

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

April 1992

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April Showers bring May Flowers[®]

The background of the cover features a large, abstract graphic. It consists of several organic, flowing shapes in a vibrant green color, set against a deep purple background. These green shapes resemble stylized leaves or perhaps raindrops falling from the top. The overall effect is a modern, artistic representation of the 'April Showers' theme mentioned in the text.

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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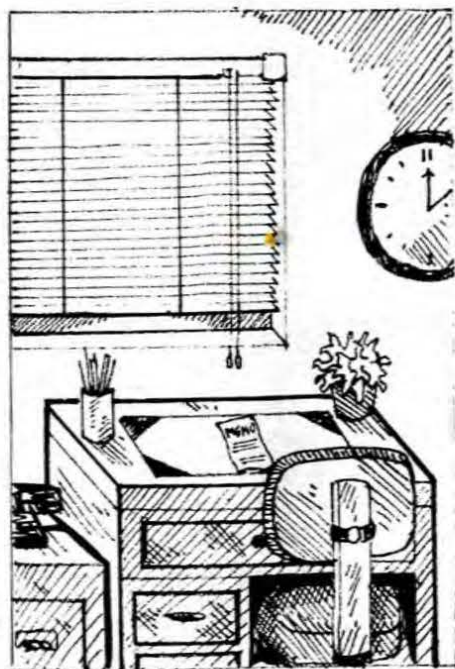
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Tangible evidence

The enclosed is something I felt compelled to write following the death of my father. His passing touched off a new and heightened awareness of just how wonderful recovery in NA has been for me and brought into focus how every facet of my life has been affected. I hope I have captured my feelings in an understandable form.



The call came in to my office about noon. I was out on a job. There was a note on my desk when I walked in: "Your father is in the hospital. Please call your mother as soon as possible."

I felt numb all over. I had been expecting this call for a long time. My father had been ill for the better part of sixteen years, and I thought when it came I would be prepared. . . mentally, spiritually. I wonder now if anyone is ever really "ready" for such calls.

Arrangements were quickly made—plane reservations, ground transportation. I packed my bags, jumped on a plane, and a few hours later walked into the intensive care unit of a midwest hospital. Dad was lying in bed motionless. There were tubes, monitors and other hospital paraphernalia everywhere. I had not been there ten minutes when my worst fears were confirmed. My father was not breathing on his own, he had suffered irreversible brain damage resulting from a massive stroke. I knew we had spoken our last words. He died that night.

There had been many illnesses and hospitalizations over the years. I had received many similar calls at work. But this time, for the first time, I was available and responsible. I was there for my father. I was there for my family. I was there for myself. I saw, felt and lived the program. The evidence was clear and in a tangible form.

When they told me my father was going to die I knew I was powerless, that I had to surrender. It was so much easier just to trust in my Higher Power, to let Him do what was

right and good for a suffering man and those who loved him.

The Ninth Step taught me the value of making amends and the importance of restoring damaged relationships. When dad died I was truly grateful I had made those amends, that I had changed some things, that he had forgiven me and that I had forgiven myself. We had developed a new, more honest and open relationship, and I had been freed of the guilt and shame that haunted me for all those years. He told me many times during the last couple years how proud he was of me and how much my recovery had meant to him.

I can just imagine how it would have been had I not found recovery in NA. The call would come in, I would dope-fiend someone for a plane ticket and some using money, fly out to the midwest like some hero, rush to the hospital, show my face just long enough to let everyone know Mr. Wonderful was there, and head for the old using buddies, not to be seen again until everything was over. On the flight back home it would be, "Oh, poor me, pour me a drink."

Things went quite differently, as it turned out. I did fly home, and I did rush to the hospital, but from there on the story changes dramatically. Instead of pretending to be Mr. Wonderful, I was just the son of a dying man who wanted to be with those he loved. The call of my old using buddies was drowned out by a powerful sense of responsibility. And that feeling of "poor me" on the plane ride home was replaced with peace and serenity.



While the death of someone dearly loved is generally a time of sorrow and mourning, it can also be a time of deep and profound spiritual growth and joy. Part of that joy for me was a gift of recovery and spiritual awareness.

On September 4, 1988, my twenty-five year run of active addiction came to a halt. A long, dark and painful period in my life and the lives of those who loved me was mercifully ended. I came to Narcotics Anonymous and was told of a new way of life. They told me that I could start all over again, that I could be the person I longed to be, that the insanity could be stopped. All I had to do was ask for help, and it would be given. I believed them.

In the months since dad died, I've had some time to reflect on some things. When I walked into the

hospital that day, my mother told me my father was going to die. I surrendered. There was nothing I could do to change it. I had faith. No matter what happened, I believed it would be all right. I made a decision to let it go, to accept the reality of the moment. It worked.

As I sat in the room that day with dad, I prayed for strength, guidance and understanding. Thoughts about the harm I had done through the years as well as the amends I had recently made filled my mind. I'm so thankful I was given the opportunity to "get right" with my father before his death, that he had forgiven me, and that I had forgiven myself. How painful would it have been to drag that bag full of guilt and shame around for the rest of my days? Thanks to the program, a loving God

and a little help from dad and me, I'll never know.

Over the course of the next week I spent hour after hour talking to my mother about her life, dad's life and my own. I listened. . . really listened. It was wonderful just to be available, to help someone loved, to be there for someone in need. I thought of all the years past when I was not there to listen, to help, to love anyone, much less myself.

When I came to NA they told me to pray, to go to meetings, don't pick up. Get a sponsor, work the steps. Share your experience, strength and hope. Find a Higher Power I could understand. Help others. If I did these things my life would improve, and recovery was possible. I believed you then. I believe you now.

D.S., Maryland



The idealistic meeting

It opened with, "Quiet please! Welcome to the noon meeting, of your favorite home group, of Narcotics Anonymous. I am an addict, Slugg E."

The few rules did apply to this meeting. No one was holding any drugs or paraphernalia, on themselves, or in the building.

The children were at school, no distracting pets were present. Attendance sheets, for the moment, were tucked away.

We did the readings without interruption and went around the room introducing ourselves merely as "addicts."

A topic was brought up by someone who had not shared in a while. It was "caring and sharing the NA way." "What a great topic," I thought to myself.

An addict began to share and everyone was listening. People had already used the restroom and had their coffee made. Most were on time.

In a polite, orderly fashion, addicts began to respond sincerely, to the point and into the solution.

This meeting was fantastic and almost unbelievable. As some members quietly walked in late, not everyone turned to see who it was, nor did

they break the tempo of the message by skidding chairs back, patting, high fiving and whispering while someone else was trying to share.

I mean this meeting really had it *going on*. Most all the addicts gave the person that was sharing respect, just as if they were sharing themselves.

This is "caring the NA way." Yes fellow addicts we must depend on the "atmosphere of recovery" in order for true spiritual empathy to work. . .

As this idealistic meeting started coming to a close, almost everyone had been blessed with a chance to share.

Several burning desires were expressed with the quickness, then the chairperson blended in the Seventh Tradition, and a final message to the addict that still suffers.

The keytags were graciously done by the quiet old-timer, and the NA welcome tag was accepted by two tearful newcomers. Incidentally, they were announced as being the most important persons there.

The traditions were passed around and recited with respect. . . , as the newcomer listened. The familiar announcements were done and we closed the meeting with the Third Step prayer, in a tight warm circle.

People stayed after it was over, picking up, some signing sheets and others visiting with the newcomers.

Eventually, all left what was heard inside, and the door was locked. One addict was heard saying to another, "This was one of the best meetings I've been to in a long time."

Other addicts in this city continued to suffer today, as usual.

J.S., Texas

Transitions

So here I am, truly realizing for the first time that all the little things I do for myself in my recovery prepare me for the raging storms that define life itself. . . like death, like the tearing up of roots.

My family (self, husband and son) has lived on a farm for ten years. We bought raw land, lived as pioneers for a long time and slowly built up a beautiful homestead. We worked together all the way, raising our own animals for food, a large garden, etc. It has been a lot of work. . . the kind that holds limitless rewards and lessons in life.

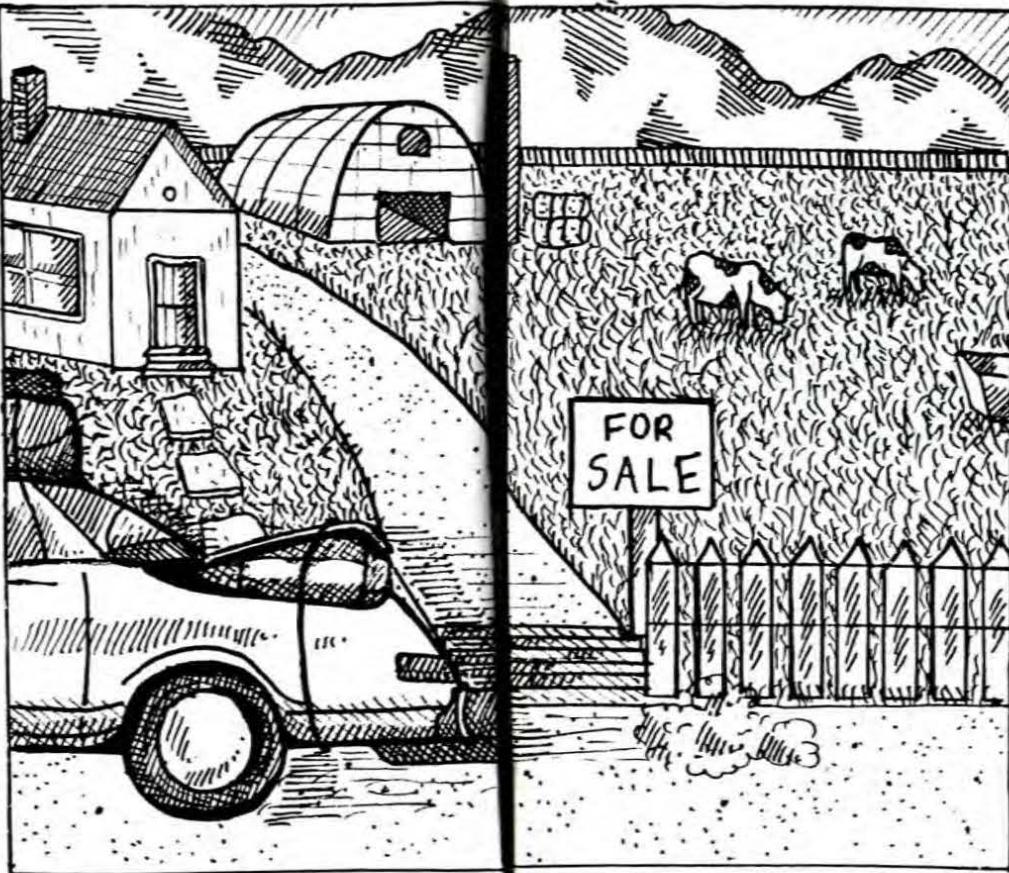
This has been my first true "home." I was able to see the reality of my addiction while here. Not only did I hit bottom, but so did my family unit. It has been a long slow process, but healing is taking place for us. We have learned how to love and nurture each other and how to communicate. I have been clean for two years, eleven months by the grace of God and through the loving fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Through my recovery I have discovered joy in life, everyday life. Who would've thought? Wow! I am learning to confront my fears and in doing so have been granted the gift of freedom. I can follow my dreams and

achieve my goals for the first time ever. I am forty years old, with a lust for life that I never knew before.

All of these things have occurred in my life, here on this farm. Part of me is here, too.

But now it's time to move on, to change, and go forward. Becoming emotionally healthy brings about a



new awareness of each person's self and of life. As a family and as individuals we decided that many of the things we desired for the future are not available to us or possible in our area. We all agreed that relocating to

a place that offers us more culturally and economically was what we wanted to do. We didn't have a particular place in mind, but obviously God did.

While on our first vacation after so many years of backbreaking work, my husband inquired about a job in this town we visited. It happened that the manager had been looking for

(something a little smaller this time) but be closer to "the world."

Our property is now on the real estate market and I feel my roots pulling loose, tearing away from this precious place in my heart and soul. In a way it is like dying, seeing my life pass before my eyes as I prepare to leave. But I believe that death leads to rebirth. The anticipation of our future excites me and it also scares me. I feel so safe here because it's familiar and comfortable, like an old shoe. As I said before, today I really try to face my fears and walk through them to know true freedom. I know that I am not alone.

So, at this point I am thinking of the changes going on in my life and how well I am processing all of it. Then the phone rings. . . my neighbor and very dear friend has just died of cancer at the age of forty-eight. Once again I am thrown overboard into strange new waters. Could I in my recovery, actually face death? I made the decision to do just that. I've always run from everything in my life, most of all death! Not this time, though. Terrified and trembling, I viewed the body, paid last respects and shed lots of tears. I knelt and said a prayer and cried some more. An odd thing happened. . . in the pain I felt healing. With the tears came happiness for a shared friendship.

Today I am allowing my Higher Power to steer the ship while I pay attention to the journey itself, one day at a time. A power greater than myself (yes, it's true!) is guiding me in a new direction and I've decided not to fight it this time. I am listening.

V.W., Oregon

little bits of GRATITUDE

I wake up to an alarm clock. I have somewhere to go. I'm alone. No furtive glances to see if his face will help me recall his name. No contemplating whether the night's activities will require the services of the free clinic, an obstetrician or an anonymous testing site. No uncertainty about what city I'm in.

I get up and go to the bathroom. I have indoor plumbing and toilet paper in rolls rather than napkins imprinted with the name of a fast food chain.

I brush my teeth, take a shower, and wash my hair. My teeth don't hurt and my gums don't bleed. I use shampoo, not hand or dish soap. Daily grooming—what a concept!

I spend some quiet moments with my still-sleeping son, remembering how very grateful I am to be in recovery. I think about the big things I am grateful for.



His alarm goes off. I go to the closet, not the far corner of the floor, and choose clean clothes to wear. I don't have to inspect them for food or blood stains, or odors indicating too many wearings. I help my son get dressed.

I make my bed. The bedspread is neatly laid over sheets, blankets, pillows and a mattress set inside a frame. No longer is my bed mere piles of dirty laundry, smoothed out flat on the floor, covered with a blanket.

My son watches TV, while I prepare breakfast. The electric bill was paid, on time, and the TV isn't on loan. There is food in the house, clean dishes are in the cupboard and the stove works. No more hot plates. Left-over pizza might be his choice, but it's not the only choice.



I put my makeup on, in my bathroom, not on the bus or driving my car. I can look at myself in the mirror. I like, even love, who I see behind those eyes.

I make his lunch. Sometimes I even make mine. I have the ability to plan ahead.

We put on our coats to leave. They are hanging in the closet.

I pick up my keys on the way out the door. I know where they are today.

We go to the car. I remember where I parked it. It hasn't been towed.

I drive him to school and catch the train. I'm capable of driving without frightening or endangering the lives of passengers, pedestrians or other drivers.

I arrive at work, on time. Conversations start, "Good morning. . ." instead of, "I'm sorry I'm late. . ."

I do my job to the best of my ability. No verbal conversations with my computer or that non-person I just know is standing directly behind me. No more excuses for the quality of my work. I'm not trying to get the drugs out of my purse and up my sleeve without anyone seeing me, for frequent trips to the bathroom.

I get paid regularly and I pay all my bills on time. I have enough left (and the discipline) to save for a vacation. I'm not waiting at the teller machine for the stroke of midnight (when the automatic deposit from my job is processed into my account) so I can get back home before the connection, whom I've already called, arrives.



I eat lunch during my lunch hour, sometimes at NA meetings. Gone are the days of trying to cop and find a public restroom to fix in and get back to the office reasonably close to one hour from when I left. Gone are the days of losing myself in a stationary, art supply or hardware store because I'm too loaded to eat lunch. I shop with checks that don't bounce. I'm not on a first name basis with pawn-brokers.

I leave work with the same possessions I arrived with. Pens still accidentally come home in my pocket, but periodically I collect them and take them back.

I catch the train home, take out my notebook. I pick a topic and write about it. This week the topic was gratitude.

I get off at my stop (I don't miss it) and get into my car. It is still where I left it and I know where that is. I pick my son up from school *on time*.

We go home. I legally park my car, remembering to lock it. I open the apartment door and turn on the lights. They work. I remembered to turn them off when we left in the morning.

I open the mail. Mail from people, not collection agencies.

I listen to the messages on my machine and return my calls. The answering machine isn't a tool to screen calls from bill collectors and friends I don't want to talk to this day, this month or this year.

I prepare dinner, grateful there is food in my house, and I have the appetite to eat it.

We eat together and talk. I actually listen to him.

I do the dishes. I own more than one glass and one dish for each of us. I clean the kitchen and I enjoy seeing it clean.

We spend some time together before bed. I change into a clean night shirt. I don't sleep in my clothes.

I brush my teeth, wash my face and go to the bathroom, still grateful for indoor plumbing. Sometimes I even floss.

I say my prayers out loud with my son, thanking my Higher Power for another day clean followed by "Now I lay me down to sleep. . ."

I cuddle with my son and read him a bedtime story. We talk a little bit about life. He respects my values. He doesn't only love me, he likes me, too.

My bed is nice to get into, the sheets are clean, nothing is piled on top of it. I don't have to work at creating a place to sleep each night. I write, I talk on the phone, I read myself a bedtime story, usually from *The NA Way* or *Basic Text*. I go to sleep. I don't pass out. I don't get up again because the inner "committee" wants to fight. I go to sleep thanking my Higher Power for this opportunity to be different and more than a little bit grateful.

C.E., California



Which insanity

I am an addict who has been clean in NA for over nine and a half years as of this writing. During all these years, I had to face a lot of truths about myself. This is my story about one of those truths. . .

Ever since I was a small child, I had been under professional medical care for one psychiatric problem or another. Starting at age three, I was placed on medication to offset several mental health diagnoses. After a series of examinations, the doctors determined that I was mentally retarded and hyperkinetic. They tried several medications, and finally settled on a particular drug, which I took from age five until age fourteen.

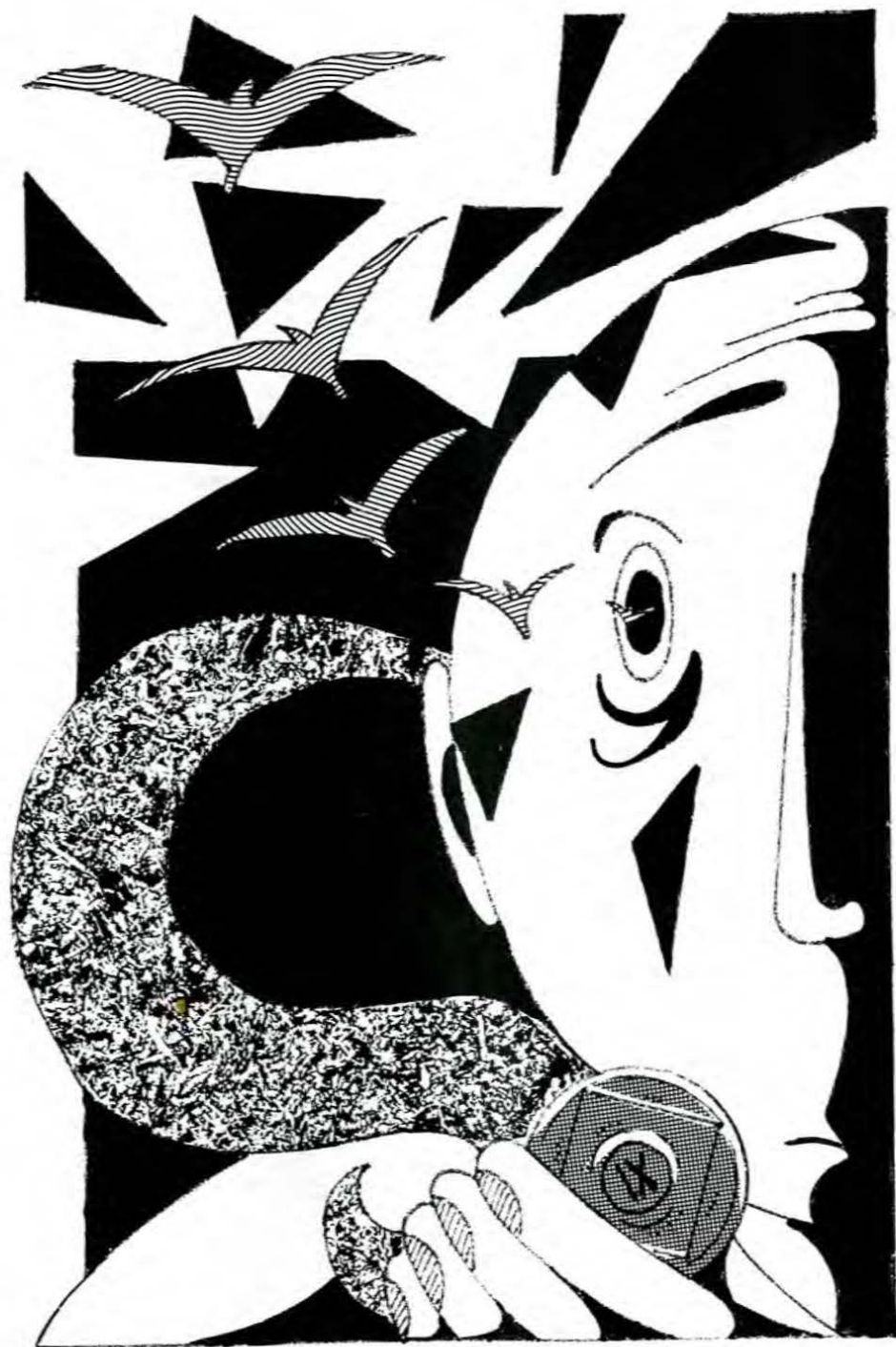
When I was seven, I started using, and by the time I was eleven, I was abusing my prescribed medication. Later in my active addiction, I was hospitalized on a number of occasions for manifesting the "bizarre behaviors" mentioned in our literature. Some of these hospitalizations were of the psychiatric kind, others were rehabs for addicts like me who wouldn't admit to their addiction.

For the last several years of my using, I had been diagnosed with several different mental illnesses and

prescribed various medications. Besides conning the medical professionals for "legal dope," I was also given drugs that would cause "normal" people to have some severe reactions. These, I was told, were to manage the symptoms of my mental illness.

In the first year of my recovery, I remained clean from all drugs. The only exception was the time I received an injury when I reached into a grease fryer vat to pull out a pair of tongs, receiving second degree burns up to my wrist. In this incident, I left the prescribed painkillers with my sponsor, and went over to his house when I absolutely felt that I needed one. But even when clean that first year, a disturbing thought haunted me, "What if I'm still mentally ill?" After all, I had been prescribed medications that would have caused me to have adverse reactions if I didn't *really* need them. Also, I had just worked Step Two, and had little remaining resistance to accepting that I was insane. The sound of my life crashing down around me at the end of my active addiction had all but proved this fact. But which insanity did I have?

So I left the issue of mental illness behind me and plunged into recovery full steam. At two years clean, I was living in a stairwell after finishing another semester of college; having no place to live when the dorms closed. I hit a "recovery bottom," and got very responsible after that. Three years later, I was still clean, and was an administrator at a residential treatment center. Two years later, I was married and separated. About this time, I decided to release myself



from the treatment field. The seventy-hour work weeks and being on-call for everything was exhausting me. In the next year (my eighth year clean), things really took a turn for the worst. I was bankrupt, out of work, recently divorced and often depressed.

During this time I was active in my recovery. I was sponsoring eighteen addicts (which I now see in hindsight to be a bit overboard!), going to meetings five to seven times a week, serving as an RSR and holding six other positions, including WSC positions. I was respected and loved by many of the addicts I shared my life with. On the outside things were going fine.

On the inside, things were often terrible. Since the divorce, I surrendered to the fact that being suicidal the first thing every day I woke up wasn't too good for me, and I sought some professional help. I was often too distraught to speak about these things at meetings, and besides, I was unsure if this was appropriate to share in the context of the recovery meetings we have in NA. The last thing I wanted to do was go to an NA meeting and have a "bummer" (a freak-out). So I paid someone to hear me freak out. They tested me and found results that indicated I had four mental illnesses.

I was crushed! But I was even more shocked when they recommended hospitalization and a regimen of medication. I went around for six weeks with the prescription in my pocket, and decided to skip out on the medications and the therapy. I talked in meetings about my fear and being insane and being mentally ill; feeling frustrated that all the praying and service and meeting attendance

would not change this fact. I admitted that all those questions I had asked myself earlier in my recovery were indeed valid concerns.

So I endured the depressions and the craziness, and the loneliness. After a couple of more years clean, the dam burst. . .

During this period of time, I had been chronically unemployed, had moved to another area and had difficulty adjusting to the recovery atmosphere there. I attended college again, and got into a new relationship with a very loving woman. But eventually the relationship ended civilly, and I had to drop out of college because of financial mismanagement and emotional strain. I did however, receive the gift of a wise and loving sponsor in my life, and he even went as far as to recommend that I seek some professional help. "You cannot keep NA pure when you try to deal with these kinds of issues in the meetings, go and seek out some help. The addicts are there offering recovery from addiction, you may need some other kind of help. Be flexible, and be good to yourself."

The dam broke open one evening in summer 1991. Three caring addicts came over to my trailer and confronted me. One, my roommate, talked about how I screamed aloud in the house, doing things under a blackout: such as turning on the headlights of his car in the middle of the night, and locking myself in my room and moaning. Another, my employer, talked about his concerns about my work performance, and his perception that my behavior was bizarre. Another

addict, my landlord, talked about the fact that I hadn't paid rent in four months. They all strongly recommended that I go to the emergency room and try to get into the psychiatric inpatient program. I listened, and had very little denial (they didn't give me time to argue). Besides, I knew what they were saying was true. And what I remembered my sponsor telling me was suddenly very clear.

For the past several months, I had been isolating, at times not eating or sleeping for days. There were entire days where I didn't leave my room in my trailer. Frequently, I would hear voices around corners and see birds and other objects flying



around my living room. I was screaming out gibberish for no apparent reason. At the end of a WSC, I felt crushed, a total failure; an RSR who had let down his region because he didn't get up to the microphone, a WSC servant who sat in a panel too terrified to speak and consequently disappointed everyone on the committee who had worked so hard in the preceding year. The RSR-A had to Twelve Step me for a couple hours to bring me out of the deep depression I was in. At home, I never did laundry, and seldom took a shower. My sleep cycle was chaotic. I felt like I was just a piece of trash most of the time, and beat myself up. I knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that I was in

trouble, and my recovery was on the line as a result of whatever was causing all my pain.

That night I surrendered the only way I knew how. . . Step One. I am powerless over my addiction. My life had become unmanageable. My addiction was so powerful and it had caused me to deny another powerful disease. If it wasn't for Step One, I would be denying my addiction, and

consequently denying my mental illness. My addiction had once again tried to kill me. And my only hope for recovery from addiction was once again the Narcotics Anonymous program. If the surrender I made to NA also meant going the

extra lengths to stay clean, such as psychiatric help, I was going to take that risk. I don't want to use!!

So I went to the hospital, and was told that my problems were too chronic to justify admittance. I got hooked up with a therapist the following week. I was the first person in the history of their agency to check "yes" to every item on their intake form! As a result, they were reluctant to offer me their services, but HP guided me and I got some help. Today, I have two therapists, because I need twice the help.

The first few weeks after surrendering to my mental illness made my recovery really challenging. I am an oldtimer in my area, and I felt that

once people knew about my other disease they would ignore me, and disregard my recovery experience, strength and hope. And I had to learn to confine my discussion at meetings to how my recovery is challenged by my mental illness. I had to take medication, and I asked for support from other addicts when I would question whether I was clean or not. I received a lot of help from an addict who is diabetic, and from another addict who also has a disease other than addiction.

I learned that I am surrendering my will in taking the medicine. It is physically necessary. I keep strictly to my physician's prescription; further proof that I am powerless. I am surrendering to a more experienced person (a doctor) just like I surrendered my addiction to a more experienced recovery program (NA).

I am learning to maintain this surrender. I also allow HP to show me where my insanity of addiction stops and my insanity of mental illness begins. My addiction is no longer masking my other illness in its attempt to get me back out using and dying. My message of recovery has some added experience of positive value to others: the fact that I am a NA member who is also dealing with mental illness on a daily basis, clean. When I shared about it at a recent mini-conference, I received support and also reached some other addicts. Recovery still comes first, and I thank NA for pointing the way for me to get help for my mental illness. And I still contribute some service here and there, and share some recovery at times.

I really don't know why I have a mental illness in my tenth year of recovery. I don't need to know. I no longer resent my HP for giving me one more facet of life to deal with. Instead, I truly am amazed that I stayed clean and alive through the whole situation. So are my therapists, and they have gained a lot of respect for the NA program by recognizing that NA kept me clean through it all.

But there are a few things even they do not understand. They are experts in the field of treating mental illness, of this fact I have no doubt. But they don't understand why I'm sometimes grateful to be an addict. They don't comprehend how I am aware that it is nothing short of a miracle that God loved me and kept me clean through the most difficult period of my recovery. They can't empathize with my relief that NA is a feeling program, not just a "feel good" program. And they still don't get it when I tell them about the joy of seeing a newcomer walk through the doors for the first time.

But I know that you do. I believe that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. So this is my story...and recovery is still happening to me every day because I've been given the gift of recovery in NA. Thanks for letting me share and loving me as I am.

From the heart of a grateful recovering addict,

Anonymous

Keep coming back

Sometimes as I sit in a meeting and listen to a newcomer sharing or watching someone early in recovery I think to myself, "Boy are they sick." I easily forget that most people don't come to NA because they're overflowing with grace and have a set of spiritual principles that are working in their lives. I also seem to forget where I was nine years ago.

Today when I hear someone sharing about having ninety days clean and still stealing from their boss I can easily become judgmental. I get an attitude—almost wishing they would stop coming to meetings so they wouldn't give NA a bad name. My reason for writing this story is actually gratitude.

Today I have a set of principles to live by. I am an acceptable, responsible, and productive member of society. But I realize that I didn't walk into NA the same as I am now. As a matter of fact, I'm grateful NA members then didn't have the attitude I sometimes get now. Early in 1983 I walked into my first NA meeting. Though I still got high, I really wanted to get clean. I picked up my first white chip. After the meeting a woman approached me and started to give me an NA hug. At the time I wasn't real

hip on the thought of a woman hugging me, so instinctively I pushed her (quite hard) and she ended up on the floor. She looked at me and gently said "keep coming back." No one else hugged me at that meeting, but I felt welcome. I relapsed for a few months but then got clean. In my first two years clean I managed to change nothing except I didn't pick up. I sold drugs to high school students thinking if I didn't use up my profit I would make more money. I continued acting violently, and was locked up a number of times. I continued ripping people off and behaving just as I always had. It took many meetings and a lot of patient addicts helping me for the realization of needing to change to sink in.

I thought for a long time that as long as I didn't use drugs I was ok, and at first I guess that staying clean was the best I could do. The time came, though, when I was no longer comfortable being a "punk." I looked up to those talking about the steps, spiritual principles and integrating into society. There were enough addicts who let me come back and feel welcome, despite my apparent lack of growth, that eventually the message of recovery became real. So today I need more than ever to practice a little humility. And when I see the sickness of an addict, any addict—coming out, I try to remember where I came from.

I have no right to judge anyone but myself. So next time I witness someone's sickness I will use what I learned at my first meeting and sincerely tell them to keep coming back.

M.K., Florida

Home Group

Denilah focuses

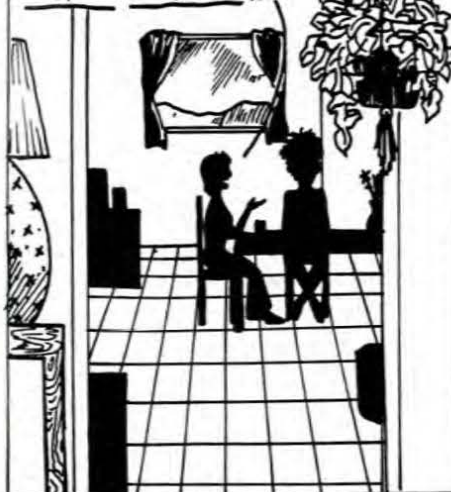
I'VE BEEN, LIKE, DOING MY 4TH STEP, SERENA... AND, LIKE, I DON'T KNOW...



I KNOW WHAT I FEEL GUILTY ABOUT, BUT ARE THOSE THINGS REALLY "BAD"... AND I KNOW WHAT I FEEL OK ABOUT...



WELL DENILAH... IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE TAKING AN INVENTORY OF YOUR OWN MORAL VALUES...



YA... BUT THE ONLY THING I KNOW ABOUT VALUES IS, LIKE, 50% OFF!



The broad perspective

Here's hoping you continue to find meaningful the March "Graphic Classics" issue of *The NA Way Magazine*. Its relative simplicity belies the many considerations and choices which resulted in the final composition and layout. It seemed simple. The staff began polling artists and review people for favorite graphics from past issues. A list of about 200 was compiled, and work began by locating and making copies of all those selections.

It soon became obvious we'd have to lean heavily on material from fairly recent years, because so few original renderings were used in early issues. From September 1982 (Volume One, Number One) until mid-1985, art-catalogue cut-outs were the staple.

In 1986 and 1987 much more original material began to be used; but it was 1988 before most of our graphics were designed especially for our magazine.

What to do? The prospect of a "classic" issue of graphics from the relatively recent past seemed a bit presumptuous. Since most of our graphics aren't exactly antiques, we

cast about for some additional criteria of selection.

What was "classic" about the material? Our *problems*; and our *solutions*. Using that standard we began to pare away material of equal visual impact and quality, in order to arrive at the choices. Absorbed in that process, amid mounds of copies and hastily devised codes of priority, we realized that we were working with a complete story that could be *shown*, not just written. If you haven't already done so, try looking at each picture, in order, as "a paragraph" of feeling and meaning. Comments will be welcomed, and printed.

A great asset, and one regrettable liability, have become clear since the publication. The good news is (because there are so few and such basic words involved) translation work is practically unnecessary. We plan to sock together at least a few copies of the March issue for most of the languages represented in our fellowship, and make presents of them at the WSC.

The bad news is, at the last minute, we purposely transposed one set of four pages with another, and did not reflect that change in the index located on page 40. A corrected index page is available upon request.

Head on

In a letter detailing the four-session agenda for this year's WSC Multinational Development Forum WSB spokespersons said "Only by facing those challenges and opportunities together, head on, can we continue to fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose."

The letter, from the chairperson of the WSB and the chairperson of the WSB External Affairs Committee, noted Session One will be held on Saturday afternoon, April 25, and include addresses by the external affairs chairperson and representatives of some 22 countries.

Session Two, from 9 to 11:30 a.m., Sunday, will see the formation of participants into nine working groups to consider plans to provide basic services for new and developing NA communities. At noon the individual working groups' facilitators will present reports.

Session Three, Sunday afternoon, will bring the groups together to preview, in light of worldwide development needs, the Monday and Tuesday WSC "B" panel discussions on such matters as taxes, WSO sales policy, multiregional forums, Guide to Service project, prejudice, WSC participation and decision-making, national/zonal WSC representation and other world level board and committee projects.

Focus questions provided in the Session Three agenda are: "Does NA wish to continue developing as a worldwide fellowship, or should NA divide?" and,

"What are NA's capacities and limits in supporting worldwide development?"

On Thursday, at 9:30 a.m., the conference will enter the final MDF Session. Spokespersons selected by the groups on Sunday afternoon will report on the worldwide ramifications of "B" panel discussions held earlier in the week. They will also present various points for the conference to

consider in creating an international development agenda for the coming year, highlighting budget priorities for Thursday afternoon's WSC finance session. To close this MDF session, the conference will be asked to answer the question of NA's future worldwide.

Nominations

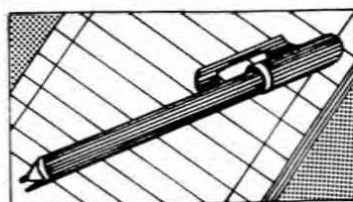
We've experienced a 30 percent increase in the amount of articles submitted to *The NA Way Magazine* during the last couple of months, and have several thousand new subscribers on the roles. Those increases can be attributed, respectively, to the new networker system of magazine liaisons, and the 1992 Group Drive. Thank you.

Another very important facet of the magazine operation is the work done by the review panel and editorial board. Nominations for those positions are in order during the Dallas WSC later this month. Nominees must have a minimum of five years clean time. Send nominations (forms are in the CAR, but handwritten is OK) to the editor or directly to the chairperson of the conference.

The conference elects one person to the three-member editorial board in even-numbered years, to serve a two-year term. The other editorial board members are the magazine's managing editor and an appointee of the WSB.

The conference affirms nominees for the review panel and places their names in a pool. The editorial board taps, in turn, qualified pool members for service on the review panel.

Viewpoint



The voices in the dark

I love it when the meeting has got that feeling, an emotional crest that one senses when recovery is flowing smoothly. Since I have been clean in NA, I have had the gift of attending several hundred meetings of this nature. The meeting opens, then a succession of members share about how recovery has returned purpose and joy to their lives. Being open about the joy of living clean has brought illumination to my life.

When I was new, NA in my life was my sponsor, myself and one or two other regular members. With the single meeting and a living room group, we hung together and shared the joy of our new-found friendships. Many times, each person had something special and unique to share at the meeting; living just for today meant being a new person each day. Support was just a phone call or a strolling walk away.

Then it happened. After one of the meetings, two of us got into an extended argument about some issue. And then the issue got brought into the next week's meeting. It was one of those serious issues; we felt that our lives hinged in the balance. It was a concern about what we felt was best for NA and there were sharp disagreements on this topic. Our happy median was suddenly transformed into a rift between two differing roadways to recovery. Needless to say, there was a great amount of tension and ego which somehow found its way into the debate about NA. As arguments go, this one was flesh and blood, and it soon passed away. I learned that this happy fellowship of addicts could let love find a way through different viewpoints, and celebrate change.

Recovery meetings have a radiance all their own. In my perception, this is one of the highlights of recovery, basking in the glow of goodwill and fellowship. When members shine with the happiness they feel by being freed in the moment from the living hell of active addiction, the gathering of addicts multiplies this intense feeling with their gratitude. The meeting pulses with the light of recovery.

And then someone ruins it all. They speak out about the problems they see: People being dishonest with each other, addicts seeking romantic at-

tachments at meetings instead of recovery, literature not being on the table, members sharing about "things" that bother them. . . "We've all heard this before," someone responds. "Who are you to complain, this is recovery," another member states. All of a sudden, the light of the meeting has a mote, a dark spot, a place where the glow of recovery is diminished.

I used to see things this way too. Automatically, the hair on my neck would stand up, I would get a swell of righteous anger, and then, one day, it connected... the way I react when someone shares the problems instead of the solutions is often the same way I feel when I see concerns that the meeting needs to address. When I go to a meeting, and there are no meeting lists for a newcomer, I get pissed. When I bus across town to a meeting, and no one has arrived to unlock the door, I develop a resentment. When I saw the link between how I felt when I saw the problems of everyday recovery, and the reactions I had to other members carping about what they see, I began to empathize with them.

Was their grievance a blot on the light of recovery? I know that my very life depends on this program of recovery. I have learned that I never had a chance put a halt to my active drug use until I was attracted to NA. Not a *slim chance*. Not a *lucky break*. Nothing. Not a chance in hell of getting out of hell. That's where I came from, that is what I carry with me into meetings. I love Narcotics Anonymous because of the new life I have been given. We are all different in this fellowship; some members can get by

with just showing up to two meetings a week, others need to attend a meeting a day and make a lot of coffee. But many of us are bound by our gratitude to NA for being the beacon of recovery across the wasteland to our broken, damaged lives.

Because of this, I choose to believe that the irritated voice I sometimes hear in the meeting is a voice of concern. A voice of love, a toughened love that addicts develop when they invest their lives towards NA. That voice (and sometimes it is my own voice) is actually a voice in the dark. A light in the dark; someone who is sane enough, gutsy enough, maybe even crazy enough to speak out against the norm. What passes for "normal" is not always healthy in recovery. What is passed off as "routine" may actually reflect no spiritual value at all.

The light in the dark may be the next addict that says: "Why not cut back on coffee so we can have more chips," or, "my life depends on what is shared here, put a halt to the gossip." There are a lot of elements of NA that can be improved. Our program is still in its infancy, and always will be if we follow our primary purpose and attract newcomers to NA. And this vibrancy of youth can be cherished, should be cherished. The next time someone speaks out against the grain, demanding more service, more honesty, more NA, I'm not going to rank-and-file judge them as a "crackpot," or a "whiner." I'm going to give them a listen, be open-minded and watch them to see if they're being honest and if what they describe fits my own reality.

I'm going to listen very closely. That voice may be the voice of loving concern that is the light in the darkness. If it is, I better take note, because my life still depends on the NA way!

Anonymous

The forgotten many

I'm a grateful recovering addict who resides in a maximum security prison for women. I recently attended a very interesting program put together by some students and became aware of some very alarming statistics. I'd like to share them with you. First, almost all of the women here are here for drug-related crimes. It is said most will return to drug abuse, crime, and come back for another term. Shocking huh?

It's actually quite surprising how many of the inmates here have no idea what an NA meeting is all about. One meeting a week is all we have right now. It's not enough. But God bless those NA fellowship members who do believe in us and participate in H&I service programs, without them we truly would be lost.

Most drug possession is illegal, therefore the vast majority of drug addicts will realize "... jails, institutions" and, possibly, "death." My concern is that we receive help. We

need more NA meetings and rehabilitation programs. You probably don't realize this but when a woman is released from this prison she leaves in a white shirt, jeans and sneakers, with one-hundred dollars in her pocket. Unless she has a family who wants her, where is she to go? According to some statistics, ninety-seven percent of the time she will return to the past, what is familiar. The cycle continues.

I don't think I'm asking for a miracle or the impossible, but what I am asking for is help, help to break the cycle before it claims more lives. Help to restore a fellow human being to a sense of self so that they might be a productive part of society. Is it too much to ask? I think not.

J.P., Florida

"Worldwide" in literature?

Thanks very much for the copy of the approval form of *Just For Today—Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts*, which we received a few days ago. The correspondence from the WSO reaches us via Amsterdam or Rotterdam, and takes some two months, so that's why there's been a delay in sending this letter. We know that this is a draft for approval or dis-

approval and not for the sending of input, nevertheless we've made the effort to read it carefully and have some comments we'd like you to bear in mind, if not this time, then at least in the future.

Firstly, we really appreciate the great effort that has gone into the creation of this book and we know it will help us all in our daily recovery.

However, it can be said that in 1992 NA is really beginning to be a worldwide fellowship; instead of being "worldwide" in name alone as it was some years ago, this has now become a reality. What we sometimes wonder is if this development is reflected in our literature. To make this claim in 1982 when the Basic Text was first published would have been absurd; for example NA didn't even exist in our country then. But several years have gone by and everything has changed. Our fellowship, as far as we know, is established in fifty-five countries and therefore is composed of very different cultural and linguistic contexts. Is this taken into account when working on the literature? Does anyone stop to think that a great part of this literature is translated into different languages? Does it ever occur to anyone that what seems perfectly normal to an addict recovering in New York may sound like something from another planet to an addict in Bombay?

Reading some parts of "Just For Today" the answer is obviously "no." Is the literature written for all addicts, or only for those living in the US?

To mention only a few examples, let's look at tenth February; "Fun to us today is a walk along the ocean

watching the dolphins frolic. . ." The question is, when was the last time that an addict living in Manchester or Madrid saw a dolphin? We realize it's a metaphor referring to new ways of having fun, some of those being the ability to enjoy nature. But aren't there any other metaphors that are slightly more universal? For example, the sunrise itself, which this extract goes on to mention.

The feeling we had upon reading some of these meditations is that the American way of life is taken as a universal norm. There are references to the "mall" (Aug. sixth), to "bowling" (May fourth); in Spain practically nobody ever goes bowling. We imagine that an American addict who suddenly came across the phrase "Often, home group members get together to see a movie or go to the bullfight," would find this equally as weird. The references such as "live in the suburbs, have 2.6 children, and start wearing polyester," although we understand that this is written tongue in cheek, out of context it becomes incomprehensible and not even funny. In some countries suburbs are the poor parts of the city, in some societies having a numerous family means economic prosperity, and the polyester, frankly. . .

Throughout the text there are countless references to cars and driving (among others April fifteenth, May fifth, September twenty-second, October tenth, November seventeenth). Although it may appear strange to an American, the car is not an omnipresent, nor indispensable object everywhere in the world, and the symbol of our material aspirations is

not necessarily the possession of one. Quote: "A new car comes from showing up on the job every day." A while ago we read a report about NA in India in which we believe mention was made of the fact that the richest NA member had a scooter. We, for example, haven't got a car, mainly because the public transport system here is fairly good, and it's easier to travel by subway than by car. Therefore we can't "sob in our car and turn the radio all the way up so we can't hear our own thoughts" even if we wanted to. The "life's rewards" of December first are absolutely alien to the economic, social and religious realities of many communities. A material desire for a person from an opulent society might be a luxury car and for a person from a poor society, a radio.

All of these examples are metaphors which can easily be made universal, so that addicts—all addicts—can identify. Instead of "sobbing in your car" you can "sob in your chair, or in your room, or while you are walking," there are thousands of possibilities. Instead of "a walk along the ocean watching the dolphins frolic" you can "walk along the street, or in the countryside and see the colors of the sky in the morning."

It's true that we live in a world that tends towards the global village and some of our differences are beginning to disappear, but to take American reality as a universal model is not only dangerous but unfair. We know that despite our differences we all have the same disease and we have all found recovery through the same program. We also know that because of experience, resources and manpower

our literature is written, and presumably will continue to be written for a few years at least, in English. No objection. But it's better to focus on our similarities rather than our differences, especially given that the WSCLC produces literature for the entire fellowship. Just as the mention of specific drugs has been eliminated from the literature, an effort could be made to also eliminate references which are culturally, socially, sexually, and racially specific, therefore extending even further the spirit of unity, which is one of the basic elements of our program.

A big hug to everybody. Yours in loving fellowship,

S.K./M.C., Spain

Funding NA services

In our recent struggle to carry the message of recovery, a problem has become apparent in Narcotics Anonymous. Although it would be nice if we, as a fellowship would never have to discuss the issue of finances, reality dictates that we need to if we are to continue to carry the message and provide services.

We continue to provide a great proportion of our services through the money we generate from conventions and "fund-raisers." Half or more of all donations received for the World Serv-

ice Conference are from the above-mentioned sources. That leaves fifty percent or less as actual Seventh Tradition donations. I believe this should cause us as a fellowship to ask ourselves questions such as:

1. Where are we headed with these conventions and fund raisers?
2. Are we becoming dependent upon them as the means by which we are self-supporting?
3. Does the trend toward reliance on them as means by which we support a lot of our service structure lead us down a perilous path?
4. Why isn't the Seventh Tradition working?
5. Do we exclude newcomers in conventions or fund raisers due to cost of events?
6. Do fund raisers take away from the important role our groups play in passing on their collections, after expenses, to support area, regional, and world services?

Another issue of concern, raised in last year's conference, was a motion for a "unified budget." A "unified budget" raises more questions about self-support through the Seventh Tradition, and the declining of outside contributions.

The World Service Office is a separate business organization that provides administrative and support services to world service committees and boards. The source of income to provide these services comes from sales of our literature.

Some concerns about how this affects our fellowship and the Seventh Tradition:

1. Published financial statements indicate that 33.93 percent of the sales of literature are to non-fellowship customers. Should this non-fellowship income be used for the World Service Conference, which is supported through the Seventh Tradition?
2. The World Service Office acts in a capacity to process the income for, and expend funds on behalf of, the WSC. The WSC repays the WSO on a monthly basis, after verification of expenses by the WSC treasurer. Have we in the past received money from the WSO, that we didn't have, to function at the WSC? And if so, was it ever paid back?
3. Since the WSO depends upon sales of products derived from WSC actions—Have we prudently undertaken projects that were feasible within our budget at WSC?
4. Is the Seventh Tradition effective in our fellowship today?

Communication and application of the Seventh Tradition seems to me to be missing in these situations.

In the beginning of our traditions the Basic Text says "We keep what we have only with vigilance, and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps, so freedom for the group springs from our traditions. As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that will tear us apart, all will be well."

The Seventh Tradition states that "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Money is an important part of our existence. Learning to deal with it and its responsibilities are equally important parts of "facing life on its own terms." Every NA group has certain monetary obligations which are necessary in fulfilling its primary purpose. Our ability to accept personal responsibility is a reflection of our recovery. The Seventh Tradition helps us preserve our primary purpose, protect the groups' autonomy, and assure personal anonymity. The Basic Text states "Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life."

Self-sufficiency is as important to the healthy growth of our groups as it is to our own growth as individuals. As our recovery deepens, we learn that being self-supporting isn't just a necessity—it's a privilege.

When we depend solely on ourselves and our membership, other good things result. One thing that is increased is the heart of the First Tradition, our unity and common welfare.

To be self-supporting financially is keeping in line with all our traditions. Tradition Four allows us to be autonomous. The Sixth Tradition maintains a policy of nonaffiliation with organizations outside our fellowship. Independent of outside support, we begin to rely on ourselves for our continued existence. It frees us from the temptation to become caught up in power, property, or prestige.

One of the reasons we practice the Twelve Steps is to recover from a lifetime of sick dependencies on people, places and things. We learn to depend on a Higher Power, Narcotics Anonymous, and ourselves for our new way

of life. Group practice of the Seventh Tradition means we depend on each other to meet our needs. We have found that with prayer and ingenuity we can find a way to stay in operation within the definition of this tradition, and avoid losing our independence. It is better to struggle and trust that our fellowship will grow in God's time, rather than violate one of our most important traditions by depending on sources outside of NA.

The larger service structure of NA is made of members and groups, but they are directly responsible to those they serve. These service committees also have the Twelve Traditions as their spiritual basis, and rely on the groups' contributions of time and money for their existence and operation.

Some of our members do not have money at times. This is understandable. However, we, as a fellowship, must be aware that we cannot continue to allow others to pay our way in recovery. When we contribute to our group to the best of our ability, we make our fellowship stronger and participate in our own recovery. We are a part of NA. This makes our group more important to us. When we work for something, it means more than something just given to us. The following is an example of a Seventh Tradition statement that might be appropriate for group use:

"The Seventh Tradition has its foundation in the spiritual principal of self-sacrifice. The basket we pass around is a symbol of our determination to be self-supporting. Your contribution says that you're assuming your

responsibility to our fellowship, instead of leaving it to others.

"Gratitude is not something we say, it's something we do. The survival of NA depends on us all. That little something we didn't give might be the difference between one addict dying or surviving.

"These funds provide our group's rent, literature, refreshments, meeting lists, telephone helpline, literature, hospitals and institutions and public information efforts, and other services from area, regional, and world levels. If this is your first meeting we ask you not to contribute. All others are privileged to do so. Our gratitude speaks. . . when we care and share with others the NA way."

Anonymous., Virginia

NA under surveillance?

Surveillance of our meetings by outside persons or agencies would seem at first glance to be a problem rarely encountered in the NA fellowship. Years ago we heard stories about narcs using meetings to gather information and even make arrests based on surveillance activities directed at meetings and participants in our fellowship. This kind of problem seems part of the dead past. However, another, less abrasive activity, may merit our attention.

For many years I have witnessed, and practiced the signing of, documents issued by various courts and/or corrections personnel for the purpose of documenting the attendance of persons at our meetings. The "court-ordered" person is required to take the document around to meetings and get (usually) a signature, location, and date of the meeting attended.

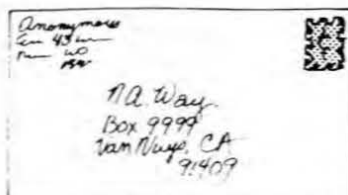
Are we participating in and therefore validating a form of surveillance by providing the service of signing these documents? Ought we to be in the position of providing aid and assistance to any agency which does not necessarily have our best interests in mind? Does any aid we provide constitute an "affiliation" or an "endorsement" with an outside enterprise.

The Tenth Tradition states that we avoid getting tangled up in public controversies; few public controversies afford us more opportunity for entanglement than drug prohibition and the enforcement of related laws and policies. Regardless of our intentions, cooperation with the courts in drug cases by way of providing information concerning who does or does not attend our meetings invites entanglement in public controversy.

We cannot rely upon the disinterest of outside groups, persons, and agencies to keep us free from organized observation. If we are to be under no surveillance, it will be because we cooperate with no surveillance.

W.K., Michigan

From our readers



Blessed with success

It is the end of another year (1991) and I'm sitting here on my job looking back on how I've gotten through another year of being clean, and saying to myself that staying clean has nothing to do with being lucky, it's about being *blessed* with the gift of recovery and other recovering addicts in my life. The miracle of waking up and having no desire to use allows me to continue to be grateful for the God of my understanding and the Fellowship of NA.

I've made many New Year's resolutions in my life and I don't remember keeping any of them, so this year I'll just renew my commitment to living this way of life and be the most successful person I know, Just For Today. Love and respect,

M.R., New Jersey

Earnest & honest

Recently I've started really getting in touch with the spirituality of this program and my Higher Power, God. When I first heard of the disease of addiction, and that it was spiritual, I thought, "Not for me, I believe in God, I've prayed all my life." Which was true. On a night out using I always brought God with me; "OK God, I'm going to put this chemical into my body, please make sure I stay safe." And He always did. But I felt such

shame and guilt. I always held my head down and felt that God was keeping me from the "good stuff." I also felt that there *was no* "good stuff" in His life.

I finally gave into "whatever it takes" and became a member of NA. I started praying on my knees. Asking God to help keep me clean and thanking Him, I would look out the window and picture God as something far, far away from me.

I remember my first-year birthday. I thanked all the people in the rooms of NA for keeping me clean. I later had feelings of guilt because God never entered my mind. My denial, which is tremendous, is even in the area of spirituality.

Soon thereafter I was able to start personalizing a God of my own understanding, Who is inside of me. I got very involved in service, like my sponsor and my closest friends. God's will started happening and I became involved in a loving relationship with my best friend, who is now my husband. But I still had no true realization of a Higher Power, outside of the group, in my life.

I haven't completed the Eleventh or Twelfth Steps yet, but through having worked the others I am beginning to break through that denial of a spiritual lack. I'm beginning to see and understand that even though God has worked wondrous things in my

life and carried me into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, it is hard for me to give Him the credit.

Growing is very difficult but with God and NA I'm growing a little everyday.

J.P., Nevada

Kept coming back

I'm an addict and I live in Southern California, but I got clean in Northern Virginia. Yesterday I became four years clean. What a true miracle! I am writing this letter to let all those in the Northern Virginia area know that I am still clean and alive. You see, I came into NA in 1983 and I stayed clean for seventeen months. The second time, one year and one day. The last time I relapsed, it was the day after I celebrated one year for the second time. I had stayed clean that year on lies. I lived in a fantasy world and created my own drama. I lied about what drugs I used, who my connections were and where they came from. What I didn't know is that it just doesn't matter. I never shot dope nor did I ever really sell myself for drugs. Oh, but those stories seemed so much more exciting than mine. I was incapable of being honest with anyone, including myself. I was miserable and suicidal and felt very alone. But I did it to myself. So, I used. I lied, stole, cheated, etc., clean. That's not what anyone taught me to do in NA, but I knew better. I had the answers, I thought.

Seven months later, I hit bottom. I was ready to die from loneliness and drugs. No one could be more miserable than I was. Or at least that's the way I thought. I was full of self-pity and self-hatred. I came back to my

first NA meeting in seven months and my friends wouldn't trust me. They'd get close with me and trust me, and then I'd use. I was a "retread," but in spite of the shame and other feelings, I went to meetings every day. Sometimes two or three times. I got a sponsor who kicked my butt. She was great, though, very understanding. She really didn't let me get away with manipulation. In order for me to stay clean this time, I had to get honest with my sponsor. She laughed when I told her my stories. She laughed! I couldn't believe it. It was because she could relate and had told some of the same stories too. God works in mysterious ways, and we got together by no mistake.

It doesn't matter what drugs I used, just what I was willing to do about the problems I had. Wow! What a concept! I didn't have to compete with your stories and problems. I had enough of my own without having to create them. I wasn't such a bad person after all!

At one and a half months clean a very dear friend died from this disease. He had to try it one more time. He was buried with our tears. I will never forget that day as long as I live. He helped keep me clean on many occasions. It could've very easily been me. It could've been my last slip. I believe my friend died to keep me clean. I remember all that I had been taught, and don't use, no matter what. No matter what. I'm an addict in recovery. January twelfth, 1988 is my clean date. HP willing, I won't have to change it again. I love you NA.

A.L., California

Thanks to H&I

I feel blessed to have recently met a room full of very special women. I met them through a Friday night H&I commitment at the county jail. They are housed in a substance abuse unit. Through these women I can see myself. When they share in the circle we form with our chairs, I can feel the pain and despair they have come to know through active addiction, and where it has brought them. My eyes fill with tears when they talk about their children and how much they want to stop using and start living. I have three children myself and was introduced to NA in that same county jail three and a half years ago. I was seven months pregnant then, and I've stayed clean in NA since. My daughter is three and a half years old and has never had to live with my active days or see me high, thank God.

I was once afraid of taking a commitment like this. Every Friday night for one year! My thinking told me I couldn't do it or maybe my car wouldn't hold up, things like that. I now see that as my negative thinking, caused by my disease, talking to me!

I continued to go to H&I meetings for over a year and listen, finally taking my first commitment. It is one of the best things I have done for my recovery. It is an honor to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous, going to this jail every Friday night. I look forward to getting addicts with a strong NA message to come with me to speak. These meetings have become as enjoyable as my home group, on Saturday nights. My weekends are great! H&I committee meetings are on Sundays once a month. I have

learned a lot about the Twelve Traditions, love and service at that meeting. "Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

Thank you.

K.P., New York

Gladly checking in

In the past few months some major changes have occurred in my life that illustrate the value of an ongoing commitment to recovery the NA way. Among these are a geographical move from an area where NA meetings are available two or three times a day to an area where the closest meeting is twenty miles away and there are only four meetings a week.

Some other changes that have happened in my life are having become engaged to a wonderful woman and looking forward to a June wedding. She is not an addict and as a result of my daily NA program, she didn't know I was until I told her on our first date. She's gone out with using addicts in the past and was puzzled when I told her about my being an addict. I wasn't her idea of an addict. I am clean.

I have been clean for five and half years and still do most of the things that I learned from all of you. I go to meetings as often as possible, work the steps, call my sponsor, call my NA friends, sponsor other recovering men, do daily inventories and read our literature several times a week. Most importantly, I don't use *anything* between meetings, the key to recovery that eluded me for so long in the beginning.

I have given of myself in service to

our fellowship since I had six months clean. I learned a valuable and lasting lesson resulting from service to our fellowship. Recovery-oriented service works; service-oriented recovery is difficult, for the people around me as well as myself. I have to work the steps and apply our traditions daily if I want to serve. It is so simple when I'm able to put principles before personalities to get along with the others in subcommittees and service boards.

I'm grateful for our new Twelve Concepts of service and hope that the WSC adopts them in April in Dallas. They go so far beyond the scope of our traditions to define how to best serve our fellowship. I believe that we need a structured set of principles to protect ourselves from ourselves. I don't know about other areas, but my home area spends several hours per month on motions that attempt to clarify our service structure or to change something to better serve the groups in our area. My sincere hope is that the concepts will help to clarify the roles of each part of our service structure.

I have learned to live clean and free by applying such principles in my life as the steps and traditions. My motto is "If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got." Today I'm doing something differently. Love and gratitude.

R.N., Washington

Coast to coast gratitude

Sometimes when I go to meetings and hear so much on gratitude it makes me sick. But, today, I feel so much gratitude I want to share this with my family.

After nineteen years of using, I stayed away from drugs for almost a year. I then relapsed and became temporarily paralyzed on my right side. I had gone to the other fellowship and found it was wonderful for those people but I knew it would not work for me. I immediately buried myself in Narcotics Anonymous and I started to feel the depth in our First Step.

I got a sponsor. I started to work the steps, I read my Basic Text and I got involved in service.

I moved from Florida to North Carolina, where other members of my family lived who were in recovery. I knew they would tell me what I needed to hear, but didn't always want to hear. I once again buried myself in NA. I got a job and I started to accept life on life's terms. I met a wonderful man and we have built a strong relationship based on spiritual principles.

I got a great job, at two years clean, and the company moved me to California. I was totally convinced that California NA was all wrong, they clapped too much, and basically didn't know how to conduct meetings, (so I thought) but once again I buried myself in NA.

My sponsor from the East Coast came to see me and observed a special closeness in the fellowship here. That opened my eyes and I saw it too. I became close to more women than I ever had and I have been able to enjoy friendships with men.

I had surgery at two years and eight months clean. The surgery left me unable to walk for four weeks during the holiday season. I have experienced so much love and understanding from the fellowship. My NA family has

helped me bathe, dress, did my grocery shopping and mailed my bills, but most of all they brought meetings to my home on a daily basis. You-all have brought the greatest gifts to this addict, the message of "Just For Today, I never have to use again," the promise of freedom from active addiction and the therapeutic value of one addict sharing with another.

R.A., California

Attitude adjustment

You had a letter in a recent magazine that really changed my attitude about noisy children at meetings. They used to drive me nuts but now I see them as blessings.

Heck no, I won't take away some mother's (or father's, for that matter) shot at recovery.

I try and remember that the Twelfth Tradition doesn't only mean, "What you hear here, leave here" but that at its deepest level it means we are all equal and all have an equal right to recovery.

Thanks for your loving service.

D.G., Alabama

Response: Aloha NA friends

I can remember the love I felt walking in the doors of my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I knew I found a home, a place that accepted me for who I was and not for what I had. I talked a lot of nonsense and what I thought you wanted to hear. For two years I kept talking and coming back.

As the years went by I gained more and more recovery. I learned to listen, to give, but most of all, self-respect. Today I have seven years clean, the last five only Narcotics Anonymous.

I have noticed the "old-timers" have gotten fewer. The respect for addicts with four years or more of clean time isn't there. We are judged and put down; but high expectations are put on us. I feel ashamed to say how long I've been clean because then I see addicts turn away. Often we read, "We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict." Nowhere does it say that addict is a newcomer, it very simply says "addict." I feel I received more love, compassion, and understanding when I talked nonsense and bull with one year clean than I do now when I share NA recovery from the heart. The fellowship does need to do an inventory and look at our willingness to offer recovery, unconditional love, compassion and support to *all* addicts, regardless of their clean time.

B.B., Missouri

Response: Basic respect

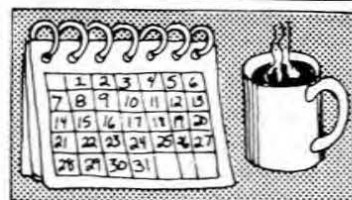
I am guilty of disrespect.

I sit in the meetings in silence, but am bothered by the people who don't care and disturb our meetings.

Lately I am the one who usually speaks, because not too many care. I am also guilty in the participation of disrespect in our meetings, because everyone else is, and I don't want to be left out. Lately I've been taking the meetings a lot more seriously, because I realize the NA way is my future.

J.G., Florida

Comin' up



ALABAMA: Apr. 24-26, 1992; East Alabama Area of NA Spring Fling 92; Wind Creek on Lake Martin; East Alabama NA, Rt 1, Box 180, Daviston, AL 36256

2) Jun. 18-21, 1992; 5th Alabama Northwest Florida Regional Convention; Huntsville Hilton, 401 Williams Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801; rsvn.s (800) 445-8667; info (205) 533-1400; Ala NW Fl RCNA V, Attn Registration, PO Box 623, Huntsville, AL 35804-0623

ARIZONA: Apr. 25, 1992; 5th Annual Arizona Regional Talent Show; Electrician's Hall, 5818 N 7th Street, Phoenix AZ; (602) 841-0987; info (602) 894-1099; RSC, PO Box 26404, Tempe, AZ 85282

2) May 22-24, 1992; 6th Annual Arizona Regional Convention; Scottsdale Plaza Resort, 7200 North Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85253; info (602) 973-1210; rsvn.s (800) 832-2025; ARCNA VI, PO Box 33125, Phoenix, AZ 85067-3125

3) Jun. 12-14, 1992; CANAC I; On the Colorado River in Laughlin, Nevada; info (602) 758-9625; CANAC I, PO Box 1085, Bullhead City, AZ 86442

ARKANSAS: Jun. 19-21, 1992; 8th Annual Beaver Round-up; Buffalo Point National Park, Yellville, AR; info (501) 253-7789; Convention, PO Box 23, Lowell, AR 72745

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 11-12, 1992; First Annual Southern California Spring Convention; Holiday Inn/Huntington Beach, 7667 Center Avenue, Huntington Beach, CA 92647; info (213) 874-7127; S.C. Spring Convention, PO Box 2017, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

2) May 7-10, 1992; 14th Annual Northern California Convention; "Hope in Recovery"; Red Lion Inn, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, CA, 95815; rsvn.s (916) 929-8855; NCCNA XIV, PO Box 527, Soquel, CA 95073

3) May 9, 1992 H&I Learning Day and evening Dance; sponsored by Southern California Regional Activities and H&I Committees; veterans Memorial Auditorium, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City, CA. Info. H&I (714) 628-7808; info. Activities (818) 338-8275.

4) May 23, 1992; 5th Annual Lower Desert Area Presents Spring Splash Clean Bash; Oasis Water Park, 1500 Gene Autry Trail; info (619) 347-4637; LDAACNA, PO Box 1621, La Quinta, CA 92253

5) Jun. 26-28, 1992; 2nd California Mid-State Regional Convention; Red Lion Inn, Modesto, CA; info (209) 544-3137; CMSRCCNA II, 1700 McHenry Avenue, 65B/300, Modesto, CA 95350

CANADA: May 15-17, 1992; 5th Ontario Regional Convention (Bilingual); Carleton University Tour and Conference Centre (Commons Building); info (613) 739-7319 or (613) 721-8562; ORCNA V, PO Box 40067, Bank/Hunt Club P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1V 8S8

2) May 29-31, 1992; British Columbia Spring Clean XIII; Gambier Island; info (604) 273-4916; Registration, PO Box 1695 Station A, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6C 2P7

3) Jun. 5-7, 1992; ENAC VII; "The Truth Behind the Masks"; Lister Hall, University of Alberta Campus; info (403) 421-4429; Convention Committee, 10022-103 Street, Basement, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA, T5J 0X2

2) May 16, 1992; 9th Annual Pigs in Space Pig Roast; Quassy Amusement Park, Group 64, Middlebury, CT; info (203) 758-2913; Reservations, PO Box 2534, Meriden, CT 06450

FLORIDA: Apr. 30—May 3, 1992; 16th Annual Fun In The Sun Weekend; Mark II Beach Resort, 15285 W Highway 98, Panama City Beach, FL, 32407; rsvn.s (800) 874-7101; info (404) 717-8875; P.C. Weekend, PO Box 47848, Doraville, GA 30362

2) May 22-25, 1992; 2nd Gold Coast Convention; "Solutions II"; Marriott Cypress Creek Hotel, 6650 N Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, 33069; info (305) 481-8914; Registration, PO Box 23325, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307

GEORGIA: Apr. 16-19, 1992; 11th Georgia Regional Convention; Downtown Hilton Hotel, 255 Portland Street NE, Atlanta, GA; info (404) 232-3632; Convention, PO Box 1084, Covington, GA 30209

HAWAII: May 22-25, 1992; 6th Annual Big Island Gathering; "Love in Action, Ohana O Aloha"; info (808) 322-4044 or (808) 966-4926; Big Island Gathering, PO Box 10842, Hilo, HI 96721

2) July 3-5, 1992 First Hawaii Regional Convention; "E Pupukahi" (We Are One) Princess Kaiulani Hotel, Waikiki, Hawaii. For info. call (808) 262-8466 or write: Hawaii Convention Committee, 150 Hanakua Dr. #308, Kailua, Hawaii 96734.

IDAHO: May 22-24, 1992; 3rd Annual Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Best Western Burley Inn, Burley, ID; SIRONACC, PO Box 427, Paul, ID 83347

ILLINOIS: May 22-25, 1992; 4th Illinois Basic Campout; Sullivan, IL; helpline (217) 373-2063; New Beginnings Area, PO Box 3214, Decatur, IL 62524

2) May 22-25, 1992; 6th Annual River Run Canoe Trip and Fellowship; Kickapoo State Park, Danville, IL; info (217) 373-2063

KANSAS: Apr. 24-26, 1992; MARCNA IX; Ramada Inn and Tower, 420 East Sixth Street, Topeka, KS 66601; info (316) 342-2256; MARCNA IX, PO Box 1701, Emporia, KS 66801

KENTUCKY: Apr. 17-19, 1992; KRCNA VI; "Welcome to the Miracle"; Hyatt Regency Lexington, 400 West Vine Street; rsvn.s (606) 253-1234 or (800) 233-1234; KRCNA VI, PO Box 279, Lexington, KY 40584-0279

LOUISIANA: May 22-24, 1992; 10th Annual Louisiana Regional Convention; Holiday Inn South, 9940 Airline, Baton Rouge, 70816; info (504) 362-9209; rsvn.s (504) 924-7021; LRCNA X, PO Box 82726, Baton Rouge, LA 70884-2726

MINNESOTA: Jun. 12-14, 1992; UMRCA IX; Best Western Garden Inn, 1111 Range Street, N Mankato, MN 55060; rsvn.s (507) 625-9333; info (701) 293-0062; UMRCA IX, PO Box 5118, Saint Cloud, MN 56303

MISSOURI: Jun. 5-7, 1992; Show Me Regional Convention VII; Holiday Inn, Joplin, MO, Highway 71, Exit off of I-44; rsvn.s (800) HOLI-DAY; info (417) 781-2858

MONTANA: Jun. 26-28, 1992; 4th Annual Montana NA Gathering; "Discover the Gift"; Saint Joseph Parish Center, 500 2nd Avenue SW, Great Falls, MT

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Jun. 26-28, 1992; 2nd Annual Fellowship in the Field; Cascade Park Campground, Loudon, New Hampshire; info (603) 798-4329

NEW JERSEY: May 22-24, 1992; 7th New Jersey Regional Convention; "The Dream is Real"; Sheraton Eatontown Hotel and Conference Center, Route 35 and Industrial Way East, Eatontown, NJ; rsvn.s (908) 542-6500; info (908) 257-4534; NJRCNA 7, PO Box 43, Edison, NJ 08818

2) May 3, 1992; 1st Annual Queens Area Spiritual Breakfast; Holiday Inn, JFK Airport, 144-02 135th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11436; rsvn.s (718) 659-0200; info (212) 601-5818

3) May 22-25, 1992; "Recovery in the Woods VI"; Lakeland Conference Center, Franklinville, NY; info (716) 878-2316; B.A.S.C.N.A., PO Box 64, Buffalo, NY 14207

NORTH DAKOTA: Jun. 12-14, 1992; 9th Annual Upper Mid-West Regional Convention; Garden Inn, Mankato, ND; info (701) 293-0062

2) May 22-24, 1992; OCNA X; "The Miracle of Unity"; Holiday Inn, 116 Park Avenue West, Mansfield, Ohio; rsvn.s (419) 525-6000; info (614) 236-8787; OCNA X, PO Box 461, Shelby, OH 44875

OREGON: May 8-10, 1992; Pacific Cascade Regional Convention I; Portland, Oregon; Holiday Inn Airport, 8439 NE Columbia Blvd, Portland; rsvn.s (503) 256-5000; info (503) 255-8696

PENNSYLVANIA: Apr. 17-19, 1992; 10th Annual Greater Philadelphia Regional Convention; Wyndham Franklin Plaza, 17th and Race Streets, Philadelphia; rsvn.s (215) 448-2000; info (215) 222-0100; GPRCNA, PO Box 31686, Philadelphia, PA 19147

2) Jun. 19-21, 1992; 13th East Coast Convention; Temple University, Broad Street at Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA; info (215) 729-7751

PORTUGAL: May 2-3, 1992; 2nd Portuguese Convention; South Pedro de Moel, Leiria; Complexo Das Piscinas Da Promoel; II CPNA, C/O E.S.P., Apartado 21785, 1138 Lisboa Codex, PORTUGAL

SCOTLAND: May 22-24, 1992; 1st Scotland Convention; The Central Hotel, Gordon Street, Glasgow, G1 3SF; rsvn.s 041-221 9680; Registration, Unit 1, Old Foundry, Chapel Street, Airdrie, Strathclyde, SCOTLAND

SOUTH CAROLINA: May 29-31, 1992; Woodstick VI Outdoor Convention; Pine Ridge Campground, Roebuck, SC; info (803) 596-5104; NCCANA, PO Box 1782, Spartanburg, SC 29304

SPAIN: May 16-17, 1992; 6th Spanish Regional Convention; "Zapatos Nuevos/New Shoes"; Hotel Es Pla, San Antonio, Ibiza, Islas Baleares; Hosted by NA Ibiza Area; info (Spanish) 010 3471 197157, (English) 010 3471 197197

TENNESSEE: May 16, 1992; "NA in May in Memphis," Multiregional BBQ Cookoff. VRC10 fundraiser. Site is shelter #5 in Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park north of Memphis. To register a cooking team or for camping info. call (901) 452-1091 or write PO Box 1107, Memphis TN 38111.

TEXAS: Apr. 17-19, 1992; 7th Annual Lone Star Regional Convention; "The Promise is True in 92"; Wyndham Greenspoint Hotel, 12400 Greenspoint Drive, Houston, TX 77060; rsvn.s (713) 875-2222; info (214) 349-6655; LRSO INC., 10727 Plano Road -200, Dallas, TX 75238

2) May 23-25, 1992; "Play in the Bay II"; Lone Star Regional Fundraiser; Quintana County Park, Quintana Beach; info (409) 265-1050; Registrations, PO Box 2431, Freeport, TX 77541

UTAH: Jun. 5-7, 1992; 6th Annual Celebration of Recovery; "Choose not to Use"; 166 South 1st West, Masonic Lodge, Vernal, UT; Convention Committee, PO Box 1476, Vernal, UT 84078

WEST VIRGINIA: May 8-10, 1992; "Miracles in the Mountains"; Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV 26502; rsvn.s (304) 372-7000; Mountaineer RSC, PO Box 2381, Morgantown, WV 26502-2381

WISCONSIN: Apr. 17-19, 1992; 4th Annual Milwaukee Area Easter Retreat; Kettle Moraine State Forest (North Unit); info (414) 476-4984; Unity Committee, 1534 South 65th St #2, Milwaukee, WI 53214



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

