up at meetings, sponsoring newcomers and doing service work. Knowing first hand someone else's feelings of pain, fear and confusion allows me to love. I have learned to accept and love myself through being accepted and loved by those who came before me, who saw themselves in me.

The love I have for my Higher Power today is overwhelming. He sees fit to make His love for me real in many, many ways. I'm filled with love for Him when I sit outside in the early morning and watch the beauty of

I am no longer at the mercy of either my childhood, my religion, or my addiction. That lets me love myself.

nature come alive. I've asked for His help when I've been caught up in isolation and self pity, only to have the

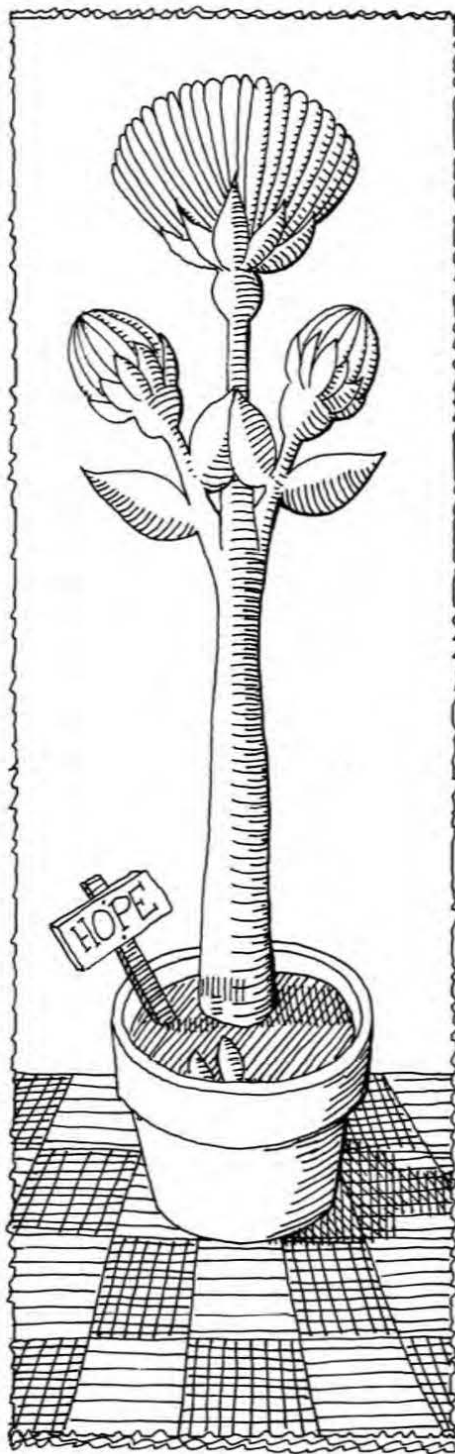
phone ring and a loving addict on the other end tell me they were thinking of me.

Most of all I've come to love my Higher Power because He *always* gives me the strength and courage to do those things I'm still afraid to do today: to share my honest feelings with others; to take daily inventories of my thoughts, words and actions; to turn over my attempts to control people and situations; in short, to keep doing all of those things necessary for me to stay clean and serene.

Before coming into the Fellowship of N.A. five years ago, I had searched endlessly for the feelings that love brings. I didn't realize that in all those years of pain and misery, while feeling lonely and abandoned by God, all He ever wanted for me was to love and be loved. He had been there the whole time trying to give me what I so desperately needed and wanted. I was just too sick to know it. Today, in the giving and receiving of love, I'm finally able to feel whole. God has made manifest His abundant love in my life today, by allowing me to finally feel it when given to me through others, and by giving it to me to share with others in return.

My Higher Power's will for me today is to experience His infinite love in all the areas of my life. "Just for today," by giving love, I'm able to experience patience, tolerance and compassion. "Just for today," by receiving love, I'm able to experience faith, gratitude and hope. "Just for today," I love, I live and I grow. "So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear."

*Anonymous, Tennessee*





## One-pointed desire

Narcotics Anonymous is not the only worthwhile organization there is. There are people involved in education, politics, historical preservation, the arts—the list could go on forever. I believe each person has a significant place in this world. I feel that I needed a one-pointed devotion to N.A. to discover mine. I feel our common bond in N.A. is our recovery from the disease of addiction. Our purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

I have chosen the N.A. way as my spiritual path, and I look for those who are doing—or who may come to do—the same. But in choosing one path, I no longer negate other ways. I now believe that each person surrenders through God's grace. I have met people living recovery in other programs. I assume that they have surrendered to their program and are as fully dedicated to the program they follow as I am to the path of N.A. The kind of recovery I trust they have is what I get from my devotion to recovery in N.A.

I felt welcome when I got here. Through the process of recovery, I have learned to try to make you feel

welcome as well. "If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the principles that made our recovery possible."

I was not willing to do this when I got here. I wanted to invent a new program. In fact, I did not want to have anything to do with reading from our recovery text (except at a recovery text meeting). If I actually read the definitive book on recovery from addiction, how could I write my own book and become famous!

It was my loneliness and isolation that kept me coming back. Even though I was drug free, I was still hopelessly addicted and unable to admit it. I kept coming for a year and a half, and I kept going to more than one fellowship. For me, that meant running my own recovery program and hiding from N.A. Finally, I surrendered to N.A.

A weight was lifted from me that day, and I spent the next year and a half trying to tell people about that surrender and learning to live it. I am still doing that. Only a few wanted to hear what I was saying back then. They are my closest friends today. We travel the path together, and we grow together. We care and share the N.A. way, and we reach out to those who would join us.

Through living that way of life, I eventually came to a place in recovery where I had to become one-pointed: devoted to one program (I was given the N.A. program). This is as important to my recovery today as it has been since my surrender to N.A.

For my very life, I have accepted this

program as it is, and for what it will grow to become. I can be a part of that growth today, and together we can change with the help of "a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."

When I surrendered to N.A., I accepted an N.A. sponsor into my life. I also accepted the fact that help was available from all the dedicated N.A. members whom I would need to rely upon for my recovery. My sponsor has been clean a year longer than I have, and I listen to him—and he listens to me. I thank God for those who went

**I believe each person has a significant place in this world. I feel that I needed a one-pointed devotion to N.A. to discover mine.**

before who are now here for me. I live "clean" in the world today. I believe that this is how our inner communication helps us to learn to live our message in the world.

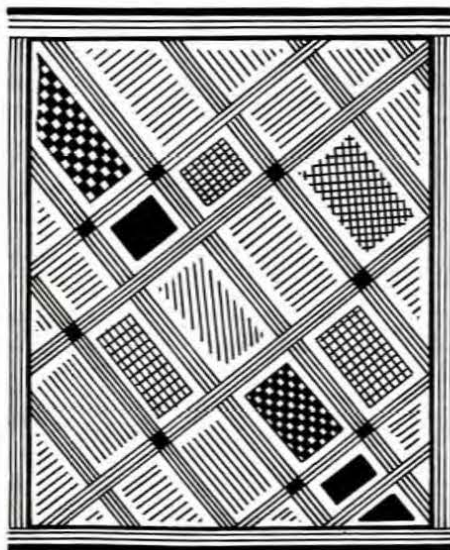
Being washed "clean" allows me to glimpse things beyond my old selfish desires. I can see recovery in others far down the N.A. line who have taken the time to reveal what N.A. has done for them, by showing me how they have come to live life on life's terms. I want what they have, and so I have had to go to the lengths that I have gone in order to be with such people who live and love the N.A. program.

I am experiencing a growing realization that there are many paths of service in this world, and that I have been chosen for the one I need. I accept that I am in the right place at the right time. I believe that in all types of groups there are a few people who have learned to recognize one another when they meet, and when they pray and meditate.

I am grateful for those who have found themselves being of service in whatever kind of group they are devoted to. I am grateful to N.A., because of those who continue to provide the patience and the time necessary for me to begin to experience the effects of a one-pointed devotion. Others are following their own personal calling; and just so, I am free to concentrate my efforts in N.A.

One of the gifts of devotion is the freedom to concentrate and become effective. I believe that N.A. is effective today as a place of recovery because of the gift of one-pointed devotion.

*Anonymous, Connecticut*





Personal  
experience  
as the N.A.  
Fellowship  
gathers in  
California for  
its 18th  
World  
Convention  
—and a  
recovery  
explosion

## Critical mass

*We sent an N.A. Way staff member into the crowds of N.A.'s 18th World Convention in September with a hand-held recorder. His job was to capture the spirit of the event and pass it along to you. If you were there, here's a walk through the memories. If not, we've brought a little piece of it to you.*

I've never seen anything like this! The Saturday night banquet is over, and we're starting the big speaker meeting at N.A.'s 18th World Convention—and the hall is just absolutely packed. We're talking pretty close to a stadium-sized room at the Anaheim, California Convention Center—a hundred thousand square feet of floor space, enough chairs for almost seven thousand people, and another couple of thousand recovering addicts standing in the back.

A huge projection TV, almost movie-screen sized, has been set up to show the podium—people in the far back of the hall are almost a tenth of a mile away from the speaker, with no chance to see otherwise.

They've begun the roll call. People from thirteen countries outside the U.S. are here... California now, and it looks like three-quarters of the hall is standing, a sort of happy howling just about lifting the roof off this place.

Now we're in the clean time countdown. A

woman stood up with twenty-seven years, the longest here... The bulge seems to be in the two to five year range. One thing kind of neat about the world convention countdowns is that, this year, it's clear that better than 90% of the addicts attending have more than a year clean—and that's just not been the case in years past.

Now they're counting the days down out there, and the excitement is rising. One guy near me held up his newborn daughter at the call for fifteen days clean, to tumultuous cheers.

Now we're down to "one day," and, yes, pushing their way through the crowd are a crew of extremely new newcomers who are being encouraged to come to the stage, stand in front of this ecstatic audience and accept copies of the Basic Text from the convention organizing committee. The spectators are thunderously chanting "Keep Coming Back, Keep Coming Back, Keep Coming Back" as our very newest members move forward, never to be the same again.

Now the traditions are being read at the largest N.A. meeting ever held. I would venture to guess that there are ten thousand people here tonight. Awesome.

The main speaker finally comes to the podium after the audience has settled down (relatively). "Stu, you were right—you can't see past the first four-thousand! Am I really on a screen up there? ("Yesss!" the audience responds.) Is my moustache on straight? ("Yesss!") My friends have been having a lot of fun with me. I'm one of those guys, boy, I'll rag you to death before you speak. But I've gotten calls on my answering machine for the last three weeks: 'They've sold ten-thousand banquet tickets. Click.'"

### Big Bang

You've heard of the Big Bang. You know, the humongous explosion at the beginning of time? The one that supposedly created the

### The first world convention

*B.B., California:* By 1970 we had probably ten to twelve meetings in the Los Angeles area—and that, plus a couple of meetings in Northern California, was all there was to N.A., pretty much. The year following that was when Narcotics Anonymous held its first convention. We called it a world convention—the world as we knew it.

It wasn't a big fancy deal like we have nowadays. It was held at La Mirada Country Club (just south of Los Angeles). Around two hundred people showed up—a pretty good-sized first convention. Most people stayed at friends' houses.

It was only a two day event: Saturday and Sunday morning. We had a meeting Saturday night. I gave a little history of N.A. up to then, and then I introduced Jimmy [one of the N.A. Fellowship's co-founders]. There was another meeting Sunday morning. And then we all drove home.



The final result was like a blast, a creative explosion grown out of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another"

universe and all therein (excluding certain small sections of L.A.'s west side)? That's a little what this convention felt like: a personal Big Bang, a new beginning.

The random energy running through the lobby and hallways of the Anaheim Hilton as clean addicts started coming together for the weekend. The attraction Narcotics Anonymous had been exerting the past year was gathering momentum, a low, throbbing pulse beginning to pump through the crowd. The hugs, the warm smiles of recognition as old friends met again and new friends were made.

This convention effected me more than I could have imagined. It's not like a regular meeting. Powerful as that is, you go, you get a small, distinct charge for an hour or two from sharing your recovery with a couple of dozen addicts, and you go home.

At this world convention, the electricity just kept growing, building and building among the hundreds of addicts in each of the dozens of workshops. The shared energy of eight thousand recovering people, rising hour after hour, day after day, created a charge greater than the sum of the smaller bits of personal renewal that were stirred into that nuclear soup.

The final result was like a blast, a creative explosion grown out of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another." That many people, that much recovery couldn't help but shake loose whatever weariness or complacency I had brought with me. And the shock waves of that blast are still being felt.

### International flavor

At world conventions, I like to sample some of the spicier bits of recovery shared by N.A. members from outside North America. This convention didn't disappoint me.

The Saturday morning international meeting didn't have the huge audience that some of the other workshops had. The room was set up for a couple hundred people, and at least half those chairs were empty. But those of us who

showed up were treated to some poignant moments.

Close to a dozen speakers—from Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America—talked about young N.A. in their countries. Some of their stories were especially moving, like the one from Barbados.

Barbados N.A. was born from one White Book finding its way to one addict sleeping on the floor of an overcrowded treatment center (there is only one center in the entire country). When that addict got out of treatment, he and a business associate—also an addict—started having meetings in a house.

For a while it was just the two of them. Each kept coming back, in the beginning, mostly because neither could bear the thought of forcing the other to have a meeting all by himself. "When I hear stories from other countries," the Barbadian speaker related, "I realize that our stories are all the same—same disease, just different people, different places."

My perspectives were broadened at this meeting, and I'm grateful for that. But what really impressed me the most about it was that the message—no matter the language or national setting—remains the same. *Never Alone—Never Again.*

### Isolated in a crowd

One of the meetings I'd been particularly looking forward to was a scheduled Saturday reunion of the N.A. Loner Group. Last winter I was assigned to do a feature on this group of brave addicts (it finally appeared in the May 1988 issue). These members are recovering in isolated parts of the world. Unable to attend regular meetings, they share their N.A. experience with one another through the mails. Their story touched me so much while I was working on it that I wanted to follow up on their progress at the world convention.

I dropped into the room set aside for the reunion, expecting to see eager, happy Loner Group members basking in one another's

### Hold hands, not drugs?

Some of those attending the Anaheim convention had to deal with a bit of culture shock. N.A. members in Southern California, the host region, did not seem as prone to spontaneous hugging as were many of their visitors from other parts of the U.S. It's just not as much a custom there as elsewhere.

Susie, the Sunday morning speaker, remarked on a similar culture clash at the world convention in London in 1986:

"Hugs! I used to hide behind pillars from some of you people. You all came to England at the world convention like this: 'Where we come from, we hug!' And we didn't."

"And so I found places to hide behind when I saw another army of The Huggers approaching. All their T-shirts read, 'Hugs Not Drugs.' 'Give Me A Hug.' 'A Hug Is A Miracle.' Oh, God! I felt like getting a shirt that said, 'I'm Susie, I'm English.'"



## Recovering service

It's a very different convention experience, being on the inside. "It's very easy to not recognize what the purpose of the event is when you're in the middle of putting it on," one World Convention Corporation board member shared with me. "And then something will touch you in the middle of an event. You're walking down a hall and you catch a small scrap of a conversation about recovery, or see a tear in somebody's eye, and it grabs you so hard. Or you see six thousand people hugging each other.

"Those times, it was such an overwhelming feeling that I couldn't do anything but thank God for the opportunity to do what I was doing, despite the fact that I was more tired than I had ever been before. Those times focussed me on what it was all about, crystal clear, for just a moment."

company, face-to-face with the friends they'd made from such great distances. I found lots of people—but none of them loner correspondents.

Instead, I met a group of regular N.A. members who'd somehow gotten lost in the crowd. These were people who felt isolated, alone amidst the multitudes. They saw "Loner Group" on the convention program, and came to the meeting hoping to share with others who might know where they were coming from.

I didn't hear any heavy wisdom from this crew. I heard them share their pain, and their hope that somehow by sharing it they could release that pain. And I felt it work. I saw them come alone—and I saw them leave with friends.

## Being there

Of course, there was lots more to the world convention this year: shows, workshops, dances, 'round-the-clock socializing—even the *lines* were recovery experiences. One new friend I made in Anaheim told me, "The queues at conventions are one of the few places in this world where I don't mind standing around. You can make some of your best friends there."

The shows were like that, too. The "oldies" show Friday night and the comedy revue Saturday, great fun though they were, really didn't have anything at all to do with N.A. recovery. But there was something in that hall those evenings that you don't find at The Comedy Store: an electric audience of clean, happy, receptive people. Even the entertainers picked up on the difference in the atmosphere.

It was a great experience, this recovery blast. I wish I could tell you about, well, *everything*—but there isn't space or time. If you want to hear more, grab one of your friends who went to California this September. Or better yet, join us in Florida next year for another critical mass—and experience it for yourself.

# Viewpoint



## The missing pieces of our service structure

There has been a lot of mention recently of a set of principles called "The Twelve Concepts for World Service." A few N.A. Way articles have made reference to them, they were discussed by several people during the general forum of this year's conference, and now in a recent *Fellowship Report* the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on the Service Structure tells us they're working on some similar principles for our fellowship.

I welcome this discussion. I have long felt that this issue is perhaps the most important one we face at this stage in our development. I'll spell out my reasons for that feeling in some detail later in the following article. Because this has been an area of personal interest for a few years now,

I've looked rather carefully at the issues related to these concepts, and have learned some things about our history which pertain to this discussion.

I've written and rewritten the following article several times over the last year or so, and could probably go on doing that for some time. So I present my own current views and perceptions not as the "final word" on these subjects—God knows there's plenty to sift through before we as a fellowship are finished crafting our organizational structure—but as an invitation to others to study and respond to these issues. If this discussion is half as important to N.A. as I suspect it is, then it's high time we aired it thoroughly.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Twelve Traditions lay down basic principles for conduct of the group. They define what groups do, and allow for the establishment of a service structure to do what the groups can't. But, having done that, they do not attempt to describe in any detail how that service structure is to operate.

For that, A.A. developed two statements of principle specifically addressing conduct of their general services: the Twelve Concepts for World Service, and the General Service Confer-



ence Charter. So far, N.A. has not chosen to take advantage of these two bodies of principle. Perhaps it's time we consider them.

In the normal course of affairs, the A.A. plan gives world services the liberty to act on behalf of that fellowship as a whole. The world office is placed in day-to-day charge of the hands-on administration of services. The office serves as both a communications center for the fellowship and as a center for the production and distribution of the fellowship's literature.

The office is closely overseen by a board of trustees with the authority to establish operating policy for the administration of office services. That board is in turn responsible to a conference of the fellowship's elected delegates, which meets once a year to review world services.

The relationships between the fellowship as a whole, the conference, the board, and the office, as well as statements describing the extent and limits of the authority of each element, are laid out in the twelve articles of the *conference charter*. An additional body of principle—*Twelve Concepts for World Service*—addresses the basic management principles guiding fellowship services.

The charter and the concepts leave the groups free to concentrate on their primary reason for existence: to provide settings where individuals suffering from addiction can help one another recover by using the Twelve Steps.

The traditions are only a part of a much larger plan detailing the conduct of all fellowship service operations.

They make very little sense when viewed in isolation from the broader pattern. When the N.A. world service structure attempts to operate with only the traditions as its primary body of guiding principle, it creates a great many problems for itself.

It finds itself without the basic guidance provided by statements of

## The charter and the concepts leave the groups free to concentrate on their primary reason for existence.

principle like those already written especially for the world level of service for organizations like our own. It is left without a clearly stated definition of its responsibilities, structure, and relationship to the fellowship.

A.A.'s general service system is easily and successfully adaptable to the needs of other anonymous fellowships, as has been demonstrated by Al-Anon Family Groups. It seems odd that we have chosen not to adapt it wholesale to our needs. But when N.A. was forming, we adapted only A.A.'s steps and traditions, neglecting the conference charter and Twelve Concepts—the missing pieces of our service structure.

In the early 1950's, some addicts in Los Angeles seeking relief from addiction joined Alcoholics Anonymous.

They found in A.A. almost everything they needed, some of our old-timers tell us, except identification. Their solution was the formation of a special-focus group they called "Alcoholics Narcotics Anonymous." The group provided those addicts with the identification they needed.

But it conflicted with A.A.'s traditional primary purpose, "to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers" [emphasis added]. According to the brief history found in the old "Grey Book," the review draft of N.A.'s basic text, A.A.'s General Service Office suggested that the group take the A.A. principles, adapt them as needed, and form a new, independent anonymous fellowship. They took GSO's suggestions, calling the new organization *Narcotics Anonymous*.

The group grew slowly. In the mid-fifties they wrote their own pamphlet, a predecessor of our White Booklet, explaining the most basic elements of recovery in N.A. More N.A. groups were started in Southern California, but because the fellowship grew so slowly, say some older members, the need for a service structure did not become evident for a long, long time. And since N.A. was operating almost exclusively at the group level, only A.A.'s steps and traditions were adapted for the young fellowship's use.

It wasn't until Narcotics Anonymous began to grow in Northern California and a few eastern U.S. cities that the need was felt for some kind of overall organization that would help N.A. stay a single, coherent fellowship.

Our first tentative service manual was written in the mid-seventies by the elder N.A. community in Los

Angeles. Called the *N.A. Tree*, it was a provisional plan for convening a conference to develop a service structure suitable to the needs of Narcotics Anonymous.

Simple as the *Tree* was, it mentioned nothing about adapting A.A.'s conference charter or Twelve Concepts to the needs of N.A. As time went along and N.A. drew further and further away from A.A., the possibility of considering the charter and concepts became less and less likely.

Everywhere, our fellowship had been influenced by A.A. In some cities, A.A. members had actually started the first N.A. groups. In others, N.A. members had relied heavily on A.A. experience for their recovery. Many in N.A. felt that this dependence on A.A. was keeping N.A. from growing.

"After all," they had heard over and over, "if we can lean on A.A., why concentrate on developing N.A. into something viable on its own?" The problem with that, some N.A. members believed, was twofold. First, many addicts would be turned out of A.A. by alcoholics protecting their own fellowship's primary purpose. And second, addicts who were welcomed into A.A. would not find the identification among alcoholics that they needed in order to recover.

N.A. had to separate itself from A.A., not merely to grow, but to survive. And so N.A. separated—completely. Unfortunately, we left before we had assimilated all we needed for our fellowship's development. We missed the charter and the concepts.

And so it has been to the present day. But perhaps we have finally



arrived at a place where we can look back at our roots without those early insecurities, see the pieces of this structure we missed, and work toward integrating them back in to the N.A. we have built.

With twelve-thousand N.A. groups, I don't think we need fear being co-opted by A.A. any longer. And with our repeated failures to produce quality recovery literature and service material acceptable to fellowship delegates, perhaps it's time to stop trying to reinvent the wheel, retrieve those pieces of our heritage that work, and apply them. We can no longer do with only one piece—the traditions—of an incomplete service structure to guide us. We need an organization that's whole.

We need to either adapt A.A.'s conference charter and Twelve Concepts for World Service to our needs, or create instruments of our own that fulfill their functions in our service structure.

*Anonymous*

## Editorial replies

### Taking a stand

*The following is in response to "Don't Cause Disunity," August 1988.*

#### From California:

After reading "Don't Cause Disunity," I felt compelled to write. My first writings were quite angry, and

subsequently went into the trash. At best they allowed me to work on my left handed hook shot, which is coming along quite well, thank you. I was particularly angry at being labeled a "purist." Then I decided it was quite appropriate. What I felt was inappropriate was the comment that we "cause disunity within our fellowship." I do not *cause* disunity, I take a stand for what I believe in. Let me explain further.

### I do not cause disunity, I take a stand for what I believe in.

The issue of our language was used as an example. From my point of view, the disunity in this area exists not because some members take a stand for the language of N.A., but because people the author refers to as "outsiders" or "someone from another fellowship" do not use the N.A. language. Outsiders and newcomers can be educated. Members of other fellowships shouldn't share at N.A. meetings.

Needless to say, tact, kindness and unconditional love should be employed to stay within the principles of our fellowship. Tact and kindness that many of my fellow "purists" may be lacking in.

The idea that *we* are the cause of the disunity is ludicrous. As long as there are still two clean members of N.A., there's gonna be a little disunity over something.

*Anonymous, California*

## From our readers



### Living in the solution

It was the night before the campout. The ongoing process of packing by the numbers was coming to an end.

The problem I have is addiction; the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are the solution. I take the action indicated in them and leave the results to my Higher Power.

I lay in bed with visions of setting up the tent surrounded by recovering addicts again. Seeing old friends and making new ones. Meeting members, their pets, their children, their parents. A simple loving hug. Meetings under the pavilions, around a fire, under a lantern, under the stars.

I thank the God of my understanding for this one step in my life, this successful day clean. My footwork and my Higher Power got me here. I am never alone today, and no one will ever take Narcotics Anonymous away from me.

Living in the solution. It feels so good.

*L.F., Louisiana*

### Takin' time

When I first came to the N.A. program, I was without feelings, a liar, a cheat and a whore (among other things). I had been in the streets for so long that my first few months in the program, I couldn't figure out what these N.A. people wanted from me.

I was angry, frightened and lonely. I had lost everything I thought I wanted, and I didn't realize what these people were trying to *give* me! I sat in meetings, head down, angry and isolated, and they kept telling me to keep coming back.

In May of this year, I celebrated my one year birthday at my home group. My sponsor gave me her one year medallion. This past year has not been easy. Getting clean, for me, was harder than living in the streets. But you people just kept on loving me, guiding me, being patient and tolerant. Takin' time.

You've also given me the most precious gift anybody has ever given me—a God as we understand Him—and for that I'm grateful. My life today is not the same. I always wanted to be a lady; today I'm on my way, inside. You people are teaching me respect, honesty, love, gratitude—feelings I knew nothing about, not too long ago. Thank you for taking the time to teach me.

*J.H., Kansas*

### You don't have to use no matter what

Part of my willingness to go to any lengths was to pass up a short prison term and request a long term treatment program. At that program I was reintroduced to N.A. Through the



H&I speakers I heard, I received hope that I could stay clean. I was released early from this treatment center and was allowed to get involved with an N.A. home group.

For the first time in my life, I felt positive. I got real involved in area service and H&I. One week before my year anniversary, I had a warrant for my arrest for being behind on my restitution. My sponsor drove me to jail, and I stayed clean.

I got out a week later and returned to being active in H&I and doing Twelfth Step calls. I carried an H&I meeting into the same jail I was recently released from.

I still didn't know anything about personal responsibility. I stayed on the couches of people who reached out for me, and I even slept in my car at times. Instead of looking for a job, I spent time fellowshiping and going to meetings.

With a year and a half clean, I got arrested again for delinquent payments. One night I was leading a jail meeting; the next I was an inmate in that same jail. I hurt real bad. I felt no hope that I would ever be responsible.

I stayed clean and put one foot in front of the other (my sponsor's explanation of faith). The Third Step. Today, eight months later, I have my own apartment and phone, and I have been on the same job for six months. I make every monthly restitution payment in full, and I work for a release center for guys just coming out of prison. I never thought any of this would be possible. Today I believe God will do for me what I could not do for myself. It really does work, if I just don't use, no matter what.

*S.D., Texas*

## **Facing life on life's terms**

I grew up in a small town in Southwest Kansas. All my life I dreamed of moving away to the mountains. Well, a year ago my H.P. let me live that dream. I had mixed emotions about it.

I just figured I'd move out west and continue in service work like I'd been doing back home. Then reality set in. I no longer had Grandma, Aunts or Uncle to help with my three children. I was studying for a new career, and had a job to help pay the bills. No one out here was really available to be a local sponsor, so I was making long distance calls when I got too flaky.

During one particularly hard time my H.P., who was still on my side after all, put a person's name in my mind. I needed to call her right then and there for help. She listened to me do nothing but cry, at first, until I was able to speak. She had no magical answers for me; she just had empathy, and she lent me the courage to get through one more day clean.

I found out this last year that this really is a "we" program. I can repeat to myself the "party line" about recovery I hear from meeting to meeting, but unless I'm willing to let other recovering addicts into my life and accept them—tall or short, blonde hair or purple—for who they are, I'm the one keeping myself away from the fellowship of recovery.

I learned to stop looking at the human difference, and start looking at the spiritual unity I feel with each one who is sharing from the heart, mind and soul at each meeting.

This city is gigantic, and I've met many new people. People from all over the States have landed here just

like me. I've never been so scared before in my whole life. Yet I have a strong faith now, through my H.P. and through my recovery, the N.A. way.

This past year, going through that third year clean and into the fourth, was both heaven and hell. My previous sponsors and fellow addicts tried to help prepare me for the old hidden emotions that come out when your head starts clearing. I thank each one of them today for being there, and for showing me that no matter what feelings I have, I won't die from them. I could die from trying to escape that pain by using. I may not be lucky enough to die from the first time back using, but I would have to live with the dope and the pain.

It's good to have goals, and it's great to have dreams. The one thing I found out is that I'm not always self-confident enough to live them. I've had to sidestep one for now, and postpone another one for later. But the two I'm working on today are the most important dreams to me and my children right now. It's only through N.A.—and my H.P.'s power—that I've made it this far.

*P.B., Colorado*

## **Feelings of sponsorship**

A year ago, my sponsee was going through a rough time and said he had outgrown his sponsor. He took me aside, and said that if I ever came to this point in my recovery he would hope I would get another sponsor.

Exactly one year later I found myself in a similar situation. My sponsor was going through a hard time. He had come to a place in

recovery where he could not find a sponsor to his liking, and had given up. We both believe that sponsorship is one of the most important things in recovery—that sponsors should have sponsors who have sponsors and so on.

I struggled with what to do. I finally told him, after a confrontation on the phone, that I was "going on strike" and not calling him until he got a sponsor. This hurt, but I could not enable him. He suggested I get another sponsor.

I must tell you I had grown to love this man dearly. I had been calling him two or three times a week for two years; he knew me inside and out. All the step work I had done had been aided by his spiritual advice, and I cherished it all. He had always been there and had always made time for me.

Then came the time when change was needed, and I had to do what I had to do. It was a scary process, but I shared with close friends in the program and got through it. I asked a man I had shared with at times (through my sponsor's direction), and who had what I wanted, to be my sponsor.

I feel good today about this transition. I've made peace with my old sponsor, and love him dearly. I don't believe I outgrew him. We just grew differently, and since recovery is about change, I had to take a chance. I reached out to someone else.

My new sponsor does things differently than my old one, but not matter—sponsorship again is working miracles in my life. I thank God for the faith and willingness I found to reach out and take that chance.

*Anonymous, Maryland*



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# Comin' up



**ALABAMA:** Dec. 2-4, 1988; Surrender in the Mountains; Cheaha State Park, Talladega; Surrender, P.O. Box 1632, Athens, AL 35611

**ARKANSAS:** Dec. 16-18, 1988; Central Arkansas Area Convention; Royal Vista Inn, Hot Springs; CACCNA, P.O. Box 55382, Little Rock, AR 72205

**CALIFORNIA:** Apr. 24-28, 1989; World Service Conference Annual Meeting; AirTel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, (818) 997-7676

**HAWAII:** Feb. 10-12; 5th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship; Camp Erdman, Honolulu; Regional Office (808) 533-4900; Hawaii RSC, P.O. Box 27909, Honolulu HI 96827

**IDAHO:** Apr. 21-23, 1989; 4th Washington/Northern Idaho Convention; A Resort on the Lake, Coeur d'Alene ID 83814, (206) 765-4000; phoneline (509) 458-7767; Washington/Northern Idaho Convention, P.O. Box 807, Spokane, WA 99210

**KANSAS:** Feb. 17-19, 1989; Second Mid-America Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Holiday Convention Center, Salina, (913) 823-1739; Mid-America Convention, P.O. Box 383, Salina, KS 67401



**LOUISIANA:** May 27-29, 1989; 7th Louisiana Purchase Regional Convention; Landmark Hotel, 2601 Severn Ave., Metairie LA 70002, (800) 535-8840; LPRCNA-7, P.O. Box 750237, New Orleans, LA 70175-0237

**MISSOURI:** Jun. 9-11, 1989; 4th Show-Me Regional Convention; Hilton Inn of the Ozarks, 3050 N. Kentwood Ave., Springfield

**NEVADA:** Jan. 27-29, 1989; 3rd Southern Nevada Convention; Showboat Hotel, 2800 Fremont Street, Las Vegas, (800)826-2800; Helpline (702) 369-3362; SNCC, P.O. Box 4771, Las Vegas, NV 89127-0771

**NEW ZEALAND:** Jan. 14-15, 1989; 2nd New Zealand Area Rally; North Shore Teachers Training College, Auckland; New Zealand Rally, P.O. Box 47087, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Feb. 16-18, 1989; 7th Grtr. Philadelphia Regional Convention; Adams Mark Hotel, City Line & Monument Rd., Philadelphia PA 19131, (800) 231-5858; GPRCNA, P.O. Box 42628, Phila. PA 19101-2628

**2) Feb. 24-26, 1989; 5th Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Sheraton Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster; helpline (717) 393-4546; Conference 5, P.O. Box 7651, Lancaster, PA 17604**

**SOUTH CAROLINA:** Dec. 3, 1988; "Just for Today" Mini-Conference; Hilton Head Inn; Mini-Conference, P.O. Box 1837, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

**TEXAS:** Mar. 24-26, 1989; 4th Lone Star Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Riverwalk, 123 Losoya, San Antonio 78205, (512) 222-1234; LSRCA-4, 2186 Jackson Keller, Suite 327, San Antonio, TX 78213

**VIRGINIA:** Jan. 6-8, 1989; 7th Annual Virginia Convention; Williamsburg Hilton and National Conference Center; Virginia Convention, P.O. Box 1373, Hampton, VA 23661

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**The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving 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.
6. 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.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



*My gratitude speaks  
when I care  
and when I share with others  
the N.A. way*

## 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 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 belong to N.A.—there are no fees or dues. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs. 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 N.A., see your local phone directory, or write us at the address inside.