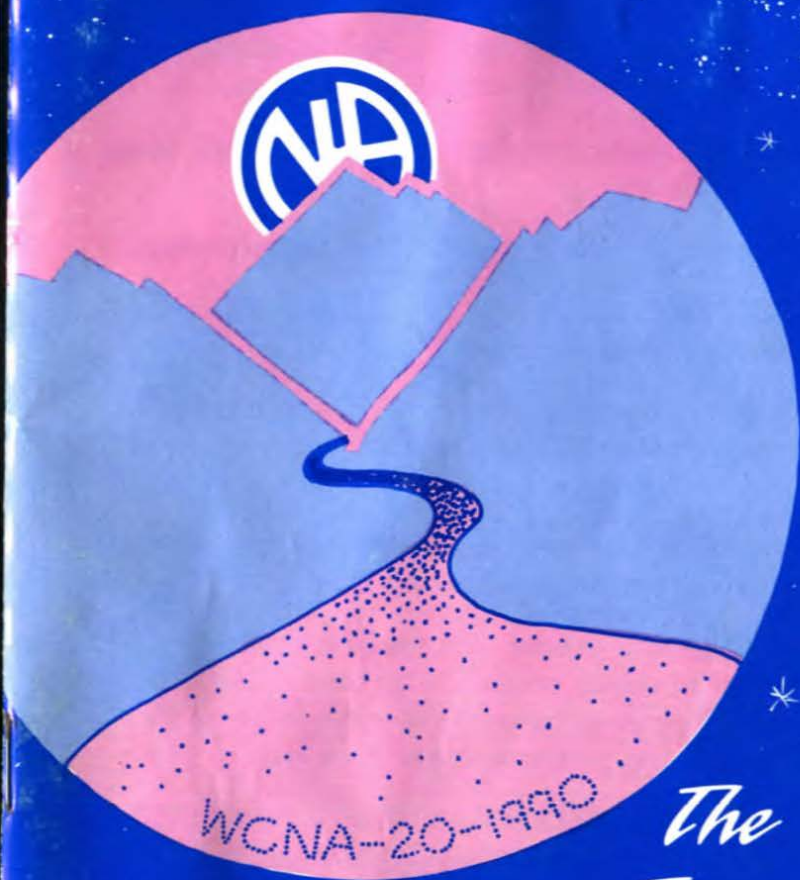


THE N.A.Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

August 1990

\$1.75



*The
Journey
Continues...*

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 N.A. Way[®] MAGAZINE

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The boiling river

We buried another addict yesterday. This time, the victim was an eighteen-year-old whose life had barely begun. He went out like a meteor, like a desperado, hoping against hope that his fragile body would defy gravity. He apparently jumped from the window of a car, fleeing from a small time robbery. Maybe the loot was meant to finance just one more high.

They found his body in the ditch along the highway a couple of hours later. I wonder if he lay there awhile, before he died, thinking about the choices that had lead him to die in a ditch. Did he wonder if anyone would mourn him at his funeral?

My telephone number was in that kid's wallet the day he died. It had been given to him by a mutual friend who thought he might need it. But the boy ran out of time to cry for help.

Yes, we did mourn at his funeral. The church was overflowing with people. They were three deep along the back wall. The boy's mother wore dark glasses; the father wept like a baby. His friends turned out in droves, wearing black leather jackets and

moussed hair and stonewashed jeans. They leaned on each other's shoulders in the church pews.

And there were parents at the funeral, many parents, each probably wondering where their own children were.

Also in that crowd in the church were people the boy did not even know—people like me, who had been praying for him without ever knowing his name. We were the recovering addicts, the people in this community who had made the choice not to use drugs one day at a time. We cried for the boy because we had lived on the same razor's edge. We know how it feels. Given the same situation, we might have made the same choices. Yet, for some reason, we were given the opportunity for a new life in recovery, while that boy was not. I marvelled at the mystery, and cursed the darkness.

How many more of these funerals am I going to have to attend? Young people are supposed to live forever, and yet one after another they are going down. In this close knit community, I always know the people involved in tragedy and I can never seem to escape the mass mourning that goes on every

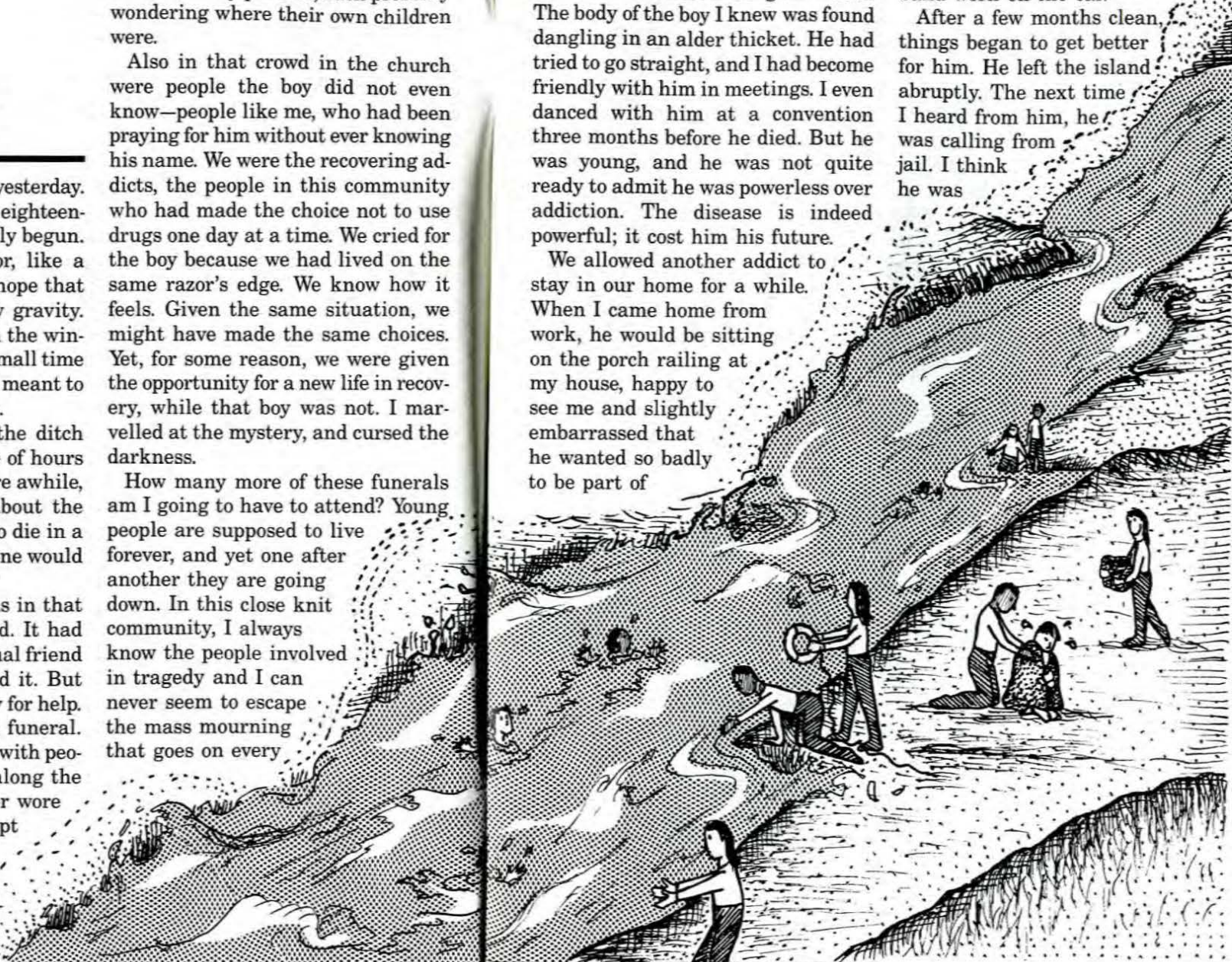
time the disease of addiction strikes.

Last august we buried two high school kids who had been passengers in a vehicle which missed a curve and flew 300 feet before hitting the woods. The body of the boy I knew was found dangling in an alder thicket. He had tried to go straight, and I had become friendly with him in meetings. I even danced with him at a convention three months before he died. But he was young, and he was not quite ready to admit he was powerless over addiction. The disease is indeed powerful; it cost him his future.

We allowed another addict to stay in our home for a while. When I came home from work, he would be sitting on the porch railing at my house, happy to see me and slightly embarrassed that he wanted so badly to be part of

our family. I got in the habit of cooking enough dinner for him without his asking; he went for walks in the woods with me and helped my husband work on the car.

After a few months clean, things began to get better for him. He left the island abruptly. The next time I heard from him, he was calling from jail. I think he was



looking for angles, trying to scam his way into a treatment center in order to get out of doing time. I did not tell him where we lived. He was released after serving six months on his sentence. Less than two months later, they arrested him on a probation violation and several new charges. This time, he was not able to figure a way to avoid hard time. The disease of addiction took him back to jail, and his life will never again be full of promise. That addict, too, was buried.

Jails, insanity and death: we repeat that phrase so often, so glibly. But to see those ends in the faces of people

**'We step back
to the river from
time to time,
to watch the
addicts drowning and
to reach out a hand
to them'**

I have loved brings tears to my eyes. My body shakes with suffering and outrage at the tragedy of wasted young lives.

I am so full of anger at the disease. Yet I know in my heart that some of us die. Many of us do not make it to recovery. I can not find it in me to feel anger toward the people. No one could have told me anything when I was eighteen-years-old. I also watched a friend die when I was eighteen; she fell out of the back of a pickup truck and landed on her head. She died with a beer can in her hand. But that episode did not stop me. I spent that

whole summer "in the ozone." I had no idea what had caused that girl's death.

Powerlessness over my own addiction brought me to my knees. Finally, I had enough. I was lifted from the jaws of death by a spiritual experience and the caring support of a few friends who had been where I had been.

I am alive today to carry the message that we addicts do not have to die. On the far side of the boiling river of insanity that is active addiction there is a quiet bank in the sun. We may drag ourselves to that bank and rest a while, but then we must get up and walk. And run. And begin the journey without looking back in longing at the boiling river. We step back to the river from time to time, to watch the addicts drowning and to reach out a hand to them. Any time we go back to the river bank, there are more addicts in the water. We help the ones who have had enough. We help the ones who are weary enough to want to drag themselves free.

We buried another addict yesterday. When I emerged from the church, the afternoon sun shone brightly and carried in its rays the warmth of spring. A thrush called from the woods. A flock of sandhill cranes passed overhead. Though it was too late for that poor boy to see spring move over the land, I know that there are others in the river, waiting. I will do my best to reach out a hand.

K.K., Arkansas

A thank you note

I wanted to take today to thank my family for all of your love and your patience. Thank you for so lovingly taking the time to share your experience, strength and hope with me. It is slowly teaching me how to live. Thank you for teaching me that we have a choice today. I remembered that today—and it kept me clean. Thank you for teaching me how to set myself up to stay clean. I would never have known how to take the footsteps without your love. Thank you for teaching me about the spiritual principle that I choose to refer to a sponsorship. Thank you for reminding me that it is ok to share my pain and my fear and thank you for listening when I finally did. It helped me to stay clean today. Thank you for sharing about your prayers and your Higher Power so that I too had a chance to learn. I asked for help today—and I stayed clean. Thank you for the hugs and for reminding me so lovingly to keep coming back and thanks for being there when I did. Thank you for helping me to learn that I am responsible for my recovery today—not my disease. I acted responsible today and, again, I stayed clean.

What a miracle we are. I am so proud to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous today. I never took pride in anything before. You have taught me how to be a part of by treating me as such. I love to share and to care today. When I came here I could barely form a sentence, no less express a feeling. You have given the hopeless hope and for this I am grateful. Today is a miracle. Thank you. I hope to keep that miracle alive in some small way—not that I may live—but that a



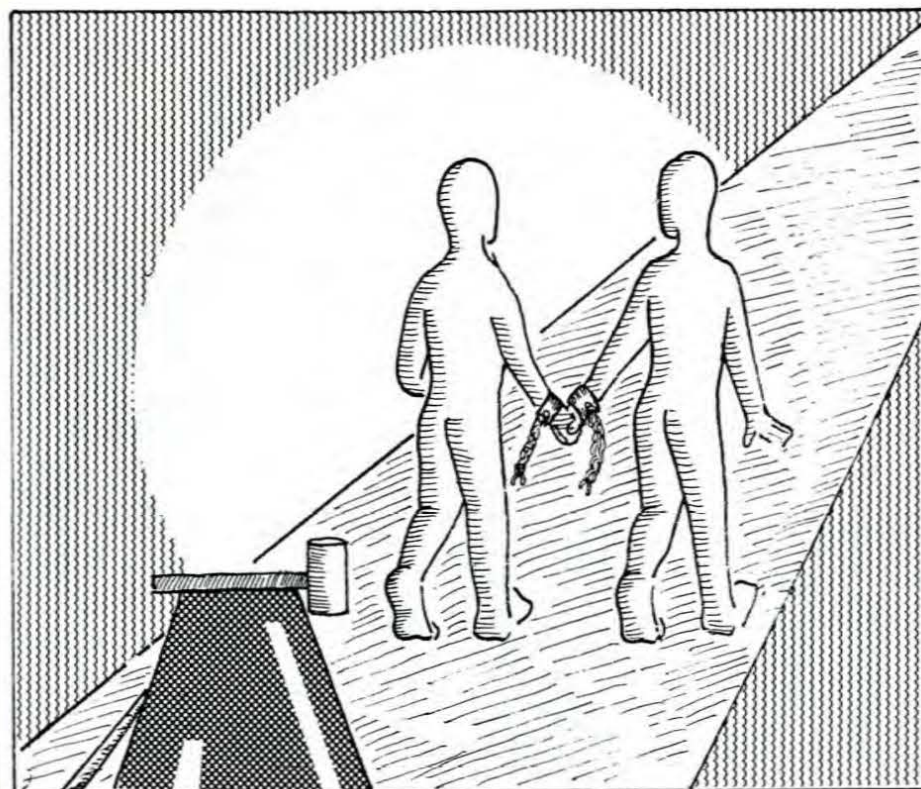
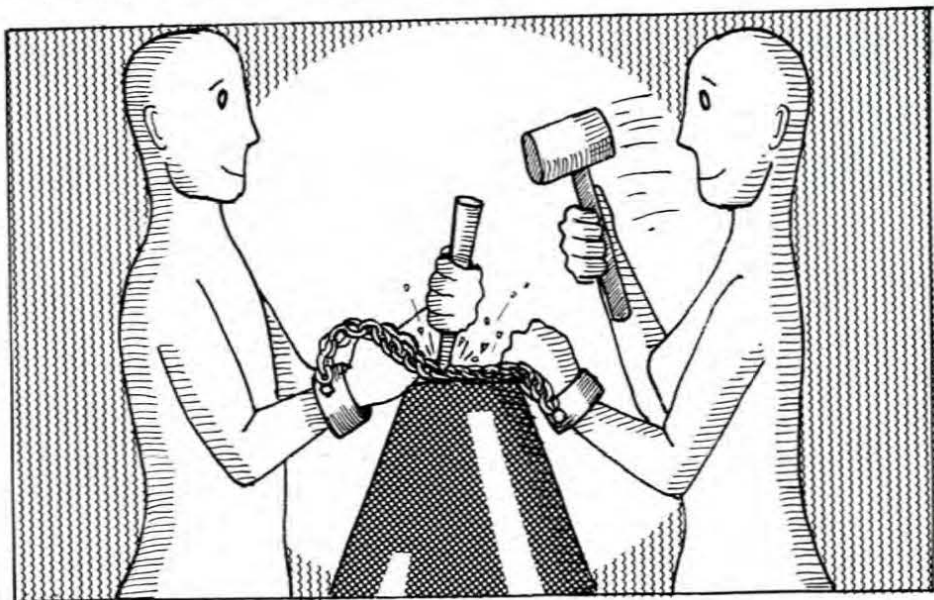
suffering addict may not die without having the chance to experience the love and the hope I have been privileged enough to experience. If I can do this—I am grateful. It makes all the fears that I have faced worth while if it helps a fellow addict. Thank you for showing me how to **LIVE**.

Anonymous

Hostage situation

I'm grateful to be an addict today and in recovery. Looking back at my past, all I have known in the area of relationships has been the "taking of hostages." Wanting to control the outcome from the beginning. Looking to get my feelings and needs met through another person. I choose not to act out in that way today. But I really didn't know another way, so I've chosen to use the tools of the

program to help me. By staying out of relationships for a while I was able to get comfortable being with me. I was able to find out things that I liked and some things that I didn't. When I came to this program I had a very low self-esteem and self image so I've been learning to love me one day at a time. If I don't love me and accept me, how am I supposed to expect anyone else to? I recently started to get to know someone, and being an addict I immediately wanted to project and start analyzing the situation. What was going to happen? Where was it going to go? That could be enough to make anyone go insane. Relationships aren't built in a day or a week or a month. So I turned to my sponsor for guidance. Through her suggestions I set some boundaries. I set a goal of no intimacy for at least thirty days. This seemed to be very unrealistic based on my past behavior. But, as the days rolled by, I found that I wasn't even



counting them. What happened is that two people can get to know each other and lay a foundation of friendship. For me, today, relationships have at least half a chance when they are based on friendship.

I strive to live life on life's terms and when I do I am sometimes faced with my old patterns and some emotional difficulties. Prayer and sponsorship are what helps me on a daily basis to deal with these things. In the past I've always wanted what I want, and I want it NOW! Because, I have a loving God in my life, thanks to the program of Narcotics Anonymous, I am able to let go and let God, most of the time. This is all God's deal anyway. If something is meant to be it's going to

happen. When it's happening, it has been proven to me that if I stay out of the way things seem to go a lot smoother. Most situations don't turn out as I would have planned them. They usually turn out even better. When it's God and me I don't seem to obsess like I do when it's just me trying to control things. I choose not to have obsessive relationships today. I don't want to "take any more hostages," and I definitely don't want to be one.

I've been given another chance at life. I just want to keep trying to live life on life's terms, one day at a time, to the best of my ability. It just seems to take a lot of prayer and meditation.

R.R., Texas

April's journal

April 2: I couldn't pay attention to what was going on at the meeting today. I spoke to my sponsor this morning about my continuing difficulty with the Second Step. I used the group, then the group and my sponsor, as my "Higher Power" and that was enough to get me a start on recovery. But I find I need something more now.

Is there some other "Higher Power"—something along the lines that religion calls "God," a conscious, creative Power who cares for the world, and who loves me? As a child I was taught so. But I was also taught to be afraid of him; and after a while I ran from him, wondering whether "He" even cared for me at all. Sometimes, even in recovery, I have wondered whether any God-like being exists at all.

My relationship with God depends, from my side, on how I understand and feel about him and what I am today is rooted in my childhood learning and experience.

"Try the idea of God as a Being who loves you unconditionally," someone said this morning.

His suggestion is giving me trouble. What I understand as emotional abuse in my childhood has left me confused about what being loved by someone really means. And as for "unconditional love"... well, the only

love I had ever known had always seemed to me to be tied to what I did, to whether or not I pleased people or did as they expected. Was it possible for me or anyone else to be loved unconditionally? My wife claims she loves me in that way, and she is the person I know loves me most. But I have the sneaky suspicion that something might happen one day and she will turn from me. Is her love for me really "unconditional?"

The Second Step refers to a higher power "loving." If there is an "H.P." like that, could it love me unconditionally? As a child my religious teachers told me God would love me only if I were a "good boy." Being a "bad boy" (by breaking his commandments, for example) would bring about his anger and turn his love away from me, perhaps forever. If that is true, then isn't his love for me conditional? It is love given to me "provided..." Some people I know think that God's unconditional love does not mean he won't turn away. I have a lot of trouble understanding how that can be so.

April 12: The chairperson at the meeting last night said "I think normal people learn from their experience, I had to hurt over and over again before I learned that drugs don't work for me. I'm slow to learn," and continued, "I guess I'm one of God's retarded children."

I might have been troubled by that comment before my grandson's birth, but the fact that he has Down's Syndrome and so is physically and mentally "slow" or "retarded" has changed my thinking about what it

means to be retarded.

I wish he were not retarded. But I don't love him any less because he is; and I couldn't love him any more than I do if he suddenly became "normal." In fact, his being retarded has brought out in me a special kind of love that I don't think any "normal" baby would have needed from me. When it comes to love, retardation doesn't matter.

April 15: The topic at the noon meeting today was the Eleventh Step. It got around to how we know what God's will for us might be. One of the guys was wondering why God had let him live since he had reached the point that he was using drugs in a savage attempt to destroy himself. "Perhaps God has something big for me to do," he said. "But I just can't seem to find what it is."

I related to what he said. I too had wanted to die. I seem to have been kept alive by some Power—it certainly wasn't my will—despite my best efforts to destroy myself with drugs. I too had woken many mornings only to curse what God there was (I wasn't sure if there was one, but I cursed him anyway!) for keeping me alive for another day. Once I started in recovery I, too, looked at the fact of being alive with wonder and asked myself: why am I still alive? Is it because there is some great task that I am expected to do? I thought that there had to be something the Power-That-Kept-Me-Alive had in mind for me to do. I didn't deserve recovery, so perhaps the fact that I got it indicated that I now had to return the favor by doing something in return. I thought it was a

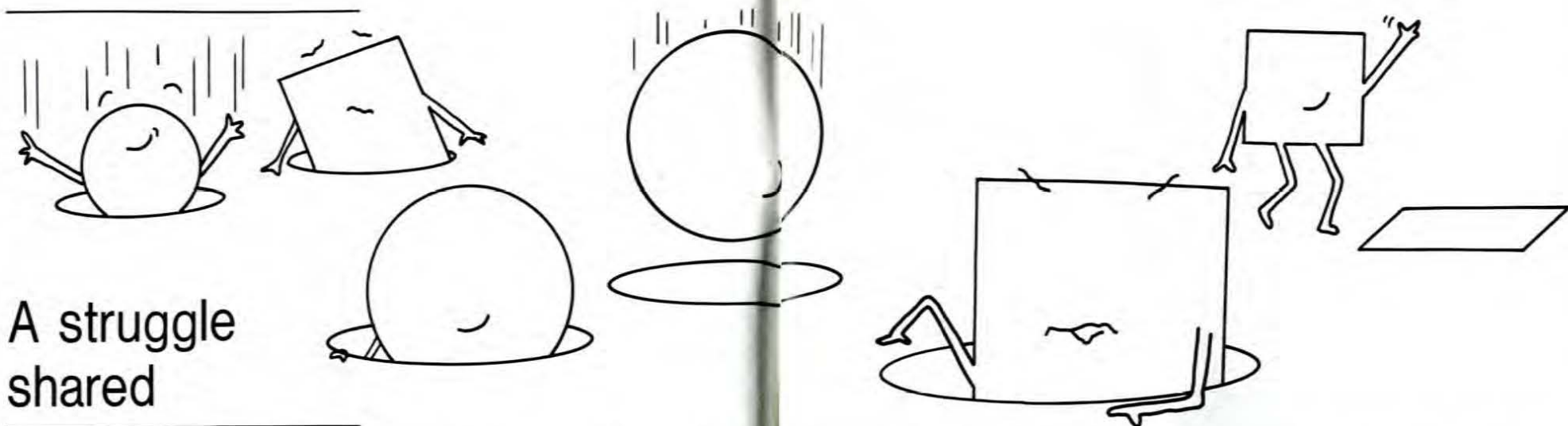
kind of deal: It did something for me, so now I was required to do something for It.

My grandson comes to mind here. The extent of his condition is not clear. It will be nice for him if he learns to walk and talk and if he can learn to run and play as other children do. It will be nice for him if he is able to go to school—perhaps even complete high school as so many Down Syndrome people are doing today. On the other hand, he may never be able to do any of these things. So what can I expect of him?

I have no expectations of him. He doesn't have to do anything in order for me to love him, or in order for me to do whatever I can to help make his life a happy one. My love for him is not part of a bargain, requiring me to do something for him in return. I love him for himself, for his being and not for his doing.

April 18: When my grandson was born and I was so frightened, saddened, and bewildered about his being a Downs Syndrome baby, my sponsor told me: "Your grandson will teach you many things." My sponsor is a prophet! In the year since my grandson's birth I have learned new dimensions of patience, acceptance—and a whole lot about love. I thought that by leading me to love him in the special way that "special" children bring out love in others, he had taught me all about love that he could. But that baby, who has not yet spoken a word, continues to teach me. He is now opening my eyes to what God's love is like.

J.C., New York



A struggle shared

Recently, I've heard a lot about whether recovering addicts should take medication and I want to share my experience.

I have been struggling with chronic depression for most of my recovery. Over the last year it has gotten worse. Over the years I had been told by fellow addicts that "if I worked a better program I wouldn't be depressed or need antidepressants," "if I wrote an inventory on what benefits I got out of being depressed I could let go of them and not be depressed," or "if I worked another step I'd get better." So I'd come home and write out another step, talk with my sponsor, sponsor another addict, take on another service position, and quit my antidepressants.

Sometimes I would get better. In fact, I'd feel great and I'd tell everybody how wonderful my life was and how easy the program seemed. Then, I would crash down. I would write again, run to the nearest self-help sec-

tion of a bookstore, take a yoga class, astrology, channeling, etc. I'm not complaining or putting down any of these tools. But they didn't work for me. I believe I was getting worse and worse but kept denying it because I had a job. I would wake up crying, hating myself, thinking of dying daily and becoming more and more ashamed of my thoughts and feelings. I felt totally isolated from anyone, including my sponsor. I started to have temper outbursts and would hit my partner and destroy my house, breaking my loved possessions. Finally a year ago my son decided to move out because he couldn't stand the temper outbursts and what he called "mood swings."

I was still looking good on the outside, going to meetings, sponsoring, taking on service positions, all parts, for me, of the denial game.

Finally I collapsed at work and was sent to a psychiatric hospital. I quit

covering up the pain by *talking* the program, and just let go. I ended up in what was, for me, a safe, protected environment. The staff was supportive of my recovery in N.A.

On the fifth day of my stay in this facility I was informed I was suffering from Manic-Depressive Disorder. I can't adequately express how scared I feel sometimes, or how hopeless I think I am when depressed.

It seemed to me that taking medication meant I was doing something wrong in my recovery. After all, this is a program of "complete abstinence from all drugs." I was ashamed and felt like I didn't belong in N.A. My medications are still being adjusted. As a result of my eleventh step and praying only for God's will and not mine, I am learning to surrender and accept this chronic illness. I wish I could say it has been easy, but the truth is it's been real hard, and I'm dealing with feelings of anger, frus-

tration, fear, shame and loss of control. My life is totally unmanageable today! I have given up my service positions because I don't think I have anything to give now. I have let go of most of my sponsees and those that are still with me, well, relationships are changing and growing daily.

On April 1, 1990, I celebrated nine years of recovery, all of it in N.A., and I'm so grateful to be clean today! This clean time medallion is really special because there were many times that I didn't think I would live to receive it. I know now God was always there working in my life.

My life will continue to grow and my new illness will become a part of my recovery process, and the steps will be there to guide me. If you're addict and going through a chronic illness, you're not alone. There is a chair in N.A. with your name on it right next to mine, so WELCOME!

D.N., Arizona

Going on to say it



I wish to share a few of what I call "Cadillac stories."

I was a material person when I arrived to N.A. I was so materialistic that when I got here in 1983 I possessed only a tooth brush, and slept on the floor in a flop house. Anyhow, I've always wanted a pair of french toed shoes, or "Stacies." Downtown a sale was going on. Shoes that were \$120.00 a pair and two months later they were selling for \$80.00 I struggled with this in my recovery, asking God to please distance me from this material yearning. I felt my priorities were stuck up some where. I wrote about it, talked to my sponsor and prayed on it. A month later, during the summer, the price was less, but I drove off mad at myself because I

hadn't really "let it go." On the way home I prayed and prayed. I took a different way home that day. Thinking about a meeting, as I was approaching the corner where I had to turn, I noticed to my right a yard sale and my view was magnetized to (you guessed it) a pair of french toes, *brand*, and I repeat, brand, new! I kicked off my sandals and I swear on my brown skin that there was no doubt about the fit. I asked the sale lady in the yard "how much?" "Oh, those shoes, 25 cents." Yes, 25 cents! (I used to say "\$5.00" but the truth, 25 cents). I gave her a dollar and told her to keep the change. God was very humorous with me on this one. Yes, I choked on my tears on the way home.

My second story deals with thievery. I'm an addict. That text was sitting up there on the shelf waiting for me. My ways remained with me for a few more years into my recovery but there is no way to justify it by saying "I didn't become an addict over night, so don't expect me to change over night." What caused my next degree of change out of the fog goes like this:

I was at a meeting and while everyone was outside I built up enough courage to ask the secretary to front me the text until next week. I was a regular attendant, I put in the basket frequently, and I heard him say at a meeting that if he could help anyone in anyway, he'd do it cause it was done for him. When I asked him for the basic text his response was "gee, you're really putting me in bad situation with the group. I'm sorry. I have to say in words of one syllable, no." I was damaged mentally. I was twick-

ing out and shared how phony he was the next day. I went to a morning meeting. That text was sitting up there on the shelf, waiting for me. I'm not gonna ask the secretary cause they're all alike. Being that the secretary and I were the only ones there an hour early (I could see) gave me time to rip the text off, take it to the car and come back set, all nonchalant, smiling "good morning" to every one. While the secretary walked outside I made a move on the text, lifted it, ready to slip it under my armpit. As I was in motion the secretary walked back in. He thought I had been putting it back down. I sat down. He walked outside again. This time I was ready, but the program set in, telling me to shine it on til next week. But that madness was conquering, saying: "go for it homes, you could write about it later." Thank God people started arriving. For twelve hours





that day it was kicking me and pounding my head. At that evening meeting, as it was ending and I was in the bathroom, I kept hearing my name, "For the last time, is there a 'S.E.' here?" They were calling my name because I had purchased a 25 cent ticket and I had won the number one prize. That's right, homes, the basic text. Isn't that odd?

This last writing is a righteous righting "Cadillac" story. Phone rang regarding personal, individual service work with the opposite sex. I mentioned that we don't operate that way in N.A. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I spoke their cultural language. Out of all the addicts in our N.A. com-

munity, I'm the only one that speaks the language and is an N.A. senior citizen (I mean in time, not age.)

There's only two of us that speak the language. I explained to the girl's parents that their was nothing that I could do for them, but only to assist their daughter. In speaking to the daughter I was relieved, because she spoke English, and I shared with her that I would introduce her to some good ladies working the program in their lives that could help her. She refused obstinately to go to meetings. Said that "there's nothing I can relate to at your meetings. It didn't work in prison, why should it work out here? I can't relate to any of these white people, but you show care, and I feel sorry for you, so I'll attend a meeting, but I know I will not learn anything." The meeting started (now you got to listen) and people were sharing. A young lady was choking on her tears because her boyfriend had gotten killed early that morning, because his mother was wasted on drug and ran into another car, killing her son. She wanted to wish death on her boyfriend's mother, and expressed hate when out of nowhere, my friend who came to the meeting with me spoke. No one interrupted the cross-talk. She said "Don't hate her. You don't realize the pain and the hate and the thoughts of her probably wanting to kill herself right now, for what she did to her son. Forgive her."

Earlier that day this new friend of mine had shared how she killed her brother, while she was wasted on drugs, in the same way, car accident.

For some one with a reluctance to going to meetings, because of not be-

ing able to relate, I shared with her that this kind of identity with another person may never happen again to her; her input was to herself.

I told her how sweet our God is to bring another N.A. warrior to show one the pain we grow from spiritually. I love this story. Even if my friend

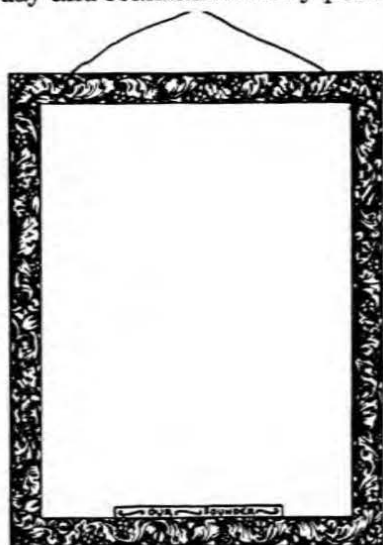
didn't feel it, I experienced it. She hasn't come back, but is that odd? No, it was God!!! Like my five year-old prays, "God you're the only hope we have and you know that you're so sweet. God, take care of yourself til we get there."

Anonymous



No role models

What is N.A.? How does it work? Who is an addict? When I first came around these rooms many questions arose in my mind. Once the reality of today and realization of my position



began to set in, the search for the answers to these questions began. I had started to surrender. I felt the need for direction and I turned to my only source of hope, the fellowship.

At the beginning of this journey I was searching for an "archetype," an individual with whom I could identi-

fy. But who is an addict? I heard people sharing about things I had never done. Do I belong, am I really an addict?

The first thing I began to accept was that it did not matter what, where, when or how much I had used. This point, stated every time I sat in a meeting, opened a door that (once I had found faith to step through) brought me a miracle-recovery. I began to see that an addict is not formed so much of the details of using, but why. I made some decisions. I am an addict, I can recover.

So I realized there was not a typical individual who "qualifies." But still, I wanted a model from which I could fashion my life. I had heard about sponsorship, the steps and traditions; an outline by which I could learn to live clean. But I still felt the need to have more guidance than was represented by the basic tools. I thought I needed a more concrete, exact way of living life, of working on shortcomings and character defects. I kept looking around for this standard, but everyone was doing it differently. My sponsor was unwilling to tell me how to live and what to do, he would not become my ultimate authority. I once again learned that there are no constant vivid examples, only tools.

I have had to come to my own understanding, to have my own personal experience in using these tools in my life. This allowed me to find myself, my own identity. The principles I could learn, but in my own way, in my own time. What I had wanted was a strict pattern of life, what I received was freedom.

R.R., Ohio

On selective recovery

When I first came into Narcotics Anonymous, the thought occurred that I could work only selected steps and still recover. I also thought that a searching and fearless moral inventory might be necessary for some people, but not for me. My sponsor and other experienced members shared their belief that it was only through living all the steps that the full benefits of the N.A. program could be obtained. So, after admitting my powerlessness and unmanageability, coming to believe in a loving God, and developing some faith, I wrote a Fourth Step.

I've often heard it said that this step can be intimidating, difficult, painful, draining, scary, or impossible. This may be partially true. But my experience has been that an inventory also produces relief, self-awareness, humility, self-acceptance, forgiveness (of self and others) and a sense of freedom.

That first Fourth Step included many details of people, places and things in my life before recovery, and there were elements that resembled a confession. It also allowed me to

recognize the destructive and self-destructive patterns—thoughts, feelings and actions that contributed to and trapped me in my active addiction. By identifying these, and sharing them with myself, my Higher Power and my sponsor, a powerful healing force was liberated within me. The subsequent steps allowed me to continue to make peace with the past, change the present and lay the groundwork for a healthier future.

A couple of months ago I felt the need to write another inventory, but I experienced an inner resistance. A short while later, while speaking on the Fifth Step at a meeting, I shared my desire (and reluctance) to work Step Four again. I believe strongly in the program of N.A.; making this public commitment gave me the motivation to get going, and so I started writing again.

Recently I completed this inventory. The focus was on the time period since the last one. There were fewer details about specific people, places and things, and less of a confessional tone to the exercise. But what emerged once again was a recognition of the patterns that block my emotional and spiritual growth, as well as an acknowledgement of the progress I've made in the past few years. My defects have not been completely removed, but some are less powerful in my life today. Conversely, my assets have been nourished by living this program to the best of my ability.

I am grateful that the steps provide me with a way of life that allows me to experience satisfaction and serenity.

P.W., Quebec

11th step express



Mile after mile of darkness. No light. No idea what it looks like, how cold it is, what's ahead.

I'm riding the train through the mountains. It's dark outside, and I can't see a thing, but I know we're in the mountains because of the map and because my ears keep popping.

They say there's extreme avalanche danger, and I'm tempted to get all fearful about that—me, who rides trains because I'm scared of planes. I know "my addict" can get me afraid of going out of the house, if I let it. I think of train wrecks, snow bearing down on me, being late to my station, being out of control.

Suddenly, there are headlights to the south and a bit below us. A car! There's a road down there, and this one lonely car is out in the dark, cold, snowy night. I watch as it passes, then disappears into the blackness.

And then I realize that I used to be like that car—alone on the road, doing it my own way. And I'm trying to do the same thing with this train. Trying to drive.

But unlike whoever is in that car, I don't have to drive. Even with tracks to run on, I don't know the first thing about driving a train. And if there is trouble, I won't be alone. I'll have lots of people with me in the same situation. And we can help each other out of our predicament.

N.A. is my life's "train"—it combines with my Higher Power to take me where I'm going. And that may be dark and scary sometimes, but it's definitely out of my control. If I try to drive, not knowing what I'm doing, I'm sure to crash. I'd rather let go control and get pulled along the track.

I'm thankful the Eleventh Step came down the road with that car!

L.J., Minnesota

Home Group

Slugg copes



Gathering in HAWAII

The language of the islands is simple. There are no letters that are pronounced one way at one time and another way when used in a different word. It seems from these reports recovery in Hawaii is also simple, honest and graciously vital.



Genesis of the gatherings

Development of the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship in the Hawaiian Island Chain has been affected by the simple realities of related, neighboring communities that are tantalizingly close, but out of easy day-to-day reach. The larger individual islands are Hawaii, Oahu, Kauai and Maui. N.A. Area Service Committees have been formed on the three larger islands. Hawaii and Oahu now have at least two ASCs each, while groups on Maui constitute one area. N.A. members answer a phone-line service and seem enthusiastic about the future. Groups on individual islands (starting with the most populous Oahu fellowship) have developed the idea of "Gatherings" for regular re-unions of the various recovering islanders and their friends from other states and countries.

Commenting on the semi-isolation of the islanders one visitor said "Unity is stronger there than I frequently think I feel here. They really *know* they depend on each other for their lives."

There are three established annual Hawaiian Gatherings now, and more seem likely. The following account was put together from interviews with participants in the most recent celebration.

Ohana 'O Aloha '90

Though recovering addicts are surely enjoying their summer 1990 celebrations all over the world, few events offer the mixture of exotic ap-

events offer the mixture of exotic appeal and N.A. unity recently demonstrated by the "Big Island Gathering" in Hawaii.

About a dozen people from the mainland United States are reported to have joined 200 or so islanders in "Ohana 'O Aloha '90." Some of those lucky few said they really experienced the meaning of the theme which, in English, stands for "Family of Love." An addict from Colorado said "It was a smaller, family-like atmosphere. It was like where I got clean. The meetings were on the steps and book-study, real N.A. stuff."

This was the 4th Annual Big Island Gathering. "Gatherings" are to Hawaiians what "conventions" are to those of us who live elsewhere. Partly because of the ocean barriers that separate most N.A. Areas in Hawaii, such annual events have developed on each of the larger islands. Addicts recovering only fifty or a hundred miles apart may have only these yearly celebrations to share the hugs and empathy of face to face meetings.

The oldest N.A. Gathering is sponsored by the whole region and takes place during February on Oahu. The 7th Oahu Gathering is already planned, and will likely see the return of many addicts from Australia and Japan, who have made it one of their favorite excursions.

The Maui Area hosts a fall Gathering, celebrated in October or November the last two years. The newest whole island N.A. services are on Kauai, and though they haven't had a Gathering yet, they are talking about

it. Addicts from Kauai island and the next largest of the Hawaiian chain, Molokai, make it a point to attend the established get-togethers.

Elemental presence

Among the most often noted memories of the June event are feelings sparked by the weather and terrain of the Gathering place. "Its very volcanic. Its easy to feel God" said one addict. Another said "Its really strange, its a trip. We were kind of up high, above the clouds, and you could go from dry and windy down into a rainy jungle. You could go from climate to climate in 10 minutes."

The June Gathering was held at Mauna Kea State Recreation Area in Pohakuloa. The park is located on a "saddle" of land joining the rising peaks of Mauna Kea ("White mountain") and Mauna Loa ("Long Mountain"). Snow-capped Mauna Kea is said to be the largest mountain in the world, if it is measured from its base along the ocean floor. Last year some possibly more adventurous addicts trekked over to Mauna Kea and brought snow back to the park.

Hawaii's natural extremes were also noted by addicts who photographed the area of Kalapana, where lava has flowed from the side of the volcano Kilauea into the ocean. Kilauea has been in an eruption phase for over six years.

The eastern part of the Big Island includes the town of Hilo and has generally moist, temperate weather. The western side is dryer and more

desert like and is where the area of Kona is located. Aware of our fellowship's general fascination with coffee, a visitor made a point of describing her encounter with a recovering coffee farmer from Kona. Kona is one of the most prized of the world's coffee-tree strains.

'Everyone got into service, they pitched in to make the gathering happen'

As might be expected from the reputation of the islands, Gathering planners went to great lengths to devise remarkable meals. Perhaps to ease culture shock for mainland visitors, the Friday evening meal (prepared by local ASC trusted servants and there assistants) included two types of Mexican enchiladas and a vegetarian option.

Saturday evening, though, the fare got a lot more native. Home island addicts treated their visitors and themselves to "Ahi," (Yellowfin tuna with Teriyaki sauce) and an exotic fruit salad. While one meal was being prepared a California addict offered to help in the Main Hall kitchen. When asked to cut up fruit she remarked "But I don't recognize any of these!"

Activities

The schedule for the gathering began at 3 p.m. Friday, June 8, and included almost hourly events through

10:30 a.m. Monday. Check-in was in the Main Hall, largest of the dozen or so wooden dormitories and cabins that make up the camp. Standard capacity for Mauna Kea Park, the largest available facility for the event, was said to be about 160. The 200 addicts who are reported to have actually been somehow accommodated were luckier than the many who had to be turned away to find lodging elsewhere. A Gathering planner says next year limited registration will probably be necessary.

Following the check-in and enchiladas Friday evening a "Neighbor Island" combination speaker meeting was held, with one speaker from each of the individual islands addressing the throng. A socializing period was next, with music provided by some people who called themselves the "Jammin' Fools."

Each morning began, for early risers, with a meditation get-together at SIX a.m. A half-hour "Morning Stretch" exercise session was daily lead by two local addicts before the 7:30 to 9 a.m. breakfast period. "Everyone got into service, they pitched in to make the Gathering happen" said a Big Island resident who helped with the event. She made sure to mention her delight at recognizing an addict from Hollywood industriously whipping out breakfasts early Saturday morning.

The remainder of the Saturday schedule included P.I. and H&I workshops, a "Spirit of Service" workshop, special interest get-togethers, and sharing sessions for the relatives and

children of addicts. A visitor who was especially impressed by the amount of family members in attendance noted "These were people from smaller N.A. communities. They can't just drive to see each other, they must travel by plane or boat. There were more married people and more children than you usually see at conventions."

"There were moments when I felt like the newest in-law at a family reunion, but that was just my stuff. They were very warm and open." The addict who shared those impressions added she dislikes conventions that "have got so big and impersonal, where there is competition in terms of clothing and partners. They (Hawaii folks) didn't dress up to try to impress. They were very relaxed and they went out of their way to make us feel welcome."

Why they came

A twenty-two year old from the mainland, who has been clean over three years, did share having had some painful and disconcerting hours during the Gathering. Ten days later she interpreted her anxious and fearful time with acceptance and some appreciation. She said "when you go away, get out of the daily routine, you get in touch with feelings. Here I am at the Gathering, life couldn't be better, and I wanted to mess it up. I wanted to use. This is the best my life has ever been and my disease tries to tell me I didn't use enough! It was insanity."

The confusion and pain for that addict began to mount on Saturday and she "went back to the dorms and found someone to talk to." She also got someone to bring her a notebook, and wrote about what was going through her thoughts. "I did what I have learned to do. I didn't isolate, I talked with someone, and I wrote about it." By Sunday afternoon she had focused on a lot of what was bothering her, and was able to share about it during the Sunday night meeting.

Two other youthful addicts quickly responded that they could relate. "It had to do with being young and in the program," she remembers, "Other people used until they were thirty or forty. I was eighteen when I came in. But I have been in a lot of trouble, I've OD'd, and been very sick from using. I've used enough."

Back in a daily routine she thought about those hours and now indicates an awareness that perhaps the Gathering allowed the conditions for those feelings to come to the surface. "Maybe it came up then because I felt safe there. I felt really accepted and didn't think I had to explain myself or defend my qualifications."

Mainlanders stressed the Gathering's similarity to homegroups of origin, "...that real N.A. stuff." One said "Perhaps the spirit of unity is enhanced when members feel needed and when we are all working together to stay clean. I brought back a feeling of love and acceptance thanks to the Hawaiian fellowship. It was a great vacation."

The broad perspective

WCNA 20 update

This month's *N.A. Way* is being mailed in time for you to make a decision, TODAY, about going to the 1990 World Convention of N.A. in Portland, Oregon at the end of this month. Call the Portland Host Committee at (503) 230-1196 for the latest info. Reservations made on or after August 1st are subject to regular hotel rates. See last month's *N.A. Way Magazine* for particulars.

N.A. Way in Portland

The *N.A. Way Magazine* reaches at least 10,000 readers monthly. Since those people share impressions with other addicts it is very possible you are now looking at one of the two or three most pervasive, regularly produced recovery connections consistently available throughout the world wide fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

At WCNA20 in Portland an N.A. Way booth will be established. There you will be able to obtain copies of the magazine, begin subscriptions, re-

mind us of your new address(!) and have an opportunity to begin the process of inputting articles for print.

Beginning with the feature in this issue the manner in which a story's presentation is accomplished opens new ground for reader/writer input. It was written by an N.A. Way staff member from interviews with about twenty addicts who attended the "Gathering" on the island of Hawaii. Two more stories for the meeting in print section of the magazine are being developed using the same approach.

This is not a new idea, but it is one who's time has come. There are thousands of individual and group stories of miracle, heartache and step or tradition work in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. The problem in getting them shared seems to be that most addicts think they can't write well enough, or they are going to do it tomorrow. If you would like to tell your personal story or see an article produced about a group, area or regional experience, stop by the N.A. Way contact point in Portland and turn us on to it. We'll get your name and number and follow up by phone, letters or personal interviews.

Halt of divisive printing urged

In an "Open Letter" to the fellowship dated June 29, 1990, the World Service Board of Trustees of Narcotics Anonymous called for an end to the production of a knock-off version of the first part of an old rendition of the Basic Text.

What's going around in some parts of the fellowship is a blue, paperback

(slightly altered) counterfeit of the conference-approved text. Rumors and speculation about the rationale of its producers generally have it that they are unhappy with the majority decision to accept the changes that have been authorized in the text during the last six or eight years, so they have printed their own rendition.

The decision to release the letter coincided with somewhat sterner legal injunctions, deemed necessary to protect the fellowship's copyrights. Misappropriation of the fellowship's tools and symbols on behalf of special interests, often profit-making special interests, has recently forced the trustees and the BOD (our "legalese" shield) to introduce litigation.

What was heard from a lawyer during a BOD meeting in May of this year is that if the owner of something (like the "NA" logo often counterfeited on jewelry) lets people get away with producing it without registering a protest, there are, under certain circumstances and after a certain period of time, opportunities for the counterfeiter to earn some legitimate rights. Contesting the improper use, as has been done in this case, protects the ownership and prevents the counterfeiter from gaining legitimacy.

The Open Letter states: "The trustees, the WSO Board of Directors, and the Administrative Committee of the World Service Conference bear a collective responsibility to protect the best interests of the entire fellowship in this matter, by whatever appropriate means possible. Key individuals behind the illegal printing and distribution of the Basic Text have been asked to stop of their own accord. Le-

gal cease-and-desist orders have been issued to those individuals and committees known or suspected to be involved. If these orders are not heeded, more serious measures will be taken."

The trustee statement also includes the comment "...We cannot allow the actions or interests of a few individual members to seriously jeopardize the welfare of N.A. as a whole. If we do not respond to the unauthorized printing, we will, in effect, be endorsing it."

WSO operation

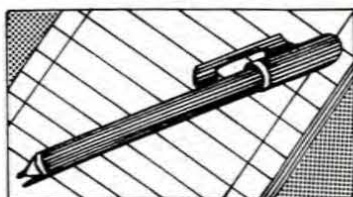
A decision not to renew the WSO manager's contract (for what would have been the eighth consecutive year) was announced June 14. The WSO Board of Directors, primarily through the office of its chairperson, has been given more direct day-to-day management responsibility, on an interim basis.

The management changeover was precipitated by a series of meetings, both open and closed, of the BOD and BOT. Unanimity of desire for a change was achieved and expressed during a June 8 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

During an open meeting of the World Service Office board Saturday afternoon, WSO manager Bob Stone urged the directors to accept the trustees' recommendation that the contract not be renewed.

Among parting remarks to staff-members (who pelted him with gag gifts and serious thanks) Bob noted there are whole countries with fewer citizens than the number of addicts now provided literature and other services by the office.

Viewpoint



Lithium discussion

I am writing this in response to the letter from R.R. in Australia about manic depression. ("Notes From Down Under," June 1990). I am a clinically diagnosed manic-depressive and also a recovering addict.

My experience suggests to me that most members of N.A. have no real knowledge or familiarity with this disorder. Therefore they don't recognize the need for Lithium or other types of medication for the treatment of manic depression.

Lithium Carbonate is a salt. It has been proven one of the most useful substances in the treatment of many depressive disorders, especially manic depression. It does not make one high nor does it change one's personality. It serves as an equalizer to the manic depressive mood swings.

As a manic depressive addict, Lithium is an integral part of my recovery. Without it there would be no recovery.

I have had members of N.A. tell me

that now that I have a Twelve Step program, I no longer need Lithium. I disagree.

I have shared about my Lithium use and have been deeply hurt by the misunderstanding and ignorance of those who otherwise claim to be open-minded.

I was born with this and will die with this. Lithium has saved my life and the lives of many others.

I.D.K., Pennsylvania

The God of my understanding

It took me two and a half years of searching, lots of trial and error, to finally come to a concept of a Higher Power that feels right to me. Two and a half years may be a relatively short time span as things go in recovery, but to me it seemed endless. I can't claim to understand this power because comprehension of an all-encompassing force is just too much for my mortal brain. All I do is accept, believe and trust in it, and that's enough for me. The miracle that is my life today has created those three pos-

sibilities. These are gifts from my Higher Power, whom I chose to call "George."

Early in my recovery I had heard that I needed to change and to do that I needed to work the Twelve Steps. I accepted that, wanting to find a better way to live. When I arrived at the time to work step three I hit a stumbling block—the word "God." I got hung up on that, as many addicts new to recovery do, because I felt God hadn't been a particularly close friend of mine over the years. I allowed old attitudes to hinder my spiritual growth. Almost all the recovering addicts I'd listened to in meetings referred to their Higher Power as God but I concluded that I needed something different, something of mine and mine alone, so the search was on.

I tried many concepts, from the group to Eastern mysticism, but nothing felt right in my heart. In December of 1989 I was asked to share in a convention workshop on the first three steps. Being the kind of addict who likes to avoid being on the spot, I thought it a good idea to prepare for the workshop by writing out my thoughts and feelings on those steps. When I finished I knew I had really worked those steps and had found the Higher Power of my acceptance, or so I thought. That H.P. was the one I called the "Spirit of all living things," but it was too complex and impersonal for me to talk to. I needed a more simplified version—perhaps a name would accomplish that. And the name "George" occurred to me, surely, I think, sent by that Higher Power. I was elated! Finally the search ended and I now have what I've need-

ed all along. I think of George as my personal "Santa Claus" because of all the gifts he's given me, most cherished being my recovery.

My concept of a Higher Power has changed many times over the past three years, and it may change again in the days to come. Just for today, "George" is my guide through the excursion called life and I trust him to show me the right roads to take.

I wanted to share this experience because I was one of the many skeptics, but through open-mindedness I have come to believe. Narcotics Anonymous gave me that open-mindedness. These changes are a miracle in my life today. To any of you for whom the search still continues, don't give up hope. If you do, your miracle may happen the next second and you will have missed it. If you're clean today, the miracle is already happening.

L.S., Ohio

Open letter of concern

As a member of N.A. I wish to express my gratitude for the program, the N.A. Basic Text, the Steps and the Traditions and the friends I've met these past three years.

However, I am very concerned with the number of people I believe relapse or stop in their recovery due to the heavy accent on a Christian-Judaic

concept of God. I have managed to adapt the steps to my own personal concept of a Higher Power, one whom I do not choose to call God, but it wasn't easy.

At first I thought that feeling "less than" because of my beliefs was a result of me not working a good program, of not following the steps and suggestions, of not being "spiritual" and feeling that I must therefore be condemned to using again. But through this struggle I have found a concept of a Higher Power that works for me, and it isn't a door knob or a coffee pot.

I wasn't one of those who "immediately felt at home" in N.A. I was turned off by the heavy religious overtones of most of the meetings I attended and for years I continued to use because I couldn't relate to being clean "by the grace of God." The meetings reminded me of church services, with readings from the "good book," addicts testifying to the "workings of God and the Lord" in their lives like in church and ending the meeting in a Christian prayer. When people would say, "Don't worry, you'll see the light. Just remember this is a spiritual, not a religious program," all I saw and heard told me the opposite—that if you weren't a Christian who believed in God you wouldn't be able to stay clean.

But this time in recovery I decided I could no longer afford resentments and anger. I had to find a spiritual concept that I was comfortable with, even if my sponsors and many others in the program thought I'd have no chance of staying clean without God.

I rebelled at the concept of turning

my will over to the care of "Him" because I didn't see my Higher Power as a grandfatherly-type gentleman with a white beard and genitals. I tried to respect their opinions but it seemed many more were concerned with "saving me" than allowing me to be me. People in the program laughed and shunned me or worse, patronized me. While I respected their religious/spiritual beliefs, it didn't seem they respected mine.

However, since I have found an N.A. agnostics meeting I have found many others like me. It is strange but in our group no one agrees about what a Higher Power is, but we all agree to disagree, and I have found a spiritualism I hadn't found elsewhere. I just wish word could better get out to others that there really is room for those with non-orthodox beliefs. Our group includes those with orthodox beliefs as well as agnostics and atheists.

Today I pray and I meditate that my Higher Power will help others in N.A. become more tolerant, open-minded and honest with those that have a non-traditional spiritual concept, even if they be atheists. I pray that I will not judge as I have felt judged.

As a Buddhist (which I believe is an agnostic religion that has no concept of a Higher Power) I find it very offensive to have a group endorse a Cristian-Judaic concept of God by ending a meeting in a Christian prayer. It would be just as "wrong" to end a meeting in a Buddhist prayer as it is to end it in a Christian one. Besides that, I believe it is contrary to the Sixth Tradition which states N.A.

ought never endorse, and to me an N.A. group is endorsing a particular religious view by ending a meeting in the Lord's Prayer, or any religious prayer.

Our group conscience decided that we would end the meeting with the Third Tradition. I also liked the idea of ending a meeting with a moment of silence for those to pray, if they so desire, to the Higher Power of their choice. I have heard a group in Lenin-grad ends their meeting with: "I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could not do alone."

I pray and hope that others in N.A. will become more understanding and tolerant of those who don't conform. After all the bottom line is, "The only requirement for N.A. membership is the desire to stop using." Today I try not to hate Christians or those with an orthodox viewpoint on the cosmos, and I try to remember they are addicts just like me. I've learned to accept what Jesus is reported to have said, "Forgive them, they know not what they do."

Maybe "N.A. Central" could provide guidance on this matter and make it known that there are a lot of us "free thinkers," agnostics, atheists, Buddhists and those with a "lack of religion" in N.A., and maybe a lot more who are driven away from recovery.

I know groups are autonomous and for that I am grateful, for it allows our group to exist. I don't wish to change groups to fit what I want, I certainly can't change a person's opinion and I don't want to. All I'm looking for is the same consideration I give others,

who believe in God, (or at least a forum to express my opinions) and to know that N.A. doesn't endorse a particular religion.

'I believe it is contrary to the Sixth Tradition . . . ending a meeting in the Lord's Prayer'

What a freedom this is, what an experience, what a relief. I have found a new joy and happiness as a direct result of taking the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, and have become comfortable with having a power greater than myself who I DO NOT CHOSE TO CALL GOD.

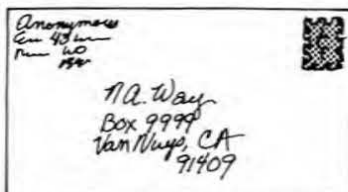
Whatever happens I will continue to help other addicts and work the program to the best of my ability. I've already seen several addicts return to recovery after finding out that they can be agnostics, atheists, or whatever. It doesn't matter.

I guess there will always be those who try to make others conform to their beliefs and condemn those who don't, who attempt to "save" rather than help addicts recover from the disease of addiction and who judge rather than accept. I fight hard not to become self-righteous in my anger and in my beliefs.

Thank you for letting get this off my chest. I felt compelled to share my views, as "wrong" as they may possibly be, to make it known to others there is hope, even if you don't believe in God, or if you're not a Christian. Humbly submitted,

E.B., California

From our readers



Grateful for traditions

About ninety days into my recovery, a group of us decided to start a new meeting. There were five of us—all relatively new in the program. We got together and decided on a name for the group, voted in the trusted servants and made a decision on the meeting format. Our first month's balance totaled eighty cents, but we felt real proud of our accomplishments together. We watched the group grow from five members to twenty two. Our group consciences were not in conflict and that seemed special. We were so proud of our home group because of the love and the unity we felt there. We had the best home group in the world!

Two months after my first year anniversary something different started happening. The unity started to dissipate and I didn't know why. I felt uneasy and I could feel tension in the air.

I wanted to run away. What was happening to our home group? Where was the love and unity that we once had?

We held a business meeting one night to vote on the WSC agenda items. The air was filled with tension and self centeredness was apparent. I told the group that I was leaving because I no longer felt "a part of." I shared that I felt the group had given

me a lot of power which I did not want. "I am just a sick and suffering addict, trying to recover," I said, "when I'm not here it should have no effect on the group."

We debated back and forth whether we wanted to vote on the agenda items. I suggested that we talk about what was going on in the home group because the WSC agenda wouldn't mean anything if the group was not there. We shared our pain, hurt, anger and bewilderment. After an hour someone suggested we adjourn the meeting because we were going around in circles. Then the question returned about the WSC agenda. What were we going to do about it? I volunteered my house for a meeting place the next morning and we agreed to meet then. Someone suggested that we go home and pray on the situation of the group. We closed the meeting with the Serenity Prayer, and each went our ways.

One thing stuck out in my mind: one of the members came to me before we left and asked me to please consider staying in the group. That touched my heart. I read the Second Tradition and thought it would be a good topic for discussion the next day.

We met the next morning and I was apprehensive at first. We decided to have a regular meeting with the usual reading. I suggested we read

and discuss the Second Tradition and another member said, "Why don't we read the First and Second Traditions." And that's what we did. I cannot put into words the love I felt come into that room as we read and shared. I was moved to tears when I heard someone read, "... We must live and work together as a group to ensure that our ship does not sink and our members do not perish." ... I felt the warmth of the God of my understanding embrace me and it was okay! That was what WE needed to hear. We each shared on what those two traditions meant to us and it was a special moment. We shared our pain and our fears, laughed, cried, and embraced each other and told one another that we loved and needed each other. That was a true spiritual awakening for me.

What happened next I know to be the work of a Higher Power. ... we sat down and went through the WSC agenda items one by one until we were finished and remained calm throughout.

The pain we went through served to make us stronger, and it gave me a good feeling about my home group. We each have good, quality recovery and we work hard at it; for in this storm we pulled together and were able to walk through the pain and fear and come out on the other side.

I thank the God of my understanding for the members of my home group and I am truly grateful for the spiritual principles of the program of Narcotics Anonymous. N.A. can survive without me, but I cannot survive without N.A.

N.F.K., Virginia

Why H & I?

For me surrender to the principles set forth in Narcotics Anonymous began when I opened up the little White Book for the first time.

The process of recovery was slow. As I became more open minded I decided to read beyond the first part of the little White Book to one of the personal stories, called "Something Meaningful". Someone was telling my story and more surrender and awareness of who I was and where I belonged grew. The longer I stayed clean and was willing to grow the more gratitude came to enjoy.

One of my reflections on the past was how much time I had spent in institutions of all kinds and never once heard words like "recovery", "a desire to stop using", "living one day at a time", "surrender", or "freedom from active addiction". I often wondered, had someone shared their experience, strength, and hope while I was a resident of those facilities, if maybe my surrender could have been sooner.

I believe my Higher Power has made it quite clear to me what my service responsibility is to Narcotics Anonymous—to go back to where I once was to try and inform others that freedom of all sorts was available to anyone who wished it, through the spiritual principles of our program.

And so I started that kind of service seven years ago. I went alone, for the most part, to one correctional institution. After a while there were two of us, and then a committee was formed and the growth has not stopped.

I think my region needs to grow into fulfilling a responsibility of serving

every hospital and institution in it's boundaries and to help other regions in their efforts.

I've made many mistakes doing it my way. The best way has been through the committee experience.

I remember the tears of joy seeing the first "inside" member at a street meeting. I remember all the friends from the past who got the message of N.A. presented to them. To plant the seeds of recovery and allow a loving power greater than ourselves to work the miracle of recovery in others' hearts, that is where our hope lies, and that, my brothers and sisters, is "why H&I".

F.S., Wisconsin

Spirituality

I left organized religion many years ago, probably thinking that I had no further need to nourish my spirituality. When I first came into recovery and heard and read some God-talk, I felt lost, even threatened. I am grateful that people, and the Steps, reminded me that the only God to whom I am accountable is one of my own understanding. Indeed, my sponsor never insisted that I adopt his understanding.

I have come to see that although I can walk away from the religious institution, I can no longer walk away from a part of myself. It was my spiritual search that kept me coming back to N.A. meetings long after the fear of using had faded away. I began to feel that I was reaching out for something which I call God, rather than running away from something, addiction. I found that it was in the sharing of experience, strength and

hope about recovery—that is, about life—that my spiritual needs were fulfilled.

In the course of my recovery I have had a number of spiritual awakenings and revelations. I have also experienced numerous crises of faith, and asked many questions for which there are no answers. It is the despair that arises from a sense of meaninglessness or purposelessness that has produced some of the most painful moments in my recovery. But through each crisis I've never stopped doing what has worked; for even though my faith in God had wavered, I've never ceased caring and sharing with others. As a result, I've always found the concern, support and love to help carry me through to the other side. Perhaps when my conscious contact with God is disrupted the messages are re-routed through people. The end result is a stronger faith in my Higher Power. All of this points to a process that is spiritual in nature.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a conference related to my work. I participated in a workshop on spirituality, and although the focus was not on recovery from addiction, I felt a tremendous affirmation of the way of life I've learned in N.A.

P.W., Quebec

Relationships

This topic relationships, I hear about at almost every meeting I attend. Is there really any suggestions I can follow? Yes there are! Thanks to my Higher Power, N.A., my fellow recovering addicts, sponsor, and of course taking an honest look at myself. Today I have a choice. Before I

had walked into a N.A. meeting, most if not all of my relationships had failed, whoever they were with. I had no belief in a Higher Power, no understanding of who I was and no time for anyone else in my life. My using came first and that was the only relationship I had with anything. When I decided to end my relationship with drugs, because I had become physically, mentally and spiritually beaten, doors began to open up in my life.

I found myself full of fear and confusion, but found a simple solution to that, N.A.! I was no longer alone and help was there if I wanted it. I met many people, who I could identify with and who were looking to change the life they were living. I found that I could not do it on my own, all the ways I had tried in the past failed, but together we could. "One addict helping another" does have therapeutic value. I was actually staying clean. "This is a program of attraction and not promotion" I heard at meetings. Yes, I was attracted and it is that attraction that keeps me coming to meetings. I came in contact with many other recovering addicts. We shared, cried, laughed and I loved every second of it. N.A. made some simple suggestions, if I wanted more of the unfamiliar feelings, "stay clean, no matter what happens," go to meetings regularly, get a sponsor, find a Higher Power, "someone other than myself" and work the steps. Well, I stepped into an N.A. meeting and slowly began to take to take some steps in fulfilling these suggestions.

I stay clean "Just for Today," and attend meetings regularly. I do not want to forget who I am and or lose contact

with my sponsor.

So, you're probably wondering where or when I am going to write about relationships. I did, a thousand of them! Thanks to all who have and continue to share the love, which I had never known of and felt before in a relationship.

Don D., Connecticut

A dilemma

My sponsor suggested to me that when I feel angry I should write about it. I find myself in the dilemma of having to take medication in recovery. My doctors know that I'm in recovery and they know that I desire to be totally drug free. They have made it quite clear that without medication I would be hospitalized for the rest of my life. I've often heard "if it isn't practical, it isn't spiritual."

I thought I had gained some acceptance in this area and continued to work a diligent Narcotics Anonymous recovery program. I got honest with my sponsor and I was very hurt and disappointed at his reaction. He said in his opinion I was not clean! You can imagine the pain I was feeling.

Since that time I have gotten a new sponsor who seems to be more understanding. The problem I'm having now is gossip. I have felt as if my family was turning me away.

I plan to stick with the winners, people "who believe in me and want to help me in my recovery." When I came to N.A. I was told that "no addict seeking recovery need ever die." I believe this includes those of us who must be on medication in recovery.

Bill F., Florida



Comin' up

LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phoneline number, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999
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ALABAMA: Aug. 17-19, 1990; Celebration of N.A. History; Ramada Inn, 8716 Highway 20 West, Madison, AL.; rsvns (205) 772-0701

AUSTRALIA: Sep. 28-30, 1990; Sydney Combined Areas Convention; Enmore Theatre, 116 Enmore Road, Enmore; tel. 61-202112445; CAC-90, P.O. Box 1376, Darlinghurst, NSW, Australia

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Aug. 24-26, 1990; 11th Annual Regional convention; Nanaimo Curling Club; rsvns (604) 756-2351 or (604) 753-1294; B.C.N.A., P.O. Box 107, Drawer 1300, Nanaimo, BC V9R 6J8

2) Oct. 26-28, 1990; 13 Annual Pacific Northwest Convention; Delta River Inn, 3500 Cessna Drive, Richmond, BC, V7B 1C7; rsvns (604) 278-1241; PNWCNA -13, P.O. Box 43018, Burnaby, BC, CANADA, V5G 4S2

CALIFORNIA: Aug. 10-12, 1990; South Lake Tahoe Campout; Camp Richardson; rsvns (916) 541-4100; South Lake Tahoe Campout, P.O. Box 7121, South Lake Tahoe, CA 95731

2) Aug. 17-19, 1990; Set Em Free Campout; Oakwood Lake Water Slides and Campground, Manteca, CA; For more information call (408) 688-5817

3) Nov. 2-4, 1990; 11th So. Cal. Regional Convention; Bonaventure Hotel, 404 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles; rsvns (213) 624-1000

CANADA: Oct. 5-7, 1990; "Chaque jour nous en revelera davantage" 3rd Quebec Regional Convention; Grand Hotel, in downtown Montreal, next to Square Victoria, metro station; C.R.Q.N.A.3, Station B, P.O. Box 1871, Quebec CANADA, H3B 3L4

COLORADO: Oct. 26-28, 1990; 4th Colorado Regional Convention; Holiday Inn, 425 West Prospect Road, Ft. Collins CO 80526; rsvns (303) 482-2626; Colorado Reg. Convention, P.O. Box 5183, Englewood, CO 80155-5183

KANSAS: Aug. 10-12, 1990; 3rd Just For Today Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Rolling Hills Area of Milford Lake; phonelines (913) 776-9933 or (913) 762-3861

2) Aug. 24-26, 1990; Hugs Not Drugs (By Choice) Rock and Roll weekend campout; LaCygne Lake at Linn County Park, 30 miles south of Kansas City, Kansas. Call (913)-294-9430 for information.

MINNESOTA: Aug. 4-6, 1990; Southern Minnesota Area Recovery Blast; rsvns (507) 345-7551

2) Sep. 22, 1990; Twin Cities Banquet, St. Albert's Church, 2833 32d Av., Minneapolis, Mn. Rsvns. via T.C.N.A. Banquet Committee, P.O. Box 18354, W. St. Paul, Mn. 55118

NEBRASKA: Sept. 14-16, 1990; Holiday Inn, North Platte, NE 69101; NCRNA VII, P.O. Box 2254, North Platte, NE 69101

NEW JERSEY: Aug. 17-19, 1990; 2nd Unity Convention; Summertime Serenity; Parsippany Hilton, 1 Hilton Court Parsippany, Troy Hills, NJ, 07054; rsvns (201) 267-7373

NEW ZEALAND: Oct. 26-28, 1990; New Zealand Regional Convention; Victoria University, Kelburn, Wellington; NZRSCCC, P.O. Box 12-473, Molesworth Street, Wellington,

OHIO: Sep. 14-15, 1990; "Literature Awareness 1990," Ramada Inn East, 2100 Brice Rd., Columbus, Ohio. Rsvns. (614) 864-1280. Ohio RSO, (614) 236-8787

OREGON: Aug. 30-Sept. 2, 1990; WCNA 20-The Journey Continues; Host Committee, WSO; P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91499-4198; rsvns (503) 230-1196, (818) 780-3951

2) Oct. 13-14, 1990; "Heartbeat of N.A." Rsvns (503) 341-6070

PENNSYLVANIA: Sep. 7-9, 1990; 9th Little Apple Area Birthday Celebration; George Washington Motor Lodge, Rt. 22 and 145, Allentown, PA; L.A.A. Sub. Comm., P.O. Box 4475, Allentown, PA 18105

2) Nov. 23-25, 1990; Beehive Area Thanksgiving Convention; Sheraton Crossgates Hotel; rsvns. (717) 824-7100; phoneline (717) 283-0828; send speaker tapes; Beehive ASC, P.O. Box 291, Wilkes Barre, PA 18703

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 15-18, 1990; Serenity Festival VIII, Landmark Hotel, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Write P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, S. C., 29577 for info or to pre-register

TENNESSEE: Nov. 21-25, 1990; 8th Volunteer Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, 623 Union Street, Nashville, TN 37219; rsvns 1 (800) 233-1234; VRC VIII, P.O. Box 121961, Nashville, TN 37212

UNITED KINGDOM: Sept. 7-9, 1990; UKCNA IV at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Union Buildings, King's Walk, NE1 8QB; UKCNA 4, P.O. Box 704, London, England, SW10 0RP

VERMONT: Nov. 9-11, 1990; Champlain Valley Area Convention; Ramada Inn, South Burlington; rsvns (800)-2-RAMADA or (802) 658-0250; CVACC, P.O. Box 64714, Burlington, VT 05406

VIRGINIA: Oct. 5-7, 1990; 4th Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4H Center, Front Royal, VA; AHA Convention Committee, P.O. Box 2462, Hagerstown, MD 21741-2462

WEST VIRGINIA: Oct. 26-28, 1990; "True Colors 111," Cedar Lakes, Ripley, W. Va., 25271. Rsvns. at (304) 372-7000. Write Mountaineer RSC at P.O. Box 2381, Westover, W. Va., 26502

WISCONSIN: Oct. 19-21, 1990; 7th Wisconsin State N.A. Convention; Holiday Inn Southeast, Madison, WI. Rsvns (800) 465-4329 or write P.O. Box 14501, Madison, WI 53714.



N.A. Way[®]

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3TEA

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.

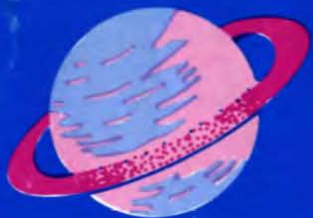
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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

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 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 dues or fees. 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.



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